

Spousal Satisfaction in Entrepreneurial Couples:  
The Role of Congruity of Family and Business Goals

THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study was to look at the influence of the congruity of goals and perceived success of goals of entrepreneurs and spouses of entrepreneurs on the life and family satisfaction of the spouses. Four potentially confounding variables, presence of children, hours worked per week in the business, stressful life events, and cash-flow problems in the household and business, were also assessed regarding their influence on spousal life and family satisfaction.

Data for the current study were collected as part of a larger study on family businesses, the 1997 and 2000 National Family Business Surveys (1997/2000 NFBSs). Families where the self identified household manager and the business manager were the same person were excluded leaving (n=417 in 1997) and (n=196 in 2000). The Family APGAR (Smilkstein, 1978), a five question measure assessing family satisfaction, and a single item overall quality of life question were used as the dependent variables for the study. Questions regarding most important long range family and business goal and success in achieving that goal were used as the primary independent variables. Congruity within these variables was determined.

The results of the present study indicate that congruity of success of goals was a greater predictor of spousal life and family satisfaction than congruity of the actual goals in entrepreneurial families. In addition, presence of children and cash-flow problems in the household were predictive of life and/or family satisfaction in certain circumstances and were consistent with previous research. Implications and recommendations for future research are presented.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents and my husband. Thank you Mom and Dad for instilling the importance of education in me, for your unfailing pride and encouragement. I love you both and appreciate everything you have given me. Thank you, Derek for consistently asking what would make me happiest. Thank you also for encouraging and enabling me to follow my dreams. Our yesterday, today and tomorrow start here!

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Family businesses continue to set the foundation for the American financial system, generating billions for the economy and millions of jobs for the rest of the country. Although there are no definitive national statistics on the number of family businesses, a common estimate is that over 90 percent of the 20 million businesses in the United States are considered to be “family businesses”; businesses that are owned and operated by a single family (Pine & Mundale, 1983, Rosenblatt, de Mik, Anderson, & Johnson, 1985, Small Business Administration (SBA),2002). It is also believed that family-owned businesses employ the majority of people in the United States and account for roughly 40 percent of the gross national product (Beckhard & Dryer, 1983). In addition, about one-third of the annual Fortune 500 largest businesses are either family-owned or family-controlled (SBA, 2002).

Over the years, there has been a great deal of research on the characteristics of entrepreneurs, what goes into creating a successful business venture, and job satisfaction among individuals who work for companies versus those who are self-employed. Unfortunately, however, there has been little research to indicate how the pursuit of “the American dream” impacts the family

and, more specifically, the relationship between the entrepreneur and his/her spouse. Ward (1987) discussed the importance of the family to the entrepreneur with regard to the likelihood of setting common goals, the sacrifice necessary for success, and the notion of investing in the company with hopes for future rewards. He notes that the family is the business owners' greatest resource. It provides both the entrepreneur and the company with employees, ideas, new blood. In addition, the family also gives the owner good reason to work and achieve success. With this in mind, some researchers have looked at the value and importance of having a strong support network (cheerleading section) prior to starting a new venture. In rank of biggest supporters, the spouse is often number one on that list (Dunn & Liang, 2001; Hirsch & Peters, 1995).

Due to the close nature between husband and wife and the interrelationship between work life and family life, it seems inevitable that the spouse of an entrepreneur will be directly impacted by the family business. Thus, a number of questions come to mind regarding the impact of owning and operating a family business on the marital relationship. To begin with, at the outset of the business venture or the marriage (if the business was already established), did both individuals share in their vision and goals for the business and their future, or did they differ? How often do the spouses end up working for the business and was that determined/discussed ahead of time? Is there a difference between being a co-preneur and working for the business without

direct ownership? How does the couple establish division of labor at work/home? How does each spouse handle stress, job/financial insecurity, instability in the workplace? Is there a higher incidence of marital instability or divorce within entrepreneurial families? How do children impact the spousal relationship and/or the business?

Rosenblatt et al. (1985) conducted a series of in depth interviews with 59 families who were business owners in Minnesota. Of these businesses, 95 percent were owned and operated primarily by men. With this in mind, they looked at the definition of “family business” and molded it to include the family members on whom the business had a significant impact; regardless of whether or not the family member worked directly for the business (received a paycheck) or not.

Through their interviews, they found that in more than 70 percent of their sample, the wife of the entrepreneur either was currently or had been involved in the business in a full time or part time role since the conception of the company. Additionally, they went on to report that regardless of whether or not the spouse was directly involved with the business, she indirectly supported the business through her efforts at home; taking on more of the responsibilities and chores at home since her husband was absent much of the time as well as forgoing expenditures for both personal and household items because the money was being used for the business. Even wives who worked for the business tended to

carry out more of the household chores. They did find that some of the women they interviewed, although not all, felt neglected, disappointed, and unappreciated.

#### Statement of the Problem / Significance of the Study

It is clear that the spouse of an entrepreneur plays a major role in the development and maintenance of a family business. With over 20 million businesses to choose from, that is over 20 million spouses that are directly impacted by their family's business. Although there is no complete data on the number of couples working together, we do know that there is a significant chance that when an individual owns and operates a company, there is a high likelihood that his/her spouse will be involved to some extent.

There is a great deal of data surrounding the characteristics of the entrepreneur and his/her motivations behind operating a company. Unfortunately, there is little to no information about the characteristics and motivations of the spouse. Studies have indicated that common characteristics of entrepreneurs include high achievement drive, action oriented, internal locus of control, tolerance for ambiguity, moderate risk taking, commitment, optimism, opportunistic, initiative, independence, commitment/tenacity or some combination of one or more of these traits (Liang & Dunn, 2002). With regard to motivation, many entrepreneurs are driven by a desire to gain control over their lives/independence, to get profits/financial rewards, to enjoy what they are doing,

to achieve their personal goals/recognition, and to make a difference/contribute to society (Liang & Dunn, 2002). With these characteristics in mind, is important to determine if spouses of entrepreneurs have compatible characteristics and motivations. It would also be important to know whether or not the dyad maintain goals that are congruent with each other.

This study will take an initial look at the congruity of business and family goals of both the “business manager” and the “household manager”. Using data from a longitudinal, nationally representative data set, the 1997 & 2000 National Family Business Surveys (NFBS), this study will generate information about the alignment of responses regarding family and business goals between the entrepreneur and spouse. This study will also be able to determine the variability of perceived success of such goals between the dyad. In addition, we will be able to look at the family and life satisfaction of the “household manager” over time. With so little research focused on the dynamic of the spouse, this study will contribute greatly to the knowledge base of the entrepreneurial family. It is crucial that future research on entrepreneurial families include not only spouses, but all members of the family when conducting research on family businesses.

#### Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed by the current study. These questions were used as a guide throughout both the study and the review

of literature. The following questions also indicate how wide open this field really is and the need for additional research in this area.

1. Does congruity of family and business goals influence spousal satisfaction as defined by family and life satisfaction assessments?

2. Does congruity of perceived success of family and business goals influence spousal satisfaction as defined by family and life satisfaction assessments?

3. Does presence of children influence spousal satisfaction as defined by family and life satisfaction assessments?

4. Does number of hours worked per week in the business influence spousal satisfaction in an entrepreneurial household?

5. Do stressful life events influence spousal satisfaction in an entrepreneurial household?

6. Do business or household cash flow problems influence spousal satisfaction as defined by family and life satisfaction assessments?

#### Variables

The current study looked at the following variables. The independent variables included: congruity of family and business goals of both the household manager and the business manager and the perceived degree of success with regard to achievement of those goals. Presence of children, number of hours worked per week in the business, stressful life events, and evidence of cash flow



problems in the household or business also were used as independent variables. These independent variables were correlated with the dependent variable: the household manager's family and life satisfaction. The study looked at these variables using data collected in 1997 as well as data collected in 2000.

#### Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used in this study:

*Household Manager.* Self proclaimed by the respondents in the data set, this individual is primarily responsible for taking care of the household.

*Business Manager.* Self proclaimed by the respondents in the data set, this individual is the business owner and operator of the family business. This is the primary entrepreneur in the study.

*Family Business.* This term will be used to describe any business that is owned and/or operated by one or more persons in a family. The family business will include all individuals in a family that are either directly or indirectly impacted by the company, whether they are paid employees or not.

*Co-preneur.* A couple who share ownership, commitment and responsibility for a company; those where both parties contribute labor, are on the payroll and consider the business their primary vocation.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Due to the limited data about the impact of family business ownership on the satisfaction of spouses, this review will address issues that relate to the current study either directly or indirectly. Previous studies regarding business start-ups and their impact on the family, co-preneurs and dual income earners, issues about marital equity, stress as a result of financial instability, and the impact of children are a few of the topics that will be addressed in this review of literature. Each of these headings will assist the reader in learning more about various aspects of owning a family business.

#### Theoretical Background

The foundation of this study will be based on two theoretical schools of thought; the first being that of systems theory and the second being social exchange theory. According to Rosenblatt et al. (1985), “from a systems theory perspective, all families have patterned ways of interacting, patterned roles, patterns of coming in contact and out of contact” (p.5). Regardless of the setting, a family will interact with one another the same way. Tensions or problems may arise or be exacerbated when the family must relate to each other in a business environment as well as a family setting (Beckhard & Dyer, 1983). The way in

which a family interacts with one another may be entirely appropriate in one area of their lives, but not in another.

