THE EFFECTS OF RAISING GRANDCHILDREN ON THE MARITAL
SATISFACTION, LIFE SATISFACTION, AND PARENTING
STRESS OF GRANDPARENTS

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Larry M. Aaron, B.S.E., M.Ed.
Denton, Texas
August, 1992
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This study examined the relationship among the variables of marital satisfaction, life satisfaction, and parenting stress of grandparents raising grandchildren and whether the sources and levels of marital satisfaction, life satisfaction, and parenting stress differed among grandparents raising grandchildren and grandparents not raising grandchildren.

The subjects for this study were 62 grandparents from the North Texas metropolitan area chosen from two populations. Group 1 was composed of 31 grandparents not raising grandchildren. Group 2 was composed of 31 grandparents raising grandchildren. Each grandparent completed the Short Marital Adjustment Test (SMAT), the Life Satisfaction Index - Z (LSI-Z), a demographic sheet, and a consent form. In addition grandparents in Group 2 completed the Parenting Stress Index/Short Form (PSI/SF).

Independent t-tests were used to determine whether the groups differed on sources and levels of marital satisfaction and life satisfaction. An independent t-test
was used to determine whether Group 2 differed from the norms established in the Test Manual of the PSI/SF. The groups differed significantly on the levels of life satisfaction but not on marital satisfaction. Group 2 did not differ significantly on the level of parenting stress from the norms on the PSI/SF. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if the variables of education and income differed significantly between the two groups on marital satisfaction and life satisfaction. The two groups did not differ significantly on the variables of education and income relative to marital satisfaction and life satisfaction.

Based on this study, grandparents raising grandchildren do have a significantly reduced level of life satisfaction. Grandparents raising grandchildren do not have a significantly reduced level of marital satisfaction nor a significantly elevated level of parenting stress.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Grandparenting has increasingly been a subject in the popular press beginning in the early 1980s and continuing into the 1990s (Beck, 1990; Brazelton, 1990; Brubaker, 1985; Heiligman, 1990; Kornhaber & Woodward, 1981; Pifer, 1991; Plummer & Tamarkin, 1990). In 1980 there were thought to be more than 22 million grandparents in the United States (Barranti, 1985; Tinsley & Parke, 1987). As the population of the United States continues to age and people continue to live longer, being a grandparent will be experienced by more and more people (Barranti, 1985; Bengtson, 1985; Hagestad, 1988; Neugarten & Weinstein, 1964). Some estimates are that over 70 percent of older people are grandparents (Kahana & Kahana, 1970; Kivnick, 1982; Tinsley & Parke, 1987). According to Beck (1990), by 2030 one-third of the current United States population will be senior citizens. One need not be a senior citizen, however, to be a grandparent (Hagestad & Lang, 1986). The majority of grandparents acquire their first grandchild when they are in their forties or fifties (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1985; Troll, 1985b).

There is a transition taking place in the perceived significance of the grandparent role. Transitions are "life
changes which involve shifts in role involvements and the person's social identity" (Hagestad, 1988, p. 405). Much of the very early literature on grandparenting was negative toward grandparenting in that grandparents were perceived as either unimportant or harmful to children and grandchildren (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986; Fischer, 1983; Strauss, 1943). Over the past ten years, grandparenting has been perceived as a more positive role than previously (Bengtson & Robertson, 1985; Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986; Kivnick, 1982; Kornhaber & Woodward, 1981; Strom, 1982). Bengtson and Robertson (1985) state that "the contemporary grandmother's difficulty stems in part from uncertainty as to what one should do in the grandparental role, and in part from the fear of doing too much" (p.13).

In recent decades, American society has experienced tremendous change in demographics, including mortality, fertility, mobility, divorce, transportation, communications, the work day, retirement, Social Security, standards of living, higher divorce rates, as well as the constitution of the family (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986; Denham & Smith, 1989; Hettinger, 1989).

Grandparent rights has become a heated topic along with the rise in senior citizen advocacy groups (Kornhaber & Woodward, 1981; Plummer & Tamarkin, 1990). Grandparent rights legislation has been passed in a majority of the state legislatures in the United States (Hunter & Hunter,
1984; Johnson, 1985). Mead (1978) stated that in societies where grandparents are absent or powerless the young may ignore adult standards. Grandparent organizations have sought to reexert the influence of grandparents in American society (Kornhaber & Woodward, 1981). The effects of such influence is unknown.

The image that most adults have of grandparents is one of older adults who are retired and spend most of their time in a rocking chair. These people are usually perceived as being out of step with the times and, particularly in the case of a grandmother, not working outside the home. This image is more compatible with a great-grandparent than a grandparent (Troll, 1985b). A modern grandparent is more likely to be active, up-to-date in dress and thinking, and working at a job outside the home. Grandparents have been viewed as the custodians of history, the pattern for behavior, and models of how to deal with the world (Kornhaber & Woodward, 1981; Severino, et al., 1986; Tinsley & Parke, 1987).

Significance of the Study

A particular phenomenon of grandparenthood that has received increased attention since the late 1980s is the grandparent that becomes the primary or sole caretaker for the grandchildren ("Grandparents Raising," 1990; Pifer, 1991; Larsen, 1990; Seligman, 1990). The concept of
grandparents being surrogate parents is not new (Albrecht, 1954; Mead, 1972, 1974); however, grandparents serving as parents is increasingly frequent and is often the result of divorce, illness, death, alcohol, drugs, abuse or some combination of these in the parenting generation (Crosbie-Burnett, 1983; Dersch, 1986; "Grandparents Raising," 1990; Johnson, 1985). Grandparents serving as parents has long been recognized as a frequent pattern in black families (Barnes, 1985; Burton, 1992; Wilson, 1982). In the 1980s, the concept increased in the white middle-class society as well (McCready, 1985; Seligman, 1990). The effects of such skip-generation parenting on both the grandchildren and the grandparents requires further study (Seligman, 1990; Staff, 1989).

Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986) observe that "finding out more about grandparents might provide valuable insights about the strengths, weaknesses, and dilemmas of the contemporary American family" (p.5).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to explore the effects of parenting a grandchild upon the life satisfaction, marital satisfaction, and parenting stress of the grandparents. The literature review suggested that the phenomenon of grandparents raising grandchildren was increasing due to a high divorce rate, increased incidence
of drug abuse, and alcoholism. Added knowledge was needed in order to help the grandparents cope more effectively. In addition, increased knowledge will help those working with the grandparents and the grandchildren be more effective in planning appropriate strategies. This study has contributed to an understanding of the effects on grandparents of raising grandchildren in the areas of parenting stress, life satisfaction, and marital satisfaction of married grandparents.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between married grandparents not raising grandchildren and married grandparents raising grandchildren on the Short Marital Adjustment Test (SMAT) as measured by an independent t-test.

2. There is no significant difference between married grandparents not raising grandchildren and married grandparents raising grandchildren on the Life Satisfaction Index-Z (LSI-Z) as measured by an independent t-test.

3. There is no significant difference between married grandparents raising grandchildren and the normal range of scores established in the Test Manual of the Parenting Stress Index/Short Form (PSI/SF).
Definition of Terms

The following definitions apply to specialized terms for this study.

**Grandparents Raising Grandchildren:** biological grandparents serving in the capacity of a parent to their grandchildren, including primary responsibility for food, clothing, shelter, medical care, discipline, advice, and guidance. For the purpose of this study the grandparent must have had the above primary responsibility for the sixty (60) days prior to participation in this study.

**Life Satisfaction:** the cognitive evaluative component of a person’s psychological well-being (Tobin & Neugarten, 1961), morale (Lawton, 1975), or adjustment as measured by the *Life Satisfaction Index - Z* (LSI-Z; Neugarten, Havighurst, & Tobin, 1961; Wood et al., 1969; Weber, 1988). The LSI-Z is a shorter version of the *Life Satisfaction Index - A*. There are five components of life satisfaction: zest; resolution and fortitude; congruence between desired and achieved goals; positive self-concept; and mood tone (Neugarten et al., 1961). The range of possible scores is from 26 to 13 with a high score signifying high life satisfaction and a low score signifying low life satisfaction using the scoring of Wood, Wylie, and Sheafor (1969).
**Marital Satisfaction**: a husband or wife's internal response evaluation of their relationship (Hunt, 1978) as measured by the *Short Marital Adjustment Test* (SMAT) using the simplified scoring of Hunt (1978). The range of possible scores is from 60 to 0 with a high score signifying high marital satisfaction and a low score signifying low marital satisfaction.

