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# Lifestyle Stress and Marital Adjustment Among Seminary Students and Their Spouses

Roger L. Dudley and Margaret G. Dudley

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*Students taking the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) course at Andrews University and the spouses of those who were married were surveyed about the sources of stress in their lives, their methods of coping with problems, and information on their marriages as measured by the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test. Only 15 percent of the students and 12 percent of the spouses rated their marriages with some degree of unhappiness; 19 percent of each group said they were "perfectly happy." Happiness in marriage was correlated negatively with the number of stressful events the couple had recently experienced. Couples used "escape-avoidance" as a method of coping with problems, and with the amount of family indebtedness from student loans. Happiness was positively correlated with the stress-coping methods of "problem-solving" and "positive reappraisal."*

## Introduction

Married students who attend seminary in preparation for the pastoral ministry often face a heavy schedule of responsibilities. They must attend classes and spend many hours reading, writing papers, preparing for tests, and doing other assignments. In addition, many work at jobs to support their families, share in household duties, and

carry responsibilities in local churches. How does the stress created by these pressures affect marital adjustment and satisfaction?

To address this question, all the students taking the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) course at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, and the spouses of the married students were requested to answer a comprehensive questionnaire. They were asked, among other things, for the sources of stress in their lives, their methods of coping with problems, and information about their marriages. Also included was an open-ended question: "How has being a seminarian, or the spouse of a seminarian, affected your

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*marriage and family life?"*

The M.Div. program is the official preparation for pastoral ministry in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Under normal conditions the students complete this degree in nine consecutive quarters with no break: fall, winter, spring, and summer quarters. Some of the students come to the seminary on completion of their undergraduate degree; others begin pastoral internships within a regional conference and then are sent back to the seminary to complete the M.Div. degree.

Concerns have revolved around the stress associated with the program in view of the intensive program of nine consecutive quarters of study, inadequate income, escalating student loans, and the pressures of family life. Questions have been raised as to how all this may affect the spirituality, marital adjustment, sense of well-being, and commitment to mission of the seminarians and their spouses. Could patterns of family relationships formed during the seminary experience persist throughout the ministerial career of the students?

### **Stress and Marital Adjustment**

A sizable body of literature has been generated in the larger area of family stress. In a megareview of research reported during the six decades from 1930 to 1990, Huang (1991) summarized approximately 125 studies. In addition to setting forth key studies, important findings, and methodological trends for each decade, Huang distilled 32 major findings for the 60-year period. Many of these do not apply to the subject of this article, but several seem

relevant:

*11. Changes from one life stage to another can be viewed as a family crisis, which might cause the onset of symptoms in family members.*

*21. More cohesive families have lower levels of strain and higher levels of well-being than less cohesive families.*

*24. The development of an adaptive support network depends not only on the availability of friends and/or relatives but also on the fit between the role orientation of the woman and the way in which her network is organized.*

*25. The influence of family stress on family satisfaction is mediated by the perceived ability of family to achieve its wants, needs, and expectations.*

*30. A strong sense of coherence, particularly one shared by the spouse, provides the motivational, perceptual, and behavioral basis for successful resolution of problems posed by stressors. Not the absence of stressors but their successful resolution provides one with a sense of satisfaction about family life (Huang, 1991:322-324).*

Closer to the subject of this article is the relationship of stress and marital adjustment among clergy. It has long been recognized that the particular stresses of pastoral ministry have created problems in clergy marriages. In 1980, Mace and Mace explored the situation from their own research and also compiled a bibliography of about 120 publications dealing with the subject. More recently, Pennington (1988) investigated stress and burnout among clergy couples serving in new work areas. Quispe (1988), surveying 50 pastoral couples in Texas,

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found that 28 percent were experiencing some degree of marital dissatisfaction. Perceived stress scores had a positive correlation with global distress scores and significantly predicted lack of marital satisfaction.

Barbour (1990) conducted in-depth interviews with male pastors and their wives. For pastors and their wives, the greatest source of stress was in being caught in triangles and having to choose sides—either with the congregation and against the spouse, or with the spouse and against the congregation. The pastors in this study appeared to be enmeshed with their congregations, making it difficult to create boundaries between home and work. The responses indicated that seminary students and their wives received little practical training. It was reported that more practical training would help the pastor and his wife cope with the stress in the parish. For pastors in a parish, learning skills in negotiating family needs and learning how to separate work from the family were reported as being especially important. Teaching stress-reduction techniques to the entire system of parish, wife, and pastor may be the most effective means of reducing stress.