Additionally, this theory supports the interweaving notion that people and events occur within a context of mutual influence and interaction. It suggests that if one member of the family is experiencing a change or a stressor, then that will impact each member of the family regardless of gender. Thus, according to this theory, the dynamic nature of business ownership could have a significant impact on the marital relationship within the family. Rosenblatt et al. (1985) suggest that patterns or experiences that may develop at work can carry over into the home environment. This includes the interactions that will occur at home with the family and the spouse. The most common of these patterns is when the entrepreneur introduces the “boss” role into the home. In current US society, marital relationships have become far more equitable than in the past. The equality and mutual respect displayed in the family system may not work or be appropriate within the business system. Even if the spouse does not work for the company, s/he may not appreciate the overlap of authority their spouse may bring home from the office.

Research has supported a connection between job satisfaction and marital and family life suggesting that there is reciprocity between them (Voydanoff, 1990). “Work and family life influence each other in a circular or feedback fashion” (Larson, Wilson, & Beley, 1994, p.139). For example,

demands at the office, mental absorption of work concerns while out of the office, work overload, and the psychological challenges of work can identify itself through less energy and involvement with others at home (Small & Riley, 1990; Staines, 1980). According to this theory, anxiety or stress over the business could create similar feelings in the spouse. Past research has indicated that husbands' job stress has an adverse effect on the emotional health of their wives (Rook, Dooley, & Catalano, 1991).

Rosenblatt et al. (1985) discuss the risk of carryover from one system to another in terms of goals. Although many of the goals of family and business may be similar (effective communication, rules about leadership, and rules for developing and enforcing rules), the goals for a family are inevitably different than the goals for an enterprise. Business goals may include things like increased profits, productive employees, and a growing share of the marketplace while family goals will likely include issues regarding self worth of individuals in the family, experiencing personal competence, and establishing a sense of comfort and belonging within the family. Thus, with the differing of so many individual goals, it is not practical to anticipate that what keeps a business viable is also what works for a family.

With the possibility of increased tensions and stress that business ownership ensues, the second theoretical basis underlying this study is that of social exchange theory. This theory purports that couples work together based

on an attempt to establish perceived equality among the relationship. Marital satisfaction is thought to be at its optimal when both partners feel they are offering an equal amount to the relationship and their immediate environment. This theory is beneficial because it encourages a stronger look at marital satisfaction and business ownership in terms of either offering greater flexibility regarding division of labor at home and work or the development of frustration and negativity among the spouse who is not running the business.

This theory directly addresses the questions regarding why some marriages survive family business ownership and others do not. The framework of this theory rests on relationship development, satisfaction, and stability of three components, rewards and costs, equity and equality, and comparison levels and comparison levels of alternatives. Individuals in the dyadic relationship work to maximize rewards and decrease costs of being in the relationship. If this delicate balance can be met, then both parties will express greater satisfaction with one another. As previously discussed, however, spouses often end up taking on additional responsibilities around the house while entrepreneurs invest more time and resources with the business. This, along with other examples, may impact a spouse's perception of greater costs and fewer rewards especially if financial gain is too far in the future.

The second component of this theory states that both partners will seek ways to maintain both equity and equality within the relationship. As discussed

earlier, this aspect of social exchange may be challenged when and if a spouse overlaps business systems and patterns with family systems and patterns and vice versa. Rosenblatt et al. (1985) discuss some common issues, i.e. when a husband comes home and maintains his “boss role” with his wife or a wife’s desire for equality with business decisions or status when the husband feels uncomfortable discussing sensitive business topics. Both situations can cause disruption, conflict, and frustration and may result in a disturbance of a prior sense of equity and equality within the relationship.

The third component of social exchange theory is based on comparison of one’s perceived reality to their desired reality. The theory suggests that individuals bring expectations into relationships based on what one would expect from a different relationship. If the balance of costs and rewards compares favorably to those expectations then the relationship will be considered satisfying and will remain stable over time. In a family business, if one individual in the dyad has a different goal or vision of the future than the other, this could greatly disrupt a positive comparison. A wife may not have “signed up” to be a single mother while her husband is focused on the business. This train of thought may result in a spouse choosing an alternative choice like asking her husband to leave the business or ultimately leaving her husband for a different lifestyle.

Both family systems theory and social exchange theory offer a firm foundation for this study. They enable a train of thought to filter through both the

review of literature and the study itself. As this field develops and more studies are conducted, both theories offer insight into the many “why” questions that will inevitably be asked.

### Spousal Roles and Tension within the Family Business

Perhaps the most important body of research on this topic was conducted by Rosenblatt et. al (1985), who encapsulated the lives of a number of families in their 1985 study. They interviewed 59 families who owned and/or operated family businesses that were identified through the Yellow Pages in Minnesota. The team did not consider physicians, attorneys, social workers, counselors, and other professionals because they felt the requirement of formal education limited the extent that other members of the family without the same education could work in the business. Although the study was qualitative in nature, the researchers uncovered a number of repetitive issues with each of the participants in the study. They uncovered many truths about the business world that are so vital to the American way of life. In writing this book, the first page of the preface discusses how understudied the families in “family businesses” have been. “It is as though a crucial part of the lives of millions of people were invisible” (p.xi).

Using this dilemma as a primary drive and focus of the book, the authors underlying theory focused on “the interplay, overlap, intermingling and connection of the family system and business system” (p.xi). The first issue they address and possibly the most common (occurring in roughly 90 percent of their

sample) was tension. It appeared that tension was caused by a number of factors. One issue had to do with the difficulty in leaving roles, patterns, and office behaviors back with the business. It is a challenge for many to switch roles once they are back at home with their families. It seems a common quote for wives may be, "I'm not your secretary." Here is a quote from a husband with regard to his wife's desire to pull equal rank at the office.

"My wife has a tendency to want to be the boss in business always. It doesn't go too well with some of the other employees, with the result that I haven't had her here the last couple or three years. I prefer not to have her around when the other people are here. It causes problems" (p.28).

Some other topics addressed in the book include working out division of labor, fairness of compensation and work load, family togetherness (be it too much or too little), and setting boundaries. Although there are some definite challenges to being a family business owner, the authors also uncovered some commonly held advantages. These advantages included freedom, independence and control, financial benefits, prestige and pride, creativity, and the improvement of family relationships. Using some of the themes from this book, the following research touches and/or confirms many of the ideas brought forward through this study.

As discussed in Rosenblatt (1985), tension and conflict styles are an important aspect of a family business. In a study by Danes et al. (2000) they looked at impact of conflict style and severity of conflict on the quality of life of



farm owning families. They drew a random sample from the USDA's (United States Department of Agriculture) Agricultural Statistics Service for Minnesota. The sample included farm businesses of all types from every county in the state. Data were collected via questionnaire form from both husbands and wives of 206 couples. According to the researchers, "conflict is inevitable whenever there is an environment in which boundaries between systems and subsystems are not clear" (p.262). Farm owning families are often included in entrepreneurial studies because their economic survival is reliant on their business.

Campbell (1981) questioned individuals about the meaning of "quality of life". He found the two most highly ranked responses included economic security and family life, two clearly interlinked aspects of an entrepreneurial household. Danes et al. (2000) broke down this concept to include values, beliefs, attitudes around finances and family life, holding to the belief that compatibility of these values and beliefs is what constitutes the foundation for a strong relationship between couples. They hypothesized that severity of conflict (made up of assessments measuring aggression, assertion, withdrawal, submission, denial, and adaptation) would result in a negative relationship with quality of life (as determined by level of living and family life).

Results did, in fact, suggest a statistically significant negative correlation between severity of conflict and quality of life. More specifically, conflict resolution styles appeared to have a strong impact on severity of conflict and

thus on quality of life for both men ( $R^2=.25$ ) and women ( $R^2=.41$ ) with stronger results for women. Additionally they found that both the social indicator (satisfaction with family life as a whole) and the economic indicator (satisfaction with level of living) held relatively equal weight with regard to quality of life. Based on this study, it appears levels of conflict and how they are resolved have a significant impact on quality of life, thus stressing the importance of balance among an entrepreneurial household.

Continuing to use the random subsample of data gathered on 206 couples within farm families in Minnesota, Amarapurkar and Danes (2005) studied the relationships between business tensions, relationship conflict quality and satisfaction with spouse. The study was designed using education, off-farm employment, farm size, locus of control and decision involvement discrepancy as the independent variables and business tensions, relationship conflict quality and satisfaction with the business owning spouse as the dependent variables. According to Gottman and Krokoff's (1989) relationship problem solving model, spousal satisfaction is mediated by partner's conflict management strategies.

With this in mind, they hypothesized that the more constructive the relationship conflict quality, the higher the level of reported spousal satisfaction. Additionally, they hypothesized that the higher the level of business tensions reported, the lower the level of spousal satisfaction. Results indicated that both relationship conflict quality and business tensions were significant predictors of

spousal satisfaction. Satisfaction with the business owning spouse as reported by husbands was higher when the couple engaged in more constructive relationship conflict strategies. With regard to business tensions, they found that the higher the business tension, the lower the satisfaction with the spouse as reported by the wives but not the husbands.

### Business Start-up and Families

These previous studies focused on family businesses that have been in existence for a while. Dunn and Liang published a few studies that focused on the impact of starting a new business venture on the family and the entrepreneur. In one study (2001) using a sample of entrepreneurs from 65 retail and service firms that had fewer than 50 employees and were less than five years old across the United States, the entrepreneur was asked a series of questions. Results indicated that although many felt that sales were higher than predicted, they found that their profits were lower than originally expected (indicating some concern over economics). They also indicated that while 80% of the entrepreneurs felt that their expectations about being happier were met, they did not feel that their families' expectations were met. Of the sample, 39.6% agreed that their relationship with their spouse was strained as a result of starting the business and slightly over 50% felt the business had an impact on the relationship. Among the 58 married entrepreneurs, 6.9% had divorced, 3.4% were separated, and 3.4% were estranged. Of those who were married, 80% felt

there was no effect on their marriage although some indicated that it had put strain on their marriage while others indicated that it had actually strengthened their marriage. Results of this study indicate that divorce among entrepreneurial couples may not be as high as expected.