**Parenting Stress**: the relative magnitude of stress in the parent-child system as measured by the *Parenting Stress Index/Short Form* (PSI/SF; Abidin, 1986, 1990; Loyd & Abidin, 1985). Parent-child systems which are stressed are at risk for the development of maladaptive parenting behaviors or behavior difficulties in the child. The PSI/SF has two central domains: child characteristics and parent characteristics. A high total raw score (90+) is an indication of significant stress in the parent-child system. The normal range for the total score (raw scores of 51-79) is from approximately the 10th to the 75th percentile rank (Loyd & Abidin, 1985). A very low score (below 51) may indicate dysfunction in the parent-child system as well (Loyd & Abidin, 1985).

**Review of the Literature**

**Grandparent/Grandchild Relations**

There has been a lack of research into the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren (Barranti, 1985;
Kivnick, 1982; Minkler, Roe, & Driver, 1992). Most research has focused on the nuclear family while extended family relationships have not been viewed as sufficiently important to warrant investigation. Murray Bowen and Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy emphasized the importance of multigenerational systems in the functioning of the family and the individual members of the family (Bowen, 1978; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1985). Wilcoxon (1987) argues that "the systemic perspective advances the notion of reciprocal satisfaction of needs between family members" (p. 290).

The average age at which one becomes a grandparent has stayed basically the same over the past century, change has come in the fact that one will likely be a grandparent for a much longer period of time than a century ago (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986). Grandparents usually do not have a choice about becoming grandparents. The birth of a grandchild is ordinarily the decision of the parents and automatically results in grandparents, either willingly or unwillingly (Kornhaber & Woodward, 1981). Kornhaber and Woodward argue that grandparents are the only adults with the time, commitment, and fun-loving ability to be full-time mentors of the young. The early years are important in the bonding of grandparents and grandchildren, as they are in other significant relationships (Kornhaber & Woodward, 1981). The grandparent-grandchild bond is second only in emotional importance to the bond between parent and child.
A study by Hartshorne and Manaster (1982) found that 95% of young adults rated their relationship with grandparents as either important or very important to them.

Kornhaber (1986) claims that dysfunctions in the parent-child dyad are not directly passed on to the grandchildren when parents become grandparents. Kornhaber appears to be saying that dysfunctions are not directly passed across the generations. In other words, the grandparents do not interact with their grandchildren in the same dysfunctional ways that they interacted with their children.

In addition to the previously mentioned factors of increased life expectancy, better health, and better education, the grandparent-grandchild relationship is also supported by less autocratic family structures which are increasingly becoming the norm (Baranowski, 1982a). Kornhaber and Woodward (1981) called this new family structure the new social contract. According to Baranowski (1982a), an autocratic family structure reduces opportunities for intimate relationships while the less autocratic family structure results in greater potential for close relationships. Several writers have hypothesized that most interaction between grandparents and grandchildren is filtered through the parent generation (Baranowski, 1982a; Barranti, 1985; Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986; Kornhaber,

Grandparent-grandchild relationships are mediated and defined by the middle, or parent, generation. This means that most contact between the grandparent and grandchild generations is controlled by the parent generation. The parents decide when and under what circumstances the grandparents will have access to the grandchildren. Troll, et al. (1979) call this arrangement the **lineage bridge**.

The nature of the grandparent-grandchild relationship is affected by the grandparent's kin position, the age of the grandchild, and involves mutual influence and reciprocity between the two generations. Barranti (1985) supports Baranowski's (1982a) contention that authority no longer defines the relationship between older adults and younger people. When grandparents are not associated with family power there can be a warm and indulgent relationship with the grandchildren (Thomas & Settersten, 1986).

Grandparents who assume a parenting relationship with the grandchildren also assume a position of power that will affect the grandparent-grandchildren relationships.

Mead (1978) stated that young people in our culture today learn what is necessary to life mainly from peers rather than adults. This is due to the rapid social and technological changes in our society. Mead went on to say that when people do not have intergenerational family relationships, there is a lack of cultural and historical
identity in the younger generations. This is supported by contentions of several authors that grandparents are the family historians for the third generation (Baranowski, 1982b; Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986; Troll, 1986). Baranowski (1982a) views the lack of grandparent-grandchild relationships as a chief problem in the young person's attempt to resolve developmental functions.

Kinship networks have received increased attention in the literature recently (Bengtson, 1985; Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1985; Cochran & Brassard, 1979; Mitchell & Register, 1984; Troll, 1985a; 1986). According to Cochran and Brassard (1979) kinship networks are important in childrearing. Kinship support for the parenting generation provides a necessary resource of encouragement and advice. Since Troll (1986) notes that most older people have smaller networks than younger people, and that 82% of all network members are kin, older grandparents may have less support available when they assume a parenting role. Johnson and Baer (1985) found that grandparents with more flexibility and openness regarding their children's and grandchildren's life style issues had larger supportive networks in the family. They further observed that these grandparents exerted great effort to avoid being controlling or intervening in the children's and grandchildren's lives. Younger grandparents are usually more active in the lives of their grandchildren than are older grandparents (Bengtson,
1985; Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1985). According to Troll (1985b), older people who are exclusively involved with their children and grandchildren often have lower morale. Troll (1985b) indicates that the very fact they are heavily involved with their family is because of problems in the younger generations. Grandparents commonly become directly involved with their grandchildren during a family crisis such as divorce (Scherman, et al., 1988).

Blacks generally have more highly developed kinship networks than whites (Barnes, 1985). In addition, blacks are more likely to take children and grandchildren into their homes. The real cause of this willingness to take children is thought to be socioeconomic status rather than race (Mitchell & Register, 1986; Troll, 1986). Grandmothers are generally more involved with grandchildren than grandfathers in both races and all socioeconomic conditions (Barnes, 1985; Pearson, et al., 1990; Troll, 1986).

Factors Which Influence Involvement of Grandparents and Grandchildren

Families are increasingly grappling with problems that are threatening their very existence. Among the social problems that are disrupting families are divorce, alcoholism, drug abuse, and physical and sexual abuse (Denham & Smith, 1989; Minkler, Roe, & Price, 1992). Family-oriented professionals have begun to look for methods of alleviating the negative impact of these problems by
strengthening the intergenerational bonds of the family. One means of doing that is through the support and encouragement by grandparents of their grandchildren. Mead (1974) observed that throughout the span of this nation we have developed a family nature in which there is emotional and physical distance between grandparents and grandchildren, with the exception of a few ethnic groups. The potential influence of grandparents can be seen in the observation by Mead (1972) that her "paternal grandmother, who lived with us from the time my parents married until she died in 1927,...was the most decisive influence in my life" (p.45).

Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986) argue that there is an incongruity in the values of American grandparents today. On the one hand grandparents want close, gratifying, secure family relationships, but on the other hand they want to retain their independence, be free of familial constraints and to enjoy their own lives. According to Cherlin & Furstenberg, "The new American grandparents want to be involved in their children's lives, but not at the cost of their autonomy" (1986, p. 190).

Some research has identified the most enjoyable part of being a grandparent is the absence of parental responsibility (Thomas, 1986). When parental responsibility comes to the grandparent, it is usually the grandmother that assumes such a role. Ordinarily, neither grandmothers nor
grandfathers desire an extensive caretaking obligation (Albrecht, 1954).

The influence of grandparents on grandchildren is of three basic types: symbolic, indirect, and direct (Denham & Smith, 1989). The symbolic influences are of such a nature that expressing them is difficult. Therefore, metaphors are often used to express the symbolic interaction of grandparents with their children and grandchildren (Bengtson, 1985; Denham & Smith, 1989). Some of the metaphors that have been developed are: national guard, or watchdog (Hagestad, 1985; Troll, 1985b), which expresses the role of family protector; arbitrator (Hagestad, 1985), which describes the role of mediating family disagreements; and family historian (Baranowski, 1982a; Kornhaber & Woodward, 1981; Mead, 1974), which indicates the role of educating younger generations concerning the family history.

