

THE INFLUENCE OF SELECTED VARIABLES ON THE  
ATTITUDES OF CANADIAN ADOLESCENTS TOWARDS  
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

by

F. JEAN CYRULL

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The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purposes were to investigate the attitudes of Canadian adolescents toward marriage and family life and to determine how these are influenced by family structure, perception of family conflict, gender and age and to investigate the influence of family structure on adolescent self-esteem. Seven hundred and ninety-two students ages 13-19 in a Western Canadian high school responded to the questionnaire. Multivariate and Univariate analyses reveal that family structure and perception of family conflict have a greater influence on adolescent attitudes towards marriage and family life than age and gender. Length of time living in a remarried family did not appear to influence adolescent attitudes. The remarried family structure most negatively affected adolescent attitudes. Older males in the remarried family appeared to have higher self-esteem than subjects in other family structures.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Among the important changes which have taken place in American families over the last 25 years are an increase in divorce rates and in the incidence of remarriage (Fine, 1986; Glick, 1984). Although these changes have taken place, there are different views about the magnitude of the change. Greenstein (1990) reports that between 1965 and 1980, divorce rates in the U.S. approximately tripled, and that other industrialized nations such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia reported even larger increases for the same period of time. According to Glick (1989, p.24) "in 1987, there were an estimated 11.0 million remarried families and 4.3 million stepfamilies in the United States". He further states that "it seems reasonable to speculate that well over one half of today's young persons in the United States may become stepsons or stepdaughters by the year 2000" (Glick, 1989, p.26).

White (1990) challenged such claims and suggested that the reports of high divorce rates result from the use of an inappropriate statistic (the ratio between the at-risk population for divorce and the at-risk population for marriage). If, however, one compares the number of divorces in a given year with the number of those at risk for divorce (i.e., those who are married), then the rate of divorce is much smaller (less than 2% in Canada in 1987). White further reported that preliminary finding from Statistics Canada data indicate that only 10% (males) to 12% (females) of ever-married Canadian are ever divorced. While divorce rates in the 1970's were relatively high

because of changes in divorce laws and the 'baby-boom' population bulge, since that time, divorce rates in Canada have been increasing at only a modest rate.

Views also differ on how these family changes affect children and adolescents, with some suggesting more negative impacts than others. According to Parish and Taylor (1979), divorce lowers a child's self-concept, while Smith (1990) reported that divorce increased a child's risk of lower academic self-concept and the likelihood of more personality problems. As well, divorce may reduce economic and social resources which may have long-term consequences for children (e.g. lower educational attainment) (Keith & Finlay, 1988). Stepchildren may also be faced with other concerns such as dealing with loss, divided loyalties, and guilt (Visher & Visher, 1979). Historically, the term stepfamily has carried negative connotations, and stepchildren may have negative perceptions of their stepparents (Fine, 1986; Halperin & Smith, 1983; Visher & Visher, 1979).

Marriage and family life attitudes have been assumed to be influenced by childhood experiences, and parental marital relationships seem significant in affecting adolescent attitudes toward marriage and marriage role expectations (Hill & Aldous, 1969; Landis, 1962). Thus, if this relationship is disrupted by divorce or death, it might also be assumed that the child's attitudes to marriage and divorce would also be affected. According to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), happy intact marriages are expected to produce positive role models, while unhappy intact or divorced relationships model negative behaviors (Coleman & Ganong, 1984). Thus if the adolescent experience

during the divorce or stepfamily restructuring period is unhappy, this might result in negative attitudes to marriage and family life.

In spite of these concerns about the effects of divorce and remarriage on children and adolescents, not all studies support these negative conclusions. Ganong and Coleman (1987) suggested that research on stepfamilies has been hampered by what has been labeled "the deficit comparison approach (p. 310). The approach is based on the assumption that the nuclear family is the normal family and that any variations in this will have an undesirable effect on children (Ganong & Coleman, 1987). In their work, Ganong and Coleman approached the study of the stepfamily as 'normal though different', and have concluded that "there were few differences in how stepsons and stepdaughters perceived their relationships to their stepparents" (p. 15). They suggested that undesirable qualities may be the result of factors other than the family structure.

As most of the studies of children and adolescents in stepfamilies have been carried out in the U.S., little is known about the influence of this family experience on Canadian adolescents and whether it is a positive or a negative experience for them. As well, the differing views in the literature reported above on the effects of divorce and remarriage on children and adolescents indicates a need for further research in this area. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify adolescent attitudes towards marriage and family life and to determine how these are influenced by divorce, remarriage and other selected variables.

The literature relevant to this study is hampered by the inadequacy in language (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). As noted above, the term "stepfamily" carries negative connotations and thus may contribute to the negative stereotypes of this family structure. Although much of the research literature reported here uses this term, in this paper, the term 'stepfamily' will be replaced by the more neutral 'remarried family'. However, since there are few other terms which adequately and concisely describe the relationships within the family, when necessary, terms such as 'stepparent' and 'stepchildren' will continue to be used.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Review of Literature**

As noted in Chapter One, the perception of divorce and remarriage as a negative influence on children and adolescents has been supported by a number of studies. Two major kinds of influences are important to this study:

- 1) the negative perceptions and stereotyping of remarried families by both those who are members of the family and by those outside it; and
- 2) negative influences on the self-concepts of members in the remarried family.

### **Divorce and Remarriage as Problematic for Children**

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) reported on a ten-year study that followed the lives of 60 divorced families (131 children and adolescents) in order to determine how long it takes family members to re-establish their lives following divorce. In this report, they included some of the findings from the original 5-year study (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Although families selected for the study responded to an advertized divorce counselling service, they were not considered to be a population in treatment, and according to the authors, most appeared to be coping with divorce reasonably well. In general, the families were middle-class, well-educated, predominately white, and, in most cases, leaving first marriages.

This study found that the psychological condition of the children and adolescents was related to the quality of life in the post-divorce family. Five years following the divorce, one-third of the children were doing well, but well over one-third

were significantly worse off than before. Wallerstein and Blakeslee concluded that divorce was almost always more devastating for children than for adults and that these effects were long-lasting. Children were most vulnerable because the divorce experience affected their formative years, influencing how they viewed themselves and society. Adolescents were most at-risk as their family structure collapsed at a time when they may have been feeling uncertain about themselves and their future. Wallerstein and Blakeslee were unable to predict which children would have long-lasting negative effects from divorce, based on their initial reactions to this experience. Although these findings are important, concerns about methodology have been raised (Hetherington & Furstenberg, Jr., 1989), and thus some caution should be exercised in interpreting the results.

Bryan, Coleman, Ganong, and Bryan (1986) surveyed 696 students from two midwestern universities to determine their perceptions of both adults and children living in remarried families. The students (95% were unmarried and 76% were from nuclear families) were asked to respond with first impressions to brief paragraphs describing adults and adolescents. These paragraphs described different types of family structure such as intact, divorced, and remarried. It was found that family structure was an important factor in stereotype formation and that the term 'stepfamily' had a negative stereotype. It was further reported that "Children in stepfamilies were viewed more negatively than children in any other family structure" (p.173). Although the authors had expected that stepchildren would be evaluated less positively than children in nuclear and in widowed

families, they had not anticipated the low ranking of stepchildren when compared to children of divorced or never-married parents. They concluded that stepchildren may be the most negatively stereotyped children in our society.

Fine (1986) studied 175 midwestern university college students to determine if their perceptions of stepparents were less positive than their perceptions of biological parents and whether the degree of stereotyping depended upon the current family structure. Eight family positions (i.e., mother, stepfather, friend) and two non-family positions were rated using evaluative adjectives on a 7-point scale. Fine found that college students perceived stepparents negatively, with stepmothers perceived more negatively than stepfathers. He reported that some problems in remarried families (e.g., poor adjustment of children, a higher rate of divorce among those who remarry, and negative stereotyping) appeared to be related to the negative expectations of the members of remarried families held by those outside the family who may interact with these family members. As well, individuals who worked with remarried families held less negative stereotypes than did those who did not interact with them. He also found that those who lived in intact families held stronger negative stereotypes than did those who lived in other family structures.

Bryan, Ganong, Coleman, and Bryan (1985) investigated counselor attitudes towards remarried families. They surveyed 123 employed Missouri counselors and 147 graduate and 105 undergraduate students in counseling or social work. The study found that counselors appeared to hold more negative stereotypes

of stepparents and stepchildren than they did of parents and children from intact families, but it was suggested that this might have been influenced by the unrealistic positive views of the nuclear family held in particular by young, inexperienced counselors (Bryan, Ganong, Coleman & Bryan, 1985). The authors suggested that working with remarried families may change perceptions, since counselors with two years or less experience evaluated remarried families more negatively than did the experienced professionals. This finding was consistent with that reported by Fine (1986) above.