In another article by Dunn and Liang (2002), the researchers looked at 135 entrepreneurs and asked questions pertaining to expectations, reality and willingness to start again from the perspective of the entrepreneur, and their perceptions of their spouse. Of the entrepreneurs who started a business less than five years ago, the results indicated that 46.5% would start again, while 50% would not. Of those who would start again, the results showed that they had lower expectations regarding their families' happiness versus those who would not start again. Additionally, 59.04% of those who would start again felt their spouse was happier, while 40.96% felt their spouse was not happier.

In a third study, Dunn and Liang (2003) looked at both the entrepreneur and the spouse. They designed two parallel questionnaires for the entrepreneur and their spouse and had senior and graduate students at a university interview a convenience sample of 53 entrepreneurial families in northern Louisiana. In order to guarantee independency, they did not mail out the questionnaires. Although this impacted the random nature of the sample, they felt that it was more important to ensure that the entrepreneur and the spouse filled out the questionnaires independently and simultaneously.

The framework of the questions surrounded the notion of a potential link between expectations and reality about new venture creation for entrepreneurs and their families. Variables surrounding this topic included business process, financial situation, family attitude, and impacts of family/spousal relationship. Specific variables related to marriage included divorce, estranged, etc.

Results of this study indicated that a little over half of the sample felt the business had no impact on their marriage and a little under half did. Most entrepreneurs and spouses agreed that starting the business was harder and took longer than expected. In spite of this, however, they reported that they had realistic expectations prior to starting the company. They also agreed that finding time for themselves and their families was problematic. The results also found that there was a definite split between couples who felt the business had no effect on their marriage and those who did. The individuals who were not happy, did not meet financial goals, did not feel better off, and had no time to spend with their families were more likely to feel the business had a negative impact on the marriage. Regardless, a majority of entrepreneurs stated that they would start a business again and believed their families would support them again. These studies were groundbreaking in that they were the only qualitative measures that directly assessed the relationship between business ownership and some aspect of the impact it had on the marital relationship.

## Work/Family Roles

Another important and often referenced study was conducted by Marshack in 1994. She studied the difference between dual career and co-preneurs. Marshack (1994) used self-report inventories and cross-sectional survey methodology to compare responses of 30 co-preneurs and 30 dual earner couples. Participants were all volunteers from the Chamber of Commerce listings in two small communities in Washington.

She reported that the literature on dual career couples shows that these couples struggle to establish equality within their relationships, that wives shoulder more of the domestic responsibility, that they are no more dissatisfied with their relationships than the general population, that their marital satisfaction is based more on their perceived equity in the relationship than on equality, and that relationship satisfaction is highest among both partners when both feel their careers are supported by their spouse. Unfortunately, there is currently no list of traits that are associated with co-preneurs. It is clear to see, however, how social exchange theory could produce insights regarding the marital satisfaction of co-preneurs as well as dual career couples. Results of her study indicated that based on sex-role orientations, co-preneurs divided household responsibilities in a fairly traditional manner whereas dual career couples tended to be more androgynous. She found that 80% of the co-preneurial husbands took on a stereotypical male role while 76% of wives took on a stereotypical female role.

Marshack (1994) defined marital equity as a way to measure how satisfied each spouse was with the division of responsibilities. She found that there was a high level of satisfaction among all four groups even though the actual division was quite disparate, especially for co-preneurs. This suggests that regardless of the fact that the division of household responsibilities may not be equal, they were perceived to be fair and reasonable. Both types of couples were generally happy with the relationship. She also found that husbands tended to work more hours than their wives, leaving more time for the wives to complete household tasks. In general, both dual career couples and co-preneurial couples were satisfied with their relationships.

In support of past research, Hochschild (1989) found that regardless of the movement of women into the workplace; there has not been a significant change in family roles. Stoner et al. (1990) also examined the work-family role conflict as experienced by women. They found that time pressure, family size, support, job satisfaction, and marital and life satisfaction were important factors that impact the work-family role conflict.

In another study by Lee et al. (2006) they looked at the relationship between the management activity of married women within family businesses and their perceived well being controlling for work roles, family context, personal and financial resources. Using data from the 1997 National Family Business Survey, a national probability sample of 14,000 households, they focused on a

subsample of 545 married women who were self-proclaimed household managers within an family owned business. They identified four work roles, working only for the family business, working only for employer other than the family business, working for both the family business and another employer, and not working for pay in either situation.

Results of this study indicated that over 40% of the women worked for the family business while 27.5% worked for both the family business and another employer outside of the family business. Of the women who worked for both family and outside businesses, results suggested that they tended to have the highest number of children under the age of 18 and the lowest household income. When looking at success of achieving the most important family goal, they found women who did not work for pay were the most successful in achieving their goal while women who worked for an employer other than the family business reported the lowest level of achievement. Additionally, they found that success in achieving their family goal was a positive and significant determinant of the woman's perceived level of well-being. With regard to cash flow problems within the household, they found that women with a greater level of cash flow problems reported a lower level of perceived well being than those without cash flow problems. Ultimately, they concluded that "married women who work in business-owning families may be different from married women in typical



dual-earner families because they face constraints and barriers at the interface of the business and family systems” (p.539).

### Job Insecurity, Economic Hardship, and Stress

Another topic that often comes into play with regard to business ownership is the ongoing emotions surrounding job insecurity and the potential or reality of economic hardship. As noted in the previous study, household and/or business cash flow problems can cause stress and tension within the home. Larson, Wilson and Beley (1994) conducted a study that assessed the impact of job insecurity on marital and family relationships. This study looked at a stratified sample of 150 faculty and staff members and their spouses at a northwestern university. Results of this study showed that, regardless of employment status, job insecurity stress was negatively associated with both marital and family functioning for husbands and wives.

Conger and his colleagues (1990) developed and tested a general model of marital satisfaction based on their research of economic hardship. The model is based on the expectation that economic hardship could be associated with hostility (a negative behavior) and warmth/supportiveness (positive behavior). Ultimately, the model was designed to shed light on the effects of positive (warmth/support) versus negative (hostile) marital interactions on spouses' evaluation of their relationship (Conger *et al*, 1990). Using a sample of 76 white,

middle class couples from a Midwestern county, the researchers conducted a series of self report measures.

They hypothesized that economic hardship would promote interactional difficulties if the spouse psychologically experienced the stress that changes in their economic position may alter their standard of living. Males were hypothesized to react more negatively with regard to economic hardship. Results of their study indicated that economic strain did increase hostility and decrease warmth/supportiveness of husbands toward their wives. Additionally, both wives' hostility and/or warmth were highly correlated with husbands' hostility and/or warmth. They also found that economic strain had an indirect impact on marital quality through husband's behaviors. In addition, they found that economic hardship can have an adverse effect on marital quality and that couples with a strong marriage are less likely to suffer both personally and as a family.

In another study, Conger, *et al* (1993) looked at differences in the way husbands and wives react to undesirable life events. They recruited a sample of 451 white married couples from eight predominately rural Midwestern towns. The families consisted of the husband and wife as well as a child in the seventh grade and another sibling. Of the sample, 34% lived on farms. The study involved measures on the following domains: gender, psychological distress, undesirable / negative life events, and some socio-demographic information. Results of this study indicated that men reacted in a more hostile manner than wives in

response to sex-typed negative events including financial problems and income loss. Additionally, they found that women reported significantly higher levels of somatization, depression, anxiety, and hostility than husbands.

Since economic hardship, stress and instability are often associated with business ownership, it would be interesting to determine if these studies are consistent and generalizable among all marital situations that experience economic stressors. Additionally, it would be interesting replicate these studies with entrepreneurial couples. This information could be crucial to future research with regard to entrepreneurs and their marital quality. Conger's models could be used with a family business sample to investigate the importance of a hostile vs. supportive manner and the impact of a solid marriage from the outset of the venture.

#### Presence of Children and Couple Similarity

When looking to determine the impact of congruity of goals for spouses of entrepreneurs, it is important to take into account the role children play. Studies have shown that both number and age of children weigh heavily on the adjustment and life satisfaction of the mother (Abbott & Brody, 1985). It has also been suggested that wives shoulder a significantly larger share of the household duties across the lifespan of a marriage, peaking during the early child rearing years (Suitor, 1991; Cowen et al., 1985). Abbott and Brody narrowed the scope by finding that wives with only preschool aged males and wives with two male

children (an infant and a preschooler) reported lower levels of cohesion and satisfaction in their marriages compared with childless wives.

In a meta-analytic review on parenthood and marital satisfaction, Twenge et al. (2003) suggested that research supports that couples grow less satisfied with their marital relationship after having children. Current studies show that the presence of children increases chores, stress, and strain due to decreased time (Anderson et al. 1983). Children also are reported to interfere with couple companionship, the couple's sex life, cause an overload of social obligations, exacerbate inequality between partners, and create negative evaluations of marriage especially among non-traditional wives (Twenge et al. 2003). Across 90 studies, they found that fewer parents (45%) experienced marital satisfaction than nonparents (55%). Ultimately, they also concluded that women were more negatively affected by parenthood than men.

