Exploring the Relationship Between Gratitude and Family Satisfaction Among College Students

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Michael A. Williams, Sr

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This dissertation titled
Exploring the Relationship Between Gratitude and Family Satisfaction Among College Students

by
MICHAEL A. WILLIAMS, SR

has been approved for
the Department of Counseling and Higher Education
and The Patton College of Education

________________________________
Thomas E. Davis
Professor of Counseling and Higher Education

________________________________
Renée A. Middleton
Dean, The Patton College of Education
Abstract

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Director of Dissertation: Thomas E. Davis

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between gratitude and family satisfaction among college students, to investigate if the strength of the relationship between the two constructs were significantly different when the gender of the college student was taken into account and to identify some potential trends in the way that family satisfaction and gratitude were both conceptualized and expressed.

A sample of 133 college students completed a web-based survey which included questions pertaining to demographics, the Gratitude Questionaire-6 (GQ-6; McCullough et al., 2002), the Family Satisfaction Survey (FSS; Olson, 2010) and a series of open-ended survey questions designed to elicit detail responses regarding the views of the respondents as they pertained to the constructs. Data collected from the GQ6 and the FSS were analyzed using a Pearson’s Correlation. A Regression analysis was conducted in order to examine additional data collected via the open-ended questions.

Results indicated that a significantly positive relationship exists between gratitude and family satisfaction among college students. However, there is no significant difference in the relationship when examined along the lines of gender.

This research supports the view that positive emotions are tied to desired outcomes such as family satisfaction. The research also encourages research into the use
of gratitude based interventions with individuals as well as families particularly those with members who are college students. Additionally, this research is relevant to those who seek to train professionals who serve families and college students including but not limited to counselor educators.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Thomas E. Davis

Professor of Counseling and Higher Education
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I would like to publicly acknowledge the hand of God in this work. It is through Him that I have been able to accomplish all I have. I will be forever grateful for His patience with me as He continues to work with me to carve out a suitable stone from the rough ashlar that I am.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Prior to the present study, researchers have demonstrated the positive association of overall life satisfaction with the concept of family satisfaction (e.g. Carver & Jones, 1992; Olson, McCubbin & Associates, 1989). This is to say that there is evidence that family satisfaction is not only associated with overall life satisfaction but is viewed to be a contributing factor to the broader concept. Further, studies (Froh et al., 2008; Froh, Yurkewicz, & Kashdan, 2009; Kashdan, Uswatte, & Julian, 2006; Lambert & Fincham et al., 2009; McCullough et al., 2004; Vernon et al., 2009) have been able to identify positive correlation between gratitude and the broad concept of overall life satisfaction and related topics such as well-being and wellness. These works have investigated both correlations between the constructs as well as the effectiveness of gratitude based interventions in regards to enhancing subjective and objective levels of overall life satisfaction, well-being and wellness. As will be further illustrated later in this work, these two constructs are independently associated in positive ways with overall life satisfaction or well-being.

As will be evident in subsequent sections, substantial work has been done in examining the correlations between the two constructs to be examined in this study as they pertain independently to overall life satisfaction. This research has been conducted among a variety of demographics such as children, adolescents, college students and young adults and older adults (Michalos, Thommasen, Read, Anderson, & Zumbo 2005; Nelson, 2009). Furthermore, the implications for the use of gratitude as an intervention among individual members of the college student demographic and other demographics
has been discussed (Nelson, 2009). However, research regarding any possible relationship between the two constructs of family satisfaction and gratitude has gone heretofore uninvestigated particularly among the college student population. As will be reiterated later on, a recent (4/30/2012) search conducted in EBSCO HOST, ERIC and PsycINFO using the terms; “college student*” AND “family satisfaction” AND gratitude, returned zero results across all three databases.

**College Student Development**

Specifically, this study was aimed at exploring the relationship between the two constructs among college students who from a developmental standpoint are coming into their own in terms of becoming aware of and cultivating their own identity. In order to do so, it is important to provide an understanding about human development particularly the development of college students.

In so doing, this study framed student development along the lines of three theorists as they pertain to college student development. The theorists whose ideas will be discussed are; Erikson (1963), Chickering and Reisser (1993), and Kohlberg (1981). Each of these theorists took a different point of view regarding human development. Erikson examined and reported on stages of development from infancy to late adulthood. Chickering and Reisser were most interested in explaining the stages associated with how college students mature and develop. Kohlberg’s theory spoke specifically to moral development.

Each of these theories has a place in better understanding the mix of development which is being encountered by college students.
Well-being

Due to the similarities among the constructs of overall life satisfaction, well-being and wellness, for the purposes of this study, the three were considered to be synonymous. The respective terminology used by the cited authors was used within this study interchangeably allowing for the blurring of the terms to speak to the blurring of the ideals represented by each of the constructs. After all, the goals of all of the outlined literature is to speak to improving the human condition no matter if it is measured by instruments intended to examine overall life satisfaction, wellness or well-being all of which are related to and reflective of the same.

Well-being is classified within the literature in several distinct ways. First and probably the most straightforward, is the classification of subjective well-being (SWB). The term “subjective well-being” speaks to an individual’s perception regarding their happiness and the avoidance of pain or suffering (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffen (1985), explain that SWB is “often conceptualized as involving high positive affect, low negative affect, and high satisfaction with life.” (p.834). Ryan and Deci (2001), offer a third classification of well-being which is derived from the Aristotelian view of classifying well-being as “eudemonic.” This definition focuses more on “meaning and self-realization” and “the degree to which a person is fully functioning.” (p.834).

On the same page, Joseph and Wood (2010) describe Philosophical well-being (PWB) as being the process of “reflect[ing] engagement with the existential challenges of
life [such as] autonomy, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, purpose in life, positive relationships with others and personal growth” (see Ryan & Deci, 2001, Ryff and Keyes, 1995; Ryff and Singer, 1996).

According to Shin and Johnson (1978) life satisfaction is defined as “a global assessment of a person’s quality of life according to his chosen criteria” (p.478). Diener et al. (1985) refers to life satisfaction as a “cognitive judgmental process.” They posit that one compares current circumstances to a standard that one has set for oneself for which to judge the quality of life (p.71).

Regardless of which conceptualization of life satisfaction is chosen, the correlation between each of them and gratitude is significant and occurs within the framework of different constructs. Most of these correlations are positive in nature. That is to say that gratitude and the other constructs are found to coexist.

This study assumed the position of the “bottom-up” approach to well-being. This approach holds that well-being is the sum of several parts or factors. The quality of life is affected by the accumulation of experiences which are viewed by each person to be positive. These experiences fall into various domains which when combined together reflect an overall life satisfaction (Diener, 1984). This view is essential to several studies including the present one as it sets the framework for the concept of one or more domain, in this case, family satisfaction to be viewed as a correlate or predictor of satisfaction with one’s life overall. Without this approach, there would be no basis for inquiry.

Moreover, in the “bottom up” view, the relationship is correlational as well as contributory in nature. That is to say that the quality of one’s family life not only
correlates with life satisfaction but also contributes along with other factors, the quality of one’s *overall* life. There are several other factors in this calculation. Each contributing to the overall satisfaction with life measured either objectively or subjectively. In addition to family satisfaction, these include satisfaction with topics which fall into categories such as: “health, work, spare time, financial situation, neighborhood, friendships, and religion” etc. (Hsieh, 2003, p. 231). Each of these factors into the equations used to arrive at or determine the level of satisfaction one has with life. Again, life satisfaction may be referred to by several names such as wellness or well-being. However, to reiterate, for the purposes of this study, the term “life satisfaction” was used. Other studies that take the bottom up approach include works which are frequently cited in the literature and serve as starting points for a good deal of the studies involving family satisfaction as it pertains to the overall quality of life. These studies infer either correlation or a causal relationship depending on the study itself. The majorities of these are correlational in design and for the purposes of this study are most appropriate.

**Family Satisfaction**

Prior to delving into a discussion of family satisfaction, it would first be important to discuss the family itself. With the landscape of what makes up a family being something of current and ongoing debate in many circles, it would be prudent to discuss the matter here for the purpose of this study rather than later on in the discussion of terms section of this chapter. This study accepts the definition of what constitutes a family established by Gladding (2002) “A family is here considered to be those persons who are biologically and/or psychologically related whom historical, emotional or
economic bonds connect and who perceive themselves as a part of a household” (p.6). This definition is additional to Gladding’s assertion that “Basically, families are systems in which the individuals within them stand in interaction with each other and the family unit as a whole” (p.5).

The importance of the family is outlined by several researchers as noted by Gladding (2002). The family “produces and socializes children, acts as a unit of economic cooperation, gives significant roles as children, husbands, wives, and parents, and provides a source of intimacy” (Strong & Devault, 1986, p. 4). Some of the benefits of familial involvement are the sense of belonging, opportunities to experience love, fun and joy. These experiences are some of the most deep and emotionally satisfying (Framo, 1996). Furthermore, the family can provide a therapeutic environment built upon empathy, reassurance and helping one another (Sayger, Homrich, & Horne, 2000). As these researchers have outlined, the family serves as the basis for preparation toward independence and success in future relationships and endeavors college life being one of these. However, academics are not the only facet of college life. Socialization, including the development of romantic relationships, community involvement and identity development are important parts of the college experience (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Although for some portions of the college student population there may be a variance in which of these are being pursued, the family may still provide influence and support in these pursuits whether it is the family of origin or the family of current involvement.

So important is the effect of the family on the well-being of people, that the majority of the recognized bodies of accreditation for the helping professions (Council
for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) and Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)), require coursework regarding the treatment and/or delivery of services for families (CACREP, 2009; COAMFTE, 2005 & CSWE, 2008). The family is seen by some to be such a valuable and integral part of the human experience that an entire division of clinical focus has been established to treat individuals and groups from a family centered view point. The American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists state their position toward treating people as following a strictly defined method this method uses “an intervention aimed at ameliorating not only relationship problems but also mental and emotional disorders within the context of family and larger social systems” (AAMFT, 2005, para. 5).

According to Olson, et al (1989), family satisfaction is “interwoven and interrelated” (p.186) with overall quality of life. Campbell, Converse and Rodgers (1976) work appears to be the earliest research regarding satisfaction with family life. In their research it was noted that family satisfaction displayed one of the most solid relationships with overall life satisfaction within all life stages. Mills, Grasmick, Morgan, and Wenk (1992) shared some of the earliest work discussing the correlation between family satisfaction and psychological well-being. Family Satisfaction is a contributing factor to overall life satisfaction (Olson, et al., 1989). As such, changes in family satisfaction may have an influence in how one perceives his or her current level of well-being and satisfaction with life.
Gratitude

In conducting this investigation it is necessary to understand the important place the concept of gratitude has within cultures. Gratitude as a guiding principle is a cross-culturally present concept. It has been observed, “There are two little words in the English language that perhaps mean more than all others. They are ‘thank you.’ Comparable words are found in every other language--\textit{gracias, merci, danke, obrigado, domo}, \underline{[emphasis added by author]} and so forth” (Hinckley, 2002, p.15). Nelson (2009) noted that all of the world’s major religions share gratitude as a common principle. Emmons and Crumpler (2000) pointed out that among the world’s monotheistic religions (Islam, Judaism and Christianity) gratitude is a fundamental virtue. Emmons (2007) stated, “There is not a religion on earth that believes that thanksgiving is un-important. It is universally endorsed” (p.195). Prayers of thanksgiving he noted, are often considered to be the “most powerful form of prayer” (p 195). Finally, Bono, Emmons and McCullough (2004) share the view of Carman and Streng (1989) as regarding the presence of gratitude within the world’s five major religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism) (Linley & Joseph, 2004, p.464).

The concept of gratitude is also found in classic western literature. It was Aesop that noted, “Gratitude is the sign of noble souls” (trans.1902). It was Shakespeare’s King Henry VI who uttered this desire: “O Lord, that lends me life, lend me a heart replete with thankfulness!” (Shakespeare, King Henry VI. 1.1, 1999).
Gregory Rodriguez (2005), a senior fellow at the New America Foundation, points out that the age old concept of gratitude as remarked upon by some of history’s most poignant philosophers still holds true in today’s society.

Cicero, the Roman orator, called gratitude "not the only greatest, but also the parent, of all the other virtues." Indeed, throughout the ages, plenty of philosophers have considered gratitude to be the glue that binds people together….German thinker Georg Simmel called gratitude "the moral memory of mankind." Without it, he concluded, there could be no social equilibrium….Adam Smith …wrote that "the duties of gratitude are perhaps the most sacred of all those which the beneficent virtues prescribe to us" (para. 6).

Comte-Sponville (2001), remarked “Gratitude is the most pleasant of virtues and the most virtuous of pleasures” (as cited by Emmons, 2007, p.2).

In his work, “Thanks!: How Practicing Gratitude Can Make You Happier.” Emmons (2007) summarizes the research (most of which he has been involved with) regarding the benefits of practicing gratitude. “Gratitude is positively related to such critical outcomes as life satisfaction, vitality, happiness, self-esteem, optimism, hope, empathy, and the willingness to provide emotional and tangible support for other people, whereas being ungrateful is related to anxiety, depression, envy, materialism and loneliness”(p.186). The positive correlation between gratitude and other prosocial attributes such as empathy has also been discussed by McCullough, Emmons Kilpatrick and Larson (2001). In their work, “Is gratitude a moral affect?”, they share that gratitude affects moral behavior in three ways:
1. a response to the perceived reception of morally driven behavior from another person,

2. a motivator to behave morally toward others

3. a reinforcer to act morally in the future

By drawing upon Prochaska’s stages of change which involves six stages people progress through as they make changes in their lives (precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance and Termination), Emmons (2007) encourages those who wish to be more grateful to leave the “contemplation stage” which is focused on intending to change soon and enter the “action stage” which involves taking actual steps to change (p188.). In order to do so, Emmons suggests ten evidence-based practices to becoming more grateful (pp.188-208.) Additionally, Lyubomirsky (2007) writes of the importance or significance of gratitude in *The How of Happiness*, stating, “Gratitude is an antidote to negative emotions, a neutralizer to envy, avarice, hostility, worry and irritation” (p.89).

In the same work, Lyubomirsky (2007) suggests eight ways that gratitude boosts happiness in individuals who engage in gratitude based interventions. She posits that “grateful thinking” promotes appreciation of positive life experiences, self-worth and self-esteem are bolstered by the expression of gratitude, grateful people are more able to “cope with stress and trauma”, “moral behavior” is encouraged by the expression of gratitude, strengthens and builds “social bonds” and other relationships, the expression of gratitude inhibits negative comparison to others and is responsible for continued appreciation of a positive event or person in one’s life (pp. 92-95).
Statement of the Problem

Although the literature demonstrates a positive relationship between each of the constructs and overall life satisfaction (Diener, 1984; Froh, Sefick, & Emmons, 2008; Froh, Yurkewicz, & Kashdan, 2009; Kashdan, Uswatte, & Julian, 2006; Lambert, Fincham, Stillman, & Dean, 2009; McCullough, Tsang, & Emmons, 2004; Michalos et al., 2005; Neugarten, Havighurst, & Tobin, 1961; Olson et al., 1989; Toseland & Rasch; 1979-1980; Vernon, Dillon, & Steiner, 2009), this study was designed to determine if any relationship between gratitude and family satisfaction exists and to determine the nature of that relationship.

As one’s overall life satisfaction is affected by these and other factors, one can be left to question if gratitude and family satisfaction interact with one another. This study aimed to explore such relationship among these contributing subcategories and thus, provide insight which was otherwise lacking in the literature. Further elaboration of this research which suggests that the correlation between gratitude and family satisfaction is significant will be provided in chapter two.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between gratitude and family satisfaction among college students. Prior to this study, both constructs had been showed to have a positive relationship with overall life satisfaction or well-being. However, no research had been conducted to investigate any relationship between these two constructs independent of their relationships to overall life satisfaction. Another purpose of this study was to investigate if the strength of the relationship between the two
constructs were significantly different when the gender of the college student was taken into account. Previous research (Kashdan, Mishra, Breen, & Froh, 2009; Mills et al., 1992) has shown that gender influences the levels of both gratitude and family satisfaction among other populations.

The importance of examining this potential correlation lies in the shortage of literature that suggests that gratitude is linked to this more precise area of family satisfaction, let alone if gratitude based interventions could be used to enhance or improve family satisfaction. As previously mentioned, the literature is also awash with any mention of how any of these issues are correlated for members of the college student population. A recent (4/30/2012) search conducted in EBSCO HOST, ERIC and PsycINFO using the terms “college student*” AND “family satisfaction” AND gratitude, returned zero results across all three databases.

Due to the evident correlation between family satisfaction and overall life satisfaction, when one adds the understanding that gratitude has also been shown to correlate with overall life satisfaction, there remains the question: Is gratitude related to family satisfaction? This study intended to answer that question as it applies to college students, and by doing so, inform future research regarding the role of both variables in increasing the overall life satisfaction of college students.

**Significance of the Study**

Although there has been a good deal of scholarly research regarding both gratitude and family satisfaction, little to no work has been conducted to explore where these two principles intersect, nor has any research concerning these topics been
narrowed down to the specific demographic of college students. This study has the potential to contribute to the body of literature which addresses meeting the emotional and psychological needs of individuals and families. Although the current study explored correlations between gratitude and family satisfaction among college students, potentially what was learned will be applicable to other populations as well.

This study is significant in that it may serve as a starting point for other research which could examine if gratitude based interventions are applicable to college students and other populations in regards to increasing overall life satisfaction, or more specifically, satisfaction with one’s family. Further, it is intended that in so doing, the field of counseling will be enhanced with literature that supports the use of what should be considered a viable, affordable and meaningful intervention strategy applicable to those suffering from mental and emotional distress with respect to their familial relationships both within and without the population currently studied.

Furthermore, the results of this study may provide insight into both the topics being examined and the demographic being surveyed. Additionally, direction may also be given to those who provide clinical services to college students and/or their families. Professionals who coordinate or provide services to college students such as higher education professionals may also benefit from the results of the study.