The results of these studies indicate that there are negative stereotypes, negative perceptions, and negative attitudes towards remarried families. One might presume that this general negative view might then influence adolescent attitudes towards marriage and family life and might become problematic in family functioning.

Some studies suggested that divorce and remarriage had a negative impact on adolescent self-concept (Parish & Taylor, 1979, Parish & Wigle, 1985). Self-concept has been defined by Chaplin (1985) as self-evaluation. Parish and Parish (1983), however, focused more narrowly on "the affective-component of self-concept or the child's emotional attitude towards himself/herself. This component of self-concept is often referred to as self-esteem..." (Parish & Parish, 1983, p.650). Because much of the literature on divorce and remarriage appears to be assessing emotional attitudes toward this life experience, self-esteem may be a more concise and more appropriate term than self-concept. However, to facilitate the review of literature



for this study, the term self-concept will be used as it is used in the literature.

Parish and Taylor (1979) assessed the self-concepts of 406 grade and junior high school students from a small midwestern school district. They reported that children whose parents had divorced but the mother had not remarried had significantly lower self-concepts than children from intact families. It was suggested that the divorce experience may not be the key variable in lower self-concepts, but rather it may be the decrease in socioeconomic conditions which affected many single-parent families. The study also indicated that children from remarried families had lower self-concepts than children from intact families.

Four hundred and seventy-two children, grades five to eight, from six school districts in eastern Kansas were subjects in a study of the relationship between children's self-concept and family structure and family concept (Parish & Parish, 1983). Children checked forms which listed adjectives describing themselves and their families. Children's self-concept was reported to be significantly related to family structure (i.e., intact family, single-parent family, remarried family) and to family concept (i.e., a person's perception of their family as happy or unhappy). It was found that children in remarried households were "more likely to describe themselves as cruel and less likely to describe themselves as gentle" (Parish & Parish, 1983, p.657), more likely to describe themselves as afraid, weak and gloomy and less likely to describe themselves as cheerful (Parish & Parish, 1983).

In another study, Parish (1981) asked 349 university students from a large midwestern university to evaluate their parents and themselves using both positive and negative adjectives. He reported that "college students' self-concept varied significantly as a function of perceived family happiness" (p.177). It was suggested that when there are threats to basic needs such as safety, love and belonging, there are reduced opportunities for personal growth and development, thus lowering self-concepts.

Smith (1990) investigated parental separation and the academic self-concept of 1,682 grade seven and nine students in Columbia, South Carolina. According to Smith, the sample was racially balanced and came from all socioeconomic segments of society, although all students in remedial classes were not included in the study. He reported that children experiencing parental divorce or separation had more personality problems, and that academic self-concept (though not academic achievement) seemed to be reduced if the separation occurred after the child finished the second grade. The effect of the timing of parental separation led to the tentative conclusion that academic self-concept decreased as a result of pre-divorce conflict between parents or with the trauma of separation which lessened over time (Smith, 1990).

If the perceptions of children and adolescents toward remarriage are negative, then one could assume that their self-concept would suffer and that this could affect their attitudes towards marriage and family life.

Halperin and Smith (1983) compared stepchildren's

perceptions of their biological and non-biological fathers. One hundred and forty subjects from intact and remarried families were selected from fifth and sixth grade, black and white Alabama students. It was found that stepchildren perceived both their biological and non-biological fathers less positively and more negatively than control children perceived their biological fathers. Two explanations were given:

- 1) children from intact families had a clearer definition of the father role and therefore "a more positive perception of him than children whose family situation has been disrupted by divorce" (p. 25); and
- 2) stepchildren were confused by the departure of the biological father, by the addition of the non-biological father and by needing to cope with the complexity of the remarried family relationships.

It was suggested that these children may be caught within the web of conflicting loyalties, involving not only fathers but also other family members. The stepchild's negative perceptions of both fathers may have reflected not only his or her own personal feelings, but also the feelings of other family members as they tried to "perpetuate certain family patterns, myths and dynamics ...that may serve a greater function for the entire family" (Halperin & Smith, 1983, p.26 & 27).

Glenn and Kramer (1987) studied the divorce-proneness of adults whose parents had divorced. Data for the study came from the 1973-1985 General Social Survey. They found a "tendency for divorce to run in families" (p.822) and suggested that value and behavioral patterns unfavorable to marital success may pass from

generation to generation. During adolescence, it appeared that the children with divorced parents "tend to be hesitant and cautious about marriage, often saying that they will not marry" (p.824). On the average, however, they married at an early age, appearing to be impelled towards it while at the same time that they are apprehensive. "It seems likely, therefore, that when they marry they often hedge their bets against failure by withholding full commitment to the marriage" (Glenn & Kramer, 1987, p.824).

Keith and Finlay (1988) used the 1972-1983 General Social Survey data to examine the effect of parental divorce on the child's educational attainment, marital timing, and probability of divorce. They found that "divorce diminishes the economic and social resources available to children", that "fewer resources may have negative consequences for educational attainment, marital timing, and divorce probability" (p.807) and that parental divorce is associated with children's probability of being divorced.

The findings of these studies suggest that divorce and remarriage may affect not only the current attitudes and self-esteem of adolescents, but also the stability of their future relationships.

#### **Divorce and Remarriage as Non-Problematic for Children**

Not all empirical studies support the view that divorce and remarriage negatively affects adolescent attitudes towards marriage and family life. Raschke and Raschke (1979) examined the effect of conflict within different types of family structures on self-concept. Subjects for this study were public

school children in grades three, six and eight from a large Southeastern city. The authors found that family structure (i.e., intact, single-parent, reconstituted) did not make a significant difference in children's self-concept, but that children who perceived greater conflict in their families did have significantly lower self-concepts. As well, they reported that perceived parental happiness correlated with children's self-concept. For all children in the sample, the greater the perception of parental happiness, the higher their self-concepts. While Raschke and Raschke (1979) did not dispute that self-concept can be a problem in disrupted families, their findings suggested that perception of family happiness or conflict may have had a greater influence on adolescent self-concept than did family structure (Raschke & Raschke, 1979).

Long and Forehand (1987) reviewed literature which addressed the relationship between parental divorce, parental conflict and child adjustment, and concluded that "children from divorced families whose parents display high levels of conflict show greater maladjustment than children from divorced families whose parents display low levels of conflict" (Long & Forehand, 1987, p.295). They recommended that parents be aware that children may be more likely to experience problems if the parents engage in frequent conflicts in front of the child.

Effects of parental conflict, family structure and gender on attitudes towards marriage were studied by Jennings (1990). Three hundred and forty students (273 from intact families and 67 from non-intact families) from a large southern university were the subjects in this study. A major conclusion of the study was

that student's views of their own future marriage was impaired by parental dissension. Males had less favorable attitudes to marriage than did females, and students from intact families had more positive marriage attitudes than did those from non-intact families.

Hoelter and Harper (1987) also studied the effects of family structure (which they called family type) on self-concept, but included other family variables as well (family size, family support, and family conflict). They defined family type as traditional (living with both parents natural or adopted) or nontraditional (all other types of family forms). Data was obtained from 905 students in grades nine to twelve in an Ohio school district. Their findings suggested that family support had the most influence on the self-esteem of adolescents, while family type had little effect. They explained this finding by suggesting that family relationships stabilized fairly quickly after the change of family membership (Hoelter & Harper, 1987). (As noted earlier self-esteem rather than self-concept may be a more appropriate term since the studies cited above seem to be assessing emotional attitudes to life experiences [Parish & Parish, 1983].)

Knaub and Hanna (1984) examined family strengths as perceived by 44 middle-class children in remarried families, and found that these children "appeared to perceive their families as relatively high in family strength, especially in their perceptions of happiness with the remarriage, feeling of closeness within the stepfamily and their own sense of self worth" (Knaub & Hanna, 1984, p.84). They reported that

perceptions of happiness may have been linked with age of the child at the time of remarriage and with knowing the stepparent before the marriage (Knaub & Hanna, 1984).

Divided loyalties and discipline have been identified as stressors in remarried families (Lutz, 1983; Visher & Visher, 1979). In a survey by Lutz (1983), 103 West Virginia adolescent children in remarried families responded to questionnaires which measured perceived family stress. Lutz reported that over time stress in remarried families seemed to lessen. She suggested, however, that the findings were hampered by the fact that little information was available on remarried families who have passed the restructuring stage and have established equilibrium (Lutz, 1983). Strothers and Jacob (1984) used the same measure as Lutz (1983) to study stress in remarried families on a sample of 63 West Virginia adolescents. They reported that the family stress reported by adolescents in remarried families was not any higher than that reported by adolescents in nuclear families. This study did find some stress concerning discipline, and they suggested that living in a remarried family compounded the normal adolescent need for autonomy (Strother & Jacobs, 1984).