Even more pertinent to the present study is the fact that not much has been found in the literature that deals with the seminary experience and stress. Brightman and Malette (1977) surveyed 26 married students enrolled in a northeastern theological seminary and their spouses to assess perceived changes in the marital relationship since attendance at the seminary. Scales were constructed to measure goal con-

sensus, relationships with friends and extended family, verbal communication, and sexual relations. Overall, both husbands and wives perceived improvement in their marriages since attending the seminary, but husbands perceived slightly greater improvement than wives, although the differences were not significant. Husbands tended to rate consensus on goals as having improved most, while wives ranked verbal communication as most improved. Paired correlations revealed a high level of consensus ( $r = .60$ ) between individual husbands and wives.

Harbaugh (1984) found significant stress levels among seminarians and suggested that the continuous pressures need to be addressed in a holistic way by incorporating a "doing theology" similar to that developed by Clinical Pastoral Education. Rosenbaum (1984) investigated stress among the wives of 200 students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The majority of wives had a positive attitude toward their husbands entering the ministry. Wives who had a negative attitude toward their husbands being in the seminary perceived life-change events as more stressful than wives who reported positive attitudes. It was concluded that attitude acts as a moderator variable in the perception of life stress. It was also determined that events in the areas of finances and time management produced stress in the greatest number of wives.

While it seems obvious that continual exposure to stressful situations can negatively affect interpersonal relationships, including marriage, the equation is not quite that simple. Lazarus and Folkman (1984)

have developed a transactional model which emphasizes the importance of mutually reciprocal and dynamic relationships between the person and the environment. This interactive process involves cognitive appraisal of the stressful encounter and use of optimal coping methods as critical mediators of stressful person-environment relationships (Folkman et al., 1986). Other studies of coping strategies have found that persons who perceive life events to be beyond their personal control are significantly more anxious than are those who perceive some personal control (Emmite and Diaz-Guerrero, 1983; Krohne, 1980; Pargament et al., 1982). Thus anxiety may prove to be an intervening variable between stressful events and marital adjustment.

Along this line, Houser et al. (1990) examined the relationship between types of coping strategies used and marital satisfaction among 26 couples in which the woman was a college student, to identify coping strategies characteristic of the early developmental stages of a dual-career family. The use of escape-avoidance and confrontive coping was significantly and negatively related to dyadic satisfaction. Also, the use of distancing and escape-avoidance predicted lower scores on dyadic consensus for the men. More recently, Schaefer and Gorsuch (1993) have found that coping methods tend to vary with specific stressful situations rather than being entirely dispositional traits.

On the basis of this literature review and the specific situation of the population under study, the following hypotheses were set forth:

1. Marital satisfaction will relate negatively to the amount of stress being experienced.

2. Marital satisfaction will relate positively to such methods of coping with stressful events as positive reappraisal (reframing), problem solving, and seeking social support.

3. Marital satisfaction will relate negatively to such methods of coping with stressful events as confrontive coping (aggressive efforts to alter the situation), escape-avoidance, and distancing (efforts to detach oneself by trying to forget the whole thing).

## Methodology of the Project

### *Instrument*

To help evaluate the impact of the various stressors, a questionnaire was constructed which employed either the full or an abbreviated version of several existing scales, as follows:

1. The *Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test* (Locke and Wallace, 1959) is a measure of marital harmony and satisfaction. In addition to an overall score, it contains a single item which asks participants to self-rate the happiness of their marriages on a seven-point scale that ranges from very unhappy to perfectly happy. The instrument is short (only 15 items), it has been carefully validated for reliability, and it appears often in the research literature (Edmonds et al., 1972).

2. The *Holmes and Rahe Social Readjustment Rating Scale* (1967) awards points for various stressful events occurring within the previous two years. For this

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questionnaire, 21 events were presented,  
ranging from 70 points for marital sep-  
aration or divorce to 11 points for minor  
violations of the law. The points for each  
event were totaled to obtain a stress score.

3. The *Lazarus and Folkman Ways of Coping Checklist* (Folkman et al., 1986) was developed to measure the broad range of coping and behavioral strategies that people use to manage internal and external demands in a stressful encounter. Factor analysis of the 66 items by Lazarus and Folkman produced eight scales—each describing a method of coping. While 66 items were too many for this survey, the authors have given two to four prime examples for each scale. These 26 items were incorporated into the questionnaire.