The area of Counselor Education may also benefit from the results of this study inasmuch as it may assist in the preparation of future counselors who may wish to use such strategies in treating a variety of populations. Counselor educators may also benefit from the results of the study by way of scholarly inquiry pertaining to the treatment of
college students and other populations. The study may be beneficial to these professionals as they strive to assist those they serve in maintaining or improving familial relationships by using gratitude based interventions. This kind of intervention may have an impact on the overall quality of life of students in this age group as well as the quality of life of the other members of families which have as their members, college students.

Moreover, it is the intention of the author to inform future research. As research is lacking in the area of gratitude and family satisfaction among college students, this study seeks to answer the questions regarding such correlations and provide insight into how these correlations may inform future research. Such future research may ask if family satisfaction mediates the relationship between gratitude and overall life satisfaction. Further studies may also examine the applicability of gratitude based interventions in family work not necessarily limited to those families who have one or more members attending college.

**Hypotheses**

The first null hypothesis of this study is that there is no significant correlation between gratitude and family satisfaction among college students.

The second null hypothesis states that there is no difference in the correlation between gratitude and family satisfaction among male and female students as opposed to the entire sample.

**Limitations of the Study**

The respondents were selected from a small group of courses and not from a random sample of all students. This study is not without its limitations, the largest of
which is in regards to the sample used, the size and the narrowness of the sample. The
sample consisted of 133 usable responses from one solitary institution. The respondents
were selected from a small group of courses and not from a random sample of all
students. These factors limit the ability of the findings to be projected upon the general
population. Students from a mid-sized Midwestern university, meeting specific criteria
were asked to participate and most likely did so in the interest of garnering some
academic advantage. Further, they were from a limited set of the student body. The
sample consisted of traditional aged college students, the institution as well as the sample
is predominately white, and the institution itself is a high-research institution which could
affect the data. Although much variety of the population was expected to be represented,
the sample remained one of convenience.

Definition of Terms

Gratitude

As noted by Emmons and McCullough (2003), defining gratitude is not a simple
undertaking. “It has been conceptualized as an emotion, an attitude, a moral virtue, a
habit, a personality trait, or a coping response” (p.377). For definitive purposes, this study
shared the view of Bertocci and Millard (1963) who stated that gratitude is “the
willingness to recognize the unearned increments of value in one’s experience” (p.389).

Family Satisfaction

The definitions of Family Satisfaction used in this study are: “The degree to
which one is generally satisfied with one’s family of origin and the constituent
relationships embedded therein” (Carver & Jones, 1992, p.72) and “the degree to which family members feel happy and fulfilled with each other” (Olson, 2010, para. 2).

**College Student**

For the purpose of this study, a college student is defined as an undergraduate who is between the ages of 18 and 24 inclusive. This definition reflects 91% of the student body of the surveyed institution.

**Summary**

To Summarize, this study sought to explore the relationship between gratitude defined in this study as “the willingness to recognize the unearned increments of value in one’s experience” (Bertocci & Millard, 1963, p. 389) and family satisfaction defined as “The degree to which one is generally satisfied with one’s family of origin and the constituent relationships embedded therein” (Carver & Jones, 1992, p.72 ) among college students. Although each of the constructs had been previously established to be related to overall life satisfaction (e.g. Carver & Jones, 1992; Olson, McCubbin & Associates, 1989; Froh et al., 2008; Froh, Yurkewicz, & Kashdan, 2009; and McCullough et al., 2004) and well-being, this study sought to examine the relationship between the two. Further examination of the literature is detailed in chapter 2.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

College Student Development

This section will provide a backdrop of the theories which inform the development of college students particularly in the areas which would most directly influence the topics being explored in this study. The concepts of gratitude and family satisfaction are both constructs which are applicable to the study’s population due to the different stages of development which the college student population is involved with. These stages as outlined in the next few pages deal with the stages of development as described by three leading theorists of human development particularly as it pertains to college students.

With the backdrop of what these theories state the college student is encountering, the applicability of the constructs should become clearer. Following the description of these theories and their respective stages as they apply to college student development, I will address well-being.

Much has been said regarding college student development. Human development has long been a topic of scholarly discussion within the helping professions. Erikson (1963) presented his theory of human development which is both based upon and deviates from the views of Sigmund Freud. As the views of Freud regarding human development were psychosexual in nature, the views presented by Erikson focused on stages of development which were psychosocial in nature. That is to say that at different stages (of which there are eight) people pass through different stages where they are faced with a task they must accomplish in order to successfully enter the next stage of
their development. If the tasks associated with any particular stage are accomplished, the person moves on to the next stage and is left to the “danger” side of the stage which is what results in not being able to complete the tasks (e.g. identity vs. role confusion). If this occurs, the person fails and remains stuck to some degree within that stage. Although there may be some movement into the next stage, the person is not fully prepared to draw upon the strengths and experiences he or she would have gained had the tasks associated with the previous stage been completed, and thus be prepared to meet the challenges of the next stage. It should be clear that one does not simply accomplish some predetermined task and then advance as if it is a rank. Individuals move along these lines at different paces although each task is associated with a respective age range.

The stages presented by Erikson are outlined and explained in detail in “Childhood and Society” (1963). Although each of the stages will be listed here, only the two stages which are applicable to college students will be discussed in detail. The initial task that humans must resolve, according to Erikson is “Trust vs. Mistrust.” This stage is part of the infant stage of psychosocial development. The next stage which is associated with early childhood which Erikson called “Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt”. In the third stage which is known as the preschool stage, one is faced with achieving a sense of “Initiative vs. Guilt.” Gaining competence and confidence is the key to this stage. The fourth stage, “Industry vs. Inferiority” is the stage most associated with school aged children.

The next two stages are stages which are commonly seen being mastered by college aged individuals. They are “Identity vs. Role Confusion,” which begins in
adolescence and “Intimacy vs. Isolation” which is seen in young adults. One of the major tasks of developing one’s identity especially in the western world is finding one’s career path. Erikson (1963) stated that “In most cases it is the inability to settle on an occupation which disturbs individual young people” (p.262). This viewpoint was shown by Marcia (1970) to apply more toward males than females who tend to view occupation as only one part (along with ideology and sex) in forming “identity status” among women (p.253). However, according to both theorists, it is for this reason that people engage in learning the skills they need to know in order to prepare for the career that they have chosen or are choosing during this stage of development. Thus the pursuit of academics is vital at the latter phase of this stage. The person has (or should have) acquired the skills in the last stage to do the work related to accomplishing the tasks associated with this stage.

The stage of “Intimacy vs. Isolation” is entered into by individuals who have or are completing the task of finding their identity. It is the accomplishment of this task that pushes the person into a phase of wanting to as Erikson (1963) stated, “fuse his identity with that of others…to commit himself [or herself] to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments even though they may call for significant sacrifices or compromises” (p.263). One should note that it is in this stage of development for the college student that fraternities and sororities are presented to the student as to meet the needs demanded by this stage. Erikson goes on to posit that entering this stage results in what is referred to as “self-abandon” and the formation of strong relationships. This stage serves as the launching point for the
consideration of higher or loftier ideals. Persons in this stage are beginning to discover intimate relationships and what makes them work. Avoiding these experiences and associations frequently leads to the counter result of this stage which is isolation. Being isolated from others does not allow much progression into future stages and also stifles relationships which are still developing. The concepts of gratitude and family satisfaction fit directly into this stage as it is here where individuals are developing an awareness and interest in becoming close with others and what is needed to do so.

The other stages in Erikson’s (1963) model are “Generativity vs. Stagnation” which is most likely met in middle age. In this stage the tasks here are best accomplished when one has mastered or completed the task of intimacy with others. Then finally, the stage met in later life, “Integrity vs. Despair”.

Negotiating and completing the tasks associated with these stages of development is not only a normal phase of human development, it is essential for progress into the later stages in life. As college students successfully complete these tasks, they are developing values and relationships which this study seeks to explore.

Other views of development within this age group have also been presented in the literature. More specifically, attention has been paid to the development of the college student who is most often found to be near this age. The views of Chickering (1969) and later Chickering and Reisser (1993) regarding college student development are presented in the form of seven vectors are designed to assist individuals in higher education in better understanding the development of their students and to develop programs and services to meet the needs of the whole student. The model is made up of the seven
vectors or life tasks which influence the development of college students. As the stages of Erikson’s (1963) model was described, so too will the vectors be described. That is to say they will be listed and perhaps briefly described as needed but only the stage of most interest to this study will be discussed in any detail. The information regarding these vectors are summarized from Chickering and Reisser. They are:

1. Developing competence: The competence spoken of here deals with “intellectual, physical and manual skills and interpersonal competence” (p.45).

2. Managing emotions: This vector addresses not only gaining the ability to deal with negative or difficult emotions but more importantly to be able to recognize and appropriately express emotions whether they are positive or negative. In some cases positive emotions have been repressed similarly to their more “negative” counterparts and need to be able to “exist” (p.46). Applicable to this study, the development of ones abilities to manage one’s emotions is right in line with Erikson’s stage regarding the development of intimacy. Developing the skills to manage one’s emotions allows for more intimate relationships to flourish and grow. The ability to feel and express emotions allows one to “transcend the boundaries of the individual self, identify or bond with another or feel part of a larger whole” (p.47). The authors note that “students come to college with a lot of emotional baggage” (p.83) which is either expressed inappropriately or suppressed. Learning how to manage emotions is an important stage of development for college students which allows them to progress through other stages of life and accomplish their goals. Those who fail to complete these tasks
will have a stifled level of development and not be able to progress in accomplishing other tasks.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) noted the importance of positive emotions in regards to this vector. However, little research had been conducted regarding the benefits of positive psychology by that point. Some progress has been made on this front with the introduction of the positive psychology research field (Seligman, 2003). As mentioned in this study, significant scholarship from Emmons (2007) and Lyubomirsky (2007) among many others, has examined the importance of positive emotions among college students and other populations.

3. Moving through autonomy toward independence: As students address the tasks associated with this vector, independence is gained and the students become less influenced by outside opinions and become self-sufficient and relationships particularly with the family of origin are revised (p.47). Learning about one’s self helps a person become more involved with others as reflected in the transition from “identity vs. role confusion” toward “intimacy vs. isolation”.

4. Developing mature interpersonal relationships: this vector is more like “intimacy vs. isolation” stage outlined by Erikson. Whereas the last vector is unique to the seven vector model. In this vector the student is developing two strengths. These are the “tolerance and appreciation of differences and the capacity for intimacy” (p. 48). This vector is associated with Erikson’s views of the importance of becoming an individual in order to become intimately involved with others. Although similar to Erikson’s stages, this vector is also an appropriate place for
the practice of developing a sense of gratitude and other moral ideals as well as
becoming more appreciative of intimate (family) relationships.

5. Establishing Identity: This vector is noted by the authors to be dependent upon the
other vectors mentioned so far (p.47). In this vector, along with becoming aware
of and satisfied with self, the student also becomes aware of and reflects upon
influences outside of themselves. It is noted that “establishing identity includes
reflecting on one’s family…[and]ethnic heritage”, and seeing one’s self as a part
of a larger social construct (p.49).

6. Developing purpose: This vector is essential to the development of college
students. This is where meaning is put to what the student is doing or plans to do.
They plan what they want to do, how they will do it, and why they are doing it. I
identifying these purposes are important as without them they are “dressed up and
do not know where to go” (p.50).

7. Developing integrity: The last of the vectors is as noted by the authors, is similar
to the previous two vectors. It includes balancing one’s beliefs with the beliefs
and expectations of others, continually affirming one’s own values while
demonstrating respect for the values of others and finally, finding congruence
between personal values and behavior which is acceptable to society (p.51).

The seven vector model is one way to look at college student develop. It seeks to
inform those who are in higher education or work with college students in a variety of
capacities in regards to how best serve, lead and guide students so that they may develop
not only academically but in a more holistic way.
One other way to view the development of college aged individuals is through the lens of moral development. The foundation of this point of view was laid by Lawrence Kohlberg. His early work (1958) explored moral development as it applied to adolescent males. With this work as well as subsequent research involving college students, Kohlberg (1981) developed a model which aims to explain the moral development of individuals. As his research was conducted primarily with college students, and in light of the topic of gratitude being central to this study, his model is most appropriate.

Kohlberg’s (1981) theory is based upon a six stage sequence which contains three separate levels (preconventional, conventional and postconventional or principled) the name of each level indicates how deep the relationship is between the individual and society. The preconventional level is made up of two stages. In the first stage which is named the heteronomous stage, morality is focused on doing what is right in an effort to not harm others and their property as well as to avoid being punished. A person who is in this stage is acting out of their own self-interest. People in this stage do not focus on any rewards per se but rather the avoidance of undesired outcomes.

The second stage of the preconventional level is the stage of individualistic, instrumental morality. In this stage people are exhibiting small levels of empathy and concern or understanding of other peoples perspectives. However, their own needs must be met while the needs of others are met also.

The people who are operating within the stages of the conventional level are operating in a way where they are seeing themselves and each other as members of something larger than themselves. The rules and expectations of authority figures as well
as those to whom they consider to be equal are under constant consideration. In the
interpersonally normative morality stage, the first of the conventional level, people are
taking the needs of the larger group into consideration ahead of their own. People in this
stage are concerned with looking like a “good person” in that they are willing to share
and help but are not completely dedicated to a larger system as of yet.

The next stage of the conventional level is that of social system morality. People
in this stage of moral development are acting as members of the larger society. They act
in ways that maintain a system that they willfully partake of and contribute to. They are
dedicated to its functioning.

The principled level consists of two stages the first stage addresses human rights
and social welfare morality. In this stage people are focused on protecting and ensuring
the rights of others and making sure that all parties are maintaining their agreement to the
same.

The second is theoretical in nature. It is concerned with morality of
universalizable, reversible and perspective general ethical principles. People in this stage
are concerned with principles which are able to be applied to all people in all situations
and under all circumstances. Kohlberg was unable to show through empirical means that
this stage actually existed (Kohlberg et al., 1984). However, his theory is presented as
just that which he claimed provided the context in which to bring his theory to a
conclusion.

The commonality among all of these theories is that they inform those who work
with the college student population (and in the cases of Erikson and Chickering; other
populations) regarding the developmental emotional and motivational influences behind behavior particularly regarding human interaction. How one perceives the quality of those interactions both with others and feelings about themselves contributes to the notion of life satisfaction or well-being. The following section will address the topic of well-being and how it is viewed pertaining to this study. As observed by Mather (2010) it is not the explicit intention of these models to result in the wellbeing or happiness of the individual. Rather, the models serve as a foundation from which to understand the development of the person (p.159). Only then can the interventions be planned and enacted in order to achieve the desired results. In the case of the individuals who serve and work with college students, the goal is frequently to help the student achieve some increased level of well-being. Promoting aspects of positive psychology such as prosocial behavior to which gratitude has been shown to be positively associated (Froh et al., 2008) and Froh, Yurkewicz, and Kashdan (2009) may indeed result in the increased level of well-being often sought by such professionals. This study shares the belief of Mather that “the tools of positive psychology can be useful for maximizing college student learning and development” (p.158).

Well-being

As previously outlined in chapter 1, this study assumes the “bottom up” view of family satisfaction. That is to say that life satisfaction is seen as being influenced by or the culmination of multiple factors. Diener (1984) posits along with Campbell et al. (1976) and Glenn and Weaver (1979, 1981), that marriage and family satisfaction are strong predictors of overall life satisfaction. Further, Diener shares the assertion of
Freudiger (1980); Michalos (1980) and Toseland and Rasch (1979-1980), which state that family and marriage satisfaction has been shown by several studies to be the “strongest predictor” (p. 556) [emphasis added] of life satisfaction. In this work, Diener elaborates on many topics pertaining to the concept of subjective well-being (SWB) including definitions of the construct, measurement, the psychometric properties of different scales including 3 single item measures (Andrews & Withey, 1974; Cantril, 1965; Gurin, Veroff, & Feld, 1960) and 15 multi item measures (Bradburn, 1969; Campbell et al., 1976; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Dupuy, 1978; Fordyce, 1977; Fordyce, 1978; Kammann & Flett, 1983; Kozma & Stones, 1980; Larsen, 1983; Morris & Sherwood, 1975; Neugarten et al., 1961; Tellegen, 1979; Underwood & Froming, 1980; Wood, Wylie, & Sheafor, 1969). Diener also discusses, the variety of demographics for which the instruments have been designed and applied, causal factors of SWB, the differing views regarding its orientation (top down vs. bottom up) and the theories behind the various view points and conceptions of SWB and happiness. The structure of SWB is also discussed wherein Diener also shares the differing views expressed by multiple researchers of the topic regarding if SWB even truly exists and if it is accurately measured. Provided by Diener is a helpful table describing the different scales discussed in the article. This portion of the article has served as a model for other such reviews (Hu, Summers, Turnbull, & Zuna, 2011). The table provides a quick overview of instruments which had by the date of the article spanned nearly two decades. A virtual seminal work, this particular piece of literature serves as a reference of a large portion of works related to the topic of life satisfaction. Although the whole of the article is not focused solely on
the relationship between family satisfaction and life satisfaction, the article is a strong support for the “bottom up” view of the relationship.

Another work which supports this point of view is asserted by Neugarten et al., (1961). In the process of validating two new measures of composite life satisfaction, this article documented some of the earliest forms of life satisfaction measurement and as it pertains to this study, support for the “bottom up” approach. Although at the time the scales used were designed to measure “attitudes” of the respondents, the topics were very similar to what is found in today’s literature. For example, the Chicago Attitude Inventory (Cavan, Burgess, Havighurst, & Goldhammer, 1949; Havighurst & Albrecht, 1953; Havighurst, 1957) asks questions regarding “economic situation, work, family, friends, health, and so on, and about his happiness and feelings of usefulness.” The authors note that although the scales focus on the feelings of satisfaction, the score is calculated based upon the level of activity. These attitude scales reflect perhaps the earliest support of the “bottom up” point of view and demonstrates how “family” has been considered to be a contributing factor to life satisfaction and to have some share of the equation from early on.