Variables in addition to family variables may also be important influences on adolescent attitudes. Ganong, Coleman, and Brown (1981) surveyed 321 Kansas high school students to determine differences in attitudes toward marriage and family life held by adolescents living in intact, one-parent, and remarried families. They found that family structure made little difference in these attitudes. This study indicated that gender was more important than family structure in determining attitudes

and perceptions, with females reporting more positive attitudes. Further, it seemed that despite personal experiences, these adolescents held on to cultural stereotypes regarding marriage and family. This finding suggests that gender is an important variable in the investigation of adolescent attitudes.

Tamashiro (1979) investigated attitudes towards marriage held by 162 urban high school students and 83 adults from two private colleges in St. Louis, Missouri, and found that adolescents were more advanced in personality development than in marriage concept development. Using Piaget's structural developmental theories, he suggested that adolescent attitudes towards marriage may be part of the developmental process, and that until a more mature cognitive level is reached, an adolescent cannot apply his or her own family situation to him or herself. "The topic of marriage may be more threatening to adolescents than other topics, or adolescents may have had less experience in thinking about and formulating their ideas on marriage compared to other topics" (Tamashiro, 1979, p.451). This study suggests that age may also be an important variable in determining adolescent attitudes.

Amato (1988) used data from a 1981 - 1982 Australian National Survey to determine if experiencing parental divorce during childhood affected later adult attitudes towards marriage and family life. Subjects aged 18 to 34 whose parents had divorced when they were children described living at home more negatively than did those subjects who came from intact families. However "the respondents from divorced families were, overall, more positive than negative in their recollections" and "more



acceptable of alternatives to traditional family forms than other respondents" (p.460). They were, however, no more likely to be in favor of divorce than any other adults. Amato suggested that these individuals valued family life as other young people did, but were "aware of its limitations and tolerant toward its alternatives" (p.460). He suggested that once members have had time to adjust, one-parent and remarried families may be close and supportive.

Demo and Acock (1988) reviewed the empirical literature which had examined the relationships between divorce, family composition and children's well-being. Although much of this literature supported the claim that the well-being of children is affected by family structure, Demo and Acock (1988) cautioned readers about this conclusion since many of the studies had methodological deficiencies (i.e., simplistic classifications of family structure), had overlooked factors such as income and social class, or had used nonrepresentative samples. They agreed with Raschke and Raschke (1979) that "several variables including the level of family conflict, may be central variables mediating the effect of family structure on children" (Demo & Acock, 1988, p.619). As well, Ganong and Coleman (1987) caution against accepting any "study as timeless because much social data may be time-bound in a particular social-historical context. Researchers and educators should be cautious in relying upon information drawn from studies on remarried families conducted a decade ago" (Ganong & Coleman, 1987, p.15).

According to the literature reviewed here, there is some disagreement on the importance of family structure as an

influence on adolescent attitudes toward marriage and family life. The studies reported here suggest that other variables such as self-esteem, family conflict, age and gender may also be important influences on these adolescent attitudes.

### **Glossary of Terms**

1. family concept - a person's perception of their family as happy or unhappy (Parish & Parish, 1983)
2. family structure - family membership (i.e., intact, one-parent, remarried)
3. intact family or nuclear family - a family unit consisting of father, mother and one or more children which have not experienced separation or divorce
4. one-parent family - family unit consisting of one parent and one or more children
5. stepfamily or remarried family - a family unit consisting of a father, mother, and one or more children in which at least one of the adults has been remarried
6. perceptions - the process of knowing objects and objective events by means of the senses (Chaplin, 1985, p.330)
7. self-concept - an individual's evaluation of self (Chaplin, 1985, p.414)
8. self-esteem - the child's emotional attitude towards himself (Parish & Parish, 1983, p.650)
9. stereotype - a rigid biased perception of an object (Chaplin, 1985, p.447)

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes of a sample of Canadian adolescents toward marriage and family life and to determine how these are influenced by family structure, perception of family conflict, gender and age. A secondary purpose is to investigate how the self-esteem of Canadian adolescents is influenced by family structure. The following hypotheses will be tested:

Hypothesis One: Adolescents in nuclear families will have

more positive attitudes towards marriage and family life than will adolescents living in one-parent families or in remarried families.

Hypothesis Two: Adolescents who have lived in remarried

families 3 years or longer will have more positive attitudes towards marriage and family life than will adolescents who have lived in remarried families less than 3 years.

Hypothesis Three: Adolescents who perceive greater conflict will

have more negative attitudes toward marriage and family life than will adolescents who perceive less family conflict.

Hypothesis Four: Younger adolescents will have more positive attitudes toward marriage and family life than will older adolescents .

Hypothesis Five: Females will have a more positive attitude towards marriage and family life than will males.

Hypothesis Six: Adolescents living in intact families will have higher self-esteem than will adolescents living in re-married families.

### **Subjects**

Subjects for this study were all students between the ages of 13-19 in one high school in a Western Canadian province. The school was selected because it had age ranges appropriate for the study, because it had a sufficiently large enrolment to meet the purposes of the study and because of its accessibility (i.e., the investigator was a member of the staff). The total population was included in the study and was considered necessary to ensure sufficient numbers in each cell for analytical purposes. Of the 903 students eligible for the study, 805 completed the research questionnaire. Thirteen questionnaires were discarded as unusable. Of these, ten questionnaires were incomplete and three subjects provided questionable responses (e.g., one grade eight boy indicated he was married with children). Thus there were 792 usable questionnaires for the study. This represented 87.7% of the population eligible for the study and 98.3% of those who participated in the study. Of the ninety-eight students who did not participate in the study, 14 did not have parental approval for this participation. It is not known why the remaining 84 students did not choose to participate in the study.

### **Selection of Research Instruments**

The literature was reviewed to identify appropriate instruments for measuring attitudes towards marriage and family life. The instruments reviewed are listed in Appendix B. Student attitudes toward family life (Hypotheses One, Two & Three) will

be measured by the Colorado Self-Report Measure of Family Functioning (Bloom, 1985). This instrument measures the perception of family members concerning their family functioning. It has 15 sub-scales with 5 items in each sub-scale and uses a four-choice Likert-type response format. For the purpose of this paper, only 3 of the sub-scales will be used:

- 1) the Cohesion subscale (Cronbach alpha = .89; average inter-item correlation = .61),
- 2) the Conflict sub-scale (Cronbach alpha = .85; average inter-item correlation = .53), and
- 3) Family Idealization sub-scale (Cronbach alpha = .92; average inter-item correlation = .70).

According to Bloom (1985) these sub-scales are correlated but each may also be treated as an independent measure. Cohesion appears to be the integrating concept in the measure as it correlates in a positive direction with Family Idealization and in a negative direction with Conflict (Bloom, 1985). The sub-scales of the Colorado Self-Report Measure of Family Functioning selected for this study appear to be appropriate measures as their focus is on family attitudes. Further, the measure has been tested with adolescents from both intact and disrupted families. It should be noted that these are at best indirect assessments of attitudes. The perspective offered here is that attitudes are the external manifestation of a perception.

Relevant sections from Monitoring the Future (Bachman, Johnson & O'Malley, cited in Thornton, 1989), an instrument designed for adolescents, will be used to assess attitudes toward marriage, divorce and childlessness (Hypotheses One and Two).

Depending on the particular question, responses vary from a three-point (i.e., yes, no, depends) to a six-point response (i.e., very likely, fairly likely, uncertain, fairly unlikely, very unlikely, already have children). Psychometric properties of the instrument were not provided in the Thornton (1989) reference. However, because the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan has used this measure since 1976 to assess adolescent attitudes towards a variety of topics, it was considered to be a suitable instrument for this study.

Self-esteem will be measured using the Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). This scale consists of ten items, with a four-point Likert scale response (from strongly agree to strongly disagree). The scale has high reliability with test-retest correlations (.85) and had correlations with other similar scales ranging from .56 to .83 (Rosenberg, 1965). The measure seems appropriate as it was developed for use with high school students. This measure tests Hypothesis Six.

Selected demographic information needed for the purposes of this study included age, gender, parent's marital status and parent's educational level. Students were asked to indicate their gender and their exact age in years (from 12 to 19). Parents' marital status was indicated by selecting one of seven alternatives: (1) married, (2) remarried, less than 3 years, (3) remarried, 3 years or more, (4) previously married, now a single parent, (5) previously married, living with someone, (6) other, and (7) don't know. Students were also to indicate the educational level of each parent. A copy of the questionnaire is found in Appendix A.