The indirect influences of grandparents are usually adjudicated through the parents. These indirect influences often involve emotional, financial, and marital support which the grandparents provide to the parents, and thus, indirectly to the grandchildren (Denham & Smith, 1989). Direct influences involve interaction between the grandparents and grandchildren that are not mediated through the parents (Cochran & Brassard, 1979). Direct influences include active participation in the child's life such as attention, play, instruction, modeling, emotional
encouragement, financial support, as well as cognitive and social motivation (Denham & Smith, 1989). In addition, grandparents often act as caregivers or surrogate parents for the grandchild (Tinsley & Parke, 1984).

Grandparental influence is affected by both the age of the grandchild and the age of the grandparent (Thomas & Datan, 1983). Grandchildren become increasingly appreciative of their grandparents as the grandchildren develop and mature (Hartshorne & Manaster, 1982; Thomas, 1986). Young, healthy grandparents tend to be more involved with their grandchildren (Baranowski, 1982a). Grandparents that are in poor health tend to be less involved with the grandchildren and have less influence on the grandchildren's lives (Strom, 1978; Thomas, 1986). Another issue in grandparent influence is the amount and frequency of contact between the grandparent and grandchild (Baranowski, 1982a; Thomas, 1989). Thomas found that "grandparents reporting that they spent some or most visits with the grandchild alone reported greater satisfaction and responsibility for disciplining, offering childrearing advice, and helping grandchildren than did grandparents reporting that parents were present during most visits" (1989, p.4). Cochran and Brassard (1979) observed that it is not uncommon for a grandparent to introduce the child to a new situation not previously engaged by the parent and child. One research project (Pearson, Hunter, Ensminger, & Kellam, 1990) found
that black grandmothers, living in multigenerational households in which the grandmother had primary care of the grandchildren, engaged in parenting behaviors such as controlling, discipline, and encouragement, as an integral part of the relationship. These grandmothers had more direct influence on the child's subsequent development. They further noted that grandmothers who were filling the mother role were more involved in parenting functions than other grandmothers.

There are four main factors which affect grandparents' influence upon grandchildren (Denham & Smith, 1989). The first is a divorce in the parent generation. Grandparents are more involved with their children and grandchildren when a divorce has occurred in the parent generation (Aldous, 1985; Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986; Tinsley & Parke, 1987). Another factor is the presence of stepgrandchildren which complicates the family interaction and lineage (Denham & Smith, 1989). An additional important factor in grandparental influence involves teenage mothers. Grandparents, especially maternal grandparents, are often more involved in parenting behaviors involving the grandchild when the mother is a teenager (Tinsley & Parke, 1987). Grandmothers tend to care for grandchildren more than do grandfathers (Albrecht, 1954). Finally, negative attitudes of the parents toward the grandparents may
restrict grandparents' access to their grandchildren (Day, 1991; Plummer & Tamarkin, 1990; Robertson, 1975).

**Divorce and Grandparents**

According to Dobson and Reuben (1981), only 600,000 children experienced the separation or divorce of their parents in 1951. By 1976 this figure had jumped to nearly 2,500,000 children with divorced or separated parents. Over 60% of couples involved in divorce have one or more minor children (Matthews & Sprey, 1984). Dobson and Reuben (1981) go on to state that "only 7% of the American population lives in what is called the typical American family—a breadwinner father, a homemaker mother, and children" (p.145). The nuclear family has decreased in importance as a multiplicity of family forms are now being practiced (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986).

**Impact of Divorce on Grandparenting**

The skyrocketing divorce rate has brought changes throughout society. One group that is particularly affected, but has received little attention, are the grandparents (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986; B. K. Smith, 1989; Kalish & Visher, 1982). The divorce of one's child may result in disturbance and anxiety, but this is particularly true when grandchildren are involved. Grandparents on the noncustodial side of the divorce may see a lessening of their contact with the grandchildren while
the grandparents on the custodial side may see a sharp increase in the duties and obligations including babysitting, financial assistance, and possibly receiving the parent and/or grandchildren into the home (Barranti, 1985; Johnson, 1989; Kalish & Visher, 1982; Matthews & Sprey, 1984).

Grandparenting is perceived by most people as one of the simple pleasures in life. Lee (1985) notes that older adults perceive grandparenting as a time to enjoy their grandchildren without the burdens and responsibilities of parenting. A divorce or separation may foul this dream including affecting family lineage, inheritance, retirement plans, family relationships, and child care obligations (Kalish & Visher, 1981; Smolowe, 1990). Dobson and Reuben (1981) emphasize that grandparents should avoid taking on additional obligations relating to the divorce or separation simply from a sense of duty. Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986) argue that divorce establishes possibilities as well as perplexities for grandparents. Often family relationships improve and a greater sense of extended family and kinship is experienced by the family members involved. "Children of divorced parents may have stronger ties to some of their grandparents than children from nondisrupted marriages have to any of their grandparents" (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986, p. 164). An increasing number of grandparents have the responsibility of parenting their grandchildren. Others do
not want that responsibility and suffer guilt feelings as a result of their refusal to accept such an imposing task late in life (Aldrich & Austin, 1991). Problems that necessitate grandparents making such a decision require extraordinary and continuing psychological adjustments (George, 1988; Strom & Strom, 1984). Grandparents require educational alternatives to help them cope with the decision-making process as well as the consequences of those decisions (Strom, 1988; Strom & Strom, 1987, 1989).

Grandparent/Grandchild Relations Following Parental Divorce

In a study reported by Gladstone (1988) on perceived changes in grandmother-grandchild relations following a parental separation or divorce, over 42% of the grandmothers studied noted an increase in the number of visits with the grandchildren. An important consideration in the increased visitation was parental custody of the children. Grandparents on the custodial side of the divorce reported increased contact while grandparents on the noncustodial side often observed a decrease in contact (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Tetrick, 1990; Thomas, 1982). Married grandmothers were most likely to report an increase in contact possibly because they had more time and were less apt to be working outside the home. Since divorcing parents are often dealing with their own emotional difficulties, they may not be available to support their children's emotional needs during this important time (Kelly &
Wallerstein, 1977). Grandparents are likely to fill this need with increased contact and advice giving (Gladstone, 1986, 1988; Johnson, 1989). Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) observed that many children they studied reported grandparents helped them the most, during their parents divorce, by frequent telephone and personal contact.

Children whose parents are involved in a divorce reported more problems than other children in a study by Johnson (1989). Approximately one-half of the divorcing families had children with school problems and nearly two-thirds had a child with emotional problems. Johnson noted that grandparents were important in providing help for the divorcing parent and grandchildren through babysitting, finances, and other types of help. Some grandparents took action that prevented their grandchildren from being placed in foster care (Johnson, 1989). Although the negative effects of divorce are well-known, it is not as widely promulgated that extended family relationships, especially those between grandparents and grandchildren, may be strengthened as a result of increased contact after a divorce (Barranti, 1985; Wilson & DeShane, 1982).

**Parent-Absent Children/Surrogate Parenting**

Montemayor and Leigh (1982) report in a demographic analysis of children not living with their parents that there were a total of 2,295,000 children not living with
their parents. This is 3.7% of the unmarried, noninstitutionalized population under 18 years of age in 1980. This number represented an approximate doubling of the figures from 1975. More than three million children, 5% of children under age 18, in this country now live with a relative other than the parents (Minkler, Roe, & Driver, 1992; Riddle, 1991). That relative is usually a grandparent with more than a third of the grandparents cited providing the sole or primary care for the children. According to the 1990 U.S. census (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991), 3.2 million children under age 18 live in the home of a grandparent. According to Creighton (1991), the above figure is a 40% increase in the past decade. Creighton further stated that 12% of black children now live with a grandparent. The 1990 U.S. census showed that 3.6% of white children and 5.8% of Hispanic children live with grandparents (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991). In a survey reported by Cherlin & Furstenberg (1986), sixteen percent of the grandparents surveyed had played an active part in rearing their grandchildren. Most of the children not living with a parent live with another relative, and that relative is usually a grandparent (Conroy & Fahey, 1985; Montemayor & Leigh, 1982). However, in a study done by Furstenberg, Nord, Peterson, and Zill (1983), grandparents were not even mentioned as a possible living arrangement for grandchildren after a divorce. They report
that nine of ten family disruptions are caused as the result of marital divorce.