Clearly the presence of children seems to have a significant impact on marital satisfaction. Researchers have also been trying to determine whether or not couple similarity plays an important role as well. Because the current study focuses on the congruity of responses by both entrepreneur and spouse, it was necessary to determine if there is any indication that couple similarity comes into play with regard to satisfaction. Apparently, in spite of the growing number of studies on this topic, it remains an unresolved debate. Studies conducted by Blum and Mehrebian (1999) and Caspi and Herbener (1990) indicated that there

is a positive association between spousal similarity and marital satisfaction. In contrast, Gattis et al., (2004) and Watson et al., (2004) found that there was no such association.

In an attempt to offer additional research to the current pool, Gaunt (2006) studied 248 Jewish Israeli heterosexual couples who were recruited through day care and community child-health facilities. The following measures were considered: values, gendered personality traits, family role attitudes, sociodemographic characteristics, marital satisfaction, and positive and negative affect. In order to compute couple similarity, Gaunt looked at both the profile of the couples' ratings as well as the difference between their scores.

Results of this study indicated that for both husbands and wives, similarity on the gendered personality traits and values domains were strongly associated with satisfaction and affect. In addition, husbands' satisfaction was significantly associated with wives' satisfaction and vice versa. All in all, the data suggest that the greater the similarity between partners, the higher levels of marital satisfaction and the lower the levels of negative affect. Although gendered personality traits and values demonstrated the strongest correlation, role attitudes and religiosity domains were weaker and more inconsistent. The results of the study indicated that a profile-based similarity assessment tends to be a better measure of the correlation of relationship measures than score-based similarity.

## Summary

This review of literature covers a variety of topics closely associated with factors that come into play when looking at spousal satisfaction among entrepreneurial couples. Starting with the foundation that both family systems theory and social exchange theory offer, the variables mentioned above are all impacted by elements of these two theories. Beginning with tensions and conflict as a result of family business ownership, both theories touch on the potential for both satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction based on spousal roles within the family business as well as conflict resolution strategies within the couple. When looking at business start-ups, the research has briefly looked at issues including expectations and realities of business start-ups and potential strain on the marital relationship.

Another focal area of research investigated the differences between dual career families and co-preneurial couples and the establishment of work and family roles. Not surprisingly, the research has been consistent over time indicating that regardless of work role, women continue to bear a greater household burden than men. Additionally, the research indicated that traditional gender roles were found more often in co-preneurial households. Perhaps when couples work together, they are able to see how hard each other is working. This may increase respect for the spouse and offer a greater level of tolerance for his/her lack of participation with household duties. The division of labor may be

viewed differently when a spouse has insight into the rest of the person's day. The level of work may feel more equitable due to the knowledge of level of difficulty experienced during the work day. Perhaps dual career couples are more androgynous because the spouse can more defiantly say, "I work just as hard as you do", and the spouse may not know if this is accurate or not.

The intermingling between work and family in entrepreneurial families can be a backdrop for stress related to job insecurity and economic hardship. As the data suggest, regardless of employment status, job insecurity stress was negatively associated with both marital and family functioning for husbands and wives. Thus, in the unpredictable and often cash strained world of entrepreneurship, this could put an additional strain on the marital satisfaction. When looking at potential strains on the relationship, the data is fairly consistent that the presence of children on the marriage can decrease satisfaction. With all of these potential stressors, it appears that consistent conflict resolution strategies and potentially couple similarity may mediate marital satisfaction in entrepreneurial families.

As with most research, the studies presented in this review of literature suffered from several limitations. To begin with, there was a disproportionate number of studies conducted in Midwestern communities. This was quite surprising because companies exist across the United States. In addition, many of the studies focused on businesses in small communities. Perhaps small town

business owners are more likely to participate in studies of this nature, but it would be helpful to gain access and insight to family owned businesses in urban and suburban environments as well. More representative samples would have enabled greater generalization of the results in the studies presented.

Additionally, because this is such an understudied topic, not all of the studies discussed used valid and reliable inventories. For example, the studies conducted by Dunn and Liang used self report measures that were developed solely for the purpose of a single study. Additionally, they often relied on a perceived vision into the spouses' opinions and a memory of their thoughts and feelings up to five years prior to the study. This can pose a significant challenge when considering issues of selective memory and self report bias. Because two of the studies relied on interviews (both in person and over the phone) there is a possibility that some of the responses suffered from social desirability bias. A final limitation of the current research is that it generally does not take into account the dyad. The various studies often had feedback from both males and females, however, they did not question both the husband and wife. When researching topics regarding a married couple, it would be far more powerful to generate data based on responses from both individuals. Although not without its own share of limitations, the current study attempts to look at the relationship of responses between both members of the dyad. This is a rare, yet powerful opportunity to gain insight into both entrepreneur and spouse.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This study focused on the congruity of family and business goals and congruity of perceived success of family and business goals on spousal satisfaction. The methodology in this study was designed to answer the following six questions:

1. Does congruity of goals influence spousal satisfaction as defined by family and life satisfaction assessments?
  - a. Does congruity of business goals influence spousal satisfaction?
  - b. Does congruity of family goals influence spousal satisfaction?
2. Does congruity of perceived success of the chosen goal influence spousal satisfaction as defined by family and life satisfaction assessments?
  - a. Does congruity of perceived success of the business goals influence spousal satisfaction?
  - b. Does congruity of perceived success of family goals influence spousal satisfaction?
3. Does the presence of children influence spousal satisfaction in an entrepreneurial household?

4. Does number of hours worked per week in the business influence spousal satisfaction in an entrepreneurial household?

5. Do stressful life events influence spousal satisfaction in an entrepreneurial household?

6. Does the presence of cash flow problems in either the household or business influence spousal satisfaction in an entrepreneurial household?

#### Research Design

Data for the current study were collected as part of a larger study on family businesses, the 1997 and 2000 National Family Business Surveys (1997/2000 NFBSs). The 1997 NFBS used a household sampling frame that was limited to families in which at least one individual owned or managed a family business. Additionally, family business owners had to have owned the business for at least one year, worked at least six hours per week year round or a minimum of 312 hours a year on the business, be involved in the daily operations of the business, and lived with at least one other family member (Heck et al, 2006). The 2000 NFBS involved re-contacting the original sample three years later.

#### Procedures

The sample for the 1997 NFBS was purchased from Survey Sampling in Fairfield, Connecticut for financial purposes. Because the study was administered via telephone, the sampling frame consisted of those families who

were listed with a telephone number. In 1997, staff at the Iowa State University's Statistical Laboratory conducted 14,115 telephone interviews resulting in 1,116 eligible households. When the initial interviews were complete, the 1997 NFBS consisted of 794 participating households, a 71% response rate (Lee, Danes, & Shelly, 2006; Heck, Trent, & Kaye, 1999).

The families that qualified through the screening questionnaire were re-contacted for 30 minute follow-up telephone interviews – one for the business manager and one for the household manager. If the household manager and the business manager were the same person, a longer interview (45 minutes) that combined aspects of both questionnaires was used. After all interviews were complete, the final sample size was 708.

In order to look at family businesses over time, the researchers attempted to re-interview the 1997 NFBS sample three years later. With the goal of re-contacting the sample in 2000, the team mailed a one-page summary of the research results to the participants every six months. By following this process and updating the database of addresses as necessary, only 61 out of 708 households could not be located for the 2000 survey. An additional 93 households opted not to be interviewed in 2000. As a result, 553 households participated in the data that were gathered in 2000, just over 75% of the original 708 households surveyed in 1997 (Heck, 2000).

### Data Producing Sample

For the purposes of this study, a sub-sample of couples was drawn from the larger sample in 1997 (n=417) and in 2000 (n=196). The present study focused on the congruity of answers relating to goals and success of goals for both household managers and business managers. Therefore, households where the business manager and the household manager were the same individual were excluded. To be eligible for the present study, data had to be available from both the business manager and the household manager for each family.

The mean age of the household manager in 1997 was 44.38 years (SD = 10.90) and the mean age of the business manager was 46.79 years (SD = 11.33). In 1997, 98% of the sample (n=417) was married and in 2000, 94.4% of the sample (n=196) was married. In 1997 the mean household size was 3.47 (SD= 1.33), and 63% of the sample (n=417) had children, while in 2000, the mean household size was 3.11 (SD = 1.35). Unfortunately, there were no data available about the percent of families with children in the 2000 data. The sample was primarily Caucasian (95%), with 1.7% being African American and 3% being Asian, Native American or Other.

Data from 1997 indicated that 25% of the sample (n=417) made less than \$10,000 annually from the business and 75% made \$50,000 or less. Data were similar in 2000, with 21.8% of the sample (n=133) making less than \$10,000

annually from the business and a little over 75% making \$50,000 or less. In 1997, 90.7% of the business managers were male and in 2000, 85.2% of the business managers were male. Interestingly, 96.2% of the household managers were female in 1997 and 83.2% of the household managers were female in 2000. Almost four fifths of the businesses (79%) remained operational in 2000.

### Measures

Dependent Variables:  
Spousal Satisfaction

*Life Satisfaction:* In order to gather data on satisfaction measures, the researchers asked the household managers: “How satisfied are you with the overall quality of your life?” They were asked to respond using a 5-point scale (1 “very dissatisfied” to 5 “very satisfied”).

*Family APGAR:* In addition, they were asked a series of five satisfaction questions relating to their family. They were asked to rate the following questions on a 5-point scale (1 “Never” to 5 “Always”). Are you satisfied that you can turn to your family for help when something is troubling you? Are you satisfied with the way your family talks over things with you and shares problems with you? Are you satisfied that your family accepts and supports your wished to take on new activities and directions? Are you satisfied with the way your family expresses affection and responds to your emotions, such as anger, sorrow, or love? Are

you satisfied with the way your family and you share time together? (Smilkstein, 1978).