The questionnaire was pretested on twelve grade eight students in another school in the same district where the study was to be conducted. Grade eight students were selected for the pretest because students at this level would represent the youngest participants in the study and therefore the most likely to have difficulty with the language in the questionnaire. Parental permission for participation was granted prior to administration of the pretest. The purpose of this pretesting was to: (1) determine the completion time for the questionnaire; and (2) evaluate the clarity of meaning for each question. Based on the pretest results, minor changes were made to the wording of a few questions. For example, when several students did not know the meaning of gender, the relevant demographic question was changed to: Are you (1) Male? (2) Female?

### **Procedure**

Informal permission to conduct this study was first obtained from the Principal in the school where this study was conducted and the Assistant Superintendent of the School District. This was followed by formal letters of request sent to the Superintendent and to the Assistant Superintendent of the School District and to the Principal of the school. A copy of this letter is found in Appendix C. Simultaneously, a letter requesting permission to undertake this study was sent to the University of British Columbia Ethics Committee.

University research protocol requires that parental permission be obtained when the research subjects are school-aged children. Thus letters were sent to parents of all students in the school requesting permission to include their children in the

study. In keeping with School District procedure, the District Superintendent requested that parents respond in writing if they did not give consent for this participation. This procedure was contrary to University policy, but following consultation and discussion, permission was granted by the University to follow the school district procedure.

At the request of the principal of the school, all students completed the questionnaire at the same time. The date of this administration was negotiated with teachers, and a time was chosen that was convenient to them and when it was anticipated that most students would be in class. Prior to administration of the questionnaire, two staff meetings were held in order for the investigator to instruct teachers on their role in administering the questionnaire and to answer any questions concerning the study.

Questionnaires were packaged in class sizes and labeled with the teachers' names. A teacher instruction sheet attached to the front of the package included the names of students who were not participating in the survey. Teachers were asked to read aloud the letter on the front of the questionnaire at the beginning of the session as this letter gave students the right not to participate in the study. Teachers were requested not to draw attention to any students who did not wish to participate. All questionnaires were returned to the investigator within the hour of administration. Students absent during this session were offered an opportunity to complete the questionnaire later the same week. Several students did take advantage of this opportunity and completed the questionnaire.



### **Analysis Overview**

Each of the thirteen questions from Monitoring the Future used to assess adolescent attitudes to marriage (Bachman, Johnson & O'Malley, cited in Thornton, 1989), appeared to be used as an independent measure. In the interest of parsimony, preliminary analysis were undertaken and these questions were subjected to a factor analysis with Varimax rotation producing four factors with Eigen values greater than 1. The central theme in Factor 1 appeared to be that marriage and family life follow a normative course or process that lasts for most of life and includes having children. Factor 1 was named Family Life Course. As the central theme in Factor 2 suggests that parenting is a fulfilling experience, this Factor was named Fulfillment. The central theme in Factor 3 reflects the attitude that marriage and family life should follow the traditional role of a legal marriage and loyalty to family and its needs. This Factor was named Traditional View. Factor 4 was named Lack of Commitment since it has as it's central theme the attitude that marriage and family life does not require a commitment and that if things don't work out divorce is an option.

The Methods section introduced the hypotheses of the study in a specific order; this order is altered to facilitate presentation of the analysis. Hypothesis Two proposed that adolescents living in the remarried family longer than three years would have more positive attitudes to marriage and family life than would adolescents living in remarried families less than three years. Multi-variate analyses of variance (MANOVA) yielded no significant effects with the family attitude

variables. Due to the vastly differing and disproportionate cell sizes for all of the Marriage Attitude variables, multi-variate analyses could not be conducted. Therefore, Univariate analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted instead. The ANOVA results for Marriage Attitude variables as these were influenced by the length of time in the remarried family, are nonsignificant in all cases but one.

As a result of these findings, Parental marital status was recoded into three parts: nuclear family, re-formed family, and single-parent family. Following this, MANOVA was used to examine the influence of these marital status categories, gender and age on Family Attitudes variables and on Self-Esteem, and ANOVA examined the effect of gender, age and parent's marital status on Marriage Attitude variables and Self-Esteem. These analyses address Hypotheses One, Four, Five and Six. In the concluding analyses (Hypothesis Three), ANOVAS were used to examine the effect the adolescent's perception of Family Conflict on Family and Marriage attitude variables.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

#### Demographics

Seven hundred and ninety-two students responded to the questionnaire. Of these, eight individuals did not indicate either gender or age. Thus, the final number of students in the study included 424 males and 368 females. The distribution of age and gender for these students are reported in Table 1. Parent's marital status as reported by students is presented in Table 2.

It is interesting to note that although recent U.S. studies indicate high rates of divorce and remarriage (Glick, 1984; Greenstein, 1990), 74.3% (nearly 3/4) of the students in this study reported living in nuclear families. Although the area in which the school is located includes a military base and a prison, the high percentage of nuclear families found in this study may reflect the stable agricultural background from which this community developed. It should be noted, however, that 98 students did not participate in the study. No demographic information is available for these students, but it is possible that at least some of these non-participants came from non-traditional family structures and may have considered a questionnaire about marriage and family too sensitive to answer. If this was the case, their attitudes towards marriage and family life may be negative, and thus could have altered the results. However, because the entire school wrote the questionnaire at the same time, it is also possible that the non-participants had homework to do, preferred having free time, or were uninterested

in the study.

Father's education as reported by students is presented in Table 3, and mother's education as reported by students is presented in Table 4. It is interesting to note that 20.8% of the students did not report or did not know their father's education and 15.8% of the students did not report or did not know their mother's education. Some students seemed to find this question sensitive, as several questionnaires had comments suggesting that this question should not have been asked.

### **Preliminary Analysis**

Each of the thirteen questions from Monitoring the Future used to assess adolescent attitudes to marriage (Bachman, Johnson & O'Malley, cited in Thornton, 1989) appeared to be used as an independent measure. In order to be as parsimonious as possible, the questions were submitted to a factor analysis with Varimax rotation producing four factors with Eigen values greater than 1. The five items in Factor 1 were:

- 5) Which do you think you are most likely to choose in the long run? (Getting married, Not getting married)
- 4) Do you think that you would prefer to have a mate for most of your life or would you prefer not to have a mate?
- 6) If it were up to you what would be the ideal age for you to get married?
- 3) How important is it to you to have a good marriage and family life?
- 13) If you did get married, how likely is it that you would want to have children.

As the central theme in this Factor appeared to be that marriage and family life follow a normative course or process that lasts for most of life and includes having children, Factor 1 was named Family Life Course. Low mean scores on this Factor indicate a positive attitude toward marriage and family life following this normative course.

The items in Factor 2 were:

- 11) Being a father and raising children is one of the most fulfilling experiences a man can have.
- 12) Being a mother and raising children is one of the most fulfilling experiences a woman can have.

As the central theme in Factor 2 suggests that parenting is a fulfilling experience, this Factor was named Fulfillment.

The three items in Factor 3 are:

- 7) When there are children in the family, parents should stay together even if they don't get along.
- 10) Do you feel almost all married couples who can, ought to have children?
- 1) Most people will live fuller happier lives if they choose legal marriage rather than staying single or just living with someone.

The central theme in Factor 3 reflects the attitude that marriage and family life should follow the traditional role of a legal marriage and loyalty to family and its needs. This factor was named Traditional View.

Factor 4 also includes three items:

- 8) Divorce is usually the best solution when a couple can't seem to work out their marriage problems.

2) One sees so few good marriages that one questions it as a way of life.

9) If you did get married, how likely do you think it is that you would stay married to the same person for life.

Factor 4 was named Lack of Commitment since it has as it's central theme the attitude that marriage and family life does not require a commitment and that if things don't work out divorce is an option.

### **Analyses**

The central purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of Canadian adolescents towards marriage and family life and to determine how these were influenced by family structure, family conflict, gender and age. A secondary purpose was to investigate how the self-esteem of Canadian adolescents was influenced by family structure and related variables. Although the Methods section introduced the hypotheses of the study in a specific order, these hypotheses will be discussed in a different order so that the presentation of the analyses can be facilitated.

Missing data varies with most of the analyses. There seems to be a number of reasons for this. Students did not respond to every question, and it appears that they had more difficulty answering questions pertaining to marriage, than to family. For instance, response rates for the Perception to Family variables remained over 700, while Perception to Marriage variables were lower, ranging between 180 to 400. Conclusions drawn from this study suggest that perhaps a developmental issue is making it difficult for students to have formed definite marriage

attitudes, and thus difficult for them to answer. This will be discussed later in the paper. As well, missing data also included cases dropped when all neutral responses were recoded as missing data. The scoring for most of the measures used was continuous, thus neutral responses interfered with this process, and dropping them facilitated statistical analyses.