Grandparents are reported to draw a clear distinction between grandparenting and parenting (Johnson, 1988; Troll, 1986). Grandparenting is primarily a middle-aged activity, argues Johnson (1988), and a majority of grandparents have no desire to return to the role of parent (Kornhaber, 1986; Troll, 1986). In fact, Johnson (1988) states that "a majority agreed that they did not want to repeat the parental role and, instead, preferred to be with their grandchildren on a voluntary, short-term basis" (p. 188). A surrogate parenting role for a grandparent may have consequences on the grandparent-parent relationship. There may be a blurring of the grandparent role and the parent may become like an older sibling (Kornhaber, 1986). Kornhaber (1986) raises the interesting question that if the children of the grandparents are having such difficulties that they must give up the parental responsibility, will the grandparents be in a position to improve as parents with their grandchildren? He seems to be implying that one factor in the difficulties of the parent generation is the lack of adequate parenting skills in the grandparent generation.
Legal Issues in Child Custody and Grandparenting

Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986) note that in the 1970s and early 1980s most states passed laws to guaranteed grandparents certain rights in child custody cases. The idea was to give grandparents legal status in the courts to guarantee those who were prevented from seeing their grandchildren, by the custodial parent, the opportunity to receive legal relief (Blau, 1984). With this legal standing has come additional responsibility (Howell, 1988; Kornhaber 1985). The state of Wisconsin passed legislation in 1985 requiring grandparents to support their grandchildren when the parents were unwed teenagers, until the parents were eighteen years old (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986).

The Best Interest of the Child

United States case law concerning child custody has mainly been guided by the principle of the best interest of the child (Blau, 1984). Child custody cases are usually the outgrowth of a divorce. The parties to the divorce action often transfer their anger concerning the divorce onto the child custody, and their anxiety onto the children (Beal, 1979). The courts' difficulty then becomes deciding what is the best interest of the child, which is a very debatable judicial, clinical, and practical consideration. Blau (1984) observes that the legal system is starting to recognize that grandparents are an important resource for
children and that they help provide stability during times of family stress or trouble. This principle is now recognized through laws giving grandparents the legal right to seek visitation of grandchildren. Wilson & DeShane (1982) note that ignoring the influence and bonding between the grandparents and grandchildren may not be in the best interest of the child.

According to Blau (1984), grandparents serve a number of functions which are in the best interests of the child. First, they are usually the initial people sought out in a time of family crisis. Grandparents also instill a sense of family and communicate both social and moral values to the grandchildren. In addition, grandparents often are the only adults that either are willing or able to give the children their undivided attention and participation in leisure and fun. Children with strong links to grandparents are less likely to develop psychological problems during times of family disruption (Blau, 1984). Grandparents often contribute the encouragement children need for healthy self-esteem. Another benefit is that adults who had a solid relationship with their grandparents demonstrate a more constructive view of older people (Troll, et al., 1979). In addition, people who were well-bonded to their own grandparents, when they were children, are more competent in grandparenting (Kivnick, 1982).
Legal Rights of Grandparents

The supremacy of the parent-child relationship is widely recognized in our society. Most of the research that has been done on families has been with the nuclear family rather than research on multigenerational relationships. This is especially true as it relates to family stress (Wilson & DeShane, 1982). Generally, grandparents can achieve legal status only if they can show that such standing is in the best interest of the child. Wilson and DeShane (1982) state that grandparental rights are further obscured by "the lack of stability in family units....Multiple marriages, alternative living situations, and single parenting" (p. 69).

A majority of states allow for grandparents to be sued, either by the state or by individuals, for support of their grandchildren (Wilson & DeShane, 1982). An example, mentioned previously, concerned the state of Wisconsin which makes grandparents legally responsible for their grandchildren when those children are borne by teenagers out of wedlock (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986). Laws concerning grandparents' legal responsibility usually take into consideration the presence of a nearer relative, e.g., a parent or step-parent, and the ability of the grandparents to contribute to the support of their grandchildren in cases where parents are dead or missing (Wilson & DeShane, 1982).
Grandparent Custody of Grandchildren

Hunter and Hunter (1984) addressed the question of granting grandparents custody of their grandchildren. There are three principal factors that are weighed in making a decision to grant grandparents custody of their grandchildren. First, is the question of whether the grandparents have already been custodians of the child and why, e.g., death of the parents. Another factor involves grandparents holding such a significant position in the child's life that psychological or emotional harm might occur if the grandparents were not granted custody. Finally, courts often take into consideration the question of the grandparents' ability to provide a stable family atmosphere for the child. With an increasing emphasis upon the importance of the multigenerational family, grandparents are more and more being considered a viable option to the traditional foster care system used by the courts in the past (Robertson, Tice, & Loeb, 1985).

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Conroy and Fahey (1985) point out that a biological grandparent serving in the capacity of parent to grandchildren is not a new phenomenon, as is apparent in the Book of Ruth in the Bible. When the parent generation is either unwilling or unable to provide that stability, the first and third generations are thrown together for purposes
of survival and preservation of the family unit (Aldous, 1985). Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986) observe that data they collected suggest that parents are willing to seek help from grandparents in raising their children when, for whatever reason, they are having difficulty raising the grandchildren themselves. The data also suggested that when grandparents are actively involved in raising the grandchildren, the children are often not doing as well as their counterparts. Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986) argue, however, that the children would probably be doing even less well if the grandparents were not involved in providing aid.

Childrearing Practices of Parents and Grandparents

In a study of black grandmothers in multigenerational households, grandmothers were more involved in both control and punishment of grandchildren when the mother was not part of the home, than when the mother was part of the family unit (Pearson et al., 1990). Grandparents prefer not to be engaged in a parenting role (Bengtson & Robertson, 1985; Troll, 1986). However when this is required due to family disruption the grandparent-grandchild relationship is changed as a result (Riddle, 1991). Cherlin & Furstenberg (1985) state that "those grandparents who were disciplining, advising, and correcting their grandchildren with regularity had crossed a sensitive boundary in intergenerational relations" (p. 152).
The question arises as to whether parents and grandparents have markedly different childrearing styles and practices. That is, would a child raised by grandparents have a much different family experience than a child raised by the parents? Studies have shown that parents and grandparents behaved comparably in a wide range of affective and parenting measures (Ho & Kang, 1984; Tinsley & Parke 1987). In the Tinsley and Parke (1987) study, the parents rated higher in their interactive behavior than grandparents in global rating categories of competence, relaxation, flexibility, calmness, and confidence. The grandparents rated higher in only one category, gentleness. Blackwelder and Passman (1985) found that when grandmothers feel they have responsibility for training the grandchildren and spend considerable time caring for them, they tend to punish more strongly. Girls tended to receive more rewards than boys for identical behavior when their success rate was high (80%), while the boys received more rewards at a lower success rate (20%). Ferguson (1987) found that interaction with a same-sex parent in situations involving a single parent was predictive of higher intelligence quotients, grade point averages, ego-resilience, and identity achievement. When both parents are present the study demonstrated that the influence of the opposite-sex parent was more predictive of the above constructs.
Grandparents' Feelings About Raising Grandchildren

Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren report experiencing high stress ("Grandparents Raising," 1990; Larsen, 1990; Pifer, 1991). Not only are they involved in parenting at an age when most people are in retirement or looking forward to retirement, but they usually are parenting children who have had a great deal of physical and emotional disruption (Larsen, 1990). These children may be doing poorly in school, be rebellious against authority, be physically aggressive or, alternately, withdrawn. Such children often have powerful issues of abandonment, grief, anxiety, and anger. Facing such strong emotions and difficulties is a monumental task for a young parent, much less an older grandparent who may not be emotionally, financially, and physically prepared for parenting again. In addition, the grandparents may have publicly gone to court to prove their own children incompetent as parents in order to gain custody of the grandchildren (Plummer & Tamarkin, 1990; Pifer, 1991; Seligman, 1990). The grandparents may desire custody because without legal custody of the children, they run into difficulties getting the children enrolled in school or obtaining medical care, among other problems ("Grandparents Raising," 1990).