Near, Smith, Rice and Hunt (1984) and Diener (2000) demonstrate further acceptance and validity of the bottom up approach. The former not only outlining two broad concepts such as job satisfaction and satisfaction with “nonwork” related aspects of life but also confirming the importance of family satisfaction as part of nonwork satisfaction which is demonstrated by the study to be more significantly related to life satisfaction than job satisfaction. The latter article (Diener, 2000), points out potential
biases both obvious and not so obvious which could affect the validity of the various measures. The most notable being the level of individualism or collectivism of the respondents’ culture. As what constitutes a satisfying life may differ based upon this factor, appropriate measures must accommodate for variance. The article asserts the need for a national index of SWB which would be able to be utilized across demographics and populations. The results of which could indicate not only which portions of the populace are more or less happy but also allow for the customization of interventions based upon known variables and other factors. The article also calls for a more scientific approach to be applied to defining and measuring life satisfaction. Case in point for this argument is that differing measures consider life satisfaction to be a contributing factor to SWB where others consider the terms to be synonymous. However, it is noted by Diener, that in spite of the fact that SWB is not the only indicator of mental health and should not be, the importance of the personal experience and perception of the individual merits considerable examination, respect and inclusion in the assessment and treatment processes.

A more recent discussion regarding the use of a multi-domain determination of life satisfaction has been found in Hsieh (2003). In this study of 90 telephone interviews with Chicago residents ages 50 and over, concurrence with Diener (2000) was asserted in that, the correlation between life satisfaction and domain satisfaction was not enhanced by using analysis wherein the domains were weighted as opposed to simply summing the scores. Further, Hsieh suggests that using domain ranking, wherein the respondents are able to rank the various domains according to their perceived importance did serve as a
stronger indicator of life satisfaction. In addition to serving as a supporter of the “bottom down” approach, it also presents findings of the important role of family satisfaction.

Confirming the results of other studies, family life ranked as a significant correlatory of life satisfaction even when relative importance was considered, life satisfaction ranked high upon the list of domains second only to health.

As is evident, there are a wide variety of measurements of life satisfaction found within the literature, the vast majority of which support the “bottom up” view shared by this study. It is very common to find correlation between the two constructs of family satisfaction and life satisfaction. Although there are differing views as to the direction of influence regarding the correlation (the opposing view to be briefly discussed in the next section) as well as whether or not the terms deemed by this study and many others to be synonymous (well-being and life satisfaction) there is a clear connection as demonstrated by the literature between life satisfaction and family satisfaction.

The opposing view of life satisfaction is one that takes the perspective of “top down.” In this view, there is a philosophy of viewing happiness or satisfaction in a manner which is global. A person is thought to enjoy the various factors of life because they are happy not the other way around. That is to say, one is satisfied with their life and is thus satisfied with aspects related to the specific domains (Diener, 1984). It was the view of Democritus that “a happy life does not depend on good fortune or indeed on any external contingencies, but also, and even to a greater extent, on a man's cast of mind. . . the important thing is not what a man has, but how he reacts to what he has” (as cited by Tatarkiewicz, 1976, p, 29). No matter the type of domain satisfaction used as predictors
of life satisfaction, such satisfaction was able to be predicted and that weighting them did not alter the strength of predictability (Andrews & Withey, 1974).

Hsieh (2003) provides further evaluation of this point of view “The top-down approach assumes that global life satisfaction is a predispositional trait or personality which influences one's evaluation of satisfaction in specific domains;” (p. 227). Hsieh elaborates on the debate by pointing out that the results of many studies pertaining to the true nature of the relationship being either “top down” or “bottom up” are persistently inconclusive by citing (Feist, Bodner, Jacobs, Miles, & Tan, 1995; Headey, Veenhoven, & Wearing, 1991; Lance, Lautenschlager, Sloan, & Varea 1989; Scherpenzeel and Saris, 1996). The differences between the two approaches provide an environment which allows for alternative theories to develop which ultimately results in diversity of approaches and application of relevant theory and practice (Diener, p. 565). However, as this study joins Hsieh by supporting the “bottom up” perspective, and there is limited literature regarding this point of view by comparison, there will not be a discussion regarding the position given herein.

**Family Satisfaction and Life Satisfaction**

Less conceptual than the construct of gratitude which will be addressed later in this chapter, family satisfaction is a construct that is easily understood. Although subjective in its structure, family satisfaction is able to be measured and classified to varying degrees. Thus much of the literature pertaining to the construct is focused on few topics. The topics which will be addressed here are those of the relationship between the construct and satisfaction with life in general, the importance of the construct as it relates
to a variety of demographic groups, and the various ways to measure a person or group of
person’s level of satisfaction as it pertains to his or her or their family.

There is a substantial amount of literature which demonstrates the correlation
between satisfaction with one’s family life and overall life satisfaction (Diener, 1984;
Michalos et.al., 2005; Neugarten et al., 1961; Toseland & Rasch, 1979-1980;). The
literature which demonstrates the correlation frequently shows similar correlation
between life satisfaction and other variables or contributing factors (Campbell et al.,
1976; Huebner, 1991; Wilson, 1967). Although it could be speculated that the list of
factors could vary from person to person, Huebner (1991) demonstrates that there are
several (which will be discussed in a later section) regularly occurring variables. These
variables or domains are used to categorize different aspects of what makes up an overall
picture of life or what is important to people (life satisfaction). The different domains all
have an influence on the total or overall picture. One of the most commonly measured
domains to appear on domain based life satisfaction instruments is the domain which
pertains to the individuals’ family life.

This kind of relationship between family satisfaction and life satisfaction is one
that has been well documented. Michalos et.al., (2005), point out that over the last few
decades there have been a significant amount (dozens) of studies pertaining to the
“importance of social and good family relationships to a good quality of life” (p.42).
These, according to the article, have been summarized in publications by Michalos (1986
Olson et al. (1989), describes the relationship by stating that family satisfaction is “interwoven” with quality of life, varying in its importance through different stages of life. (p.186). It is further explained that quality of life and family satisfaction follow the same pattern when looked at across the life cycle. The early work of Campbell et al., (1976) has served as a launching point for many studies investigating the important role of family life in the lives of individuals and how one’s perception of family life influences and effects one’s perceptions of life in general. This relationship has been established by the authors as being one of the most solid relationships with overall life satisfaction within all life stages. Mills et al., (1992) shared work related to how family satisfaction contributes to overall life satisfaction and is interpreted differently across genders. Their research showed as hypothesized that the different genders reported different aspects of family life influencing perception of the level of family satisfaction. For instance, their research supports the position of Williams (1988) that women view the quality of the relationship to be of the most importance. Conversely, their research also supports the view of both Blumstein and Schwartz, (1983) and Hiller and Philliber, (1986) which holds that the quality of their familial relationships is most affected by their view of themselves fulfilling the “provider role”. This particular study (Mills et al., 1992), shared the same conclusion of many others that “There is no question that the family remains one of the most significant contributors to individuals' feelings about the quality of their lives” (p. 443) ultimately, concluding that the correlation between these two constructs is both positive and significant.
In investigating the different attributes of life satisfaction in elderly African Americans, Coke (1992), found through the means of structured interviews which included a five item Life Satisfaction Scale attributed to Diener (1984), as well as open-ended questions regarding the frequency, variety and quantity of activities done with the family, that family involvement was strongly related to life satisfaction among males in this population second only to self-rated religiosity. Although this was not the case with the female participants, family involvement was rated consistently higher among female participants than among their male counterparts. As Coke points out, these findings hold fast to the claims of Clavon and Smith (1986) and Morrison (1982), that the extended family plays a significant role in the lives of elderly African Americans (p. 319). This study shows the important role played by social relationships in the lives of individuals. These relationships begin for most people in the family of origin and continue on throughout the lifespan.

The evidence of the importance of family throughout the lifespan is further evident in Huebner’s (1991) study regarding the life satisfaction of children. In addition to personality traits, locus of control, self-esteem and anxiety, this study examined satisfaction among seven different life domains; “friends, family, neighborhood, self, school life, opportunities for fun and city” using a scale developed by the author for the purposes of a similar study. Examining all of these factors through a multiple regression analysis, it was discovered that at this stage in development, family was shown to be significantly correlated with life satisfaction above all other domains, even the domain of friends. These results demonstrate the importance of family satisfaction as it pertains to
the life satisfaction of children. This was consistent with other studies (Campbell et al., 1976; Wilson, 1967) which reported that for adults, positive involvement with family is directly correlated with life satisfaction. In the pre-adolescent stage of development, it is somewhat expected that peers would have less of an influence or a lower level of importance to family. However, there is sound research regarding the importance of a satisfying family life among adolescents.

Huebner, Drane and Valois (2000) examined data collected from 5,545 South Carolina high school students using a modified version of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey from the Center for Disease control. This instrument includes items regarding participant’s perceptions of family relationships. In their analysis, each of the life domains measured (i.e. family, friends, school, self and living environments) were significantly correlated to overall life satisfaction. Scores related to family items were found to be correlated with life satisfaction independent of grade level, gender and race. These findings are a breath of fresh air in light of the common opinion that this demographic is frequently dissatisfied or unable to be happy with their life satisfaction. This is a point which has been discussed in multiple works (Adams, Gullotta, Markstrom-Adams, 1994; Arnett, 1999; Blos, 1962; Erikson, 1968).

As for a more wide variety of developmental stages Fugl-Meyer, Melin and Fugl-Meyer (2002), report similar findings among a sample of swedes ranging from age 18 to age 64. Their findings were that one factor made up of relationships pertaining to family life, partner relationships and sexual relationships was a significant predictor of overall life satisfaction. The instrument used in the study, the life satisfaction checklist (LiSat-
11), was developed in association with the Swedish National Institute of Public Health in 1996. Further finding of the study assert that as people get older, there is a greater statistically probability they will become more satisfied with their family life and thus their overall outlook on life.

Zullig, Huebner and Pun (2009) examined the domains included in the Brief Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, Seligson, Valois, & Suldo, 2006), as they pertain to correlation with life satisfaction as a whole. The sample examined was that of 522 college students attending a Midwestern American university. The findings of their analysis were consistent with previous studies which looked at similar attributes as measured among adults, children and adolescents (Diener 1994; Gilman & Huebner 2003; Huebner, Suldo, Smith, & McKnight, 2004; Huebner, Suldo, Valois, Drane, & Zullig, 2004) respectively. Of particular interest to the current study, their findings indicated that college students are satisfied not only with their overall lives but also with their family life (p.234). This position is consistent with both Huebner et al. (2000) and Diener and Diener (1996).

Family satisfaction was correlated significantly to life satisfaction in four separate measures used by Michalos et al. (2005) when examining the correlation of a variety of domains to life satisfaction among citizens of British Columbia ages 17 and higher. Out of all of the domains measured across three instruments, satisfaction with family ranked number two in order of importance. Although, the research in this study was mainly directed, toward general health research, the findings outline the important role that satisfaction with family relationships plays in determining life satisfaction.
In exploring the association using the Brief Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale with a sample of adolescents in Hong Kong, Kwan (2010), supported previous studies pertaining to adolescents. This particular study not only shed light on the positive association but also revealed data regarding how the positive association translates into negatively viewed statistics. That is to say that as in other studies which focus on how high life satisfaction is generally present with high life satisfaction, Kwan not only highlights this association but shares specific data about the correlation of dissatisfaction pertaining to these variables. According to the findings, 13 percent of respondents shared a negative view of their family satisfaction. Although this is not offered as a specific correlation in this study, it is congruent with a higher level of days in which poor mental health was experienced by the participants as opposed to the level reported by counterparts in the United States; 81 percent vs. 69 percent among females and 63 percent vs. 48 percent among males. In considering all of the domains examined in this study. Family satisfaction was significantly more associated than any of the other domains when controlling of other variables such as, economics, gender, family structure, age and migrant status.

Oberle, Schonert-Reichl and Zumbo (2011) applied an ecological lens when examining life satisfaction among early adolescents. When studying the influence of family, parental support or at least the perception of it was the main focus of inquiry. This model follows the framework of positive youth development which is an asset based approach to looking at how the ecology of the adolescent influences or in some cases predicts specific outcomes. In agreement with Gilman and Huebner (2003), the authors
hold that positive relationships with parents are negatively associated with depressive symptoms among adolescents. Their work also supports the view of Valois, Zullig, Huebner, and Drane (2009), which found a positive association between life satisfaction of adolescents and a positive perception of support from parents. Oberle et al. further cited work done by Diener and Diener (2009) which reports similar findings among adults. It is apparent that these associations are capable of being found among nearly demographic groups across the life span. The family based measure used in this study pertained specifically to perceived parental support. The Parental Support subscale of the California Healthy Kids Survey (WestEd, 2005) was used to measure this construct. The results from this instrument were compared with others including the Satisfaction With Life Scale for Children (SWLS-C; Gadermann et al. 2010), this particular instrument is a modified version of the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al. 1985). The findings of this study were poignant. Not only was the correlation between these two variables significant, there was also a predictive relationship. As positive perception of parental support increased, so too did the level of life satisfaction (p.896). This finding suggests that life satisfaction among adolescents can be increased by manipulating perceived parental support. This perceived level of support was also found to translate into other relationships with peers and other adults in the community. Thus supporting the notion that positive family life serves as a framework upon which other relationships are developed.

In addition to the direct relationship between family satisfaction and life satisfaction, there are several studies which highlight the importance of family
relationship toward one’s life satisfaction in more indirect ways. This is similar to the concept of life satisfaction being an amalgamation of several domains. Thus, family satisfaction is divided into subdomains which from the previously mentioned “bottom up” view contribute to a cumulative level of family satisfaction. There are several studies found throughout the academic literature which examine a variety of topics related to family satisfaction. These studies pertain to a variety of populations which are distributed across nearly all levels of demographics. There is no shortage of literature which falls into this category. Some of the subdomains and topics examined are: cohesion (Arango-Lasprilla, Lehan, Stevens, Díaz Sosa, & Espinosa Jove, 2012; Carver & Jones, 1992; Lightsey & Sweeney, 2008; Olson, 2010; Volker & Olson, 1993), marital interaction (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989), communication (Burns & Pearson, 2011), stress (Chelsey, 2005; Miller, Cate, Watson, & Geronemus, 1999; Phillips-Miller, Campbell, & Morrison, 2000; Weigel & Weigel, 1990), adaptability (Arango-Lasprilla et al., 2012;), leisure (Aslan, 2009; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003), gender roles (Mills et al., 1992), work (Grosswald, 2004; Hughes & Parkes, 2007; Phillips-Miller et al., 2000; Sweet & Moen, 2007) and environment (Sullivan & Evans, 2006 and Toth, Brown & Xu, 2002) to name several. By no means conclusive, this list demonstrates that virtually any topic could be and often is studied pertaining to its possible correlation or predictability in respect to family satisfaction. Many articles address more than one of the subdomains/topics simultaneously.
Family Satisfaction and College Students

Although there have been many inquiries into the area of family satisfaction, the research regarding family satisfaction among college students is somewhat limited. A recent (5/2/2012) search conducted in EBSCO HOST, ERIC and PsycINFO using the terms; “college student*” AND “family satisfaction”, returned two results across all three databases. One of these results was not applicable to the current study the other (Morr Serewicz, Dickson, Morrison, and Poole, 2007) examined the relationship between family privacy, relational maintenance and family satisfaction among young adults. At least three additional studies have examined family satisfaction among college student aged individuals (Kennedy,1989; Kusada,1995; Scabini & Galimberti,1994). These three used the FSS to measure the level of satisfaction with one’s family.

Measurements of Family Satisfaction

Studies using measures of family satisfaction not only examine the topic in a general sense, but also in other categories related to general health and disabilities (Hu et al., 2011). This section will discuss in general terms, a number of quantitative instruments in the literature which measure family satisfaction. Following this general discussion a portion of this section will discuss in more detail, the instrument selected for this study including why it was selected as a suitable measure of family satisfaction as pertaining to the goals of the study.

As previously mentioned, Hu et al. (2011) have provided a valuable resource in describing many of the instruments available for the assessment of families through a variety of means and circumstances. An analysis of 25 databases containing journals
published from 1980 to 2009, they identified sixteen separate instruments which have been used in a wide span of settings. These include instruments which are applicable in disability studies, physical healthcare as well as studies involving general family studies.

Five of these instruments have been identified as being applicable to disability related research. The Beach Center Family Quality of Life Scale (Beach Center on Disabilities 2006), The Family Quality of Life Survey (Brown et al. 2007), Family Quality of Life Questionnaire for Young Children with Special Needs (Tang et al. 2005), The Latin American Quality of Life Scale (Aznar & Castañón 2005), Quality of Life Questionnaire (Bowman 2001). The scoring method for each of these relies upon either the mean or sum score for each domain. This is consistent with common practices in quality of life measures. In the field of disability services, focus on the quality of the family relationship is essential as many of the supports that individuals who face challenges related to disability physical, intellectual or otherwise are often derived from the familial relationship. Further, measures for family satisfaction may need to be adapted or in the case of these measures created fresh in order to meet the unique needs of the population.

An additional resource to the area of family satisfaction is the description provided by Hu et al. (2011) regarding family satisfaction instruments directed toward general healthcare studies. The impact of poor health can be detrimental to the well-being of a family. The level of satisfaction felt by any or all of the family members could quite possibly be affected by the health issues of one or more of its members. Four healthcare related instruments were identified by the study as pertaining to the measurement of
family satisfaction. All but one, The Multidimensional Assessment of Parental Satisfaction for Children with Special Needs, (Ireys & Perry 1999) measures the families’ internal level of satisfaction. This particular instrument, measures the family members level of satisfaction with the providers of the care.

The remaining measures are aimed at examining the families’ ability to adapt to childhood illness, The Revised Impact on Family Scale (Stein & Jessop 2003; Stein & Riessman 1980; Williams, Piamjariyakul, William, Bruggman, & Cabanela, 2006), measure quality of life among family members of patients with skin disease, The Family Dermatology Life Quality Index (Basra, Sue-Ho, & Finley, 2006) and Top measure the quality of family life among those with terminal cancer and their families, Quality of Life in Life Threatening Illness – Family Carer Version (Cohen et al. 2006).

It is commonly recognized that both illness and health can have an impact upon not only the quality of life of the person but subsequently, the family and other relationships that person is involved with. These instruments seek to measure the impact that such illness may or may not be having on the other family members and more importantly, to identify areas of potential improvement or care.