### **Comparisons of Short Term and Long Term Remarriages**

'Time' to establish bonding between children and stepparents has been identified as an important factor influencing the restructuring process in remarried families (Mills, 1984; Visher & Visher, 1979). Mills' (1984) model for stepfamily development suggests a time of 3 - 5 years for the completion of the initial phase of stepfamily formation. For this study three years was selected as the time period required to complete this restructuring, and respondents living in remarried families were asked to indicate whether they had lived in a remarried family less than three years or longer than three years. Hypothesis Two proposed that adolescents living in the remarried family longer than three years would have more positive attitudes to marriage and family life than would adolescents living in remarried families less than three years. MANOVA yielded no significant effect:

Cohesion -- [F (1,56) = .900 p < .347]

Conflict -- [F (1,56) = .664 p < .418]

Family Idealization -- [F (1,56) = .394 p < .533]

Due to the vastly differing and disproportionate cell sizes for all of the Marriage Attitude variables, multi-variate analyses could not be conducted. Therefore, Univariate analysis

of variance (ANOVA) was conducted instead. This pattern is repeated throughout the hypotheses. The ANOVA results for Marriage Attitude variables as these were influenced by the length of time in the remarried family, are nonsignificant in all cases but one. The only marriage attitude variable showing significance is Lack of Commitment [ $F(1,39) = 4.60, p < .038$ ], with means of 6.54 for remarried less than 3 years and 5.33 for remarried more than 3 years. The variable Family Life Course yielded a nonsignificant main effect for remarried status [ $F(1,48) = .97, p < .330$ ] and a nonsignificant main effect was also found for remarried status on the variable Fulfillment [ $F(1,52) = 2.23, p < .140$ ]. As well, the variable Traditional View by Parent's Remarried Status also yielded a nonsignificant main effect for remarried status [ $F(1,17) = .090, p < .767$ ].

Overall, these results seem to indicate that for these subjects, the length of time which they had lived in a remarried family did not have a great deal of influence on their attitudes, with the possible exception of reducing marital commitment.

#### **Comparisons of Gender Age and Marital Status**

Given that all but one variable in Hypothesis Two was nonsignificant and to be consistent with the family structures outlined in Hypothesis One, which addresses the nuclear, remarried and single-parent family, student's seven-part response to their parent's marital status, from the questionnaire, was recoded into three parts: nuclear (which included those married less than 3 years as well as those married 3 years and longer), re-formed family (which included remarried families as well as those people previously married but now living with someone), and



single-parent families.

The MANOVA was used to examine the influence of parents' marital status (as described above), gender and age on Family Attitudes variables (i.e., Cohesion, Conflict, and Family Idealization) and on Self-Esteem.

On the questionnaire, students had been asked to indicate their actual age in years. This information was recoded into junior (ages 13 to 15) and senior (ages 16 to 19). Justification for recoding this information comes from developmental theory. Tamashiro (1979) used Piaget's theory to develop his Marriage Concepts Theory and assumed: 1) students move through distinct changes in their thought process; 2) that the stages have invariant sequence; 3) that the stages have inner logic; and 4) that the stages are hierarchical. As well, Erikson (1968) suggests that in the early stage of adolescence there is a search for trust in oneself and in others, while in the second stage adolescence seek their vocational direction. Gordon (1972) categorized adolescence into two groups: 1) Early adolescence, those ages 12-15 who must deal with a major dilemma of Acceptance/Achievement, and 2) Later adolescence, those ages 16-20 who must deal with Intimacy/Autonomy as their major dilemma. Since developmental theory suggests differences between early and later adolescence, and since the population for this study provides that opportunity, subjects will be divided into two groups: younger (junior high school students) and older (senior high school students).

The MANOVA revealed a significant multivariate main effect for Parent's Marital Status on the Cohesion variable [ $F(2,614) =$

4.967,  $p < .007$ ], with a mean of 15.47 for those living in nuclear families, 14.53 for those living in re-formed families and 14.49 for single parent families. The Student-Newman-Keuls Multiple Comparisons was then conducted to determine between-group significance. This test indicated significance ( $p < .05$ ) in the predicted direction between those adolescents in nuclear and re-formed families, but not between those adolescents in nuclear and single parent families. Thus the analysis of the variable concerned with perceptions of family cohesion provides only partial support to Hypothesis One.

The variable Family Idealization measured the adolescent's perception of their families harmony and happiness. A significant main effect was found for this variable over the parental marital status variable [ $F ( 2,614) = 11.99, p < .001$ ] with mean of 12.62 for nuclear, 11.14 for the re-formed family and 10.60 for single-parent families. Multiple comparisons using the Student-Newman-Keuls test yielded significant between-group differences ( $p < .05$ ) with adolescents in nuclear families scoring higher than those in re-formed families as well as significant between-group differences ( $p < .05$ ) with adolescents in nuclear families scoring higher than those in single parent families. Results of this analysis supports the hypothesis that adolescents in nuclear families will have more positive attitudes towards family than those in remarried or single-parent families.

As well a significant main effect is found for age (young, old) on the Cohesion variable [ $F (1,614) = 4.68, p < .03$ ], with means of 15.22 and 14.97 respectively. This supports Hypothesis Four, that younger adolescents will have more positive attitudes

towards family life.

Data from this study do not support Hypothesis Six, that family structure influences adolescent's self-esteem [ $F(2,614) = .015, p < .985$ ].

All of these main effects are qualified by the 3-way interaction between Parent's marital status, and the gender and age of the subjects on the Self-Esteem variable [ $F(2,614) = 4.53, p < .01$ ]. This information is graphically presented in Figure 1.

Follow-up simple main effect analysis determined that the focus of this interaction was in the analysis of the re-formed family. There are no gender differences for the younger group but significant gender differences for the older group [ $F(1,57) = 7.71, p < .007$ ]. Females did not differ over the age groups (although a downward trend is evident) but there was a significant difference for males [ $F(1,48) = 6.14, p < .01$ ]. These results indicate that in re-formed families, older adolescent males score higher on Self-esteem than older females, but this difference doesn't exist in the younger age group. Older males scored higher than younger males, but this difference is not evident for females. In this study, older adolescent males in the re-formed family had the highest self-esteem.

Of further interest, the effect of educational level of the father on Self-Esteem yielded a significant main effect for father's education [ $F(1,603) = 199.5, p < .010$ ], with means of 30.61 and 31.76 for low and high education respectively.

Following the pattern indicated above, univariate ANOVAS examined the effects of gender, age and parent's marital status

on the Marriage Attitude variables and Self-Esteem. That is a 2 (Gender) x 2 (Age) x 3 (Parental Marital Status) ANOVA was conducted on each of the variables: Family Life Course, Fulfillment, Traditional View and Lack of Commitment.

The first of these analyses on the variable Family Life Course yielded a significant main effect for gender [ $F(1,486) = 11.58, p < .001$ ] with means of 7.77 and 7.16 for males and females respectively, as well as a significant main effect for parent's marital status [ $F(2,486) = 4.63, p < .01$ ] with means of 7.33 for nuclear, 8.18 for the re-formed family and 7.64 for the single-parent family group. Low cell means for Family Life Course indicate positive attitudes towards marriage and family life. Multiple comparisons yielded significant differences between adolescents in nuclear families and re-formed families ( $p < .05$ ), but not between adolescents in nuclear and single-parent families. Analyses reveal that in general female adolescents perceive that marriage and family life follows a predictable course.

Both of these main effects were qualified by their interaction on the Family Life Course variable (presented by Figure 2). The interaction between gender and parent's marital status [ $F(2,486) = 6.59, p < .002$ ] took the form of higher ratings by females than by males in the re-formed family group as uncovered by simple main effect analysis [ $F(1,58) = 9.47, p < .003$ ] with means of 9.32 for males and 6.96 for females. The nuclear and single-parent family were not significant in this analysis.

Results from the analysis for this variable give some

support to Hypothesis One and Hypothesis Four, that female adolescents from nuclear families have the more positive attitude to marriage and family life. Further analysis indicate that within the re-formed family, females also have the more positive attitude to this variable than males.

The second of these analysis on the variable. Fulfillment yielded only one significant main effect for the parent's marital status variable [ $F(2,548) = 3.65, p < .03$ ] with means of 6.81, 6.32 and 6.48 for the nuclear, re-formed and single-parent groups respectively. Multiple comparisons indicated significance ( $p < .05$ ) between adolescents in nuclear and re-formed families, but not between adolescents in nuclear and single-parent families. This would seem to indicate that adolescents in re-formed families have a less positive attitude to their future parenting role than adolescents in nuclear or single-parent families. Data from this variable gives partial support to the Hypothesis One.