Sylvie de Toledo (cited in Larsen, 1990) states that "older people in this situation feel cheated out of the traditional doting-grandparent role and the children are
also deprived of that relationship" (p.33). There is anxiety and resentment by the grandparents that they are raising a child again. There is also anger at the parents for not assuming the parental role, for whatever reason. The grandparents often find that their friendships and support system lessen because people their age do not want children around (Larsen, 1990).

When a married couple takes in the grandchildren, some grandfathers feel neglected as the attention that once belonged to them is now focused on the grandchildren. According to de Toledo (cited in Larsen, 1990), "the burden of raising a child at this stage of life and also coping with the loss of an adult child...often causes problems between couples who've spent most of their lives together" (p.35). There is also a financial commitment involved which may cause marital difficulties. Money that was set aside for travel and enjoyment during retirement is committed to the grandchildren.

There are also rewards for the grandparents raising grandchildren. They are kept very busy and have a sense of purpose that may have been missing from their lives. In addition, they receive the children's love and appreciation for what they are doing (Larsen, 1990).
Parenting Stress

Selye (1976) defined stress as "the state manifested by a specific syndrome which consists of all the nonspecifically-induced changes within a biologic system" (p. 64). He further states that stress is the wear and tear that takes place in the body at a given time. Parenting stress has been defined by Abidin (1983) as the relative magnitude of stress in the parent-child system. Therefore, one notes that parenting stress is the sum of all the changes caused in a person that relates to the role of being a parent. The main factors in parental stress are parent characteristics, characteristics of the child, stressful life events, adverse life changes, and marital status (Beckman, 1983; Bendell, Stone, Field, & Goldstein, 1989; Loyd & Abidin, 1985). Parental characteristics include the parent's perceptions of parenting, support by a spouse, bonding to the child, and the parent's support system outside the home from family and friends. Child characteristics could include the child's activity level, physical and emotional characteristics, and adaptability (Loyd & Abidin, 1985). Stressful life events include such situations as limited financial assets, divorce, death of a family member, or other negative personal variations.

Jarvis and Creasey (1990) conducted a study of the relationships among parenting stress, marital stress, and the social support for mothers and fathers. They found that
high parenting stress had a negative relationship to marital adjustment. Jarvis and Creasey call for additional study of the effects of parenting stress and poor marital adjustment on child development. The Jarvis and Creasey study found no significant relationship between parenting stress and social support. Loyd and Abidin (1985), however, list the social support system as important in assessing the Parent Domain on the Parenting Stress Index (PSI) along with support of a spouse.

Minkler, Roe, and Price (1991) did a qualitative study of 71 black grandmothers who were caring for their grandchildren as a result of the crack cocaine involvement of the grandchildren's parents. The grandmothers, between the ages of 41 and 79, were living in Oakland, California. Among the findings reported was that 77.5% of the grandmothers reported feeling totally exhausted, while 57.7% reported feeling that they needed a break or were about to go crazy. In addition, 29.6% stated that they felt their emotional health was worse than a year ago. Minkler, Roe, and Price reported that "it wasn't caregiving per se that caused a perceived worsening of their emotional health, but rather what that caregiving stood for in terms of the problems faced by their adult children" (1991, p. 16).
Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is a highly researched construct in the field of behavioral science (Chassin, Zeiss, Cooper, & Reaven, 1985; Locke & Wallace, 1959; McLaughlin, Cormier, & Cormier, 1988; Speisman, Grossman, & Costos, 1984). According to Locke and Wallace (1959), marital adjustment is the "accommodation of a husband and wife to each other at a given time" (p. 251). Marital satisfaction alludes to the husband and wife's own internal response evaluation of their relationship and is an important part of marital adjustment (Gilford & Bengtson, 1978; Hunt, 1978). According to Meeks, Arnkoff, Glass, and Notarius (1986) the couple's own belief in their ability to settle their disagreements is the best predictor of marital adjustment. Other important factors in marital satisfaction include the number of children, years of marriage, occupation, years of education, self- and partner-perceptions, coping ability, and income (Chassin et al., 1985; McLaughlin et al., 1988; Meeks et al., 1986; Speismen et al., 1984). Reed and Stone (1982) found that people in distressed marital relationships reported more unpleasant incidents and fewer pleasant incidents compared to nondistressed marital relationships. Schachter and O'Leary (1985) stated that "the most important difference found between the distressed and nondistressed couples was in the positivity and negativity of their communication" (p.21). Furthermore, McLaughlin et al. (1988) found that
gender was a factor, with women reporting more marital distress than men. However, McLaughlin et al. did not find confirmation that women are exposed to more stressors than men.

Marital satisfaction in later life has been a subject of some interest in the behavioral sciences (Blieszner, 1986; Brubaker, 1985; Gilford, 1984; Gilford & Bengtson, 1979; Troll, Miller, & Atchley, 1979). Brubaker (1985) defines later life families as "families who are beyond the child-rearing years and have begun to launch their children" (p. 13). This is a time for developing the marital relationship under conditions different from the parenting activities of the previous 18 plus years depending upon the number of children in the family. The childrearing years are the most difficult according to many studies reporting on marital satisfaction. According to Troll, Miller, and Atchley (1979), marital satisfaction drops after the first child is born and remains lower throughout the childrearing stage. When the children are gone from the home, the couple is engaged in reestablishing a complementary relationship that focuses on their present and future needs. They also focus on participating in activities beyond the home and not involving the immediate needs of children (Duvall cited in Brubaker, 1985). The ability of the marital partners to acclimatize to the other's changing needs has an explicit impact on marital satisfaction in the later years.
(Blieszner, 1986). Gilford and Bengtson (1979) reported that middle-age married people view the period after the children are launched as better than in earlier periods. For most older married couples, marriage is central to a fulfilling life in the later years. Troll, et al. (1979) observed that the factors which affect marital satisfaction for older couples are health, role strain, attachment, division of labor, sexuality, retirement, and remarriage.

According to Gilford and Bengtson (1979), "marital satisfaction refers to spouses' evaluation of their relationship on two general dimensions: positive interaction and negative sentiment" (p. 389). Homas observed that a couple may be considered to have high marital satisfaction when they have frequent positive interaction together and experience little negative sentiment (Cited in Gilford, 1984). Grandparents who are raising children are doing so at a time when most couples their ages are adjusting to life without children. Ehrle (1987) researched the influence of assuming guardianship of grandchildren on grandparents using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). There was no significant difference between guardian grandparents and non-guardian grandparents on the DAS Total Score. Ehrle's hypothesis "that age and guardianship status interact to influence marital satisfaction, or any other variable measured by the ...DAS, was not supported by the results" (Ehrle, 1987, p. 53).
Life Satisfaction

Weber (1988) defined life satisfaction as the cognitive evaluative component of subjective well-being. Tobin and Neugarten (1961) defined life satisfaction as psychological well-being or adjustment. Neugarten, Havighurst, and Tobin (1961), who did the generally recognized vanguard research into life satisfaction in the Kansas City Study of Adult Life, stated that another word for life satisfaction is morale. Life satisfaction is based on one's own perceptions of, and criteria for, satisfaction. Fuhrmann (1988) found a sample of sixty older couples in Southern California generally had both high levels of marital satisfaction and life satisfaction. Dutcher (1989) determined that married people and singles had higher life satisfaction than widows or widowers.