#### Independent Variables: Family Goals

Both the household manager and the business manager were asked to answer the following question regarding family goals. “Now think about long-range goals for your family. In your opinion, which one of the following is the most important long-range goal for your family?” Answers included “good family relationship, a balance between work and family, adequate family income, a secure future for younger family members, or secure retirement resources.” Then they were asked about how successful their family had been in achieving those goals. They were given a 5-point scale (1 “Not at all Successful” to 5 “Very Successful”) and were asked to choose.

#### Business Goals

Both the household manager and the business manager were asked to answer the following question regarding business goals. “Now think about long-range goals for [Business Name]. In your opinion, which one of the following is the most important long-range goal for the business?” Answers included “adequate financing, profit, a positive reputation, long-term viability, or growth”. Then they were asked how successful they felt the business had been in

achieving this goal so far. They were given a 5-point scale (1 “Not at all Successful” to 5 “Very Successful”) and were asked to choose.

#### Life Events

Household managers were given the top 10 stressful life events from the *Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS14)* (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). They were asked in both 1997 and 2000 whether they had experienced the death of a spouse, divorce, marital separation from mate, detention in jail or other institution, death of a close family member, major personal injury or illness, marriage, being fired at work, marital reconciliation, or retirement from work.

#### Cash Flow Problems

Household managers and business managers were both asked about the occurrence of cash flow problems in 1997 and 2000. The household managers were asked, “How often was there a cash-flow problem in the household?” Answers included: every week, every month, several times in [insert previous year], once or twice, and never in [insert previous year]. Business managers were asked the same question about cash-flow problems in the business and were given the same answers from which to choose.

#### Data Analysis

Data were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 15) for PC computer programs to analyze the data. Frequencies and descriptive statistics were conducted on all variables of interest:

family and business goals, perceived success of family and business goals, life and family satisfaction, presence of children, number of hours worked in the business, number of stressful life events, and cash flow problems in the business and the family.

Congruity was established by taking the most important long range goal (family or business) for the household managers and subtracting the most important long range goal (family or business) for the business managers. Congruity of goals was coded in SPSS as 0 = congruent and 1 = incongruent. This was done for the data in 1997 as well as 2000. Because perceived success of these goals was already coded 1-5, congruity of success was determined by subtracting the perceived success of the business managers from the perceived success of the household managers for both the business and family goals.

Correlations were computed between the individual questions that make up the Family APGAR and the SUM APGAR 2000 (See Table 3.1). Significant high correlations were found between SUM APGAR 2000 and can turn to family ( $r = .762$ ), family talks ( $r = .826$ ), family supports ( $r = .738$ ), family expresses affection ( $r = .782$ ), and family share time ( $r = .672$ ). Because of these high correlations, only the summed variable (SUM APGAR) was used in further analyses. The coefficient alpha reliability estimate for the SUM APGAR was .84 in 1997 and .81 in 2000.



	Quality of Life 2000	Sum APGAR 2000	Turn to Family	Family Talks	Family Supports	Expresses Affection	Family Share Time
Quality of Life 2000	1	.477**	.406**	.412**	.254**	.404**	.324**
Sum APGAR 2000		1	.762**	.826**	.738	.782	.672**
Turn to Family			1	.590**	.436**	.471**	.369**
Family Talks				1	.510**	.529**	.482**
Family Supports					1	.541**	.292**
Expresses Affection						1	.395**
Family Share Time							1

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

Table 3.1: Correlations Between APGAR Questions, Sum of APGAR, Quality of Life

The following analyses were conducted on the variables of interest. Initially, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to examine relationships between: congruity of family and business goals in 1997 and 2000, congruity of perceived success of family and business goals in 1997 and 2000, parental status, hours worked per week, death of a family member in 1997 and 2000, injury and/or illness in 1997 and 2000, cash flow problems in the household

and business in both 1997 and 2000, and spousal life and family satisfaction in 1997 and 2000.

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the relative influence of each of the variables of interest on life and family satisfaction in 1997 and 2000. Parental status, hours worked per week in the business, stressful life events, and household and business cash-flow problems were entered in step 1. Congruity of family and business goals were entered in step 2 and congruity of success of goals were entered in step 3.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The present study explored the role of congruity of family and business goals and success in achieving family and business goals among entrepreneurial couples on spousal satisfaction. Data were collected at two times, in 1997 and in 2000. Participants were questioned about their most important long range family goal and their most important long range business goal. They were given several options from which to choose. They were also asked about their perceived success in accomplishing these goals. The research questions suggest there may be a relationship between the congruity of the answers to these questions by both the entrepreneur and household manager and spousal satisfaction. It is possible that confounding variables including the existence of children, stressful life events, and cash-flow problems also may influence spousal.

This chapter is organized according to the research questions posed in Chapter 3. Prior to discussing the findings regarding these research questions, participants' responses to each of the variables of interest will be reported and discussed.

## Family and Business Goals and Perceived Success

While the primary focus of this study was on congruity of goals and their relationship with spousal satisfaction, learning about which goals were selected most often and the overall perception of success of these goals was of interest as well. The most frequently selected family goals by both the household manager and the business manager in 1997 and 2000 are presented in Table 4.1. The most important family goals were good family relationships, a balance between work and family, and one of the two security (future or retirement) options. Two of the goal options relating to security (secure future and secure retirement) were combined. Note the similarities and differences between the household manager and the business manager. It appears the business managers are almost equally split among the three options whereas most of the household managers selected good family relationships as their most important family goal.

<b>Long Range Family Goals</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Good Family Relationships</b>	<b>Work/Family Balance</b>	<b>Combined Security Future/Retirement</b>
<b>1997 Data</b>				
Household Manager	417	41.2%	18.9%	35.3%
Business Manager	412	31.0%	30.0%	32.5%
<b>2000 Data</b>				
Household Manager	111	55.9%	21.6%	19.8%
Business Manager	171	35.7%	25.7%	27.4%

Table 4.1: Long Range Family Goals

When looking at perceived success in achieving these goals, household managers scored slightly higher than business managers (See Table 4.2). In 1997, their mean score was 3.90 and in 2000 their mean score was 4.15. The business managers, however, averaged approximately 3.75 in their rating of family goal success at both time periods. This indicates both household and business managers viewed perceived success of goals as relatively high, which in turn may influence the household managers' life and family satisfaction.

<b>Success in Achieving Family Goal</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>% answered 3</b>	<b>% answered 4</b>
<b>1997 Data</b>					
Household Manager	415	3.9	.975	24.1%	38.3%
Business Manager	413	3.74	.909	26.6%	43.8%
<b>2000 Data</b>					
Household Manager	111	4.15	.855	18.9%	37.8%
Business Manager	171	3.79	.995	28.7%	36.3%

Table 4.2: Success in Achieving Family Goal (Scale of 1-5)

When looking at the most important long range goals for the business, three primary answers emerged as the most frequently selected (See Table 4.3). Both household managers and business managers were most concerned with establishing a positive reputation with customers, the profitability of the business,

and the long-term viability of the business. It is interesting to note that the entrepreneurs and their spouses agreed that having a positive relationship with customers was the most desired goal.

<b>Long Range Business Goals</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Positive Reputation w/ Customers</b>	<b>Profit</b>	<b>Long-term Viability</b>
<b>1997 Data</b>				
Household Manager	413	33.4%	22.8%	17.0%
Business Manager	416	35.8%	19.7%	22.4%
<b>2000 Data</b>				
Household Manager	111	37.8%	20.7%	19.8%
Business Manager	178	44.9%	22.5%	15.2%

Table 4.3: Long Range Business Goals

Answers regarding perceived success in achieving business goals followed a similar pattern to those for perceived success of family goals (See Table 4.4). Household managers rated success in achieving their business goal close to 4 out of a possible 5 at both time periods while business managers averaged around 3.75.

<b>Success in Achieving Business Goal</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>% answered 3</b>	<b>% answered 4</b>
<b>1997 Data</b>					
Household Manager	411	3.9	.975	24.1%	38.3%
Business Manager	417	3.74	.909	26.6%	43.8%
<b>2000 Data</b>					
Household Manager	111	3.95	.994	20.7%	41.4%
Business Manager	178	3.77	.979	28.1%	38.8%

Table 4.4: Success in Achieving Business Goal (Scale of 1-5)

When looking at the theoretical foundations for this study, it is possible that the lower average scores of the business managers for both family and business goal success may play a role in the way these individuals relate to their spouses. Both social exchange theory and systems theory offer possible underlying explanations for the discrepancy in the perceived success numbers. As social exchange theory suggests, a fear of unsuccessfully achieving both the family and business goals may impact the perceptions of the costs and rewards of business ownership on the marital relationship. In addition, social exchange theory could explain a fear of unsuccessfully balancing the crossover nature between family and business roles.

#### Congruity of Family and Business Goals and Perceived Success

Looking at the actual goals as well as perceived success of these goals offers insights into similarities and differences between the responses of the

household and business managers. Because this study was most concerned with the congruity of goals and the congruity of perceived success of said goals, the tables below offer frequencies about the congruity of goals. It is rare to find couple data, let alone couple data from a longitudinal perspective. By viewing the information in terms of congruity, this study took advantage of a unique opportunity to gain insight into this aspect of the dyadic relationship.

Table 4.5 presents data on the congruity of answers to long range family goals. In both 1997 and 2000, the data shows that just under one third of couples who responded chose the same long range family goal. The percentages remained relatively similar in 2000.