The next analysis on the variable Traditional View yielded main effects for all of the factors: gender [ $F(1,172) = 21.56, p < .001$ ] with mean scores of 6.86 and 5.56 for males and females respectively; age [ $F(1,172) = 8.21, p < .005$ ] with means of 6.82 and 5.90 for young and old respectively; parent's marital status [ $F(2,172) = 6.54, p < .005$ ], means of 6.42, 5.83, and 4.53 for nuclear, re-formed family and single-parent family respectively. The Student-Newman-Keuls Procedure indicated significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) between adolescents in nuclear and single-parent families and between re-formed and single-parent families, but not between nuclear and re-formed families. These main effects were qualified by the interaction between age

and gender [ $F(1,172) = 4.32, p < .03$ ] as represented in Figure 3. The locus of this interaction is higher scores by males than by females in the younger age group. Further investigation yielded higher scores for younger males than for older males [ $F(1,98) = 14.92, p < .000$ ]. Analysis on this variable indicate that younger adolescent males in nuclear and re-formed families have the most positive attitude to this traditional view of marriage. This gives support to Hypothesis Four but not Hypothesis Five.

The final analysis on the variable Lack of Commitment yielded nonsignificant main effects and a 3-way interaction of marginal significance ( $p = .05$ ). Closer inspection of this interaction revealed cell sizes of 5 or less on two of the cells making further analysis questionable and any interpretation suspect.

As mentioned, student response rate to the variable Traditional View is low, approximately 25%. It would seem that about 75% of students choose the neutral response, which may suggest that adolescents have not yet formed their own marriage attitudes.

In summary, there seem to be reasonable support for Hypothesis One that adolescents in nuclear families will have more positive attitudes towards marriage and family life than adolescents living in one-parent families or in remarried families. All variables give at least partial support except the Marriage Attitude variable Lack of Commitment. Younger adolescents having the more positive attitudes (Hypothesis Four) is supported by the Family Attitude variable Cohesion, and the

Marriage Attitude variable Traditional View. Hypothesis Five (females having the more positive attitudes) is supported by one Marriage Attitude variables, Family Life Course. Though Traditional View shows significance ( $p = .001$ ), means are in the opposite direction of prediction.

### **Comparisons as a Function of Conflict**

The sub-scale Conflict from the Colorado Self-Report Measure of Family Functioning, used as a dependent variable, was recoded into Low and High Conflict, and used as an independent variable to measure adolescent attitudes to Marriage and Family Life.

Significant differences were found for two of the dependent variables. The univariate F-test yielded the following results: Cohesion, [ $F(1,600) = 219.66, p < .001$ ], with means of 16.80 and 13.50 for low and high conflict respectively: Family Idealization, [ $F(1,660) = 233.51, p < .001$ ], means of 14.15 for low conflict and 10.05 for high conflict.

Cell means and the Probability level indicate that the adolescent's Perception of Family Conflict influences Perception of Family Cohesion and Idealization. This supports Hypothesis Three that the greater the perception of family conflict, the more negative the attitude to family life.

Following the preceding pattern, ANOVAS were used to examine the effect of perception of conflict on each of the Marriage Attitude variables. The first of these analyses on the variable Family Life Course yielded a significant main effect for Conflict [ $F(1,496) = 5.19, p < .023$ ], with means of 7.29 (low conflict) and 7.72 (high conflict). On this variable a low cell score indicates a positive attitude.

The second of these analyses on the variable Fulfillment yielded a significant main effect for Conflict [ $F(1,562) = 13.11, p < .000$ ], with mean of 6.93 and 6.46 for low and high conflict respectively. A high cell score for this variable indicated a positive attitude. The results of this analysis are in the predicted direction, that is, the higher the perception of conflict, the more negative the attitude towards parenting as a fulfilling experience.

Perception of Conflict had a nonsignificant effect on the adolescent's view of a Traditional marriage and family life [ $F(1,187) = .003, p < .960$ ].

The final analysis on the variable Lack of Commitment yielded a significant main effect [ $F(1,421) = 9.22, p < .003$ ] with means of 6.33 and 6.79 for low and high conflict respectively. This variable which measures commitment to marriage with divorce as an option, (a high score means a negative attitude) also supports the hypothesis. Mean scores indicate that adolescents with a higher perception of conflict will have less commitment to marriage.

The effect of Conflict on adolescent Self-Esteem yielded a significant main effect for Conflict [ $F(1,725) = 55.2, p < .000$ ], means of 32.5 and 29.54 for low and high conflict respectively, giving support to literature that suggests perception of Conflict influences the Self-Esteem.

In summary, Hypothesis Three (adolescents who have a greater perception of family conflict will have more negative attitudes towards marriage and family life) is well supported by all of the Family Attitude variables, by all but one of the Marriage



Attitude variables (Lack of Commitment), and Self-Esteem.

### **Summary by Hypothesis**

Hypothesis One suggested that adolescents in nuclear families will have more positive attitudes towards marriage and family life than will adolescents living in one parent families or in remarried families. The MANOVA revealed a significant multivariate main effect for Parent's Marital Status on the family attitude variable, Cohesion. Multiple Comparisons to determine between-group significance indicated significance in the predicted direction between those adolescents in nuclear and re-formed families, but not between those adolescents in nuclear and single-parent families.

A significant main effect was found for the family attitude variable, Family Idealization, over the Parental marital status variable. Results of this analysis supports the hypothesis that adolescents in nuclear families will have more positive attitudes towards family than those in remarried or single-parent families. These main effects are qualified by the 3-way interaction between Parent's marital status, and the gender and age of the subjects on the Self-Esteem variable. Follow-up simple main effect analysis determined that the focus of this interaction was in the analysis of the re-formed family. In this study, older adolescent males in the re-formed family had the highest self-esteem.

ANOVA analysis for the Marriage Attitude variable Family Life Course reveals a significant main effect for Parent's marital status. Multiple comparisons yielded a significant difference between adolescents in nuclear families and re-formed

families but not between adolescents in nuclear and single-parent families. An interaction between Gender and Parent's marital status on the Family Life Course variable took the form of higher rating by females than by males in the re-formed family group.

The analysis on the marriage attitude variable Fulfillment yielded one significant main effect for the Parent's marital status variable. Multiple comparisons indicated significance between adolescents in nuclear and re-formed families but not between adolescents in nuclear and single-parent families. The next analysis on the variable Traditional View also yielded a significant main effect for the Parent's marital status variable. Multiple comparisons indicated significant differences between adolescents in nuclear and single-parent families and between re-formed and single-parent families but not between nuclear and re-formed families. The final analysis on the variable Lack of Commitment yielded nonsignificant main effects.

Hypothesis Two predicted that adolescents who had lived in remarried families 3 years or longer would have more positive attitudes towards marriage and family life than would adolescents who had lived in remarried families less than 3 years. There was only one supporting variable, the Marriage Attitude variable Lack of Commitment.

Hypothesis Three suggested that adolescents who have greater perception of family conflict will have more negative attitudes towards marriage and family. This hypothesis had the support of all variables except the Marriage Attitude variable Traditional View.

Hypothesis Four, younger adolescents will have more positive

attitudes towards marriage and family life than will older adolescents, was supported by one Family Attitude variable, Cohesion, and one Marriage Attitude variable, Traditional View. As well an interaction between Age and Gender on the Traditional View variable indicated that younger males in nuclear and re-formed families have the most positive attitude to this variable.

Hypothesis Five suggested that females will have a more positive attitude towards marriage and family life than will males. The only support came from the Marriage Attitude variable Family Life Course.

No variables supported Hypothesis Six that adolescents living in intact families will have higher self-esteem than will adolescents living in remarried families. However, an interaction with Parent's marital status, Gender, and Age on the Self-Esteem variable indicated that in the re-formed family, older adolescent males have higher self-esteem than older females and younger males.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion

This study investigated adolescent attitudes towards marriage and family life in order to determine how these are influenced by family structure, perception of family conflict, gender and age. As well the study investigated how the self-esteem of adolescents is influenced by family structure. The following family attitudes were included in the study: perception of family cohesion, perception of family idealization, perception of family conflict. The following marriage attitudes were also included in the study: family life following a predictable course, parenting as a fulfilling experience, a traditional view of marriage and family life, and lack of commitment to marriage and family life. The study found that family structure and perception of family conflict had more influence on adolescent attitudes than did age and gender. As well, the re-formed family seemed to be the family structure that influenced self-esteem.

The central focus for this study was to determine how adolescent attitudes towards marriage and family life were influenced by family structure (nuclear, re-formed, single-parent). Previous studies have provided contradictory results, with some studies indicating that the effects of divorce and remarriage were negative while others did not report this finding. The results of this study suggest that divorce and remarriage may be problematic for adolescents. Hypothesis One compared the attitudes of adolescents in nuclear families to adolescents in single-parent and in remarried families (renamed re-formed family to include those couples living together but not

married). Results indicate that all variables except Lack of Commitment show significant between-group differences and give some support for this hypothesis. As predicted, adolescents from nuclear families had the most positive attitudes towards marriage and family life. It was also predicted that adolescents in the re-formed family would have more negative attitudes than those in the nuclear family. This was supported by four of the variables (Cohesion, Family Idealization, Family Life Course, and Fulfillment). These findings suggesting that the re-formed family is viewed more negatively by adolescents than the nuclear family is supported by several studies: Bryan, Coleman, Ganong, and Bryan (1985 & 1986); Fine (1986), and Halperin and Smith (1983). All found that the respondents' perceptions of the remarried family appeared to be more negative than perceptions of nuclear families. This study would also seem to support Visher and Visher (1979) who suggest that often problems with adolescents (e.g. identity) increase with remarriage, particularly as they are experiencing the developmental need to loosen emotional ties with a family while the parents in a new re-formed family are attempting to develop cohesiveness.