The factors that contribute to life satisfaction include socioeconomic status, which Markides and Martin (1979) defined as health, income and education, and social interaction (Tobin & Neugarten, 1961). Rose (1955) gave sex (male or female), age when married (for women rather than men), education, employment, and social participation as the major components of life satisfaction. Since aging is not the same for men and women, life satisfaction is different for the two sexes in our culture according to Wood, Wylie, and Sheafor (1969). Spittler (1989) determined that working women become more satisfied with their lives as they age and
that family income is positively related to life satisfaction. Kelly and Ross (1989) reported that their review of the literature demonstrated that social activity was second only to health in importance to life satisfaction. They continue by stating that when informal social leisure is added to social activity, then activity level may be the primary factor in high levels of life satisfaction. Kelly and Ross further found that social and leisure activity engagement are consistently correlated with satisfaction in later life. Jacobson (1989) added regular exercise to the above list of factors involved in the level of life satisfaction. Markides and Martin (1979) found that activity level is a convincing positive predictor of life satisfaction for both men and women. However, they also determined that, for the elderly, socioeconomic status is the overriding variable in the amount of activity in which one engages. Markides and Martin used average monthly income and years of school completed as the two measures of socioeconomic status. They also found that income is a more significant indicator of life satisfaction for an older adult than is occupational experience (Markides & Martin, 1979).

Ann Smith (1989) studied the relationship between grandparent life satisfaction and intergenerational congruence of the grandparent role. The study demonstrated that family congruency in perceived grandparenting role was
not related to grandparent life satisfaction. The only relationship found was between life satisfaction and socioeconomic level and community involvement, which supports the previously mentioned research.

No research was found on the life satisfaction of grandparents involved in raising grandchildren. Being involved in parenting, at a time when most people their age are not, was previously mentioned as having an adverse effect on social relationships and interactions of these grandparents. Being responsible for the care of children also affects the amount of income which is available for leisure activities.

Assumptions and Limitations

An assumption of this study was that grandparents raising grandchildren experience life differently from those grandparents not involved in raising grandchildren. An assumption concerning the direction of that difference could not be made due to a dearth of scientific data to support such a direction.

The study did not attempt to determine the reasons for the grandparents raising their grandchildren. No distinction was made as to whether or not grandparents involved in the study were married to other grandparents in the study. Around half of the grandparents were married to each other with approximately the same number in each group.
There was no attempt to match the grandparents raising grandchildren with those who were not raising grandchildren demographically. Approximately 90% of the grandparents participating in the study were white with the remainder being black and hispanic. The grandparents were largely well-educated and middle-class; therefore, caution must be taken in making generalizations to other populations of grandparents.
CHAPTER II

METHODS

Research Design

The procedure for this study was an ex post facto research design involving two groups. The two groups are married grandparents not raising grandchildren and married grandparents raising grandchildren. Demographic variables considered were sex, age, education, and income of the grandparents. The ex post facto research design was appropriate due to the fact that the independent variable of grandparents raising grandchildren cannot be manipulated. Therefore, this study is appropriate for the controlled inquiry of the ex post facto design (Kerlinger, 1986).

Limitations of the Research Design

The ex post facto research design may have limited generalization due to (a) the inability to manipulate independent variables, (b) the lack of power to randomize, and (c) the risk of improper interpretation (Kerlinger, 1986).

Subjects

The subjects for this study were 62 married grandparents. Group 1 was composed of 31 married
grandparents that were not raising their grandchildren. In order to avoid contaminating the sample, only married grandparents who had not had the primary responsibility for the care of their biological, minor grandchildren in the past 2 years were considered for this study. Group 2 was composed of 31 married grandparents that were presently raising their grandchildren. Subjects must have had the primary responsibility for the care of their biological, minor grandchildren for the sixty (60) days prior to participating in this study.

**Procedures**

The investigator contacted senior citizen centers, schools, churches, physicians, and support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren in Collin, Dallas, Denton, and Tarrant counties of North Texas seeking participants for this study. In addition, some individuals made referrals to the researcher of people they knew who might be participants for this research project. The investigator contacted those individuals or groups requesting participants for this study. Appointments were made at a mutually convenient time for the agreeing persons to complete the instruments and information. Most of the appointments were in the homes of the participants. Each participant was given a packet which consisted of a manila envelope containing an Informed Consent Form (Appendix B), a
Demographic Sheet (Appendix C), an Abstract Request Form, for the name and address of those requesting a copy of the research abstract (Appendix D), the LSI-Z, and the SMAT. Packets for the grandparents raising grandchildren also contained the PSI/SF.

The investigator administered the instruments. The administration of the instruments followed the guidelines recommended by the instrument authors and publishers. Participants were given time to read the instructions. The instructions were then explained by the investigator to insure that participants understood the directions. The participants were then given an opportunity to ask questions about any parts they did not understand. All answer sheets were hand-scored by the investigator. The data were analyzed by computer at the University of North Texas. Confidentiality of the participants was maintained by coding the instruments and demographic sheets. The consent forms and abstract request forms were not coded so that the participants' names could not be associated with the participants' results, thus preserving the anonymity of the research participants.

Instruments

The instruments used in this study were the Short Marital Adjustment Test (SMAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959), the Life Satisfaction Inventory – Z (LSI-Z; Wood, Wylie, &
Sheafor, 1969), and the Parenting Stress Index/Short Form (PSI/SF; Abidin, 1990). The Demographic Sheet (Appendix C) was designed by the researcher.

**Short Marital Adjustment Test (SMAT).** The SMAT is a fifteen item test that is used by many other marital instruments as the standard against which they measure their scales (Fredman & Sherman, 1987). The SMAT uses one global adjustment question, eight questions designed to measure areas of possible disagreement, and six questions designed to measure conflict resolution, cohesion, and communication. The test is a self-report instrument that requires approximately 2 - 10 minutes to complete. Scores range from 2 to 158 with a high score reflecting high marital adjustment and a low score indicating low marital maladjustment. Locke and Wallace (1959) reported normative data on a sample of 236 middle-class couples. The sample consisted of two groups: one judged to be very well-adjusted in marriage by close friends and another group judged to be maladjusted by close friends. The difference in the group means was a ratio of 17.5 indicating a decided difference in scores between the two groups. The mean adjustment score for the well-adjusted group was reported as 135.9 and for the maladjusted group as 71.7. The split-half technique of reliability was used. This was corrected by the Spearman-Brown formula and yielded a validity of .90 showing that the
SMAT conclusively differentiates between those persons who have high marital satisfaction and those that do not. The test was shown to have discriminant validity due to only 17% of the maladjusted group scoring 100 or above, while 96% of the well-adjusted group scored 100 or above. The SMAT has been shown to correlate highly with a conventionalization scale (.63), which means that the instrument tends to engender favorable responses from subjects (Cormier & Cormier, 1988). That is, subjects tended to describe themselves as happier in the marriage than they really were (Fredman & Sherman, 1987).

Hunt (1978) demonstrated that an unweighted SMAT in which items received 0 to 5 points for six possible responses produced similar results as the weighted original scoring ($r = .92$ for wives, .94 for husbands). Scoring by Hunt’s simplified scoring method yields scores from 0 to 60 with 60 reflecting high marital adjustment. Hunt’s simplified scoring was the method used in the present study.

Life Satisfaction Index-Z (LSI-Z). The original research which developed the Life Satisfaction Index was done by Neugarten, Havighurst, and Tobin (1961) and was based on the Kansas City Study of Adult Life. From this study, Neugarten, Havighurst, and Tobin developed the Life Satisfaction Ratings (LSR). Components of the LSR were generated including zest (vs. apathy), resolution and
fortitude, congruence between desired and achieved goals, positive self concept, and mood tone. Neugarten, Havighurst, and Tobin (1961) stated that an individual was regarded as being at the positive end of a continuum of psychological well-being to the extent that one (a) takes pleasure from the sphere of activities that comprises one's everyday life, (b) perceives one's life as meaningful and accepts resolutely that which life has been, (c) feels one has succeeded in achieving one's major goals, (d) holds a positive image of self, and (e) maintains happy and optimistic attitudes and mood.