For each item, the respondent could choose one of four responses, ranging from “never use” to “use a great deal.” The items and mean score of each scale are listed in the appendix. A ranking has been determined by dividing the means by the maximum possible score (number of items times 4). The scales with their average scores are then listed in descending order of frequency of use as a coping device by the seminarians and their spouses.

Reliabilities were calculated for each of the eight scales as follows: (1) confrontive coping—.41, (2) distancing—.50, (3) self-control—.37, (4) seeking social support—.53, (5) accepting responsibility—.34, (6) escape-avoidance—.45, (7) problem-solving—.63, and (8) positive reappraisal—.68. As might be suspected, the coefficients tend to be somewhat low due to the small number of items per scale. Five of the scales

could not be improved by deleting any particular item. In the other three cases, deletion caused some elevation in the reliability alpha. “Distancing” was raised to .53 by deleting “I go on as if nothing has happened,” “accepting responsibility” was raised one point to .35 by deleting “I apologize or do something to make up,” and in the largest change “self-control” was raised to .53 by deleting “I try not to burn my bridges but leave things open somewhat.” None of these changes made any difference in the results of the analyses, so all 26 items were retained in the composition of the eight scales.

In addition to the existing scales, items were constructed to determine the extent to which students work, the extent to which spouses work outside the home or are students, denominational sponsorship at the seminary (sponsored students receive a monthly stipend as well as a promise of a job at graduation), indebtedness for student loans and other debts, number of dependent children, and whether children are being supported in parochial schools. Standard demographic questions were also included. The questionnaire was labeled *Seminary-Life Stress Inventory* (SLSI).

#### *Procedures*

All M.Div. students enrolled during the 1992-1993 academic year and their spouses (for married students) were invited to participate. Questionnaires and letters of appeal and instruction were placed in the mailboxes of all M.Div. students in November 1992. Each packet contained two instruments, color-coded—yellow for the student and

green for the spouse. Envelopes for return were also included. Students were requested to give the green surveys to their spouses. Husbands and wives were to complete their respective questionnaires independently of each other, seal them in individual envelopes, band the two envelopes together, and return them in an outer envelope.

A collection box was placed in the lobby of the seminary building. Each return outer envelope contained a code number so that it could be determined if a given subject had returned his/her questionnaire. However, a blind procedure was used so that representatives from the student body recorded the code number on the outside envelope and then delivered only the uncoded inside envelopes to the researchers. Thus those examining the data were not able to connect the contents to the individual students; complete confidentiality was maintained. Complete packets with surveys for both students and spouses were placed in the mailboxes a second and third time for those who did not respond to the first invitation, appeals were made in chapel, and finally, nonrespondents were contacted by telephone or in person. Data collection terminated in April 1993.

While enrollment figures shift somewhat during the year, seminary records indicate 207 M.Div. students enrolled at the beginning of the spring quarter. Questionnaires were finally collected from 172 students, an 83 percent response rate. Calculating the return for spouses was a bit trickier, since the method of collection meant that spouses could respond only if their student mates did. Forty of the students reported being not married, 128 were married, and four did

not indicate their marital status, leaving the possibility of surveying 128 to 132 spouses. Of these, 127 returned questionnaires, for a response rate of 96 to 99 percent of those spouses whose student husband/wives also completed questionnaires. We do not know how many of the 35 students who did not respond to repeated appeals to complete the survey were married and thus had spouses who also did not respond.

The data supplied by the total 299 respondents (172 students, 127 spouses) have been used in a number of analyses of stress and spiritual life. This paper, however, is limited to the relationships between stress and marital satisfaction. Therefore, to be included in these analyses, subjects must have been currently married and must have answered all the items on the Locke-Wallace. Of the 172 students, 111 met these criteria, and of the 127 spouses, 104 qualified. One questionnaire in each group was rejected for other reasons, leaving a total of 213 subjects (110 students and 103 spouses) whose responses could be used in correlations between marital satisfaction and various indicators of stress.

We do not know the extent to which social desirability may have influenced the answers. Obviously, ministerial candidates have a stake in presenting their home situations as happy and healthy. Three points tend to support the reliability of this research, however: (1) the high rate of return, (2) the fact that surveys were completely anonymous, so students and spouses could afford to be frank, and (3) the variance in the answers, which revealed that some subjects were willing to admit to problems

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## Results

### *Stressful Events*

Stress scores on this version of the Holmes and Rahe ranged from 0 (6%) to 472 (.7%) with an average score of 159. Arranged in descending order of frequency, those stressful events that more than 50 percent of the respondents experienced were as follows: change in financial state—72%; change in living conditions—69%; change in church activities—54%; change in work hours or conditions—54%; change in social or recreational activities—52%.