Wallerstein & Blakeslee (1989) reported that all adolescents suffer from divorce and about half enter adulthood "worried, underachieving, self-deprecating and sometimes angry" (p. 299). Results from two variables, Family Idealization and Traditional View would seem to support this view. In this study, adolescents from single parent families seemed to respond negatively to questions about family and marriage happiness and harmony as well as commitment.

The Family Idealization variable gives full support to Hypothesis One, which predicted that adolescents in nuclear families would have more positive attitudes than adolescents in both the re-formed and single-parent families. Data from all the variables suggest that the nuclear family provides the optimal environment for nurturing positive attitudes to marriage and family life. One could speculate that the single-parent family, with its reduced economic and social resources (Keith and Finlay, 1988) continues to negatively influence adolescent attitudes, and in spite of a greater awareness to the problems with remarriage, the complexity of this life experience seems to increase the possibility for the adolescent to have negative attitudes. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) suggest that many children and adolescents never recover from the disappointment of the divorce experience and carry the hurt into the re-formed family, thus making it the family structure which carries the greatest stress. The negative attitudes adolescents develop when their parents experience divorce and/or remarriage would also lend support to Glenn and Kramer's (1987) study that suggests divorce has a tendency to run in families and that these adolescents seem to withhold full commitment to a relationship.

No significant differences were found on the variable 'Lack of Commitment'. It may be that adolescents, in spite of different family structures, are developmentally unable to consider failure in their future relationships. This will be discussed later in the paper.

The prediction in Hypothesis One that adolescents in the nuclear family would have the most positive attitudes is

generally supported. It would seem, however, that adolescents in the re-formed family have more negative attitudes to marriage and family life than those in single-parent families.

Hypothesis Two suggested that adolescents who had lived in a re-formed family for three years or more would have a more positive attitude toward marriage and family life than those who had lived in a re-formed family less than three years. No significant differences were found on Family Attitude variables, supporting the finding of Lutz (1983) that life in the remarried family may not be as stressful as the literature suggests, and the findings of Knaub and Hanna (1984) that children in remarried families seemed to have a relatively high perception of family strength and happiness with the remarriage. It may be important for future research to further investigate the process of restructuring in re-formed families. Although the literature on remarried families stresses the importance of this period, there is some inconsistency concerning how long it takes the family to complete the restructuring process. It is possible that had a different 'time' period been chosen for this study different results may have been found.

The only Marriage attitude variable showing between group significance was Lack of Commitment. Results indicate that adolescents living in re-formed families less than three years do not appear to have as much commitment to a future relationship, appear to question marriage, and indicate their willingness to consider divorce as an option when faced with difficult marital problems. Amato's (1988) study supports this finding. His investigation of adult children of divorce suggested that they

had less idealized views of marriage, were more accepting of different alternatives to traditional family forms, but were no more likely to favor divorce than other respondents. One could speculate that a negative response to this variable is not necessarily a reflection of a negative attitude to marriage. In a society where divorce is a common occurrence, it may be important for young people to know that there are coping skills to survive a marriage breakup, that divorce can be both normative, for many couples nonpathological and may lead to better life situations (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987).

The second major purpose of this study was to investigate the negative influences on the self-esteem of members in the re-married family. Children's self-esteem was significantly related to family structure in Parish and Parish's (1983) study in that children in the re-married households described themselves more negatively than did children in other family structures. As well, Parish and Taylor (1979) found that children in re-married and single-parent families reported lower self-esteem than children from intact families. However, this study did not support the influence of structure on adolescent's self-esteem even though a significant correlation ( $.2870, p = .000$ ) was found between the variables self-esteem and cohesion. Although perceptions of Family Idealization indicated that those in single-parent families are less happy than those in nuclear families, it was not reflected in their assessment of self-esteem. However, in a 3-way interaction between parent's marital status, gender and age on the Self-Esteem variable, it was found that in the re-formed family, older males had higher self-esteem



than older females and younger males. This finding of greater self-esteem for older males may reflect a cultural stereotype that men are dominant while women are submissive (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) and be heightened in the single-parent family when the oldest male child takes on many of the roles of the absent father (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). The resulting high esteem in the re-formed family may indicate that the older male had already developed trust in self by the independence given to him in the single-parent family (Erikson, 1968) and thus the self-esteem is not lowered by the adjustments required in the re-formed family as suggested in other studies (Visher & Visher, 1979). Further study is needed to investigate this interpretation. The data from this study seem to indicate that the only family structure which influences self-esteem is the re-formed family. This may further the work of Hoelter and Harper (1987). Describing family structure as traditional and non-traditional, they suggested that family support has more influence on self-esteem than family structure. In this study, by differentiating the non-traditional as single parent and remarried, it may give greater clarification to their research.

Perception of Conflict as measured by a sub-scale from the Colorado Self-Report Measure of Family Functioning (Bloom, 1985) seems to be an influential independent variable in this study, emerging as a strong negative influence on adolescent attitudes towards marriage and family life. Both Family Attitude variables (Cohesion and Family Idealization) and three of the four Marriage Attitude variables (Family Life Course, Fulfillment, Lack of Commitment) show significant between group differences. As well,

Perception of Conflict shows a significant between-group difference with Self-Esteem.

Several studies support the influence of conflict on adolescent development. Raschke and Raschke (1979) found that family structure did not significantly influence children's self-esteem, but children with greater perception of family conflict had significantly lower self-esteem. Long and Forehand (1987) suggest that the most important mediating variable between divorce and child adjustment is conflict and that parental conflict does not necessarily dissipate with divorce, but may in fact increase as divorced parents wrestle with issues such as finances and visitations. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) report that the most important factor in positive readjustment for children after divorce is a loving, stable relationship with both parents, parents who have dealt with their personal differences and those who encourage cooperative parenting. This study seems to give further support to these findings as it indicates that adolescent family attitudes are influenced by their perception of the level of conflict within the family of origin. Erikson (1968) states that adolescents have distinct tasks, and the younger adolescent must strive for trust in self and others. In striving for this sense of self, the adolescent begins to doubt the adult, and this appears to bring about either vocal or silent opposition to parent's guidance (Blos, 1972). Conger (1972) suggests that degree of perception of conflict may be linked to parenting style. Basing his statements on Elder and Bowerman (1964), he suggests adolescents subjected to the democratic parenting style were more likely to find their parent's fair and

reasonable. Democratic practices guided by interested parents appeared to promote increased adolescent autonomy, and promoted positive rather than negative identification with the parent. The democratic practice became a good model for adolescent independence. In contrast autocratic or indifferent parenting styles do not present models of responsibility or cooperative independence, and frequently promote greater conflict and hostility (Conger, 1972).

This study seems to indicate that adolescent attitudes are influenced by conflict as well as family structure. Thus, one could speculate that in order to reduce perception of conflict and encourage positive attitudes, it may be important for parents to be more aware of how their children perceive conflict resolution patterns in the family.

Based on the research of Ganong, Coleman and Brown (1981), it was hypothesized that females have a more positive attitude to marriage and family life than males. The findings provide only partial support to this hypothesis. Gender had no significant influence on the adolescent family attitude variables and only partial influence on marriage attitude variables. Family Life Course, the variable that anticipates that the process of finding a partner, getting married, and having children will be a happy one, is the only supporting variable. One could speculate that this also reflects a social stereotype that marriage and family is more important to females while a career holds greater importance to males (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986). Further investigation indicates that it is in the re-formed family that females have the more positive attitude to

this variable. It is possible that females do not feel the disruption in the re-formed family as keenly as males do when a stepfather displaces their 'man of the house' position (Visher & Visher, 1979). Also, daughters identify with their mothers (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989) and it is also possible that a remarriage experience would have romanticized the Family Life Course attitude. This would give further support to the hypothesis that females have the more positive attitude to marriage and to Tamashiros's theory (1979) that marriage concepts are age related. Although significant, Traditional View, the variable assessing the adolescent's commitment to a long-term legal relationship, indicates that it is males, not females, that have the most positive attitude. This was unexpected. It is possible today's young male is recognizing the possible financial burdens associated with divorce and remarriage (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987) and is viewing with more favor the stability of a Traditional relationship, or if this reflects a developmental issue. Another factor may have influenced the results of this variable, in that one question that was part of the Traditional View variable asked for a 'yes, no, depends' response. Approximately 75% of the students selected the 'depends' response. Because these neutral responses were omitted in the analyses, the Traditional View variable is reflecting the views of only about 25% of the sample. It is possible that this 25% could have had some distinct characteristics (such as more younger students) which might have influenced the findings. Although the review of demographics indicated little differences compared to the total sample, the possibility of a difference

should not be overlooked.