The ratings for the LSR were done by 7 pairs of judges with each judge working separately. The 14 judges were associates of a student-faculty research seminar and rated 177 cases. Using the Spearman-Brown coefficient of attenuation, the coefficient of correlation was .87. Neugarten, Havighurst, & Tobin (1961) note that 94 per cent of the 885 paired judgments were in exact agreement or within one step of agreement on the 5-step scale. An item analysis was done and the LSI-A and the LSI-B were developed from the LSR. The LSI-A and LSI-B combined correlation with the LSR was .61 with a mean score on the combined scores was 27.6 and the standard deviation of 6.7. Wood, Wylie, and Sheafor (1969) conducted an analysis of the LSI-A and LSI-B and eliminated the seven weakest items in order to improve the instrument. The result was a validity coefficient of
.57 which is significant at the .01 level or beyond in correlation between the LSR and the 13 items remaining. This shorter instrument was named the Life Satisfaction Index - Z (LSI-Z). The split-half reliability was .79. Concurrent validity for the LSI-Z was established by Dorfman et al. (1984) using the Retirement Descriptive Index (RDI) developed by Smith et al. (1969). The RDI is an instrument used to assess four dimensions of retirement satisfaction: activities and work, finances, health, and interpersonal associations. Cronbach's Alpha for the LSI-Z was .70.

Parenting Stress Index/Short Form (PSI/SF). The PSI is an assessment instrument primarily designed to produce a measure of the relative extent of stress in the parent-child relationship (Abidin, 1986). The purpose is to identify those relationships that are at risk of developing dysfunctional parenting conduct or child behavior difficulties (Barnett, Hall, & Bramlett, 1990). Loyd and Abidin (1985) assert that there are two primary domains which are the source of stressors in the parent-child relationship: child characteristics and parent characteristics. The PSI has been revised to produce a short form of the scale (Abidin, 1990). The objective of the revision was to reduce the length of the original instrument, allow for more simple hand-scoring, and yield results that are easier to interpret. The PSI/SF was
administered to a sample of 800 parents. The 36 items on the PSI/SF are identical to the same 36 items on the PSI. The 36 items were chosen through a series of replicated factor analyses (Abidin, 1990). The reliability coefficient for the PSI on the Total Score was .95. Loyd and Abidin (1985) report that these coefficients indicate a high degree of internal consistency for the PSI. The PSI/SF and the PSI demonstrated a Pearson correlation on the Total Score of .94 which was significant at the .0001 level (Abidin, 1990). The content validity of the PSI was established through an extensive literature search by a panel of experienced clinicians who then developed a pool of items. Another panel of six professionals in the field of early parent-child relations rated each item for pertinence of content and the adequacy of construction. The items were then field tested and reduced to the 101 items that presently compose the PSI. Factorial validity of the PSI was established through three factor-analytic analyses using 534 mothers as the subjects. The resulting data was used in a principal components analysis using a varimax rotation criterion. A six-factor analysis accounted for 41% of the variance (Loyd & Abidin, 1985). Significant correlations (p<.001) were found between the Child Domain of the PSI and the Child Behavior Problem Checklist while the Parent Domain and the State-Trait Anxiety Scale showed significant correlations at the .001 alpha level (Lafiosca, 1983). The PSI/SF has been
shown to have concurrent validity with the PSI through a correlational analysis that showed the total stress score of the PSI and the total stress score of the PSI/SF have a correlation of .94 (Abidin, 1990).

A high total score on the PSI/SF (raw score above 90) is a clear indicator of significant stress in the parent-child relationship. Low scores (below 51) may indicate problems in the parent-child relation or a low commitment to the parenting role (Abidin, 1990).
CHAPTER III

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Analysis

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were measured using an independent t-test with 60 degrees of freedom and the level of significance established at .05. Hypothesis 3 was measured using an independent t-test with 30 degrees of freedom and significance established at the .05 alpha level. A problem with multiple t-tests relates to the experimentwise error rate which involves an increased probability of making a Type II error (Kerlinger, 1986). This problem was controlled by dividing the alpha level of .05 by three in order to maintain the experimentwise level of significance at .05. As a result, the alpha level for each of the three t-tests was set at .017. Descriptive statistics were obtained on the variables established in the study, including frequency distributions on the variables of grandparent gender, education and income.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 states that there is no significant difference between married grandparents not raising grandchildren and married grandparents raising grandchildren on the Short Marital Adjustment Test (SMAT) as measured by
an independent t-test. There was homogeneity of the samples, therefore the pooled variance estimate was used. Table 1 demonstrates that the level of significance was greater than .017; therefore the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 1

T-test for Grandparents Not Raising and Grandparents Raising Grandchildren on the SMAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>t-Value</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>45.42</td>
<td>7.26</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>45.61</td>
<td>7.37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 states that there is no significant difference between married grandparents not raising grandchildren and married grandparents raising grandchildren on the Life Satisfaction Index-Z (LSI-Z) as measured by an independent t-test. The pooled variance estimate was used because there was homogeneity of the samples. Table 2 demonstrates that the level of significance was less than .017; therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.
Table 2

T-test for Grandparents Not Raising and Grandparents Raising Grandchildren on the LSI-Z

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>t-Value</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21.48</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.89*</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18.10</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.017, two-tailed

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 states that there is no significant difference between married grandparents raising grandchildren and the normal range of scores established in the Test Manual of the Parenting Stress Index/Short Form (PSI/SF) as measured by an independent t-test. The mean for the grandparents raising grandchildren showed higher stress than those for the norm group. However, Table 3 shows that the level of significance was greater than .017, therefore the hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted.
Table 3

T-test for the PSI/SF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>t-Value</th>
<th>Prob</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norm</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>71.00</td>
<td>15.40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>76.97</td>
<td>20.06</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographics

The demographic frequencies related to grandparent gender are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Frequencies of Grandparent Gender for Groups 1 and 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The demographic frequencies related to grandparent education and income are presented in Table 5. The subjects were mainly well-educated, middle-income grandparents. There was no significant difference between the groups in education or income.
### Table 5

**Frequency Data of Grandparent Education and Income For Groups 1 and 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grandparent Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade or Below</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12th Grade</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 Years College</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Grade</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or More Years College</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grandparent Gross Family Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below $10,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,001 - $15,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,001 - $20,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,001 - $25,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,001 - $30,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,001 - $35,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35,001 or Above</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Related Findings

Additional Demographics

The ages of the grandparents ranged from 43 to 86 with a grand mean grandparent age of 58.8. The mean age of grandparents in Group 1 was 60.8 and the mean age of grandparents in Group 2 was 56.8. A t-test was performed on the variable of grandparent age which showed no significant difference in the ages of the groups. The results of the t-test are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>t-Value</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>60.77</td>
<td>11.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>56.84</td>
<td>10.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A t-test was performed on the variable of grandparent age which showed no significant difference in the ages of the groups. The results of the t-test are shown in Table 6.

The mean age of the grandchildren being raised by grandparents was 8.7 years with a mean length of residency of 6.6 years. The ages ranged from one month to seventeen years. Several grandparents stated that they had been raising the grandchild from birth. Eight grandparents reported that they were raising more than one grandchild. The total number of grandchildren being raised by
grandparents in this study was 44, with the number of
grandchildren in a single household ranging from one to
four. The 44 grandchildren included 25 (57%) females and 19
(43%) males. Relating to the question of legal custody, 15
grandparents reported that they had legal custody while 16
grandparents reported that they did not have legal custody.

The Demographic Sheet included spaces for listing
everyone living in the household of the grandparent.
Approximately 25% of the grandparents did not respond to
this section. Others were inconsistent in providing the
information so that the listings were not statistically
helpful. Many grandparents expressed fear of listing the
members of their households and their initials. Eliminating
the line for initials and specifying the relationship, such
as spouse, child, grandchild, or other, would perhaps have
increased participation in this part of the demographic
information.

Life Satisfaction Index - Z

In order to better understand the results on the Life
Satisfaction Index - Z (LSI-Z), a one-way analysis of
variance (ANOVA) was performed relative to the independent
variable of education. A one-way ANOVA was also performed
relative to the independent variable of income. The results
of the one-way ANOVAs are seen in Table 7.
The one-way ANOVAs demonstrated that there were no significant differences in group means on the LSI-Z relative to education and income.