Also, 17 percent had experienced marital problems, and 2 percent (7 persons) had undergone marital separation or divorce. In addition to the events listed on the Holmes and Rahe, information was gathered about other possible stressors. Nearly half (46%) of the respondents had worked in a different type of occupation or career before coming to the seminary, so that career shift made adjustments necessary. Less than half (44%) were sponsored by a denominational organization, an indication of additional financial strains. Time and money pressures were assessed by several direct questions; the results are shown in Table 1.

### *Marital Adjustment*

Of those students who were married at the time of the survey, only 15 percent rated their marriages with some degree of unhappiness; 19 percent said they were "perfectly happy." Of the spouses, only 12 percent admitted to being unhappy, while 19

percent claimed perfect happiness.

This self-rating question was combined with fourteen other questions to form the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test. Several items asked the extent of agreement between the spouses on issues that concern married people. The following percentages of respondents stated that they always or almost always agree on choice of friends (71%), philosophy of life (71%), dealing with in-laws (68%), proper conduct (66%), family finances (65%), demonstrations of affection (63%), sex relations (60%), and recreation (58%).

Also, 76 percent settled disagreements by mutual give and take, 82 percent engaged in at least some outside interests together, 85 percent rarely or never wished they hadn't married, 86 percent would have married the same person if they had it to do over, and 93 percent confided in their mates in most things.

The possible range of scores on the Locke-Wallace is from 15 (low) to 76 (high). The actual range for all married respondents was 25 to 74, with five percent scoring 70 or higher. Scores of 61 or higher indicate that positive responses were selected for all fifteen items. Scores of less than 61 indicate that negative choices were selected on at least some of the items. For the total group, 45 percent scored less than 61. Scores of 46 or less indicate that negative choices were selected on all the items. Only about 9 percent had scores of 46 or less. A score of 15 would indicate the *most* negative choice on all items. No one scored that low, although there was one 25 and six were in the 30s. The total group

Table 1

## Time and Financial Pressures

	Range	No hours	20 hours or more	Average	
<b>Hours Per Week Worked For Income:</b>					
Students	0-50	46 (27%)	50 (29%)	12.3	
Spouses <sup>a</sup>	0-96	42 (33%)	68 (54%) <sup>b</sup>	21.9	
<b>Hours Per Week Studied Outside Classes:</b>					
Students	0-60	9 (5%)	82 (48%) <sup>c</sup>	22.8	
Spouses <sup>d</sup>	0-40	91 (71%)	7 (5%)	14.4	
<b>Family's Current Indebtedness:</b>					
	Range (\$)	No debts	Debts	10M/more	Average (\$)
Student loans	0-60M	73 (42%)	99 (58%)	62 (36%)	8,432
Other debt	0-55M	77 (45%)	95 (55%)	18 (10.5%)	4,013
Total debt	0-65M	45 (26%)	127 (74%)	74 (43%) <sup>e</sup>	12,445 <sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup>40% of spouses work full time, 28% part-time <sup>b</sup> 14 (11%) more than 39 hours, 7 more than 49 hours <sup>c</sup>21% more than 30 hours <sup>d</sup>24% of spouses are students (12% full-time and 12% part-time) <sup>e</sup>Six students (3.5%) have debt load over \$50,000 <sup>f</sup>or the 74% who have debts, the average is \$16,855

Note: Dependent children range from no children (47%) to five children (2%); Children in SDA schools range from no children (80%) to five children (one student).

average score was 60.1: for married students it was 59.7; for spouses it was 60.6. The difference between the average student and the average spouse is too slight to be significant.

#### Testing the Hypotheses

The full Locke-Wallace Scale, as well as the seven-point self-rating of happiness in marriage that constitutes one of its items, served as the dependent variables. Zero-order correlations between these variables and the various stress measurements as well

as the Lazarus and Folkman Ways of Coping scales were calculated. Table 2 displays all significant correlations.