<b>Congruity</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>1997 Data</b>			
Congruent	417	135	32.4%
Incongruent		282	67.6%
<b>2000 Data</b>			
Congruent	94	30	31.9%
Incongruent		64	68.1%

Table 4.5: Congruity of Answers to Long Range Family Goals



When looking at perceived success of family goals, couples responses appeared to be similar. Table 4.6 shows that on average about 77% to 79% of couples felt either the same or about the same in their perceptions of perceived goal success in both 1997 and 2000. As the data in the table show, most people responded with a score of either 3 or 4 out of a possible 5.

<b>Congruity</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>1997 Data</b>	411		
Congruent		154	37.5%
Difference of 1		171	41.6%
Difference of 2		68	16.5%
Difference of 3		16	3.9%
Difference of 4		2	0.4%
<b>2000 Data</b>	94		
Congruent		28	29.8%
Difference of 1		44	46.8%
Difference of 2		19	20.2%
Difference of 3		1	1.1%
Difference of 4		2	2.1%

Table 4.6: Congruity of Answers to Success of Family

When looking at congruity of the long term business goal, the percentage of couples who shared the same goal was greater than the percentage who shared the same long term family goal. Data in Table 4.7 show that 37.6% and 40.4% of couples agreed on the long term business goal in 1997 and 2000 respectively. This is of particular interest because, as the literature suggests

(Dunn & Liang, 2001; Hirsch & Peters, 1995), spouses tend to be the biggest supporter of their partners in their business enterprises. The higher level of congruity of business goals suggests that couples may share greater similarity around the business goals and therefore may be more supportive of the family business.

<b>Congruity</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>1997 Data</b>			
Congruent	417	157	37.6%
Incongruent		260	62.4%
<b>2000 Data</b>			
Congruent	94	38	40.4%
Incongruent		56	59.6%

Table 4.7: Congruity of Answers to Long Range Business Goals

Data on the congruity of perceived success of the business goal is also higher than perceived success of the family goal (see Table 4.8). About 85% of couples either believed success of the business goal was exactly the same or very similar. As noted in Table 4.3, a high percentage of couples chose “a positive reputation with customers” as their long range business goal. It is important to note that there is greater congruity of business goals than family goals in the present study. It is possible couples have discussed their business

goals more often than their family goals because many entrepreneurs create a mission statement and business plan whereas fewer families may spend time developing a family mission statement and family plan.

<b>Congruity</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>1997 Data</b>	411		
Congruent		146	35.5%
Difference of 1		200	48.7%
Difference of 2		51	12.4%
Difference of 3		11	2.7%
Difference of 4		3	0.7%
<b>2000 Data</b>	94		
Congruent		36	38.3%
Difference of 1		44	46.8%
Difference of 2		12	12.8%
Difference of 3		1	1.1%
Difference of 4		1	1.1%

Table 4.8: Congruity of Answers to Success of Business Goals

#### Presence of Children and Life Events

In 1997, 67.6% of the sample (n=417) had children between the ages of 0-17 years old. The average number of children per household was 1.41 (SD = 1.30), with 21.3% having children under the age of 5 and 50.6% have children from 6 to 17 years of age.

When looking at stressful life events, only two of the 10 were of notable interest in the present study. Death in the family was experienced by 26.7% of the sample (n=417) in 1997 and by 43.4% of the sample (n=189) in 2000. The second stressful event experienced by a significant number of the sample was injury or illness. In 1997, 26.7% of the sample experienced either injury or illness and in 2000, 11.3% of the sample suffered from an injury of illness. Therefore, only these two variables were used in further analyses.

#### Hours Worked in Business and Cash Flow Problems

Forty three percent of the sample worked fewer than 10 hours per week in the business, 31.5% worked between 11 – 20 hours per week, 19.2% worked between 21-30 hours per week, and 6% worked 30 or more hours on the business. Three years later 79% of the businesses still were in operation.

Data on cash-flow issues as perceived by both the household manager and the entrepreneur in both 1997 and 2000 are presented in Table 4.9.

<b>Cash-Flow Problems</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Weekly to Several Times</b>	<b>Once or Twice</b>	<b>Never</b>
<b>1997 Data</b>				
Household Manager (in house)	415	28.8%	30%	40%
Business Manager (in business)	417	26.6%	31%	42.4%
<b>2000 Data</b>				
Household Manager (in house)	191	29.4%	33.5%	37%
Business Manager (in business)	176	25.9%	33%	46.6%

Table 4.9: Cash-flow Problems

As the data shows, both household managers and business managers were relatively similar in their answers regarding financial problems in the household and in the business. Based on data from previous research, families who experience cash-flow problems weekly to several times during the past year were more likely to have lower levels of satisfaction. As Conger et al. (1990) found, economic hardship increases hostility and decreases the warmth/supportiveness of husbands toward their wives. Although this study did not look at marital satisfaction, cash-flow problems may be correlated with family satisfaction and overall quality of life.

#### Correlations Among Family and Life Satisfaction

A highly significant correlation was found between Overall Quality of Life and SUM APGAR in both 1997 ( $r = .494$ ) and in 2000 ( $r = .477$ ). These results are consistent with expectations that someone who scores high on family satisfaction is also likely to score high in overall life satisfaction.

#### Congruity of Goals and Spousal Satisfaction

After determining the final variables used to access the appropriate data to answer the initial research questions, a correlation matrix was generated to assess all congruity variables with all satisfaction variables. As shown in Table 4.10, there were no significant correlations between congruent family goals and congruent business goals in 1997 and any of the four satisfaction variables (quality of life 1997, quality of life 2000, Sum APGAR 1997, Sum APGAR 2000).

Congruent success of family goals in 1997 was significantly correlated with quality of life 1997 ( $r = .256$ ), the sum APGAR 1997 ( $r = .201$ ), and congruent success of business goals 1997 ( $r = .254$ ). In addition, congruent success of business goals in 1997 was significantly correlated with quality of life 1997 ( $r = .225$ ) and congruent success of family goals 1997 ( $r = .254$ ). Examination of the correlations also indicates that congruent success of business goals in 1997 was significantly correlated with congruent success of family goals in 2000 ( $r = .230$ ).

Similar to the 1997 data, no significant correlations were found between congruity of family and business goals in 2000; however, some significant correlations were found between congruity of success of these goals and spousal satisfaction (See Table 4.10). Congruent success of family goals in 2000 was significantly correlated with the sum APGAR 2000 ( $r = .216$ ) and congruent family goals 2000 ( $r = .209$ ). Additionally, congruent success of business goals in 2000 was significantly correlated with congruent success of family goals 2000 ( $r = .463$ ) and with sum APGAR 2000 ( $r = .248$ ).

	Quality of Life '97	Quality of Life '00	SUM APGAR '97	SUM APGAR '00	Cong. Fam. Goals '97	Cong. Bus. Goals '97	Cong. Succ. Fam. Goals '97	Cong. Succ. Bus. Goals '97	Cong. Fam. Goals '00	Cong. Bus. Goals '00	Cong. Succ. Fam. Goals '00	Cong. Succ. Bus. Goals '00
Quality of Life '97	1	.107	.494**	.040	-.057	-.040	.256**	.225**	.048	.116	.018	-.002
Quality of Life '00		1	.080	.477**	-.010	-.102	.144	.026	.112	.179	.076	.096
SUM APGAR '97			1	.021	-.050	.027	.201**	.082	.122	.056	-.003	.008
SUM APGAR '00				1	.066	-.066	.039	.053	.248*	.216*	.077	.031
Congruent Family Goals '97					1	.086	.006	-.001	-.060	-.125	.026	.054
Congruent Business Goals '97						1	.016	-.099*	.107	.086	-.035	-.007
Congruent Success Family Goals '97							1	.254**	.107	.047	-.114	-.131
Congruent Success Business Goals '97								1	.058	.230*	.062	.000
Congruent Family Goals '00									1	.463**	.133	.197
Congruent Business Goals '00										1	.209*	.109
Congruent Success Family Goals '00											1	.041
Congruent Success Business Goals '00												1

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

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.10: Congruity of Goals and Success of Goals

### Hierarchical Regression Analyses on Research Goals

Next, hierarchical multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to determine the relative influence of parental status, hours worked per week in the business, stressful life events, cash-flow problems in the household and business, congruity of goals, and congruity of perceived success of goals on spousal family and life satisfaction in 1997 and 2000. Sample size varied from 341 in 1997 to 82 in 2000 for whom data on all variables of interest were available. Results of the four multiple regression analyses are presented in Tables 4.11 – 4.14. Discussion of the findings related to these analyses are organized around the major research questions posed in Chapter 3.