Table 7

One-Way ANOVAs on the LSI-Z for Variables Education and Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Between S.S.</th>
<th>Between S.S.</th>
<th>Between M.S.</th>
<th>Between M.S.</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>82.78</td>
<td>1371.50</td>
<td>16.56</td>
<td>24.49</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>228.90</td>
<td>1225.38</td>
<td>38.15</td>
<td>22.28</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short Marital Adjustment Test

In order to better understand the results on the Short Marital Adjustment Test (SMAT), a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed relative to the independent variable of education. A second one-way ANOVA was performed relative to the independent variable of income. The results of the one-way ANOVAs are seen in Table 8.

The one-way ANOVAs on the SMAT demonstrated that there were no significant relationships between group means relative to income or education at the established .05 level.
Table 8

One-Way ANOVAs on the SMAT for Variables Education and Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Between S.S.</th>
<th>Between M.S.</th>
<th>Within S.S.</th>
<th>Within M.S.</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>107.33</td>
<td>21.47</td>
<td>3102.16</td>
<td>55.40</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>234.07</td>
<td>39.01</td>
<td>2975.41</td>
<td>54.10</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

This study examined the effects of raising grandchildren on the marital satisfaction, life satisfaction, and parenting stress of grandparents. This research is significant due to the increasing incidence of grandparents raising grandchildren in our society. Research of the effects on grandparents of raising grandchildren is lacking, therefore the nature of such effects has been unknown.

Hypothesis 1 examined whether married grandparents raising grandchildren had significantly different marital satisfaction from grandparents not raising grandchildren as measured by the SMAT. Due to the lack of previous research, no difference, nor direction for any difference, was hypothesized. The scores of the grandparents demonstrated
no significant difference between the grandparents raising grandchildren and the grandparents not raising grandchildren on marital satisfaction. This finding did not support previous research which has shown a relationship among marital satisfaction, education, and income (Chassin, et al., 1985; McLaughlin et al., 1988; Meeks et al., 1986; Speisman, et al., 1984). One possible reason for this difference may be that the mean age of the grandparents in the present study was lower than in the previous studies cited above. Most of the grandparents in this study were still working and earning a regular income as opposed to previous studies in which the participants were generally retired. Disparity in income would appear to be a greater influence on marital satisfaction during retirement years with those with higher incomes having the ability to engage in more outside activities that would benefit the marriage.

Some of the grandparents raising grandchildren verbally told this researcher that raising grandchildren had increased their marital satisfaction. The grandchildren gave them something to talk about with each other. These same grandparents also reported having a focus for their marriage that had previously been missing in their relationship. Some grandparents stated that they felt they were doing a better job of raising their grandchildren than they did of raising their children. Previous research has found that marital satisfaction is lower during childrearing
years and then increases after the children are gone from home (Gilford & Bengtson, 1979; Troll, Miller, & Atchley, 1979). The fact that the present research did not support the above finding is an important result. Some grandparents stated to this researcher that they could not imagine the grandchildren not being in the home. They spoke with very glowing faces of their love for the grandchildren and the joy the grandchildren had brought to their lives. The grandparents often spoke of their children in terms of being disappointed in them.

Hypothesis 2 examined whether married grandparents raising grandchildren had significantly different life satisfaction from grandparents not raising grandchildren as measured by the LSI-Z. As was stated in the discussion of hypothesis 1, no difference was hypothesized due to the lack of previous research. In the case of life satisfaction, grandparents raising grandchildren had significantly lower life satisfaction than did grandparents not raising grandchildren. Previous research (Fuhrmann, 1988) had shown a high correlation between marital satisfaction and life satisfaction, therefore, the significance of the lowered life satisfaction, while the marital satisfaction was not significantly different, is an important finding. The grandparents raising grandchildren saw their lives as being much different than they had planned or expected; they did
not, however, attribute this difference to their spouse or the marital relationship.

A number of studies have shown a relationship between life satisfaction and socioeconomic status for older adults (Markides & Martin, 1979; Rose, 1955; Smith, 1989). The present research did not support this finding in that neither education nor income were shown to be significant factors in the life satisfaction differences between the two groups.

Hypothesis 3 examined whether married grandparents raising grandchildren had significantly different parenting stress from the norms established in the PSI/SF Manual (Abidin, 1990). As was stated in the discussion of hypotheses 1 and 2, no difference was hypothesized due to the lack of previous research. Presently, the PSI and its derivative, the PSI/SF are the only instruments available for the measurement of parenting stress. Since grandparents not raising grandchildren had no minor children in their homes for which a parenting stress measure could be made, the norm group of the PSI/SF was used as the control group for the present research. The present study demonstrated no significant differences in mean scores between the grandparents raising grandchildren and the norm group. The experimental group mean was higher than the norms established in the manual, but did not reach significance at the .017 alpha level.
Several of the grandparents raising grandchildren stated to this researcher that their stress was not primarily as a result of raising grandchildren, but came from ongoing problems related to their adult children, the grandchildren's parents, who were not taking responsibility for their children, or, in many cases, for themselves. The grandparents often perceived the children to be interfering with the grandparents' efforts to parent the grandchildren. Many, if not most, of the grandparents raising grandchildren perceived their relationships with the grandchildren's parents as negative, or strained, usually based on the circumstances that resulted in the grandparents raising the grandchildren in the first place. Some of the grandparents had opposed their children in court actions relative to custody of the grandchildren. Such circumstances obviously cause friction in the extended family relationships. Many of the grandparents reported living in fear of losing the grandchildren from their care. Legal custody did not appear to lessen such fears as the grandparents are aware that further legal action, in which they could lose custody, is always a possibility, and often, a reality. One grandparent related that she had legally adopted her grandchild, but her child's former spouse sued resulting in the adoption being set aside. Such an event is the fulfillment of their worst fears for the grandparents and can be emotionally devastating to both the grandparents and the grandchildren.
Further research is needed on the effects on grandparents of raising grandchildren. A research study that addresses the differences in marital satisfaction, life satisfaction, and parenting stress of parents raising their minor children and grandparents raising their minor grandchildren could be an important study. A research study that deals with differences in life satisfaction of single grandparents raising grandchildren and single grandparents not raising grandchildren could add important information to the body of knowledge of grandparents and grandparents raising grandchildren. Some research on three-generational families has been done, but more is needed to assess the effects on all three generations. A longitudinal study of grandchildren raised by grandparents could add much to the understanding of the effects of such a family structure.
APPENDIX A

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Permission has been granted by the Institutional Review Board of the University of North Texas. This research is exempt from further review under 45 CFR 46.010, exemption #3. The letter granting the exempt status is available for inspection.
APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM
CONSENT FORM

The purpose of this research is to better understand the effects on grandparents of raising grandchildren. The variables being considered include grandparent age, sex, education, income, life satisfaction, parenting stress, and, if married, marital satisfaction. I understand that I will complete three assessment instruments and a demographic sheet. I understand that there are no psychological or social risks associated with my participation. I further understand that my anonymity will be preserved and that my confidentiality will be protected by the investigator.

SIGNED: _______________________________ DATE: ____________
APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET
DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET

1. Grandparent Age _____.
2. Grandparent Sex _____.
3. Grandparent Marital Status: Married _____ Single _____.
4. Grandparent Education (please circle group which includes your highest year completed):
   - 8th grade or below
   - 9th - 12th grade
   - H.S. Grad
   - 1-3 yrs college
   - College Grad
   - 5 or more yrs college
5. Grandparent Annual Income (please circle group which includes your gross family income):
   - Below $10,000
   - $10,001 - 15,000
   - $15,001 - 20,000
   - $20,001 - 25,000
   - $25,001 - 30,000
   - $30,001 - 35,000
   - $35,001 or Above.
6. Does a grandchild live with you? Yes _____ No _____.
7. Length of time grandchild has lived with you:
   - Years ________ Months ________.
8. Age of the grandchild ________.
9. Sex of the grandchild ________.
10. Do you have legal custody of the grandchild? Yes _____ No _____.
11. Put the initials of all the people in your household along with each person's relationship and age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initials</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

ABSTRACT REQUEST FORM
Abstract Request Form

If you would like a copy of the abstract of this research, please print your name and address below.

______________________________
NAME

______________________________
STREET ADDRESS

______________________________
CITY   STATE   ZIP CODE
REFERENCES

Charlottesville, VA: Pediatric Psychology Press.