There are eight instruments which are frequently utilized in studies of family satisfaction. The references to these instruments in the literature are abundant to say the least. Although the use of some of them spans three decades, the relevancy persists as reflected in their presence in recent literature including the current study. Five of these assessments; The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales IV (FACES IV) (Olson, Gorall, & Tiesel, 2007), The Family Assessment Device (Epstein, Baldwin, &
Bishop 1983), The Family Assessment Measure (Skinner, Steinbauer, & Santa-Barbara, 1983), The Family Member Well-Being Index (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982), and The Family Satisfaction Survey (Olson & Wilson, 1982; Olson, 2010) are based upon theoretical models. The remaining three; The Family APGAR (Smilkstein, 1978), The Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 2002) and The Family Satisfaction Scale (Carver & Jones, 1992) do not adhere to any particular model but rather follow family systems theory as a guiding principle of assessment. Basing an assessment instrument upon a theoretical model may allow for changes in family life as reflected through the life cycle which may be of benefit to the researcher (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999; Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, & Soodak, 2006 as cited by Hu et al., 2011).

One of the most commonly recognized assessment instruments regarding families is the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (FACES). According to Kouneski (2000), over 1,200 scholarly works of all varieties have cited or used some form of FACES. Currently in its fourth incarnation, FACES IV is used in assessing via self-report, cohesion and flexibility within the family. The process is done by the use of six separate scales which measure cohesion and flexibility within the family. The other four scales measure the family’s level of disengagement, enmeshment, rigidity and level of chaotic environments.

The basis of FACES is the circumplex model. This model proposes three distinct concepts for measuring family functioning; cohesion, flexibility and communication. Based upon the point of view that “Balanced levels of cohesion and flexibility are most conducive to healthy family functioning and conversely, unbalanced levels of cohesion
and flexibility (very low or very high levels) are associated with problematic family functioning” (Olson, 2011, p.65). FACES seeks to give insight to practitioners and family members as to where function is strong and where it can improve.

The measure utilizes 42 items scored on a likert scale and projected upon a graphic representation of the model. The psychometric properties of the measure feature a coefficient alpha of .77-.93 with the test-retest reliability being in the .83-.93 range. The instrument is administered to individual family members who are at least 12 years old.

The Family APGAR (Smilkstein, 1978) is a five item scale with strong psychometric properties (Coefficient alpha = 0.86 Test–retest reliability coefficient = 0.83) that uses a five point likert scale asking individual family members questions regarding stress and coping in connection with their satisfaction of family life. No age is specified for this assessment. The Family APGAR questions correspond to five domains: Adaptation, Partnership, Growth, Affection, and Resolve. This instrument is not based upon a particular model other than general family systems theory. A total score is collected ranging from 0 to 25.

In 2002, Moos and Moos introduced the Family Environment Scale (FES). This instrument uses 90 items and is intended to assess perceived family support as well as the social environment of the family. The FES is applicable to all family types. Individual family members over the age of 11 are asked to rate their satisfaction among ten scales which operate within three dimensions. These are: Relationships (Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict), Personal Growth (Independence, Achievement, Orientation,
Intellectual–Cultural Orientation, Active–Recreational Orientation, Moral–Religious Emphasis), and System Maintenance (Organization, Control, Expressiveness, Conflict).

Although not as popular as other instruments such as FACES, The FES proves to be an assessment which could be used to shed a good deal of light on complex issues in a very detailed way. More than 200 studies have established the internal validity and consistency of the instrument with varying results among different family types (Hu et al., 2011). The format of the instrument uses true/false questions. Each of the true responses are added up and then converted to a standard score which is presented on a form which outlines which factors fell above or below the normal range this system uses a coding system developed by the authors. The psychometric properties of this instrument are: Coefficient alpha: 0.61 to 0.78 and Test–retest reliabilities: 0.52 to 0.89.

The Family Assessment Device (Epstein et al., 1983) assesses family function by following the McMaster Model of Family Functioning. By testing individual family members age 12 and older. Examining seven domains (Problem solving, Communication, Roles, Affective responsiveness, Affective involvement, Behavior control, and General functioning), this instrument utilizes a 4 point likert scale with 60 items total ranging from 1 strongly agree to 4 strongly disagree. The means from each of the subscales are evaluated with the higher score from each sub-domain mean indicating a higher level of health in that category.

The Family Member Well-Being Index (McCubbin & Patterson 1982) follows the T-Double ABCX Model of Family Adjustment and Adaptation in order to measure the current well-being of family members. No age limitations are discussed by the authors
regarding this instrument which sans eight domains. These are: Health, Tension, Energy, Cheerfulness, Fear, Anger, Sadness, and General concerns. This scale uses a 10 point likert format which ranges from zero (very much to 10 not at all when questions the respondent regarding the domains. With a coefficient alpha of .96, the validity is somewhat small at .38.

Family Assessment Measure (Skinner et al., 1983) is a 42-50 item scale to be used as a measure of therapy process and outcome and in family process studies. This scale is based upon the process model of family functioning and is applicable for family members who are over the age of 10. There are three versions of this scale used intended to be used in different types of studies (general studies, dyadic studies, individual family member studies). Each study has different items to cover seven domains (Task Accomplishment, Role Performance, Communication, Affective Expression, Affective Involvement, Control, Values and Norms). In addition to these domains being assessed in all three scales, the scale to be used in general studies includes two additional domains examining Social Desirability and Denial-Defensiveness. The instrument is scored by using a 4 point likert scale the sums scores of the subscales are then converted to a standard score which is then plotted on separate profiles.

Carver and Jones (1992) developed an instrument referred to as The Family Satisfaction Scale. This instrument measures individual family members’ attitudes pertaining to family of origin. It uses 20 items which are divided into 4 domains. These are: General Satisfaction with family life, and family members, affection and acceptance, consistency and fairness and family commitment. Responses are recorded using a 5 point
likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Reliability for the overall scale was found to be .98. The correlation between subscales was determined to be .73. Validity scores for this scale vary as it was tested to for validity against several other instruments and are not clearly reported.

The final instrument discussed in this section is not to be confused with the last scale mentioned. They share the same name but have fundamental differences. The Family Satisfaction Scale (FSS) (Olson & Wilson, 1982; Olson, 2010) is not only based upon the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems, it is actually a subscale of the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (FACES). However, the scale itself is appropriately used to measure family adaptability and cohesion. Olson (2010) defines Family satisfaction as “the degree to which family members feel happy and fulfilled with each other” (p. 1). Following the Circumplex Model, this definition operates within the view that satisfaction is measured by perceived levels of cohesion, flexibility and communication. The basic assumption of this theoretical model is that the more congruent a family is, the more satisfied they will be with their family with respect to these indicators.

The current version (2010) contains 10 items which is a slight reduction of the original 14 found in Olson and Wilson (1982). According to Olson (2010), several studies have used the scale in order to validate other scales or to assess family satisfaction in post-treatment settings. Olson further reports that family satisfaction along with other indicators has predictive ability in regards to family functioning.
Moreover, Olson reports that an important feature of the FSS is the ability to capture a view of individual perceptions rather than families as a whole (2010 pp. 2-3). As the FSS is part of FACES, the instrument has been used to examine family satisfaction across the life cycle. The FSS has an alpha reliability of .92 and test re-test of .85 this is based upon a sample of 2,465 family members. Mean and standard deviation for the scale is 37.5 and 8.5 respectively. Although it is not pointed out in the article, it is assumed that this sample included members of more than one family. For the purpose of this study, the FSS (Olson, 2010) has been selected because of its general language which allows for it to be applied to a wider demographic.

**Gratitude in the Literature**

A concept in its form, gratitude is difficult to define. Therefore, the literature is replete with a variety of evidence based views on the matter. In attempting to find a definition of gratitude for this work there has been no shortage of definitions pertaining to the concept. Emmons and McCullough (2003) remark that gratitude has been, “conceptualized as an emotion, an attitude, a moral virtue, a habit, a personality trait, or a coping response.” (p. 377). This framework categorizes gratitude as a concept or ideal rather than a term which is easily defined. The authors agree with Bertocci and Millard who define gratitude as “the willingness to recognize the unearned increments of value in one’s experience” (1963, p. 389).

In chapter one of the Psychology of Gratitude (Emmons & McCullough, 2004) Emmons discusses a history of the word and its prevalence as a concept in all of the world’s major religions and cultures. He remarks that not only is it present in each of the
major religions, it is “considered essential for living well” (p. 3). This sentiment is an echoing of previous observations by Emmons and Crumpler (2000), that the virtue of gratitude is encouraged by all of the major religions.

The concept of gratitude is by some, considered to be a disposition or trait. McCullough, Emmons and Tsang report their definition of such a disposition as being: “a generalized tendency to recognize and respond with grateful emotion to the roles of other people’s benevolence in the positive experiences and outcomes that one obtains” (2002, p. 112).

Froh, Kashdan et al. (2009) state that gratitude “is experienced when people receive something beneficial. It is the appreciation one feels when somebody does something kind or helpful” (p.409). Emmons and McCullough (2004) define gratitude as, “a sense of thankfulness and joy in response to receiving a gift” (p. 554). Watkins, Woodward, Stone, and Kolts (2003) asserted that gratitude what is felt or expressed when one appreciates of the contributions of others. In 2010, Froh, Bono, and Emmons classified Gratitude as “a positive response to receiving a benefit” (p. 144).

However, there are differing views of the nature of the construct. (Wood, Joseph, & Maltby (2008) assert that gratitude is, at least in part, an emotion experienced by individuals following the receipt of substantial and altruistic assistance from another. This idea of gratitude has been conceptualized as a moral affect which McCullough et al. (2001) found to be “analogous to other moral emotions such as empathy and guilt” (p.249). In their study, they outlined three functions related to the morally relevancy of
gratitude; namely, its ability to serve as a barometer, a motivator and a reinforcer of moral behavior.

For some, gratitude is a more esoteric concept. The term can be used to mean the feelings one experiences and/or expresses when something is done for them or on their behalf. Gratitude can be for a person, an event, a material object or a higher power. Examples of these can be found in statements similar to “I am grateful for: my mother, the party, my car or God”. Gratitude can also be recognized or expressed through action whether accompanied by words or not. An example of which would be reciprocating what had been done for the initial receiver either toward the person who first gave or to another either anonymously or not. Emmons and McCullough (2003) found that many of the participants in their study remarked that they were grateful for such things as “waking up in the morning”. These expressions of gratitude do not seem to be explicitly directed to any one source identified or not. Research involving both children and adults has proposed that gratitude may not need to be directed toward another’s help or assistance but rather simply in one’s own ability to perform a task or accomplish a goal (Weiner, Russell, & Lerman, 1979; Veisson, 1999). This suggests that gratitude could be experienced or felt internally rather than expressed or directed toward another.

All of the variation in defining gratitude makes it clear that there is a lack of a general consensus as to what it is exactly. However, there has been a burgeoning amount of literature dedicated to gratitude. Primarily, this body of work has been focused on the relation of the construct to well-being, wellness and overall life satisfaction as well as the different supporting characteristics related to them. Further, gratitude carries with it, a
great deal of potential in regards to improving a person’s perception of his or her quality of life.

**Gratitude and Life Satisfaction**

As previously mentioned in chapter 1, there has been a great deal of research which has shown the positive relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction among a variety of demographics (Froh et al., 2008; Froh, Yurkewicz, & Kashdan, 2009; Kashdan, Uswatte, & Julian, 2006; Lambert & Fincham et al., 2009; McCullough et al., 2004; Vernon et al., 2009). However, research in the arena of gratitude has also focused on a wide variety of issues and topics that either influence levels of gratitude (interventions) or are influenced by it (outcomes). Topics such as overall life satisfaction, objective and subjective well-being, pro-social behavior, cognition and positive psychological functioning, strong emotional and interpersonal relationships, spirituality and their relation to various demographic groups have also been examined.

Research has also been conducted which shows gratitude based interventions to be effective in treating victims of trauma (Lyubomirsky, 2007; Vernon et al., 2009) including veterans (Kashdan et al., 2006), families and couples (Hochschild, 1989; Lee & Waite, 2010), individuals who suffer from both depression and anxiety related disorders including PTSD (Deutsch, 1984; Emmons, 2007; Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003; Kashdan et al., 2006; Kendler et al., 2003; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008; Wood, Maltby, Gillett, Linley, & Joseph, 2008). Further, gratitude interventions have been attributed to success in relieving symptoms
related to physical medical conditions (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Krause, 2006; Nelson & Harvey, 2003).

While examining several of these components, the relationship with the broader definition of life satisfaction is manifested. Froh et al. (2008) reported that adolescents who engaged in counting their blessings not only experience increased gratitude via self-report, they also reported higher levels of life satisfaction among other positive outcomes. These findings were elaborated on by Froh, Yurkewicz, and Kashdan (2009). In their work, they revealed that beyond the positive associations found as in the previous study, boys seemed to receive more benefits from expressing gratitude regarding their social interests. Two other studies (Kashdan et al. 2006; Vernon et al., 2009) identified the same correlation between gratitude and life satisfaction following interventions used with victims of different kinds of trauma. The benefits of gratitude were demonstrated by Lambert, Fincham et al. (2009), who showed that life satisfaction was related to the trait inasmuch as it mediated the ill effects of materialism. In the second study gratitude, which was manipulated experimentally, was shown to increase life satisfaction.

Supporting the findings of previous studies McCullough et al. (2004), demonstrated that during the course of their 21 day study, those who had higher means on measures of gratitude reported higher satisfaction with life than their less grateful counterparts. Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2004) remarked that life satisfaction was “consistently and robustly associated” (p.603) with the character strength of gratitude among others. This study is significant in that it examined the responses of 5,299 participants. Another study which merits considerable attention was conducted by
Peterson, Ruch, Beermann, Park, and Seligman (2007). The aforementioned correlation was explored within a sample of 12,439 adults from the United States, in addition to 445 Swiss adults. In the US sample, gratitude was remarked as being the most “robust predictor” [emphasis added] of life satisfaction. Further, it has been reported that gratitude again served as a predictor [emphasis added] of life satisfaction (Wood, Joseph, & Maltby, 2008), as well as a predictor [emphasis added] of psychological well-being (Wood, Joseph, & Maltby, 2009).

By narrowing down the broad category of life satisfaction into related and contributing constructs, multiple studies have shown positive relationships between gratitude and the respective constructs. The first of these is a study regarding organizational conflict, expressed gratitude was shown to be able to positively alter the mood of the person to whom it was being displayed (Baron, 1984). These findings were supported by a study regarding daily mood conducted by McCullough et al. (2004). It should be no surprise after examining the empirical research, that a Gallup poll conducted among American adolescents and adults reported that more than 90% of the respondents agreed that expressing feelings of gratitude resulted in a level of happiness described as being either “extremely happy” or at least “somewhat happy” (Gallup, 1999). Based on all of these studies, the positive correlation of gratitude and mood also appears to be “robust”.

Following along the lines of mood as a component of life satisfaction, the component of positive affect also shows a strong positive relationship with gratitude. In three studies documented by Emmons and McCullough (2003), Positive effects such as
“interested, excited, alert, happy, strong, joyful, determined, thankful, calm, attentive, forgiving, energetic, hopeful, enthusiastic, active, proud and appreciative” were recorded significantly more often by those who were assigned the experimental condition of recording their feelings of gratitude as opposed to the other two conditions of hassles and neutral life events or social comparisons. Children and adolescents have benefited from the relationship between gratitude and positive affect. At least three studies have documented the benefits of this relationship whether the intervention uses the counting of blessings (Froh et al., 2008), or if it is more appropriately directed toward children and adolescents who score low in positive affect Froh, Kashdan et al. (2009), than their higher scoring counterparts. Froh, Yurkewicz, and Kasdan (2009) point out again that the benefits of gratitude, this time related to positive affect benefit boys more than girls in the area of social gains.

Other studies have outlined the benefits of gratitude as they relate to positive affect. Kashdan et al. (2006) reported increases in levels of positive affect among Vietnam veterans who suffer from PTSD as opposed to a control group of veterans without a PTSD diagnosis. Likewise, university students in Thailand and Japan demonstrated a similar correlation when measuring gratitude and positive feelings (Naito, Wangwan, & Tani, 2005). Feelings relate to autonomy and one’s ability to self-motivate are an area that is not exactly the same as positive affect but are influenced by one’s outlook or perception. Four studies in particular have briefly examined this correlation each as part of their larger inquiry (Kashdan et al., 2009; Kashdan et al., 2006; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006; Wood et al., 2009). These studies are significant because they may
provide a link between gratitude and abstract thoughts such as self-confidence, autonomy and motivation.

Several of the studies previously cited regarding the correlation between gratitude and *positive* affect (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Froh et al., 2008; Froh, Yurkewicz, & Kashdan, 2009; Kashdan et al., 2006; McCullough et al., 2004; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006), also shed light on the adverse correlation between gratitude and *negative* affect. The exception to this rule would be Lambert, Fincham et al. (2009), which revealed a negative correlation regarding materialism which is an affect considered to be negative in the context of desirable traits. At this point in the discussion of the literature regarding gratitude, it seems appropriate to mention the negative correlation between gratitude and a variety of mental and emotional conditions.

**Negative Correlation of Gratitude and Psychological Disorder**

As has been demonstrated thus far, correlations have been examined between gratitude and the several conceptions of overall life satisfaction in a variety of ways. Studies have been conducted regarding correlation and symptoms related to mental and emotional disorders. Negative correlation between depression and gratitude has been demonstrated by at least three studies, (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003; Kendler et al., 2003; Wood, Maltby, et al., 2008). The latter of those studies showing such correlation during life transitions which concurs with three additional studies examined during the course of their research (Neff & Harter, 2002; Lopez & Rice, 2006; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997).
Fredrickson et al. (2003) demonstrated that in their study, gratitude was correlated negatively with depression inasmuch as gratitude was shown to increase when the participants reported a period of positive functioning. It was reported by Kendler et al. (2003) that thankfulness was a significant predictor of a reduced risk of major depression and a variety of other mental health issues.

Depression is not the only area of mental health that is correlated negatively with gratitude. The previously mentioned study by Kendler et al. (2003) indicated a lower risk of symptoms related to generalized anxiety disorder, dependence to alcohol and nicotine and illicit drugs as well as some phobias. In addition to these disorders, bulimia nervosa was also shown to have a negative correlation with gratitude. This correlation supports the assertion of Wood, Froh and Geraghty (2010), who demonstrated the applicability of gratitude based interventions in increasing body image.