Hypothesis 1 is largely supported. While most of the stressful indicators were not related to marital adjustment, the Holmes-Rahe correlates strongly and negatively with both the full Locke-Wallace and the self-rating item. Hours spent in household duties and indebtedness for student loans relate negatively to the full adjustment scale but not to the self-rating item, although the latter correlation barely misses



Table 2

## Relationships between Marital Adjustment and Various Stress Factors

more	Average		Self-Rating Item	Locke-Wallace Scale
	12.3	<b>Stress Events:</b>		
	21.9	Holmes Rahe Adjusted	-.37***	-.31***
		Hours/household	-.07	-.17*
		Student loans	-.13+	-.15*
	22.8	<b>Coping Methods:</b>		
	14.4	Problem solving	.30***	.22**
		Positive reappraisal	.28***	.29***
		Distancing	.15*	.02
		Spouses/feel appreciated	.62***	.40***
		Escape/avoidance	-.14*	-.27***
		Take it out/family	-.08	-.16*

\*probability of chance finding less than .05

\*\*probability of chance finding less than .01

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+probability of chance finding equals .056

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significance. On the other hand, other po-  
tential stressors such as debts other than  
student loans or combined debts (student  
loans and other debts), career change,  
sponsored or unsponsored status, hours per  
week worked for income, hours studied out-  
side of class, hours spent in recreation,  
dependent children, children in parochial  
schools, whether spouse is a student,  
whether spouse works outside the home,  
and time spent in pastoral field work did not  
relate to marital adjustment.

Hypotheses 2 is largely supported.  
Though no relation was found with the  
coping method of "seeking social support,"  
a strong connection between marital satis-  
faction and the coping methods of "prob-

lem-solving" and "positive reappraisal" was  
discovered. The problem-solving scale con-  
sists of the following three items: *I know  
what has to be done so I double my efforts  
to make things work, I make a plan of  
action and follow it, and I come up with a  
couple of different solutions to the problem.*  
The "positive reappraisal" scale contains  
four items: *I change or grow as a person in  
a good way, I come out of the experience  
better than I went in, I find new faith, and  
I pray.* Correlations are significant beyond  
the .01 level.

The stress-coping method of  
"distancing" correlated positively (contrary  
to the hypothesis) but weakly with the self-  
rating item (.15,  $p=.04$ ) but not with the

full Locke-Wallace scale. The four items on the "distancing" scale are *I go on as if nothing has happened; I don't let it get to me—refuse to think about it too much; I try to forget the whole thing; and I make light of the situation, refuse to get too serious about it.*

Some of the strongest correlations (.62 with self-rated happiness, .40 with Locke-Wallace) revealed that spouses who felt appreciated for the sacrifices they were making to help their mates through seminary were more happily married than those who felt taken for granted (60% felt greatly appreciated, 34% somewhat appreciated, 6% not appreciated). These correlations are significant beyond the .001 level.

Hypothesis 3 is partially supported. Marital adjustment relates negatively with "escape-avoidance" as a coping method, and the correlation with the full Locke-Wallace is highly significant. The "escape-avoidance" scale consists of the following four items: *I wish that the situation would*

*go away or somehow be over with; I try to make myself feel better by eating, using medications, etc.; I avoid being with people in general; and I sleep more than usual.* However, no significant negative correlations were found with the methods of "confrontive coping" and "distancing."

"I take it out on my spouse/family" as a method of coping with problems was an additional item grouped with the Lazarus and Folkman scales. It was weakly and negatively related to the Locke-Wallace Scale.

#### *Open-ended Responses*

Some of the richest insights come not from statistical analyses but from answers to the open-ended question *How has being a seminarian or the spouse of a seminarian affected your marriage and family life?* Responses were received from 117 students and 92 spouses; these are grouped into categories in Table 3.

Table 3

#### Open-ended Responses to How Seminary Life Has Affected the Family

	Students	Spouses
Not affected	11 (9%)	10 (11%)
Stressed but coping	23 (20%)	24 (26%)
Negative	59 (50%)	37 (40%)
Positive	24 (21%)	21 (23%)
Totals	117	92

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 24 (26%)  
 37 (40%)  
 21 (23%)  
 92

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Fifty percent of the students and forty percent of the spouses wrote that seminary life had a negative impact on their marriage and family life. One student wrote:

*It has made it very stressful at times. There comes a point every quarter where either the family or your classes have to give. I have always been a good, conscientious, and honest student—and as I am now in my ninth quarter, I still struggle with where to find the balance. We are told to just schedule our time and stick to it—I do not believe it is possible to do all that is requested and also live the type of life a Christian should—time for family, exercise, devotion, etc. My observation is that people do one of three things: 1) neglect some aspects of life such as exercise, family, temperance, sleep, devotions, etc.; 2) cheat/lie about assignments; 3) get a lot of bad grades. My choice in looking back has been #1 with the exception that I have determined to at least take time for devotions. I wish I had adequate time for the rest.*