	<u>Step 1</u>			<u>Step 2</u>			<u>Full Model</u>		
<b>Step 1</b>	<u>b</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
Hours per week	-.005	-1.063	.289	-.005	-1.057	.291	-.007	-1.660	.098
Parental Status	-.150	-1.660	.098	-.145	-1.598	.111	-.085	-.976	.330
Cash-flow Problem in Household 1997	.189	4.425	.000	.189	4.439	.000	.186	4.607	.000
Cash-flow Problem in Business 1997	-0.22	-.518	.605	-.021	-.477	.633	.005	.129	.898
Death in Family 1997	-.100	-1.039	.299	-.106	-1.106	.269	-.118	-1.295	.196
Illness / Injury 1997	-.033	-.255	.799	-.011	-.081	.935	.051	.415	.678
(Constant)	3.729	15.309	.000						
<b>Step 2</b>									
Congruent Family Goals 1997				-.039	-.0436	.663	-.049	-.579	.563
Congruent Business Goals 1997				-.115	-1.346	.197	-.082	-1.004	.316
(Constant)				3.813	15.195	.000			
<b>Step 3</b>									
Congruent Success Family Goals 1997							.155	4.618	.000
Congruent Success Business Goals 1997							.105	2.999	.003
(Constant)							3.651	15.245	.000
Step 1: R <sup>2</sup> = .096; F = 5.938; p = .000									
Step 2: R <sup>2</sup> = .102; F = 4.715; p = .000									
Full Model: R <sup>2</sup> = .197; F = 8.117; p = .000									

Table 4.11: Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Predictor Variables of Quality of Life in 1997 (N = 341)

	<u>Step 1</u>			<u>Step 2</u>			<u>Full Model</u>		
	<u>b</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
<b>Step 1</b>									
Hours per week	-.005	-.258	.796	-.005	-.226	.822	-.009	-.467	.641
Parental Status	-.562	-1.414	.158	-.516	-1.228	.199	-.404	-1.017	.310
Cash-flow Problem in Household 1997	.348	1.856	.064	.343	1.826	.069	.338	1.826	.069
Cash-flow Problem in Business 1997	.172	.901	.368	.194	1.008	.314	.265	1.389	.166
Death in Family 1997	-.654	-1.553	.121	-.672	-1.593	.112	-.722	-1.735	.084
Illness / Injury 1997	-.716	-1.267	.206	-.669	-1.174	.241	-.521	-.924	.356
(Constant)	19.263	17.985	.000						
<b>Step 2</b>									
Congruent Family Goals 1997				-.413	-.059	.290	-.402	-1.044	.297
Congruent Business Goals 1997				-.059	-.155	.877	-.021	-.056	.965
(Constant)				19.466	17.615	.000			
<b>Step 3</b>									
Congruent Success Family Goals 1997							.501	3.259	.001
Congruent Success Business Goals 1997							.060	.376	.707
(Constant)							19.051	17.391	.000
Step 1: $R^2 = .050$ ; $F = 2.921$ ; $p = .009^a$									
Step 2: $R^2 = .053$ ; $F = 2.331$ ; $p = .019$									
Full Model: $R^2 = .086$ ; $F = 3.126$ ; $p = .001$									

Table 4.12: Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Predictor Variables of Family Satisfaction in 1997 (N = 341)

	<u>Step 1</u>			<u>Step 2</u>			<u>Full Model</u>		
<b>Step 1</b>	<u>b</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
Hours per week	.006	.988	.326	.006	.897	.373	.006	.967	.342
Parental Status	-.036	-.243	.808	-.001	-.007	.994	-.001	-.004	.997
Cash-flow Problem in Household 2000	.105	1.341	.184	.113	1.429	.157	.110	1.377	.173
Cash-flow Problem in Business 2000	-.026	-.319	.751	-.029	-.363	.717	-.030	-.371	.712
Death in Family 2000	.200	1.451	.151	.217	1.567	.121	.160	1.054	.295
Illness / Injury 2000	.006	.028	.977	.089	.392	.696	.077	.335	.739
(Constant)	3.840	8.598	.000						
<b>Step 2</b>									
Congruent Family Goals 2000				.145	.981	.330	.103	.663	.509
Congruent Business Goals 2000				.142	1.053	.296	.112	.776	.440
(Constant)				3.612	7.582	.000			
<b>Step 3</b>									
Congruent Success Family Goals 2000							.053	.813	.419
Congruent Success Business Goals 2000							.011	.146	.885
(Constant)							3.671	7.586	.000
Step 1: R <sup>2</sup> = .071; F = .967; p = .454 <sup>a</sup>									
Step 2: R <sup>2</sup> = .097; F = .993; p = .449 <sup>b</sup>									
Full Model: R <sup>2</sup> = .109; F = .878; p = .557 <sup>c</sup>									

Table 4.13: Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Predictor Variables of Quality of Life in 2000 (N = 82)

	<u>Step 1</u>			<u>Step 2</u>			<u>Full Model</u>		
<b>Step 1</b>	<u>b</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
Hours per week	.043	1.412	.162	.041	1.277	.206	.042	1.314	.193
Parental Status	-1.545	-2.202	.031	-1.484	-2.062	.043	-1.403	-1.992	.050
Cash-flow Problem in Household 2000	.467	1.237	.220	.476	1.239	.219	.419	1.118	.267
Cash-flow Problem in Business 2000	-.006	-.016	.987	-.015	-.039	.969	-.011	-.029	.997
Death in Family 2000	-.301	-.454	.651	-.274	-.407	.685	-.810	-1.134	.260
Illness / Injury 2000	.975	.931	.355	1.130	1.027	.308	.850	.784	.435
(Constant)	19.244	8.972	.000						
<b>Step 2</b>									
Congruent Family Goals 2000				.310	.431	.668	-.141	-.193	.847
Congruent Business Goals 2000				.192	.293	.770	-.315	-.464	.644
(Constant)				18.884	8.154	.000			
<b>Step 3</b>									
Congruent Success Family Goals 2000							.474	1.381	.171
Congruent Success Business Goals 2000							.380	1.235	.221
(Constant)							19.603	8.611	.000

Step 1:  $R^2 = .100$ ;  $F = 1.414$ ;  $p = .220^a$

Step 2:  $R^2 = .104$ ;  $F = 1.071$ ;  $p = .393^b$

Full Model:  $R^2 = .172$ ;  $F = 1.496$ ;  $p = .159^c$

Table 4.14: Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Predictor Variables of Family Satisfaction in 2000 (N = 82)

1. Does congruity of goals (family and business) influence spousal satisfaction as defined by family and life satisfaction assessments?

An examination of the hierarchical multiple regression analyses presented in Table 4.11 – 4.14 indicates that congruity of family and business goals in 1997 and 2000 were not predictive of family and life satisfaction. This is not surprising because the correlation matrix also showed no correlations between congruity of goals in either 1997 or 2000 and any of the satisfaction measures. The lack of significant relationships between congruity of goals and spousal satisfaction may be a reflection of the way the question was asked on the original interview. Individuals were asked to select their most important goal from among 5 possible options. If they had been asked to rate each goal instead, different findings may have resulted between congruity of goals and satisfaction.

In addition, as past research has indicated (Blum & Mehrebian, 1999; Caspi & Herbener, 1990), the debate about couple similarity and marital satisfaction remains unresolved. This lack of consistent data suggests that congruity of family and business goals may simply not be correlated with spousal life or family satisfaction regardless of the manner in which the questions were asked.

2. Does congruity of perceived success of the chosen goal (family and business) influence spousal satisfaction as defined by family and life satisfaction assessments?

An examination of the t-values for congruity of success of family and business goals in Tables 4.11 – 4.14 indicates that perceived success of some goals was predictive of both life and family satisfaction in 1997 but not in 2000. Specifically, perceived success of family and business goals were significant predictors of life satisfaction and perceived success of family goals was a significant predictor of family satisfaction in 1997.

An examination of the results of the hierarchical regression analyses for the 2000 data shows that they were not consistent with the results from 1997. Congruity of perceived success of family and business goals in 2000 was not predictive of either life or family satisfaction in 2000. The lack of significant results may be a reflection of the small sample size and not because perceived success is not an important predictor of satisfaction. Previous research discussed in the literature review section of this study does not provide an explanation as to why some of these findings may have been significant and others not. It appears logical, however, that a person's perception of their success would indeed impact their level of satisfaction.

3. Does the presence of children influence spousal satisfaction in an entrepreneurial household?

Presence of children predicted life satisfaction in 1997 when it was entered in step 1, however, it was not significant predictor of family satisfaction in 1997 (See Tables 4.11 – 4.12). On the other hand, parental status was not predictive of quality of life in 2000 although it was predictive of family satisfaction in 2000. An examination of the Beta weights indicates that the presence of children resulted in decreased satisfaction. These findings are consistent with prior research (Twenge, 2003), which found that couples grow less satisfied with their marital relationship after having children. These results also are not surprising because most of the household managers were women and Twenge (2003) concluded that women were more negatively affected by parenthood than men.

4. Does number of hours worked per week in the business influence spousal satisfaction in an entrepreneurial household?

Inspection of the beta weights and t-values in Tables 4.11 – 4.14 indicate that hours worked per week in the business were approaching significance as a predictor of life satisfaction in 1997. Hours worked was not a significant predictor of family satisfaction in 1997 or of life and family satisfaction in 2000. Prior research by Rosenblatt (1985) found that spouses of entrepreneurs often shoulder most of the household responsibilities and this can negatively impact

their satisfaction. The Rosenblatt sample was drawn from families whose welfare rested on the family business while the sample for the present study focused on individuals with family businesses in which nearly three fourths of the entrepreneurs worked 20 or fewer hours per week.

5. Do stressful life events influence spousal satisfaction in an entrepreneurial household?

An examination of the beta weights and t-values for the two identified stressful life events, death of a family member or injury or illness, in Tables 4.11 – 4.14 indicates that neither were significant predictors of life and family satisfaction in either 1997 or 2000. Death of a family member was approaching significance as a predictor of family satisfaction in 1997. As discussed earlier a relatively small number of household managers had experienced either death of a family member or an injury or illness. This may have impacted the lack of significant results. Prior research by Conger et al. (1993) when looking at undesirable life events found that males reacted in a more hostile manner than women in response to sex-typed negative events. Stressful life events used for this study were the top 10 stressful life events from the *Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS14)* (Holmes & Raye, 1967). It is likely these stressful life events may be different from those experienced by respondents in the Conger et al. study, which focused on regularly occurring stressors rather than major life events.



6. Does the presence of cash flow problems in either the household or business influence spousal satisfaction in an entrepreneurial household?