Wood, Joseph and Linley (2007) found that gratitude had a positive correlation with coping strategies such as seeking social and emotional support among those who tended to engage in behaviors such as self-blame, substance abuse disengagement of negative social behaviors and denial. However, the same study found no “substantial” link between gratitude and depression, happiness or life satisfaction.

A study by Mathews and Green (2010) demonstrated a negative correlation between gratitude and social anxiety. Those participants who scored higher on a measure of social anxiety reported feeling more indebtedness to their benefactor whereas those who held lower levels of social anxiety reported feeling a sense of gratitude to their benefactor. Based upon a regression analysis of their data they concluded “social anxiety
and public self-consciousness are positively associated with indebtedness, whereas social anxiety is negatively associated with gratitude….For the socially anxious, this inability to experience the more positive aspects of receiving benefits may hinder the development of close relational bonds with others” (p. 714).

Another area of mental disorders which has shown to have a negative relationship with gratitude is the anxiety related diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder. In two studies, the first, regarding Vietnam war veterans (Kashdan et al., 2006) and the second involving college aged women who had been the victims of sexual assault (Vernon et al., 2009), gratitude levels were higher in those who had lower scores on respective assessment instruments for PTSD. Further, Kashdan et al. asserted that notwithstanding symptomology, people who suffer from the effects of PTSD report better daily functioning when levels of experienced gratitude are higher. In the case of the Vernon et al. study, post trauma gratitude was negatively associated with measured levels of PTSD symptoms regardless of the severity of the assault, history of experienced trauma and the amount of time which had passed since the trauma. These findings are consistent with the suggestions of Joseph and Linley, (2005) and Linley and Joseph, (2004). In these works, it is proposed that gratitude may contribute to individuals experiencing personal growth following a traumatic event.

The ability for such growth to occur is considered by two requisite scenarios. First, they must have some ability to be able to find some level of benefit from the incident (Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Larson, 1998; Frazier, Conlon, & Glaser, 2001). Second, according to Joseph and Linley (2005) the individual must be able to experience
an increased level of life satisfaction following the precipitating event. Adding to this, Linley and Joseph (2004) report that people report specific benefits following the trauma which result in their perceived increase in life satisfaction. These include “living life to the full” and greater appreciation of loved ones as well as each day.

In the arena of health, gratitude is not limited in its correlation to mental health issues alone. However, its connection to physical health is indirect and for the most part, subjective. It has been reported by Krause (2006) that gratitude was negatively related to higher levels of subjective physical health complaints and self-reported stress. Other studies (Deutsch, 1984; Wood, Linley, et al., 2008; Wood, Maltby, et al., 2008) have provided more objective reports of the negative association between stress and gratitude. As it is widely known that a myriad of physical illnesses are related to and possibly exacerbated by stress, the possible connection between gratitude and physical health could possibly be mediated by stress. Further studies have also outlined a possible mediator between these two variables. The issue of sleep has been shown by Emmons and McCullough (2003), to be related one’s level of gratitude. In a study with 401 participants, it was shown that gratitude was related to the quality, duration (measured both objectively and subjectively), latency (the amount of time it takes to fall asleep) and dysfunction related to waking up. As explained by Nelson and Harvey (2003), the quality (negative vs. positive) of thoughts prior to the onset of sleep affect the quality and quantity of sleep. Those in the study conducted by Emmons and McCullough, who demonstrated higher levels of gratitude than others reported fewer negative pre-sleep thoughts that those with lower levels of gratitude and thus experienced better sleep as
reported by subjective and objective means. Similar to the proposed stress mediated correlation between gratitude and physical health, sleep may also serve as such a mediator. Further research into these and other possible correlations are warranted.

From a humanistic counseling perspective, gratitude not only appears to be applicable to well-being, it has been shown to correlate quite well with it (Joseph & Wood, 2010; Wood & Joseph, 2007). As individuals work with counselors in order to promote a sense of authenticity in their lives, consideration should be given to a study reported by (Wood, Linley, et al., 2008). They were able to find that the correlation between gratitude and living an “authentic” life was significant and positive. However, in the same study, it was revealed that there is a negative correlation regarding gratitude’s relationship with self-alienation. The construct of “authenticity” is provided as somewhat of a neo Rogerian view of “congruence or genuineness”. The postulation of the authors is that those who live grateful lives are less likely to self-alienate, are less likely to accept external influences in their choices and have a more internal locus of control and most importantly, behave in a way that is consistent with their own values and systems of beliefs (convictions).

These findings and suggestions are important when considering the point of view provided by McCullough, Kimeldorf, and Cohen (2008) which proposes that gratitude serves a developmentally evolutionary purpose in helping individuals engage and bond toward non-family members. Further, the ability of gratitude to promote responsive or reciprocal altruism (Nowak & Roch, 2006; Trivers, 1971) may also support this view of gratitude having an overarching role in human development and relationships.
Gratitude and Relationships

There is a fair amount of research which outlines the relationship between gratitude and social and personal relationships. This relationship contributes to the hypothesis that gratitude is correlated to level of family satisfaction which is based upon the nature and quality of the family relationship. Further examination of the literature regarding family satisfaction is to be discussed later. Wood, Froh, and Geraghty (2010) provided a summary of 23 separate sources which discussed this relationship. As a segway into an examination of the literature regarding family satisfaction, this portion of the literature review will expand upon their listing to include other sources which discuss the wide variety of relationship related topics shown to be associated with gratitude.

For the purposes of this discussion, the areas of social and personal relationships are divided into six subcategories. These subcategories attempt to direct the consumer of this discussion toward specific literature that details the outcomes which may be desirable for application.

Personal Relationships

In general terms, gratitude is positively associated with relationships which are close and meaningful (Bar-Tal, Barzohar, Greenberg, & Hermon, 1977). Those with higher levels of gratitude were more likely to report having positive relationships with others which was also tied to higher levels of well-being. This connection is documented in two studies which examined commons personality traits known as the “Big Five”. Although the focus of these reports focused on the relationships between gratitude and each of these personality traits (to be discussed in another section), there was clear
indication that gratitude was significantly correlated with positive relationships (Wood, Joseph, & Maltby, 2008; Wood, Joseph, & Maltby, 2009).

One of the two studies discussed by Algoe and Haidt (2009), reports findings that gratitude may play a motivating role in improving relationships to those benefactors to which the gratitude is expressed or felt. Seventy-four percent of the participants in the study reported that feelings of gratitude were responsible, at least in part, to the perception of the relationship being positive. Twenty-four percent of the overall participants reported that their gratitude was somehow viewed as being moral obligation to do for others, similarly to how something had been done for them. (pp. 110-111).

Similar to those findings, Algoe, Haidt and Gable (2008), report that gratitude is related to the formation of relationships and the desire of people to reciprocate kind gestures. This realization makes common sense as well. People enjoy being involved with people who demonstrate commitment to the relationship by their actions. This sets people at ease and serves as a signal that the relationship is indeed developing or growing. Further, as demonstrated previously that gratitude serves as a motivator to improve relationships with the perceived benefactor; it would be only natural for one to give back to one who is viewed to have given in the first place. Support for the role of gratitude in marital relationships has been outlined by Lee and Waite (2010). Their findings suggest that gratitude plays a motivating role in how married women perceive the marital and arguably, the familial relationship. During an investigation of data from a national sample of women taken in 1987-1988, they discovered that the level of perceived appreciation for the work they do affects how they view the fairness regarding the division of labor.
They support the views of Hochschild (1989) who asserted that the appreciation for the work done acts as a medium of exchange for future activities in the “household economy. Further, Hochschild suggests that gratitude is at the heart of marital relationships; “When couples struggle, it is seldom simply over who does what. Far more often, it is over the giving and receiving of gratitude” (p. 18). Research by Algoe, Gable, and Maisel (2010), was focused on examining the benefits of daily feelings of gratitude between romantically involved, cohabitating couples. Such feelings were able to significantly predict changes in relationship satisfaction the following day. In short, when gratitude was experienced or felt, the participants both men and women, reported being more satisfied than the previous day. This small sample of literature is supportive of the first and central hypothesis of this study. That is to say, gratitude is associated with family satisfaction.

In three studies by Kashdan et al. (2009) found that among men and women experience gratitude in different ways. Older men even experienced gratitude differently based upon the gender of the benefactor; reporting less gratitude when the benefactor was male. Women were found to view gratitude in more simple terms and with less reservation when receiving something from a benefactor. Further, women were found to report higher levels of gratitude overall in contrast to their male counterparts. The authors also report that the willingness to express emotions could be affected by gender.

**Prosocial Behavior**

The field of positive psychology is more or less centered on the concept that prosocial behavior is a beneficial aspect of human relationships. People are motivated to
engage with one another and they do so by way of engaging in activities or behaviors that support or encourage interaction between individuals and society.

The successfulness of developing and maintaining a positive organizational climate such as in a corporate environment may also be influenced by the levels of gratitude experienced and/or held by the members of the organization or group (Bennett, Ross, & Sunderland, 1996; Andersson, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2007). The reports in these studies support the notion that such environments may serve “micro sized” laboratories for examining the role of gratitude and prosocial behaviors and attitudes.

Gratitude has been demonstrated to at least contribute to and even motivate such behavior. Such motivating force was reported in a study of 486 Thai and Japanese university students (Naito et al., 2005). They reported a significant increase in prosocial motivation in participants who reported being significantly more grateful than other participants. Further, this prosocial motivation was reflected in an increased desire to do something with or for another as a result of the gratitude experienced or felt. Tsang (2006), DeShea (2003), and Baron (1984) all reported similar findings suggesting gratitude may be possibly responsible for returning social behavior being able to forgive others as well as contributing to the resolution of conflict. Additional studies by Froh et al., (2008) and Froh, Yurkewicz, and Kashdan (2009), lend support to the positive relationship shared by gratitude and prosocial behavior.

**Altruism or Helping Behavior**

One aspect of prosocial behavior is helping others even at risk of loss of resources to the person doing the helping. It should be no surprise practically speaking, that helping
others or altruism would be positively connected at least in some way with a grateful disposition. Not only has the receipt of an altruistic act been shown to increase levels of felt gratitude among recipients (Ventimiglia, 1982), but the association with the two constructs has also been documented motivate helping others especially benefactors Bartlett and DeSteno (2006). Further, in the second study mentioned in the work, Bartlett and DeSteno showed that gratitude could actually serve to elevate the amount of help offered to strangers. These studies they assert, demonstrate the role that gratitude plays in the development of relationships. Michie (2009) asserts that gratitude is interconnected with pride, when seen as a positive emotion, social justice and altruism. These attributes were found to be correlated among each other within a sample or organizational leaders; higher levels of each of them being present when gratitude was found to be higher. Lastly, gratitude has also been correlated positively with not only altruism and helping others but also with having a greater sense of sympathy to the distress experienced by others. Weiner and Graham (1989) posited that emotions such as gratitude “give rise to distinct [prosocial] behaviors” (p.401) These behaviors such as helping others were examined across the lifespan by using participants ages 5 to 95.

**Personality**

In the area of personality research, the focus is very commonly directed in aspects of what is known as the “Big Five factors”. These factors attempt to explain personality by categorizing it in ways that can then be used to explain and predict attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Work related to the correlation of gratitude and life satisfaction has been
conducted to rule out the big five out as causes for measurements of gratitude and well-being (McCullough et al., 2002; Wood, Joseph, & Maltby, 2008).

### Emotional and Social Support

In several sources, gratitude has been correlated with the ability for one to recognize and acquire emotional and social support and when possible to provide the same to others. Two studies showed correlation between gratitude and being able to perceive the presence of social support in one’s life (Froh, Yurkewicz, & Kashdan, 2009; Wood, Maltby, et al., 2008). This positive correlation, coupled with the understanding that gratitude is often a motivator for reciprocal acts suggests that those who perceived such support from family, friends or peers, may tend to be motivated to become the provider of such support to others thereby opening the possibility of an elevated level of well-being or positive functioning. All of this even if halted at the simple correlation between gratitude and perceived receipt of social support, heightens the emotional connection with others (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

### Related Attributes

A few studies address issues which are difficult to classify among the others. The concepts covered by these studies are not as concrete but nonetheless, they deserve mention as a way to point out the far reaching effects of gratitude as a powerful “emotion” or construct. Ideals such as praise, trust, relatedness and expressiveness have shown by some studies (Deutsch, Roksa, & Meeske, 2003; Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005; Kashdan et al., 2009) to be constructs which are positively correlated with gratitude.
These studies show a good deal of promise in developing a wider field of understanding in how gratitude works with other emotions, and behaviors.

**Gratitude and College Students**

In addition to gratitude focused studies already cited in this chapter wherein the subjects of the studies were college students (Emmons & McCullough 2003; McCullough et al., 2002; Naito et al., 2005; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006; Watkins et al., 2003; Wood, Maltby, et al., 2008) Two additional studies shed light on the presence of gratitude in the lives of college students. In a study conducted by Watkins et al. (2003), Students who listed summer activities for which they had been thankful were found to be less likely to report feelings associated with negative affect as opposed to those college students who were asked to list activities which they had planned but were unable to engage in. These findings are similar to those of Koo, Algoe, Wilson and Gilbert (2008), which found that college students who wrote about how their life had been unexpectedly enhanced by a positive event were more likely to report positive affect than those who wrote of positive events which were expected. A third group of students who participated in an imaginary exercise accurately predicted which group (unexpected vs. expected) reported higher levels of positive affect. The members of this group consistently stated that they would feel better about an unexpected event rather than one they felt was expected or deserved.

**Measures of Gratitude**

The commonly used measures of gratitude are featured in an article by Froh et al., (2011). These instruments Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6; McCullough et al., 2002),
the Gratitude Adjective Checklist (GAC; McCullough et al., 2002), and the Gratitude Resentment and Appreciation Test (GRAT)-short form (Thomas & Watkins, 2003; Watkins et al., 2003) were examined for correlation amongst each other as well as validity and consistency among children and adolescents. Since these instruments are able to be used interchangeably with similar results, this study has selected the GQ-6 for two reasons. First, the instrument is simple and easy for all populations to understand (Froh et al., 2011). Secondly, The Instrument was first tested for reliability and validity using a college student population (McCullough et al., 2002).

**Conclusion**

The two variables in this study namely gratitude and family satisfaction, have both been independently demonstrated to be correlated to the overarching concept of life satisfaction. Following the “bottom up” point of view wherein both variables among others would be viewed as contributing to life satisfaction simultaneously, this study seeks to explore if there is a relationship between these contributing factors. That is to say, is there a correlation between these two variables independent of their respective relationships with life satisfaction? The hypothesis of this study is that there is indeed a relationship between these two variables. It is further hypothesized that the significance of this correlation will vary based upon age, gender and academic major.

Although what defines gratitude is for some, a matter of debate, gratitude has by many measures been shown repeatedly to relate in a positive manner to overall life satisfaction (Froh et al., 2008; Froh, Yurkewicz, & Kashdan, 2009; Kashdan et al., 2006; Vernon et al., 2009; Lambert, Fincham et al., 2009; McCullough et al., 2004). Gratitude
is related to many aspects of human life. Relationships, behavior, personality social support, mental and emotional disorders are each related either positively or negatively with gratitude.

The relationship between family satisfaction and life satisfaction has also been shown to exist (Michalos et. al., 2005; Neugarten et. al., 1961; Olson et. al., 1989; Toseland & Rasch; 1979-1980). Although this may seem evident to some, there are other theories pertaining to the nature of this relationship. These are elaborated upon by Diener (1984) and Hsieh (2003) as being “top down” theories which view the nature of the relationship to be one wherein a person is satisfied in different areas of their life because of overall satisfaction “spilling over” into several of the smaller areas or domains. As the true nature of this relationship is still inconclusive (Feist et al., 1995; Headey et al., 1991; Lance et al., 1989; Scherpenzeel and Saris, 1996), the “bottom up” view assumed by this study is that of the prevailing literature.

There are a substantial number of instruments which measure family satisfaction (Olson et al., 2007; Epstein et al., 1983; Skinner et al., 1983; McCubbin & Patterson, 1982; Olson & Wilson, 1982; Olson, 2010; Smilkstein, 1978; Moos & Moos, 2002; Carver & Jones, 1992). For the purposes of this study, The Family Satisfaction Scale (Olson, 2010) has been selected due to its general language which allows for it to be applied to a wider demographic.

As both of the variables being measured by this study are associated with life satisfaction, it is the aim of this study to determine to what degree of significance they are
related to one another. The general hypothesis is that they are indeed related to one another. Future research will be informed by the outcome of this exploration.
Chapter 3: Methods

Overview

This chapter will describe the present study in regards to research design. This chapter will address the nature of the study in terms of, the participants in the research, the research instruments used, data collection, the research question and hypotheses, ethical issues and statistical methods used to collect and analyze the data.

This study used an empirical approach to explore the significance of correlations between level of dispositional gratitude and level of family satisfaction. The level of dispositional gratitude was assessed using the Gratitude Questionaire-6 (McCullough et al., 2002). The level of family satisfaction was measured by utilizing the Family Satisfaction Scale (Olson, 2010).

Research Question and Hypotheses

This study sought to explore to what extent there is a correlation between dispositional gratitude as measured by the GQ6 (McCullough et al., 2002) and Family satisfaction as measured by Olson’s Family Satisfaction Scale (2010) among college students.

According to Mills et al. (1992), there is a larger correlation between family satisfaction and life satisfaction among females than among males and Kashdan et al. (2009), which demonstrated that the correlation between gratitude and life satisfaction was larger in females than among males, it was hypothesized that the correlation between dispositional gratitude and family satisfaction would be larger than the entire sample.
Null Hypothesis Number One

There is no significant correlation between gratitude and family satisfaction among college students.

Null Hypothesis Number Two

There is no difference in the correlation between gratitude and family satisfaction among male and female students as opposed to the entire sample.

Research Design

This study was quantitative in nature. The exception to this was the inclusion of four open-ended survey questions which were used to collect responses examined in an exploratory manner. This section of the chapter will present an outline of the design of the study. Contained herein are a series of subsections which will discuss such topics and subtopics as; sample and data collection, sample size, selected research instruments and their respective psychometric properties, The analysis of data and considerations of ethics and the protection of participants.