A spouse wrote:

*I am now the sole financial provider for our family. I must balance this with my taking care of my children and my husband. I am tired and I am frustrated; I have no time for God; I have no time to serve Him.*

Another spouse wrote this very sad report:

*It has almost brought our marriage to an end.*

The most often repeated complaints were that there was not enough time for spouse or children because of the need to

study in an effort to keep up with the heavy academic load or the need to work because of the financial strain. Other stressors cited were racism, "unChristian" treatment, thousands of pages of required reading, and professors who don't seem to understand the demands made on the students.

Twenty-three percent of the students and twenty-six percent of the spouses allowed that the program was stressful to their family life, but that with extra effort they were coping. One student described it thus:

*It has helped by making us be serious about our relationship because the seminary situation is so difficult that it would tear us apart if we weren't intentional.*

A spouse responded in this manner:

*There is less time for the family, but I guess we always knew that if we had to go back to school we would have to sacrifice something; that sacrifice happens to be marriage and family life.*

Twenty-one percent of the students and twenty-three percent of the spouses stated that seminary life had resulted in an improvement in their family life. A testimonial from this category read:

*The seminary experience for myself and my spouse has actually, I feel, improved our relationship. I am not as stressed about work. School is enjoyable. My wife supports this experience.*

A spouse responded:

*I am stronger now than ever before thanks to the dedication of the seminary to helping my husband grow spiritually. It's rubbed off on me.*

Nine percent of the students and eleven percent of the spouses did not see that the seminary program had affected their family relationships. An example from this category is:

*It has affected our marriage very little. Nothing has changed concerning the happiness of our marriage. However, the extreme change in our financial situation during our first four months here did bring about a measure of stress that was not there before.*

The wife of a student wrote:

*Our marriage is great and seminary has had no effect at all other than I can't work in my own field, even with an M.A., and I hate my job. But it's not his fault.*

Seventeen single students opted to answer this question. Of these, nine rated it as a negative experience (not enough time to form new relationships or keep in contact with nuclear families), five rated it as a positive experience, including two single parents (one male and one female), and three said it had no effect.

### Conclusions

As a group, 85 percent of the seminary students indicated that they were happily married. When compared to a randomized sample group of 228 adult Seventh-day Adventists surveyed in a four-state area of the Midwest where 77 percent of the respondents stated they were happily married (Dudley, 1988), the marriages of the seminary students (as a group) appear to be somewhat happier in spite of the stress of rigorous academic schedules and financial

pressures.

Nevertheless, stress does affect marital satisfaction negatively. The recurring message that came to light in the open-ended question on how the seminary program affected family life was that the stress of meeting academic requirements and financial pressures resulted in not enough time with the spouse and children (for those who had children). And building strong relationships requires quality time.

Perhaps the most important finding of this study is that *how* one copes with stressful events determines to a considerable extent how well marital satisfaction will be fostered. This suggests several implications for seminary administrators, teachers, and students:

1. Seminary administrators might seek ways to reduce stress by slowing the academic pace, such as planning a curriculum that will allow students to take summer breaks or breaks between quarters without intensives, and encouraging students to adapt to such a pace.

2. Seminary teachers might plan course assignments so that students will not be unreasonably burdened but will be encouraged to take time to build family relationships.

3. Students might be given more realistic expectations about time pressures and financial constraints before they enter seminary and be urged to consider the possible advantages of stretching out their programs by carrying lighter academic loads.

4. During the orientation week for incoming students, seminary administration might provide a workshop for students and

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spouses to learn coping skills to counteract stress, such as "problem-solving," "positive reappraisal," and the need for physical exercise to balance the mental activity of intense studying.

5. The seminary might offer the opportunity for students and their spouses to take a marriage enhancement seminar that focuses on maintaining priorities in their lives and finding a balance that includes family time as well as study time. Indeed, the seminary at Andrews University instituted such a plan during the past school year. A weekend seminar was offered; the seminary subsidized students for half of the seminar costs, and the student couple paid the other half. For a minimal expense, many seminary couples received positive help and encouragement.

Seminary students are developing life patterns that will shape their whole future ministry. Since a strong family life not only serves as an example to their congregations and communities but also provides a secure base for compassionate service, it is essential that seminarians learn early to deal with ministerial pressures and set sensible priorities.

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