Cash-flow problems in the household emerged as a significant predictor of both life and family satisfaction in 1997 but not in 2000. The lack of significant results in 2000 may be a reflection of the small sample size and not because cash-flow problems in the household are not an important predictor of satisfaction. Cash-flow problems in the business were not significantly related to spousal satisfaction, perhaps because the business was not the major source of income for many of the families in the current study. These results are consistent with Conger et al.'s (1990) model of marital satisfaction which is based on their research on economic hardship. Although they looked at marital quality, not family or life satisfaction, they did find that economic hardship can have an adverse effect on the marital relationship. In addition, Lee et al., (2006) found that women with a greater level of cash-flow problems reported a lower level of perceived well being than those without cash-flow problems.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Family businesses make up over 90 percent of the 20 million US businesses (SBA, 2002). Each of these businesses impacts not only the entrepreneur who started or runs the business, but his/her entire family as well. There has been a great deal of research over the years about building businesses and the individuals behind the companies; however, the role of the family, and more importantly to this study, the role of the spouse have been grossly under researched. In spite of the commonly held notion that the spouse often ranks as the number one supporter for the entrepreneur (Dunn & Liang, 2001; Hirsch & Peters, 1995), there is a relative lack of information about the impact of business ownership on marital, family, and overall spousal satisfaction.

Although past research has not been conclusive on whether or not spousal similarity predicts greater marital satisfaction, it is conceivable that having similar goals or perceived success of goals may be significant predictors of spousal satisfaction when looking at business ownership. This study focused on the congruity of family and business goals and congruity of perceived success of family and business goals on spousal satisfaction. It also took into

consideration confounding variables including cash-flow problems, the presence of children, hours worked per week on the business, and stressful life events.

A summary of the primary findings by research questions are discussed first, followed by the major conclusions of the study. Next, the limitations of the study are addressed followed by implications and recommendations for future research and therapeutic practice.

### Summary

1. Does congruity of goals (family and business) influence spousal satisfaction as defined by family and life satisfaction assessments?

Findings of the current study suggest that congruity of goals (family or business) was not predictive of spousal family and life satisfaction. The lack of significant relationships between congruity of goals and spousal satisfaction may be a reflection of the way the question was asked on the original interview. Individuals were asked to select their most important goal from among five possible options. If they had been asked to rate each goal instead, different findings may have resulted regarding congruity of goals and satisfaction.

2. Does congruity of perceived success of the chosen goal (family and business) influence spousal satisfaction as defined by family and life satisfaction assessments?

The present study found that congruity of success of chosen goals influenced spousal life and family satisfaction in 1997 but not in 2000.

Specifically, congruity of perceived success of family and business goals predicted life satisfaction and congruity of success of family goals predicted family satisfaction.

3. Does the presence of children influence spousal satisfaction in an entrepreneurial household?

Consistent with previous research, the data indicated that presence of children predicted life satisfaction of the spouse in 1997 and family satisfaction in 2000. Families with children were more likely to report lower satisfaction levels than families without children.

4. Does number of hours worked per week in the business influence spousal satisfaction in an entrepreneurial household?

The current data indicated that number of hours spent on the business per week was not significantly predictive of spousal satisfaction. However, hours worked per week was approaching significance as a predictor of life satisfaction in 1997. Unfortunately, the sample used for this study focused primarily on individuals with household businesses who spent relatively few hours per week on the business (74% spent 20 or fewer hours).

5. Do stressful life events influence spousal satisfaction in an entrepreneurial household?

Neither of the two identified stressful life events, death of a family member or injury or illness, were significant predictors of quality of life or family

satisfaction in 1997 or 2000 with one exception. Death of a family member was approaching significance as a predictor of family satisfaction in 1997. Because the majority of the sample in both 1997 and 2000 had not experienced a major stressful life event, it is impossible to draw conclusions about the relationships between life stressors and spousal satisfaction for entrepreneurial couples. It is possible that regularly occurring stressors rather than major life events may have a greater impact on spousal satisfaction.

6. Does the presence of cash flow problems in either the household or business influence spousal satisfaction in an entrepreneurial household?

Cash flow problems in the household were predictive of both quality of life and family satisfaction in 1997. Cash-flow problems in the business were not related to spousal satisfaction, probably because the majority of families in the current study did not rely on income from the business as their major source of family income.

### Conclusions

In conclusion, data from the present study suggest that congruity of perceived success of family and business goals is more important to family and life satisfaction of the spouses of entrepreneurs than congruity of the goals themselves. Other relevant predictors of the family and life satisfaction of spouses of entrepreneurs in the present study were the presence of children and cash-flow problems in the household. Because the numbers of hours worked per

week in the business was relatively low and the number of stressful life events experienced was few, no conclusions can be drawn regarding these variables and spousal satisfaction.

Of the two theoretical foundations presented as possible bases for examining the relationships between congruity of goals and perceived success of goals and spousal satisfaction, social exchange theory seems to be most closely aligned with findings related to perceived success of goals and spousal satisfaction. When viewing satisfaction in terms of rewards (as proposed in social exchange theory), the greater the level of perceived success, the more likely an individual is to feel rewarded or satisfied. Further research to determine the broader applicability of this theory to entrepreneurial couples is recommended.

Systems theory, on the other hand, appears to be useful in understanding the relationships between the presence of children and spousal satisfaction. The presence of children changes the family interactions and dynamics and therefore influences the marital relationship.

Both social exchange and family systems theories offer possible explanations for the relationship between cash-flow problems and spousal satisfaction. Social exchange suggests that when costs outweigh rewards, individuals in the dyad are more likely to be dissatisfied. Therefore, when there are cash-flow problems in the household, the spouse or household manager is

more likely to experience lower levels of satisfaction. Cash-flow problems are present stressors, which in turn can impact the way the family system functions. Further research is necessary to clarify which of these theories may have the most relevance for understanding how economic problems in entrepreneurial households influence spousal satisfaction.

### Limitations

As with all research, there were limitations in the present study. To begin with, the sample size in 2000 was considerably lower than the sample size in 1997 because data were not always available for both members of the couple in 2000. This decrease in sample size may have impacted the power of the study.

A second limitation of this study was that a self-report measure was used. Common problems with self-report measures include issues related to reporter bias and the possibility of inaccurate or dishonest responses. In addition, the questionnaire was given via phone interview. As a result, respondents may have answered questions according to their perception of what the interviewer wanted to hear.

A third limitation was that one of the satisfaction measures used focused on family rather than marital satisfaction, and the other was a single item assessment of quality of life. Another limitation concerns the measures that were used to assess family and business goals. Asking respondents to rate each of the possible goals would have strengthened the current study and provided

greater variability. It also would have been helpful to have included data on marital satisfaction not only for the household manager but for the business manager.

A final limitation relates to the generalizability of the results of this study. Because a majority of the subjects worked fewer than 20 hours per week on their business, it appears that the sample for the study was made up primarily of family business owners rather than entrepreneurs whose well being and that of their families depends on the success of the business. As a result, the conclusions of this study cannot be generalized to the entrepreneurial population.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

There is still so much to be learned about the impact of business ownership on the family and the marital unit. Because the data used in the current study was not initially designed to answer these questions, further research is necessary to understand the interactions between work and family life in an entrepreneurial family and to unlock the keys to a successful marriage within these families. While conducting this study, additional research questions came to mind. It would be helpful to gather data on the dyad instead of the individual to illicit greater knowledge about the couple as a unit and how they work together.

To begin with, at the outset of the business venture or the marriage (if the business was already established), did both individuals share in their vision,



goals, and expectations for the business and their future, or did they differ? How stable was the relationship at the beginning of the venture (or marriage) and how did it evolve over time? Is there a higher incidence of marital instability or divorce within entrepreneurial families who do not have congruent goals for the family and the business or congruent perceptions of success? Does regular communication about the family and the business impact not only congruity of goals, but also perceived success of goals?

Does the spouse working for the business have any relationship to congruity of goals and perceived success of goals? How does the couple establish division of labor at work/home? How does each spouse handle stress, job/financial insecurity, instability in the workplace? Do similar personality characteristics and motivations of the entrepreneur and spouse impact congruity of vision and goals for the family and the business? What is the association between stress among entrepreneurial families and marital satisfaction? The possibilities are truly endless because this is an untapped area of research.

#### Implications for Marriage and Family Therapists

This study is just a small step toward learning about important factors that contribute to spousal satisfaction in entrepreneurial families. Based on the current research, it is possible that couples who own a family business may suffer from complications that do not plague other families. Marriage and family therapists need to be considerate of this point. These couples may have to spend

more time working out communication strategies and configuring division of household labor.

Also, results of the current study suggest that satisfaction appears to be most related to perceived success of goals. Therapists need to ensure that both partners have set goals not only for the family, but also for the business. They also need to feel that they are successful in achieving those goals. Fear of failure can be a heavy burden for an entrepreneur and his/her spouse. Failure in an entrepreneurial household can result in catastrophic financial outcomes or a lack of ability to balance work and family responsibilities. Either way, business ownership inevitably carries with it a great deal of self-induced stress that needs to be addressed by both members of the dyad. Thus, it appears to be important that both partners in the marriage feel they are successful in achieving their goals.

There is currently no research to support the notion that entrepreneurial households experience more stressors than other households, they may simply be dealing with different issues. It is important for marriage and family therapists to take this into account when working with a couple that is self-reliant for their income. Although this study did not produce significant results regarding hours worked and stressful life events, it is important to note that both presence of children and cash-flow problems were predictors of spousal satisfaction. This is

consistent with previous research. Marriage and family therapists who work with individuals who own a family business need to be aware of all of these issues.

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