Sample and Data Collection

The participants in this study were college students who attend a midsized public university in the Midwest. Undergraduate students enrolled in courses offered by the Counseling department were recruited for participation in this study. The instructors of these courses were asked to invite their students to participate in the study. No relationship between the students and the research is known to exist. Permission to access these participants was pursued and granted via the office of institutional research of the institution. Data were collected via a web-based survey. Particular courses which
enrolled students from a wide variety of academic majors were targeted for participation. Most of the students who enroll in these courses do so in order to meet general education requirements as well as elective requirements for his or her respective degree. These students, based upon instructor preference may have been offered academic credit for their participation. After completing the web-based survey, all respondents were provided with an option to print a certificate of completion for their records. In all 144 students were invited to participate, this was the entire number of students enrolled in the targeted courses.

This population was selected due to the clinical interest of the author in working with families and adolescents. Although members of the population used in this study are not broadly considered to be adolescents, gaining insight into what adolescents who are about to enter college and how they interact with their families will be of some benefit to those who serve adolescents and families including those families which include college students among their membership.

The university where the study was conducted has an undergraduate enrollment in excess of 17,000. Approximately 81.6% of the student body is classified as “Caucasian,” 4.5% as “African American”, 1% as “Asian”, 2.4% are “Hispanic”. Native Americans on campus represent .3% of the student body. 1.8% of the student body is of two or more races, 7% of the student body is categorized as “international students” and the race or ethnicity of 1.4% of the student body are unknown to the university. 81% of freshmen receive some form of financial aid. 51.5% of enrollment is female with 48.5% male. First
generation college students make up 20.8% of first year students. This information is summarized and presented as table 1.

**Sample Size**

Two power analyses were conducted to ensure proper sample size. The first was conducted to determine sample size for the correlational analysis. The second was conducted to determine appropriate size for the exploratory regression analysis of the additional data.

The initial Null hypothesis was assessed by testing for a bivariate correlation between gratitude and family satisfaction alone. For this purpose, an *a priori* power analysis for a “Bivariate Normal Model Correlation” was conducted in G-Power 3.1.3 in order to determine the appropriate sample size. The following parameters were used in making the determination: an alpha of .05, power of 0.80, and the correlation coefficient was set at .6. According to the results of this analysis, the needed sample size for this study was determined to be 76 participants. Thus, after examining sample size in these two ways it has been determined that a sample size of 129 would be sufficient. This needed number was met by the acquisition of 133 usable responses. Since the available number of invitations to participate exceeded the needed sample size it was assumed that the number of required responses would be met.

An *a priori* power analysis for a “Linear multiple regression: Fixed model, $R^2$ deviation from zero” test was conducted in G-Power 3.1.3 in order to determine the appropriate sample size for the study. The following parameters were used in making the determination: an alpha of .05, power of 0.8, and the correlation number of variables was
set at 6. According to the results of this analysis, the needed sample size for this study is
determined to be 129 participants. This analysis was chosen in order to inform the study
regarding the correlations between the different hypotheses.

**Research Instruments**

The instrument for this study was a combination of three components. First, a
series of questions designed to solicit demographic information which allowed for the
research hypotheses to be examined. The second instrument was the GQ6 (McCullough
et al., 2002) and the third instrument was the FSS (Olson, 2010).

**Demographic Data**

In this section of the survey, respondents were asked to provide information
regarding their status as a college student, age, race, gender, major, first generation
student status and class standing. This information was compared to enrollment data from
the university to determine if the sample is reflective of the population of the university.

**Gratitude Questionnaire Six (GQ6)**

The GQ6 is a six question instrument designed by McCullough et al., (2002) to
measure dispositional gratitude. Since college students made up the population used to
develop and validate this instrument it seemed appropriate for this study. McCullough et
al. claim that “The GQ-6 has excellent psychometric properties, including a robust one-
factor structure and high internal consistency, especially in light of its brevity. Moreover,
it correlates in theoretically expected ways with a variety of affective, prosocial, and
According to Chen, Chen, Kee, and Tsai (2009), “Studies utilizing the English version GQ-6 … found that the instrument possesses good psychometric properties” (p.4). Using the GQ-6, Giacalone, Paul, and Jurkiewicz (2005) demonstrated that positive psychological attributes such as gratitude was used by consumers when making financial choices. Kashdan et al., (2006) discussed the important role gratitude plays in the ability of veterans who suffer from PTSD to cope with symptoms. McCullough et al. (2004) explored the role of gratitude in affecting the daily moods of individuals who reported higher levels of gratitude. And finally, Watkins, Sheer, Ovnicek, and Kolts (2006) were able to delineate the often viewed equivalent attributes of gratitude and indebtedness by examining participants scores along with placement in conditions of perceived actions of a benefactor. According to McCullough et al., (2002) and McCullough et al., (2004), Cronbach’s alpha estimates for the six- item totals have ranged from .76 to .84. For this study, the level was .72. In addition to its frequent use, the GQ-6 is appropriate for use with the college student population because it was first tested for reliability and validity using a college student population ((McCullough et al., 2002).

Calculating the score for the GQ-6 is done by adding up the scores for items 1, 2, 4 and 5 and combining that with the sum of the reversed scores of items 3 and 6 (7=1, 6=2, etc.). The totals score should fall between six and 42. The score is interpreted based on a sample of 1,224 adults who took the GQ-6. The score is reported as a percentile. A score of 35 or less places the respondent in the 25th percentile in regards to gratitude. A score of 38 places the respondent in the top 50th percentile. A score of 41 places the
respondent in the 75th percentile. A score of 42 places the respondent among the 87th percentile in regards to gratitude.

**Family Satisfaction Scale (FSS)**

First developed in 1982 as a 14 item scale, the Family Satisfaction Scale (FSS), measures family satisfaction using 10 items regarding “various aspects of family functioning including family closeness, flexibility and communication” (Olson, 2010, p.2).

The FSS has been used by several studies. Carver and Jones (1992) used the Olson (1982) version with college students in order to validate a newly developed scale of family satisfaction. Chung and Chung (1994) used the FSS when assessing the role of family satisfaction in predicting the coping strategies of Korean adolescents. More recently, Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Regalia, and Scabini (2011) used the FSS to examine family satisfaction in relation to beliefs about family efficacy and family functioning.

Olson (2010), further reports that “Based on a sample of 2,465 family members, the 10 item family satisfaction scale has an alpha reliability of .92 and test re-test of .85” (p.4). As a result from the same study, the author reports a mean score for the scale of 37.5 and standard deviation of 8.5. For this study, the alpha level of the FSS was .93.

In addition to the study conducted by Carver and Jones, the FSS has been used in at least three additional studies which focused directly on college students (Kennedy, 1989; Kusada, 1995; Scabini & Galimberti, 1994). Further studies (including the previously a study conducted by Olson in 2004 which further established reliability and
validity) may have included college students in their sample but have not indicated exclusivity of such. Due to the frequent use of the FSS among a variety of including the targeted population, the FSS is the most appropriate instrument for this study.

Scoring the FSS is accomplished by summing all items of the scale. Scores range from 10-50 points. A higher score is indicative of a higher level of family satisfaction. Olson provides a scale (86-99% = “very high,” 61-85% = “high,” 39-60%= “moderate” 21-35% = “low” and 10-21% = “very low”) for interpretation of the raw score which is calculated as a percentage of family satisfaction.

**Additional Data**

In addition to the demographic information and the responses to the two scales utilized in this study, data was collected for the purposes of conducting exploratory analyses. This data was collected as responses to four open-ended survey questions which addressed how frequently the respondent felt or expressed gratitude, what the respondent felt most contributed to family satisfaction, how frequently and by what means the respondent communicated with family members. Two of these questions required a typed response the other two were responded to in the form of multiple choice responses.

**Pilot Study**

Prior to collecting data for this study a pilot study was conducted to test for general flow of the instruments as they were to be presented, the ability of potential respondents to complete the survey and to inform the author regarding a set of open-ended survey questions which were being examined for use in the final study. These
questions included four open-ended questions about gratitude and family satisfaction.

Two such items were presented for each construct.

Respondents were recruited from an undergraduate course taught at the same institution. Students in the course were provided with a link to the survey and invited to complete it. They offered no compensation for their participation but were allowed to use the experience as the basis for a weekly reflection assignment. In all, the pilot study garnered 41 responses. Of those, six were incomplete and removed from the data set.

The pilot study provided insight into the process of collecting data which proved invaluable. Due to the responses of the pilot study, several adjustments were made to how the survey items were presented and which of the open-ended items were selected for use in the study. The adjustments included forcing a response on each of the items. Several of the items, particularly the demographic questions were often skipped by the respondents. As this information is vital to the study specifically, the gender question, it was necessary to require a response.

Further, it was observed that many of the responses to the open-ended survey questions were often in the form of one or two words in spite of requesting 2-3 sentences. This prompted the decision to require that a minimum number of characters (15) be entered in order to proceed. This caused an interesting response from many of the respondents to the actual survey which will be discussed in chapter 4. During the course of the pilot study, four typed response open-ended questions were asked and a determination was made as to which two of these would be most appropriate for this survey and its expected respondents. Of the four open-ended items explored in the pilot,
the two which were chosen were “How often do you feel or express gratitude?” and “What do you feel most contributes to family satisfaction?” The two items which were not used were “please discuss the importance of gratitude in your life.” and “Please discuss your level of family satisfaction.”

It was decided to remove the first of the rejected items due to the fact that many of the responses to it simply reiterated what had been written as response to the other gratitude related question. The second item to be rejected was eliminated due to the short responses (usually one or two words) or because the responses was often a repeat of the response given to the other item associated with family satisfaction. It became clear during the course of the pilot study that the respondents were much more willing to respond to the likert scale items than they were to the written response items. Overall, running a pilot study proved to be very effective in advance of collecting and analyzing the study data.

**Data Analysis**

Once sufficient data had been collected (N=133), it was cleaned of any responses which were incomplete or were self-excluding due to the response to particular items (not a student, over 24, respondent is a grad student, etc.). The use of the Qualtrics online survey instrument at the point of collection allowed for seamless data entry into SPSS statistics package. Formatting and editing of the data in order to transform it was necessary in order to accommodate for negatively skewed items which required reverse scoring.
An overall description of the data was developed and provided in a following section. All of the statistical assumptions regarding the psychometrics of the scales were examined for validity and reliability. After confirming that the results were consistent with the properties set forth, a Pearson’s analysis was conducted between the two variables (total score on the GQ6 and total score on the FSS). The correlation was examined for significance and confidence interval. In addition to the relationship between the two variables being examined (Hypothesis 1), the significance of the two variables was compared to determine if there is a difference in the level of significance based upon the gender of the respondents (Hypothesis 2).

Beyond examining the data for the purposes of testing the hypotheses of the study, exploratory analysis was conducted regarding the level of significance based upon other variables. These have not been discussed previously as they are pertinent to the study and are not necessarily supported by any known research; however, the collection of the data was pursued in order to examine any relationships which may have been observed.

This exploratory data included two open ended survey questions which were given typewritten responses regarding the two constructs and two multiple choice questions regarding the means and frequency of communication with family members. The responses to these questions were reviewed and coded in order to provide a quantifiable means of reporting the observed results. For each question, a list of categories was created which were labeled with frequently observed words or conditions found within all of the combined responses. Each category was assigned a number, when
a criterion for the category was met; a number was written next to the response. Each
response to the family satisfaction question could reflect more than one category and
therefore be assigned more than one number.

**Ethics and Protection of Participants**

Participants in the study had several measures of security in order to insure the
proper treatment of themselves and their responses. The first of these was the review and
support of the Institutional Review Board of the University. Prior to the collection of any
data, the appropriate permissions were sought and granted by said body.

The second line of defense to protect the participants and the confidentiality of
their data was the Informed Consent portion of the study. The purpose of the informed
consent document was to educate the participant about what was to be expected during
the course of the study, how the information was to be used and what their rights and
responsibilities are under the law.

Finally, the data collected was done anonymously. The respondents were not
asked for any information regarding their identity during the course of their participation.
Although the respondents may have chosen to disclose that they had participated to an
academic instructor in order to secure credit for doing so, this could be done by
submitting a printout which included no identifying information which could have been
used to connect the responses with the participant.
Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between gratitude and family satisfaction among college students. The study also sought to determine if the relationship between these constructs differs based upon gender. This chapter provides the results of the analyzed data. Descriptive results are first provided, followed by the results of the correlational analyses that address the primary research questions. Analyses regarding the reliability of the instruments are also presented, and the chapter closes with an overview of exploratory regression results that examined the relationship between gratitude and family satisfaction in the context of other variables.

As noted in chapter 3, the participants in this study were undergraduate college students from a midsize Midwestern university enrolled in courses offered by the counseling department. These students enrolled in the courses to both meet requirements of their course of study including elective requirements. The students responded to an online survey which consisted of six demographic questions, a six question gratitude questionnaire known as the GQ-6 (McCullough, Emmons & Tsang, 2002), a ten item questionnaire known as the Family Satisfaction Scale (Olson, 2010).

Additionally, data were collected in the form of two written responses in order to examine the frequency in which the respondents express or feel gratitude and what the respondents feel contributes most to family satisfaction. Furthermore, the participants were also asked to respond to a multiple choice item that queried how often and in what form (e.g. text, telephone, in person, etc.) they communicated with their family.
Comparison of the Sample to the Student Body.

The sampling procedure entailed asking students to volunteer to respond to the survey in order to receive extra credit for a course grade. As an alternative, the students could complete a brief paper for credit. Furthermore, the classrooms were not selected at random; instead, they were identified on the basis of the researcher having a pre-existing relationship with course professors who were willing to disseminate the survey to their students. The sample is therefore not a random subset of undergraduate students who attend the university. To obtain a sense of the degree to which the sample is representative of all students, comparisons were made between responses to demographic survey items and demographic statistics maintained by the university.

According to the university fact book (the name of the university has been omitted from the study to ensure confidentiality), the sample compared fairly well to the student body of the participating institution. There were a few discrepancies. Notably, there was a difference in the percentage of African American students (4.5% in the sample vs. 20.3%), the sample did not include any Hispanic respondents in spite of the institution reporting 2.4 percent, and the sample did not include any international students. The sample also had a higher proportion of females compared to the institution (61.7 percent v. 51.5 percent). The sample was fairly similar in terms of the proportion of White, Asian, and first generation students. The degree to which the sample is thought to be representative of the university is revisited in chapter 5. Table 1 below illustrates the comparisons.
Table 1

*Comparison of Institution and Sample Statistics n=133*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Statistic</th>
<th>Institution (%)</th>
<th>Sample (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>75.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Institution (%)</th>
<th>Sample (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Generation Student</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Description of the Respondents**

One hundred and forty students responded to the survey; of these, seven were eliminated because responses were either incomplete (n=4; the amount of information collected from these four respondents was insufficient to apply to the study), had indicated that they were graduate students (n=2) or were over the age of twenty-four (n=1). The small group of respondents represented less than five percent of the total sample, which minimizes the need to utilize any imputation methods to accommodate for
the missing data (Field, 2009). The overall rate of usable data was 97.2% of the 144 invited to participate. A summary of the demographic data collected is presented below as Table 2.
Table 2

Demographic Information of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>61.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
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<td>Senior</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Business</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Health Sciences &amp; Professions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineering &amp; Technology</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undeclared</td>
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<td>12.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than one college</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First Generation Students  
48  36.1

% are based upon respondent sample; allow for rounding error
Scale Reliability

Cronbach’s alpha coefficient (\(\alpha\)) (1951) was used to assess scale reliability of the items of each instrument. As previously mentioned in chapter 3, Cronbach’s alpha for the GQ-6 has ranged from .76 to .84 in prior studies (McCullough et al., 2002). The FSS has an estimated alpha of .92 (Olson, 2010). In this study, the observed \(\alpha\) for the GQ-6 was .72; for the FSS, \(\alpha=.93\). These results are consistent with the values found in the prior studies. The results of the reliability analysis suggest that both of the instruments provided reasonably reliable results in this study (Field, 2009).

Scores on the GQ-6

Possible scores for the instrument range from a low score of six to a high score of 42. The mean score of the 133 respondents on the GQ-6 was 36.81. The median score for the GQ-6 was 33. The modal scores were 40 (n=16) and 42 (n=16). The range of observed scores was 19-42 covering a spread of 23 points. The standard deviation for the entire sample was 4.62. Figure 1 presents a histogram showing the distribution of scores which shows a reasonable departure from the assumption that scores were normally distributed. Furthermore, there were a number of outliers suggesting low levels of gratitude. Outlier scores were checked against the original data to ensure there were no data entry errors. No errors were found and no procedure was used to trim outliers as the scores may well be reflective of the population of interest. For this reason, a Spearman’s rank correlation (1910) was conducted in addition to the Pearson’s correlation when analyzing the results. This was done in order to determine if any outliers calculated during the Pearson’s correlation influenced the overall results. Spearman’s rank
correlation is a nonparametric procedure that utilizes medians instead of means, and so is more robust to departures from normality and is not influenced by outliers. Since the results of both were consistent, the results of the Spearman’s will not be reported. (Field, 2009).

**Figure 1.** Distribution of Scores on the GQ6

According to McCullough et al. (2002), the mean score of the sample is slightly less than the original norming sample of adults. Similar scores were observed when
dividing the results along lines of gender. The mean score for males was 34.86. The
median score was 33; the mode score (n=7) was 37. The range of scores was 19 to 42 (the
same as the total sample). The standard deviation for males was 5.54. For females, the
mean was 38.02. The median score for females was 37; the mode (n=5) was 42. Female
respondent’s scores fell within the range of 26 to 42. The standard deviation for females
was 3.46. These scores differ from the total sample but only slightly. However, it should
be noted that the female portion of the sample scored higher than the male respondents.
Female respondents also scored higher than 50% of the normalizing sample.

Scores on the FSS

The mean score of the respondents on the FSS was 36.8 and the median was 35.
The modal scores were 33 (n=7) and 42 (n=7). The scores ranged from 14 to 50. The
standard deviation for the entire sample was 8.13. When using the scale provided by
Olson (2010), the mean score of 36.8 is considered to be “moderate” on a “Very Low to
Very High” Scale. Sixty-one respondents or 45.8% scored lower than the mean. Seventy-
one or 53.3% scored higher than the mean. It should be noted that the score representing
the high end of the observed range; 50 (n=6), still falls into the “moderate” range of level
of family satisfaction.

In terms of gender differences, the mean for females was 35.72 and the median
was 35. These scores fall between low and moderate on the scale of family satisfaction.
The modal scores were 29, 33 and 40 (n=6 for each). Females reported scores on the FSS
which fell within the range of 14 to 50. The standard deviation for females on the FSS
was 8.54
By contrast, the mean for males on the FSS for males was 38.55. The median score for males was 36. This score is considered to be in the “moderate” range (36-60%). The mode score for male responses to the FSS was 42 (n=5). As illustrated by Figure 2, the mean and median scores for the FSS are also very close suggesting a normal distribution. The standard deviation on the FSS for males was 7.5.

Figure 2. Distribution of Scores on the FSS.
The range of scores on the FSS observed among males was 22-50. Generally, males scored higher on the FSS than females among the sample. The scores reported by females had a wider range which began lower than the scores of the males and ended as high as the males.

Following the examination of a scatterplot of the results (Figure 3), it was determined that the relationship between the two variables appears to be linear. That is to say that a change in either direction in one variable will result in a similar change in the other variable.
Overall, the scores provide a picture that demonstrates that the sample is on average, moderately grateful as well as moderately satisfied with their family life. The averages are more or less, evenly weighted. That is to say, a near equal number of persons fall on each side of either scale. Half of the respondents have low levels of gratitude. The other half seems to have higher levels of gratitude. Half of the respondents have low to very low levels of satisfaction regarding their family life. The other half
seems to have high to very high levels of family satisfaction. Table 3 provides information regarding the scores of each instrument.

Table 3

*Results of the Instruments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
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<th>SD</th>
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<td>4.619</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSS:</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>36.80</td>
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</table>

**Gender**

<table>
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<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GQ-6 (M)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>34.86</td>
<td>5.535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GQ-6 (F)</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>38.02</td>
<td>3.460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSS (M)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>38.55</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSS (F)</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>35.72</td>
<td>8.352</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analyses of Results to Test Null Hypotheses**

The software package used to test the null hypotheses for this study was version 19 of the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. A Bivariate Correlation (Pearson) analysis was conducted to examine if the relationship between the two constructs was significantly statistically different from zero as well as to examine the differences in strength of the relationship based upon gender.
Null Hypothesis Number One

*There is no significant relationship between gratitude and family satisfaction among the college students.*

Formula 1 presents the calculation approach for the standard Pearson Correlation.

\[
(1) \quad r = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} x_i y_i}{\sqrt{\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n} x_i^2 \right) \left( \sum_{i=1}^{n} y_i^2 \right)}} \quad \text{(Pearson, 1900)}
\]

As the relationship between the two constructs appeared to be linear, the Pearson correlation was used to analyze the relationship between the two constructs; results indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between gratitude and family satisfaction when using two tailed analyses. Gratitude is significantly correlated to family satisfaction, \( r(133) = .32, p < .01 \). The value of \( R^2 \) is .11 and \( 1 - R^2 \) is .89. These values indicate that that the proportion of variance explained in gratitude by family satisfaction is small (and vice versa).

Null Hypothesis Number Two

*There is no difference in the correlation between gratitude and family satisfaction among male and female students as opposed to the entire sample.*

The relationship for each gender was positive. The correlation for males was \( r(51) = .33, p < .05 \), and for females the correlation was \( r(82) = .32, p < .01 \). For males the \( R^2 \) is .11 and \( 1 - R^2 \) is .89. For females \( R^2 \) was .10 and \( 1 - R^2 \) was .90. Across both genders, family satisfaction was able to account for a models amount of self-reported gratitude, and vice versa. Although the correlations were close in size, comparing the two represented a key confirmatory question. In order to determine if there is a difference in
the relationship between the two constructs based upon gender, it was necessary to first convert the correlation coefficient into z scores. This was done by applying the Fischer z calculation (Field, 2009 p.171).

\[ z_r = \frac{1}{2} \log_e \left( \frac{1+r}{1-r} \right) \]

This formula allows scores from two or more instruments to be transformed into a number which represents a standard distance from zero. After converting both of the coefficients for each group (male = .331 and female = .322), to applicable z-scores, another Fisher calculation was applied to examine the z-score difference (Field, 2009 p.191).

\[ Z_{\text{Difference}} = \frac{z_{r1} - z_{r2}}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{N_1-3} + \frac{1}{N_2-3}}} \]

Formula 2 is used to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between two independent correlations and yields a Z score for the difference. The value found for this analysis was \( Z = .048 \). The threshold for rejecting a null hypothesis is 1.96 (\( p < .05 \)) (Field, 2009). Therefore, the study failed to reject the second null hypothesis. There is likely no difference in the relationship between the two constructs based upon gender.

**Open-ended Responses**

The responses to the questions (including the additional questions) indicate that the respondents understood what was meant by the terms “gratitude” and “family satisfaction.” However, in regards to the additional questions, the open-ended survey question regarding gratitude was less clear. The question asked was “In 2-3 sentences (200 Characters) please answer the following question: How often do you express or feel
gratitude?” many of the respondents chose to speak to how they felt or expressed gratitude and less about the frequency of doing so.

Respondents were asked to provide typed written responses to two open-ended survey questions. The first was, “How often do you feel or express gratitude?” The second was “What do you feel most contributes to your family satisfaction?” Responses to both questions were limited to 200 characters each with a minimum of 15 characters required for each response. Due to the requirement of a response to the typewritten questions, several of the respondents (5) chose to satisfy the requirement by typing random letters and numbers.

Responses to the first question (“How often do you feel or express gratitude?”) were codified into nine categories. The following list includes the titles of each category and description of the criteria used to determine the category each response was coded as:

1. Daily (respondent indicated at least daily expression or feeling of gratitude)
2. Weekly (respondent expressing or feeling of gratitude at least once a week)
3. Monthly (respondent indicated at least monthly expression or feeling of gratitude)
4. Often (respondent used phrases like “often”, “a lot”, “anytime”, etc.)
5. Rarely (used phrases which were the opposite of the “often” category)
6. Never
7. Not as often ( indicated that he or she did not express or feel gratitude enough)
8. Response not a frequency
9. Unusable response (random letters or numbers typed to satisfy the length requirement)
As is shown in Figure 3, the majority (84%) of the responses pertaining to the frequency of expression or feeling of gratitude were divided into three categories. Thirty percent of the respondents reported feeling or expressing gratitude at least once a day. For an example of the responses written in this category the following is provided “I express or feel gratitude daily. I have very much to be thankful for and I make sure those people know why and that I do.”

Twenty-nine percent of the respondents indicated that they felt or expressed gratitude “often.” An example of the responses for this category is “I generally try to express gratitude very often. It makes others feel good to be appreciated for the work that they put into something, and everyone should feel noticed and needed.” Although the term “often” is not specific, it appeared so frequently, that it was given its own category. Due to the anonymity of the respondents, it was impossible to clarify this response with the appropriate respondents.

Twenty-five percent of the respondents provided a response which was not a frequency at all. These responses frequently spoke more to how gratitude was felt or expressed. Again, anonymity was a bit of a barrier here. “I express gratitude towards many people and events in my life. I am grateful for the people who have an impact and change my life.” is an example of the responses found in this category.

In classifying the data for this section, no known classification system seemed appropriate as the questions had been developed for the present study. The method developed was a result of the observed responses. Categories were created accordingly.
Responses to the second question ("What do you feel most contributes to your family satisfaction?") were codified into 11 different categories. The topics of each category follow along with examples and synonyms of words and/or phrases found in the responses which were used in making the determination.

1. Cohesion (close, get along, bond, similar)
2. Interaction (being together, time together)
3. Fun (humor, games, enjoy, laugh)
4. Money (expenses, finances, well off)
5. Love (care, compassion)
6. Communication
7. Values (respect, coping, faith, God, acceptance, attitude)
The majority of the responses to this question (86%) fell into five categories
(Cohesion, Communication, Interaction, Love and Values). The first and largest of which
was the category labeled cohesion. The responses which were placed into this category
(21%) are best reflected by the following example. “The closeness of my family
contributes most. We are a very tight knit family and we are always there for each other
regardless of the situation.”

Communication and interaction were each represented by 19% of the responses. When speaking of communication as what contributes most to the respondents family satisfaction, one respondent wrote “I think what most contributes to my family satisfaction is the willingness for us to talk about anything. We always try to understand each other's perspectives.”

When addressing family interaction as a contributor to family satisfaction, one of the 19% of respondents remarked “Quality time most contributes to family satisfaction.” another stated “Spending time with my family at home. We all get along well when we are all together.”

Twenty-two respondents (16%) indicated that love either felt by them or expressed to them contributed most to family satisfaction. As will be discussed later, this category showed some degree of significance among the responses. An example of a
statement regarding love’s influence over family satisfaction is “I feel that our close bond and love for each other is what has allowed us to remain so close and satisfied.”

The last category was “values” this category provided a place for all of the responses which indicated some ideal, value or belief. Eleven percent of the respondents mentioned some belief or value which contributed the most to their level of family satisfaction. One respondent stated “[my] parents are hardworking and did a great job raising the family.” Another remarked “I feel as though the values and morals that we have as well as the appreciation for family contribute to our family satisfaction.” The remaining categories were so narrowly represented that they were not included as part of the discussion. Each of these are presented as Figure 5.

![Figure 5. Contributors of Family Satisfaction by Percentage per Category.](image)
Multiple Choice Responses

As previously indicated, respondents were asked to answer two additional questions which pertained to the frequency and method of communication with family. These were: “How often do you communicate with your family?” and “How do you most often communicate with your family?” Olson (2010) and Burns and Pearson (2011) both speak to the important role which communication plays in regards to family satisfaction. These two questions which served as further follow up to examine this frequently occurring theme in family satisfaction were presented in a multiple choice format. An explanation of the results is given in this section.

Daily communication with family members accounted for 55% of the responses to the question “How often do you communicate with your family?” Another 29% of the respondents indicated that they talk to their family at least twice a week. In all, 92% of the respondents speak to their family at least once a week. These results are displayed as Figure 6.
In responding to the question (the answers to which are displayed as Figure 7) “How do you most often communicate with your family?”, 68% of the respondents chose telephone as the most frequently used method. Text messaging and “in person” or “face to face” communication each garnered 15% of the responses. Only 2% of the combined responses selected email, video or letter as the most frequent means of communication. The remaining categories were so narrowly represented that they were not included as part of the discussion.

Figure 6. Frequency of Communication with Family by Percentage of Respondents
Figure 7. Method of Communication with Family by Percentage of Respondents

**Exploratory Correlation and Regression Analysis of Observed Trends**

In examining the descriptive statistics, it was observed that several trends emerged. A series of Pearson’s correlations were run to examine the relationship of the two constructs (gratitude and family satisfaction) among several sub-groups. For example, output was generated and sorted by response to the question “How often do you express or feel gratitude?” the correlation was run and the output was examined for correlation among coded responses to this question. A correlation was found among respondents who indicated either often or monthly. Using this method, several small yet significant correlations were identified among three more sub-groups. This information informed the development of a regression analysis.
A significant positive relationship was found among those who indicated love as being a contributing factor $r(22) = .48, p < .05$. A significant positive relationship was found among those respondents who reported using the telephone as the most frequent means of communication (68%). The significance of the relationship between the two constructs was $r(90) = .24, p < .05$. A significant positive relationship between the two constructs exists among those who express or feel gratitude either once a month or “often” demonstrated a significant positive relationship between the two constructs, $r(41) = .36, p < .05$.

In regards to how often the respondents communicated with family members, two categories yielded significant positive relationships. Respondents who reported communicating with family once a week showed a significant relationship between the two constructs $r(10) = .76, p < .05$. Those respondents who reported daily communication with family demonstrated a significant relationship between the two constructs of $r(10) = .76, p < .01$. These two statistics were converted to z scores and compared with one another. No significant difference in the relationship between the two constructs was found when comparing these two groups (those who communicated with family once per week and those who communicated with family daily). There was no significant correlation between the two constructs among those who reported talking to family two or three times per week. However, when examining the relationship between the two constructs among those who reported communicating with family at least once a week, a significant positive relationship was found. $r(122) = .23, p < .05$. This finding sheds an interesting light on the influence communication with family may have on the
relationship between the two constructs. A summary of these correlations and the subgroups identified is presented as Table 4.

Table 4

Summary of Positive Correlations between Gratitude and Family Satisfaction among Sub-Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>r value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.48**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>.24**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly feeling or expression of gratitude</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>.36 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1x/week+</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*p<.01, ** p< .05)

It should also be noted that no negative relationships of any significance were found to exist among the constructs in light of all of these categories. The correlations identified among these categories informed the choices made when determining the predictors of an exploratory regression analysis.

Exploratory Regression Analyses

In all, five predictors were selected to determine if any had a predictive relationship with family satisfaction. The general model used to explore these relationships was:

\[ Y = a + X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + X_4 + X_5 + e \]
Where $Y = FSS$ (family satisfaction),

$a = \text{the intercept of the model},$

$X_1 = \text{GQ6 Score}$

$X_2 = \text{love as a contributor to family satisfaction}$

$X_3 = \text{telephone communication}$

$X_4 = \text{Talks to family at least 1x/week}$

$X_5 = \text{Expresses gratitude often or monthly and}$

$e = \text{error}.$

The results of the analysis demonstrated that the combination of a high score on the GQ-6, expressing gratitude either “often” or at least once a month (both were combined since neither made a difference), talking to one’s family on the telephone at least once a week and viewing love as a contributing factor to family satisfaction accounted for 11% of family satisfaction.

Table 5 outlines the regression analysis performed between the dependent or outcome variable (constant) and the predictor variables (i.e., a high score on the GQ-6, expressing gratitude either “often” or at least once a month (neither made a difference), talking to one’s family on the telephone at least once a week and viewing love as a contributing factor to family satisfaction). Model one shows the primary correlation between gratitude and family satisfaction. Model two shows the additional predictor variables added into the primary correlation. The $b$-value statistic shows the relationship between each predictor and the outcome variable. This demonstrates how may units the outcome variable will raise if the predictor variable is increased by one unit. The column
labeled $SE\ b$ indicates the standard error of the $b$-value. The column labeled with $\beta$ speaks to the number of standard deviations the outcome will change if the predictor variable changes by one standard deviation. Finally, the symbol $\Delta$ is used to denote change, in this case change in the $R^2$ from model 1 to model 2.

Once more, as this analysis is strictly exploratory, the results are only intended to inform future research. Overall, the model itself was found to be significant at the $p < .01$ level. The values for $R^2$ and $1-R^2$ were found to be .11 and .89 respectively. This demonstrates that the combination of these five factors accounts for eleven percent of family satisfaction among the participants. Arguably, the biggest predictor of Family Satisfaction (among the examined predictors) is talking to one’s family at least once a week. This is consistent with previously expressed views on the role of communication as it pertains to family satisfaction (Olson, 2010). An examination of the scatterplots suggests there is a linear relationship between variables used in these analyses. The assumption of no multicollinearity was met as indicated by an average Variance Inflation Factor of 1.18 and average tolerance statistic of .90 both falling within the guidelines reported by Field (2009). Furthermore, The Durbin-Watson test statistic was reported as being 1.78. This was considered by the author to be close enough to two on the scale of one to four to be acceptable due to the number being closer to two than one by a considerable amount Field, 2009). Therefore, the variables are assumed to be operating independent from one another and not so similar that they would be affecting the results.

Homoscedasticity was found to be present in the model. This was done by examining the variance among the variables in the model by running a Levene’s test for
homogeneity of variance. The variances among the variables were found to not be significantly different. The results of the Levene’s tests for each of the variables (with the exception for the GQ6 score which is constant), are communicating to family monthly and often = .39, citing love as a contributing factor of family satisfaction = .28, communicating to family at least once a week = .08 and communicating with family via telephone = .07.

Outliers (which were considered by this study to be scores more than two standard deviations outside the mean of each instrument) can at times alter the results of analyses. Several outliers were noticed to be affecting the normality of the sample when examining the distribution of scores on the GQ6 (Figure 1). However, as previously mentioned a Spearman’s rank correlation was used to determine if any outliers were affecting the results. This was not found to be the case and the results of the Pearson’s correlation were accepted as valid for interpretation purposes.
Table 5

*Results of Exploratory Regression Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1* (Constant)</td>
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<td>5.54</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.32*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Constant)</td>
<td>18.24</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.32*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>-.72</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>-.93</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks to family at least 1 time/week</td>
<td>7.19</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expresses gratitude monthly or “often”</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R²=.11, (*p<.01, ** p< .05) ∆R²=.075

Overall, the model is presented as: Family Satisfaction

\[ \text{Family Satisfaction}_i = 18.24 + .41(\text{GQ6}_i) + -.72(\text{Love}_i) + -.93(\text{Telephone communication}_i) + 7.19(1x/week communication_i) + .32(\text{express of feel gratitude monthly or often}_i) + e \text{ (error)} \]

A more parsimonious model with only the statistically significant predictors was examined. No difference in variance was observed between these two models (p<.05). Assumptions for regression were again checked and no concerns were noted. The more parsimonious model is Family Satisfaction

\[ \text{Family Satisfaction}_i = 18.52 + .33(\text{GQ6}_i) + 6.78(1x/week communication_i) + e \text{ (error)} \]

It appears that these key variables are worthy of closer examination in the future.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The present study sought to explore the relationship between gratitude defined in this study as “the willingness to recognize the unearned increments of value in one’s experience” (Bertocci & Millard, 1963, p. 389) and family satisfaction defined as “The degree to which one is generally satisfied with one’s family of origin and the constituent relationships embedded therein” (Carver & Jones, 1992, p. 72) among college students. Although each of the constructs had been previously established to be related to overall life satisfaction (e.g. Carver & Jones, 1992; Olson, McCubbin & Associates, 1989; Froh et al., 2008; Froh, Yurkewicz, & Kashdan, 2009; and McCullough et al., 2004) and well-being, this study sought to examine the relationship between the two. This study did so by using a Pearson’s correlation to compare scores on two instruments, the GQ6 (McCullough et al., 2002) and the FSS (Olson, 2010).

This chapter presents a description of the sample and results of the null hypothesis. Additionally, a discussion of the implications of the findings will be provided. The limitations of the study and directions for future research will also be discussed.

Characteristics of the Sample

The characteristics of the sample described here include age, class standing, college of major, race and gender. The response rate of was high (97.2%); 140 out of 144. The members of six courses were invited to participate in the study. Of those, 133 completed surveys (95%) were suitable for use. This high rate of response could be the result of incentives offered by the instructors of the course.
The average age of the respondents was just under 21. The standard deviation was 1.501. This age is somewhat on the lower side of the range of ages (18 to 24). The age of the sample is congruent with the common conception of the age of a college student.

No particular class standing status was represented more or less than any other. However, the mean class rank (freshman=1 to senior=4) was 2.51 (halfway through the sophomore year). No majority of respondents represented any particular college within the university. The College of Education was represented by the largest number of participants, 32.1%. This was followed by Communication (17.5%), Business (15.3%), Health Sciences and Professions (13.1%). Students with undeclared majors represented 11.7% of the sample. The other colleges of the university were represented by a cumulative 7.6%. Each of the colleges of the university was represented within the sample.

The sample for this study identified, principally, as White (75.9%). African Americans represented 20.3% of the sample. Those respondents who selected “two or more races” as their race made up three percent of the sample. Just less than 1% identified as Asian. As noted in chapter 4, this is somewhat reflective of the overall student body of the participating institution. The largest difference being that the sample constituted a larger group of African Americans and there were no respondents who identified as Hispanic in spite of the university reporting a Hispanic population of 2.4 percent.

The sample was constituted of 61.7% females and 38.3% males. This compares to an approximate 50/50 split in the overall student body. Overall, the sample is diverse in
gender, academic majors, ages and class standing. The sample demonstrates a wide angle of demographics applicable to college students.

Null Hypotheses

The first null hypothesis of this study was rejected as gratitude and family satisfaction were shown to be positively and significantly related to one another among college students at the .01 level. As expected, females scored slightly higher (although not significantly) in regards to gratitude in comparison to their male counterparts. This is similar to the findings of Kashdan et al. (2009) who found that women reported higher levels of gratitude than men. Furthermore, males in this study reported a slightly higher level of family satisfaction than the females. However, this finding is not significant. Several studies have shown varying differences along gender lines. The findings of these studies have spoken to the fact that in general, people respond differently based upon gender in regards to what contributes to one’s level of family satisfaction (Coke, 1992; Mills et al., 1992; and Williams, 1988).

The second null hypothesis was upheld. There was no significant difference found in the strength of the relationship between the two constructs when examining the data along lines of gender. Due to the fact that the relationship between gratitude and family satisfaction had not been examined prior to this study this finding is neither surprising nor expected. However, it was postulated that there would be a difference with the relationship being observed as stronger among females due to the evidence that females tend to be more grateful. In finding that there is no significant difference, the research
suggests that any benefit obtained through the use of gratitude based interventions with either individuals or families should be equally beneficial regardless of gender.

**Implication of Findings**

The implications of the results of this study are applicable to those who serve college students in higher education settings as well as both counselors and counselor educators. As already noted, this study did not examine much by way of causality. However, with the clear presence of a positive relationship, there is much to be examined in regards to how an increase in one of the constructs may influence the other. As noted by Nelson (2009), gratitude based interventions are a promising means by which to treat individuals therapeutically. A source for such interventions can be found by examining the works of Emmons (2007) and Lyubomirsky (2007). Each of these works share well developed interventions which target individuals who wish to cultivate a sense of gratitude into their daily lives utilizing positive psychological principles.

This study suggests that such interventions may also be applicable to family based treatments particularly those aimed at improving well-being and the associated construct of family satisfaction. Those who treat college students will be served by the study when seeking to increase familial relationships between the college students with whom they work. Any of the ten evidence-based practices suggested by Emmons (2007), could be implemented into family focused counseling for use with families wishing to become more grateful (pp.188-208). Further, the implementation of the eight suggestions made by Lyubomirsky (2007), regarding how gratitude boosts happiness in individuals could easily be adapted to be directed toward families.
Counselor educators may benefit from the results of the study in regards to the preparation of those helping professionals who seek to serve families, college students and a combination of the two. These professionals may be academic or college counselors, school counselors, clinical mental health counselors, substance abuse counselors, rehabilitation counselors, student affairs professionals and any other helping professional who works with the population.

Those who conduct scholarly research in the areas of family studies, higher education, Counseling and other helping professions will benefit from the study as it may inform future research regarding these and other topics.

**Limitations of the Study**

The study is not without its limitations. The first of which is its design as correlational which does not address causality. The non-random sample provided valuable information however, a sample which could be gathered from a larger group perhaps even from multiple institutions would strengthen the study. Furthermore, The sample was comprised by a larger number of females than that of the student body of the participating institution 61.7 percent v. 51.5 percent.) In addition to the design, validity issues are also a limitation of this study. The data from the study may have been compromised due to lack of control regarding the respondents’ environment. A secure and closed environment could provide different results as the distraction to the respondents could be minimized if not eliminated. Furthermore, in a controlled environment any unclear questions could be addressed. In such an environment follow-up
questions could be asked regarding the open-ended survey items. The respondents could also be assessed for mood which may have some influence on the outcome of the survey.

Another limitation of this study is the anonymity of the respondents. It is difficult to determine if this is in fact a limitation. If the respondents were available for contact following the survey, responses to the open ended question could be clarified and thus, more appropriately coded. However, the respondents’ willingness to share intimate details of their familial relationships may be compromised by even a confidential setting. Either way, it is apparent that a confidential study may have rendered a different sample in terms of responses particularly in the area of the data outside of the original constructs. All of these limitations inhibit the ability to generalize the findings to the entire population.

The exploratory analysis is also limited by the use of multiple null hypothesis tests of significance with a single data set. This may increase the probability of a type 1 error. Such an event would result in the findings of significance being useless. However, as this analysis was separate from the initial, correlational analyses designed to address the null hypotheses of this study and the regression analysis was conducted to merely explore lines for future research and not to confirm any particular a priori question, there is no concern regarding the findings of the correlational analyses.

**Validity**

Two issues regarding validity are present in this research design. The first was the issue of random interference in the setting. The respondents were asked to take the online survey in their own environment. Had the setting of the survey been able to be in a
controlled environment, distractions and question ambiguity would have been able to have been better controlled or eliminated. Respondents were instructed when asked to participate to pay attention to the wording of the questions and to avoid distractions while taking the survey. Three respondents answered at least one of the reversed scored questions from the GQ-6 in a manner that was not consistent with previous responses which resulted in a lower score being reported. This was determined by the analysis of an additional open-ended survey question asked about gratitude. In all cases, changing these analyses would not significantly affect the overall score if changed to the intended response.

Secondly, the history of the respondent may have affected the results of the survey. If the respondent was having a “bad day” or was currently experiencing a period of dissatisfaction with their family, the results of both instruments may have been compromised. In both cases, the open-ended survey questions wherein the respondents provided a typed answer alleviated any of the concern for seemingly low scores. Many of these issues if not all could be avoided if the sample was larger. Future studies should consider this as an improvement to the work.

Finally, one issue of construct validity is the wording of the first open-ended survey question, “How often do you feel or express gratitude?” This question could be described as being “double-barreled” that is to say, two distinctly different answers could be provided to this question as feeling and expressing gratitude could be two different things.
Directions for Future Research

This study sought to determine if there is a relationship between gratitude and family satisfaction among college students. This was done by examining total scores on the Gratitude Questionnaire-Six and the Family Satisfaction Scale. A Pearson’s Correlation revealed a significant positive relationship between these two scores. In addition to this finding, it was also found that the strength of the relationship is not significantly different based upon gender.

Prior to this study, no studies have examined the relationship between these two constructs. Future research may look at the relationship in terms of a broader sample. Students from multiple institutions across a variety of locations may be part of such studies. Another direction for research pertaining to these two topics may be to examine causality. Future research might shed important light on which of the two constructs causes or influences the other and if manipulating the causing agent could produce increased levels of the other.

The open-ended survey data collected for this study was in no way sufficient to identify any tangible themes. However, the wide variety of way in which respondents viewed family satisfaction as well as the variety of feelings expressed about gratitude could serves as a basis for future inquiry. Those wishing to engage in such research could use qualitative methods based upon what has been provided in this study to illicit valuable themes to be used in constructing a new instrument to examine the relationship between the two constructs.
Findings of the study also have provided insight into how communication with family members may play a role in affecting the level of satisfaction family members have with one another. Both frequency and method of communication between college students and their family members may be an avenue of research into improving the quality of familial relationships. Treatment of the population and perhaps other groups may indeed be more successful when examining the communication habits of those being treated.

The next step for research pertaining to the constructs examined by this study should be to explore causality by comparing gratitude based interventions with clinical practices already proven to increase family satisfaction. Finally, if gratitude is ever proven to be a causal factor for family satisfaction, future studies could be conducted which examine the viability of using gratitude based interventions to improve the level of college students or any other population. Research into both of the constructs has been successful over a variety of demographic groups. Further research into the relationship between them among a variety of demographics could provide insight into the development of simple, affordable and meaningful treatment options for those who seek to improve familial relationships.

**Conclusion**

This study contributes to the body of scholarly work in the areas of gratitude, family satisfaction and well-being as they pertain to counseling and counselor education. This correlational study, one of the first to do so, examined the relationship between gratitude and family satisfaction among college students. The findings of the study which
demonstrate a significant positive relationship between the two constructs contribute to the literature pertaining to not only gratitude and family satisfaction, but also well-being and positive psychology at large. As it has been established by previous research, both of the constructs have been associated positively with overall life satisfaction or well-being (Froh et al., 2008; Froh, Yurkewicz, & Kashdan, 2009; Kashdan et al., 2006; Lambert, Fincham et al., 2009; McCullough et al., 2004; Michalos et al., 2005; Neugarten et al., 1961; Olson et al., 1989; Toseland & Rasch, 1979-1980; Vernon et al., 2009). The present study demonstrates the relationship between these constructs as being positive which suggests that the interaction between the two may in some way affect one’s level of well-being.

Furthermore, the study provides a starting point for further research into the relationship of the two constructs. Such research may lead to practical application of meaningful practice which may improve the condition of not only college students but other populations with respect to their familial relationships. This supports the assertion of Nelson (2009), who proposed the use of gratitude based interventions as a means of treatment for a variety of mental and emotional disorders.

Although the intent of Nelson’s work was directed at working with individuals, the findings of this study suggest that such interventions may indeed be of value to those who treat families as well as individuals. The present study further suggests that the relationship between gratitude and family satisfaction is similar to the description of the relationship between family satisfaction and overall life satisfaction as provided by Olson et al. who stated the two were “interwoven and interrelated (1989, p.186). Aside from
causality, this study echoes that description in respect to gratitude and family satisfaction. Indeed, the two constructs are related to one another in a way which would suggest that future research is applicable to determine any level of causality. If causality is able to be demonstrated as this study implies, that is to say gratitude causes family satisfaction (or vice versa), then the “bottom-up” view discussed by Diener (1984) who stated that the quality of life, or in this case the perceived quality of one’s family life would be affected by the accumulation of experiences which combine together to reflect one’s own level of family satisfaction.
References


Beach Center on Disabilities. (2006). *Family Quality of Life Scale*. Beach Center on Disabilities, Lawrence, KS, USA.


Pearson, K, (1900). On the Criterion that a given System of Deviations from the Probable in the case of a Correlated System of Variables is such that it can be reasonably supposed to have arisen from Random Sampling. *Philosophical Magazine*, 50(5), 157-175.


Tellegen, A. (1979). *Differential Personality Questionnaire*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Minnesota, Duluth, MN.


Appendix A: IRB Approval

A determination has been made that the following research study is exempt from IRB review because it involves:

Category 2. research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior

Project Title: Exploring the Relationship Between Gratitude and Family Satisfaction among College Students

Primary Investigator: Michael A Williams, Sr.

Co-Investigator(s):

Advisor: Thomas Davis

Department: Counseling and Higher Education

Rebecca Cale, AAB, CIP 4/2/12
Office of Research Compliance

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved (as an amendment) prior to implementation.
Appendix B: Permission to Use Instruments

Michael A. Williams, Sr MSEd

From: Michael A. Williams, Sr MSEd <michaelw@westga.edu>
Sent: Friday, January 20, 2012 12:57 PM
To: 'Mike McCullough'
Subject: RE: Use of GQ6

Thank you very much. I may end up sending you a formal request in order to satisfy my committee. Could you point me in the direction of any resources for scoring it?

Michael

From: Mike McCullough [mailto:mikem@miam.edu]
Sent: Friday, January 20, 2012 12:55 PM
To: 'Michael A. Williams, Sr MSEd'; maw@ucdavis.edu
Subject: RE: Use of GQ6

You are more than welcome to use the scale. Good luck in your work!

"M"

From: Michael A. Williams, Sr MSEd [mailto:michaelw@westga.edu]
Sent: Friday, January 20, 2012 12:49 PM
To: mikem@miam.edu; maw@ucdavis.edu
Subject: Use of GQ6

Gentlemen,

I am writing to initially discuss using your Instrument, The GQ6 in a study I am developing for my dissertation as part of my degree requirements for the Ph.D. in Counselor Education at Ohio University. Although currently in development stage(l plan to propose next month, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding my study which preliminarily is entitled "Exploring the Correlation Between Gratitude and Family Satisfaction Among College Students." I look forward to hearing from you. I apologize for the duplicate email Dr. Emmons, I knew Dr. McCullough had changed positions. Sorry about that.

Best regards,

Michael A. Williams, Sr MSEd
University of West Georgia
678-839-6125

Spam
Not spam
Forget previous vote
Permission to Use Family Satisfaction Scale

I am pleased to give you permission to use the Family Satisfaction Scale in your research project, teaching or clinical work with couples or families. You may either duplicate the materials directly or have them retyped for use in a new format. If they are retyped, acknowledgement should be given regarding the name of the instrument, the developers’ names, and Life Innovations.

In exchange for providing this permission, we would appreciate a copy of any papers, theses or reports that you complete using the Family Satisfaction Scale. This will help us to stay abreast of the most recent developments and research regarding this scale. We thank you for your cooperation in this effort.

In closing, I hope you find the Family Satisfaction Scale of value in your work with couples and families. I would appreciate hearing from you as you make use of this inventory.

Sincerely,

David H. Olson, Ph.D.
Appendix C: Informed Consent and Instrument

Informed Consent

By continuing further you acknowledge your consent to participating in this ANONYMOUS survey. No data will be collected to identify you.

Ohio University Consent Form

Title of Research: Exploring the correlation between Gratitude and Family Satisfaction Among College Students.

Researchers: Michael A. Williams, Sr MBEd, PC

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the procedures, purposes, benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to participate in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study:

This study is being done in order to fulfill partial requirements for the Ph.D. in Counselor Education at Ohio University. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a short survey consisting of demographic related questions and 15 topical questions. Your participation in the study will last about fifteen (15) minutes.

Risks and Discomforts: No risks or discomforts are anticipated.

Benefits:

This study is important to society because it may reveal paths to the development of treatment interventions regarding mental health. You may not benefit, personally by participating in this study.

Confidentiality and Records:

No identifying information will be requested. Therefore, you will remain anonymous with regard to your responses. Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review board, a committee that oversees the research at OU.

Compensation:

Although no compensation will be provided to you by the author of this study, you may qualify for some form of academic credit. If such is offered or arranged by your professor, you should also be given other non-research options to gain the credit.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Michael A. Williams, Sr
mcd7410@ohio.edu
or the advisor of the study
Dr. Thomas E. Davis at davist@ohio.edu

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Shewok, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University. (740) 593-0654.

By agreeing to participate in this study, you are agreeing that:

• you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
• you have been informed of potential risks and have been explained to your satisfaction.
• you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study
• you are 18 years of age or older
• your participation in this research is completely voluntary
• you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

(1) By checking this box I attest that I am at least 18 years of age, I have read the informed consent document and wish to participate in this survey.

Demographics

This survey seeks responses from college students. Are you currently a college student?

[ ] Yes
[ ] No

[Signature]

5/12/2012 2:44 PM
Please indicate your class standing

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Class</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Over 24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate your age

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over 24</td>
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Please indicate your gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are you a first generation College student?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate your race or ethnicity

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Two or More Races

In which college is your major housed?

- Education
- Arts & Sciences
- Business
- Fine Arts
- Health Sciences & Professions
- Engineering and Technology
- Communication
- Undeclared
- More than one College

Gratitude

Please answer the next 6 questions using the scale of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Neutral, Slightly Agree, agree and Strongly Agree.

1. I have so much in life to be thankful for.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Slightly Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Slightly Agree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

2. If I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Slightly Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Slightly agree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

3. When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Slightly Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Slightly agree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
I am grateful to a wide variety of people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Slightly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate how much you agree with the statement below.

As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Slightly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate how much you agree with the statement below.

Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Slightly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family Satisfaction

Please answer the next 10 Questions on a scale of Very Dissatisfied, Somewhat Dissatisfied, Generally Satisfied, Very Satisfied Extremely Satisfied

How satisfied are you with:

The degree of closeness between family members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Generally Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Extremely Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How satisfied are you with:

Your family’s ability to cope with stress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Generally Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Extremely Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How satisfied are you with:

Your family’s ability to be flexible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Generally Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Extremely Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How satisfied are you with:

Your family’s ability to share positive experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Generally Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Extremely Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How satisfied are you with:

The quality of communication between family members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Generally Satisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Extremely Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How satisfied are you with:
### Qualitative Questions

Please respond to the following items regarding Gratitude and Family Satisfaction.

In 2-3 sentences (200 Characters) please answer the following question: How often do you express or feel gratitude?  

In 2-3 sentences (200 Characters) please answer the following question: What do you feel most contributes to your family satisfaction?  

How often do you communicate with your family?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Less than Once a Month</th>
<th>Once a Month</th>
<th>2-3 Times a Month</th>
<th>Once a Week</th>
<th>2-3 Times a Week</th>
<th>Daily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do you most often communicate with your family?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Video-conferencing (e.g. Skype)</th>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>In person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion
Thank you for participating in this survey. If you wish to be informed of the results of the study please send an email with "Study" as the subject line to mw274109@ohio.edu.