The normal developmental process encourages adolescents to break gradually with the family and become independent. Therefore it was hypothesized that younger adolescents would have more positive attitudes to marriage and family life. This was supported by the family attitude variable Cohesion. The data reflected that younger adolescents had more positive feelings about family togetherness and helpfulness. Because older adolescents have gained some autonomy or at least are acquiring an independent relationship with their parents and because their central focus may be toward a career or life goal (Erikson, 1968), the older adolescent may be looking beyond family relationships and may be less influenced by them.

Traditional View is the only adolescent attitude to marriage variable that is significantly influenced by age. A further investigation showed an interaction between gender and age with younger males in nuclear families having the most positive attitudes to this variable. Tamashiro's (1979) research may give some insight into these results. His study examined how adolescents think about marriage and suggests that there are four age-related stages in acquiring marriage concepts: 1) magical, 2) idealized conventional, 3) individualistic, and 4) affirmational. Tamashiro found that adolescents score higher at the first two stages of marriage concept development and adults score higher at the last two stages. Two-thirds of grade ten students in his study scored at the Magical stage which is characterized by confusion and fantasy-filled ideas of interpersonal relationships and global emotions. Tamashiro

suggests that marriage may be a threatening topic to adolescents as they have had less experience forming ideas about it compared to other topics.

The research questions associated with the variables Family Life Course and Traditional View are similar to a standard fairy tale plot, falling in love, getting married and living happily ever after. The other two marriage attitude variables seemed more factual. They asked students to consider commitment to marriage, divorce, and having children. Students in this study seemed to respond to Family Life Course and Traditional View in a manner that compared quite closely to Tamashiro's description of 'Magical'- the standard fairy tale plot. In addition this study indicated that young males had the most positive attitude to the Tradition View variable. As adolescent males develop later than adolescent females (Tanner, 1972), this would give further support to the finding that males would have the more 'Magical' attitude to this variable.

When comparing the family and the marriage attitude responses on the questionnaire, it appears that students found it easier to respond to the family attitude questions. This is apparent in the higher response rate as well as fewer neutral responses given to the family attitude questions. Low response rates to the marriage attitude questions could indicate that while students felt they had knowledge of family experiences, they did not have similar knowledge of the marriage experience. It may be that children and adolescents (particularly adolescent males) simply have different attitudes to marriage and to family and that similar responses to these two experiences should not be

expected. The findings in this study would suggest this and would support Tamashiro's theory that until a more mature cognitive level is reached, adolescents' cannot apply their own family situation to what may happen in the future.

Family structure exerts no independent effect on self-esteem (Hypothesis Six) but interacts with gender to have an effect on both the younger and the older adolescent. Of interest are the other independent variables that significantly influenced self-esteem: gender, age, educational level of the father and perception of family conflict. This study focused only on how the self-esteem of adolescents was influenced by family structure, but the influence of these other variables suggests that they should be the focus of further research.

Data from the gender variable seem to give support for the cultural stereotype that males play a dominate role (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986). It is unclear whether this is a characteristic of this particular sample, reflecting a conservative nature in the community or whether there is some other reason for this finding. Based on developmental theory, and on the literature on divorce and remarriage, there does seem to be a possible explanation for higher self-esteem by older males. This study also indicates that although father's educational level is associated with a high self-esteem, the mother's educational level is not. However, the Pearson Correlation coefficient for mother and father's education is (.5154,  $p = .000$ ). One could speculate that home environments with above average educational levels may be conducive to positive interaction with children, encouragement of their

education, thus fostering positive self-esteem. As the family environment is what is expected to foster either positive or negative self-esteem, it was expected that perception of conflict would influence self-esteem.



## CHAPTER 6

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of Canadian adolescents towards marriage and family life and to determine how these were influenced by selected variables. Many important changes have occurred in the North American family in the last 25 years, and it is important to consider how these changes may be influencing the next generation. Few studies on this topic have been carried out with Canadian adolescents, and thus it is anticipated that this study would make a contribution to the understanding of Canadian families.

A junior-senior high school in a western province of Canada was selected for the study. Although the population was a convenience sample it was considered to be representative of a middle-class, predominately white, traditionally rural community, but with a growing urban population.

Bias could have been introduced into the study in several ways. As the investigator was a counsellor in the school, some students may have responded differently than they would have if the investigator was unknown. However, there seemed to be excellent support for the study from all concerned (school administration, parents, and students), and the high response rate may be one indication of that support. Inadvertently, the questions in the family attitude measure remained in their sub-groups on the final questionnaire. Some students may have recognized the attitude being examined and provided socially acceptable responses rather than their own attitudes. Because of this possibility, all questionnaires were reviewed but no

apparent pattern of socially desired responses was detected.

Several cautions related to methodological procedure and the analysis should also be noted. The Colorado Self-Report Measure of Family Functioning (Bloom, 1985) measures the perception of family members concerning their family functioning. The perspective offered here is that attitudes are the external manifestation of a perception. Therefore, it should be noted that the data gathered in this study are at best indirect assessments of attitudes. As well, Bloom (1985) indicated there was inter-correlation among the Family variables. Since the Conflict measure used to analyze Hypothesis Three was one of the sub-groups of the Colorado Self-Report Measure of Family Functioning, interpretation of the results for this hypothesis should be made with caution.

This study indicates that family structure does have an influence on adolescent attitudes to marriage and family. It also suggests that it may be the re-formed family, not the single-parent family, that most negatively affects adolescent attitudes. It was anticipated that the restructuring period in a re-formed family would be a difficult transitional period for adolescents. However, there was little support for this. Although adolescents in the re-formed family indicate they have more negative attitudes when compared to other family structures, it would seem that within the re-formed family, the reported turbulence during this restructuring period does not appear to influence these attitudes. More investigation is needed to determine influences during the restructuring period. A 'time' other than three years may have given different results. As

well, other factors such as the age of the children (Mills, 1984) may influence this restructuring period.

In this study, perception of conflict also appeared to be an independent variable influencing adolescent attitudes to marriage and family life. It would appear that in order to understand adolescent attitude development, as well as the influences on self-esteem, further research investigating sources of the adolescent's perception of conflict would seem to be vital. Of further interest is that the influences of gender and age seemed to be more closely tied to developmental issues and social values rather than to be influencing attitudes of those experiencing divorce and remarriage.

It was of interest to see how students responded differently to family and marriage attitude questions. Their experience with family and lack of experience with marriage seemed to make it easier for them to respond to the family attitude questions.

As self-esteem has been linked to family structure in a number of studies, it is interesting to see that the significant link in this study was with the re-formed family, males indicating the highest self-esteem. Thus, in this study, the variables influencing self-esteem seemed to be gender and conflict. It was not the intention of this study to examine self-esteem beyond the influence of family structure.

In society with relatively high divorce and remarriage it may be important to notice that this is another study that suggests that family structure and perception of conflict may have a negative influence on adolescent attitudes. It may also be of interest that in these finding, self-esteem is not

influenced by all family structures but only linked to the reformed family. However it will take future research to confirm these findings.

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**Table 1**  
**Age and Gender of Subjects**

Age	Gender		Total*
	Male	Female	
13	38	52	90
14	59	57	116
15	71	58	130
16	110	84	194
17	84	83	167
18	54	31	85
19	7	3	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>792</b>

\*No response = 8

**Table 2****Marital Status of Parents**

---

Group	N*
<hr/>	
Married	586
Remarried less than 3 years	25
Remarried more than 3 years	48
Previously married, now a single parent	64
Previously married, living with someone	27
Other	34
Don't Know	4
Total	788

---

\* No response = 12

**Table 3**  
**Educational Level of Father**

Group	N	%
Some high school	159	19.9
Finished grade 12	144	18.0
Some college or trade training	196	24.5
Bachelors Degree	52	6.8
Masters Degree or more	83	10.4
Don't know	131	16.4
Missing	35	4.4

**Table 4**  
**Educational Level of Mother**

Group	N	%
Some high school	117	14.5
Finished grade 12	209	26.2
Some college or trade training	242	30.1
Bachelors Degree	76	9.5
Masters Degree or more	29	3.6
Don't know	101	12.6
Missing	26	3.2

Figure 1

Self-Esteem as a Function of Parental Marital Status, Age, and Gender

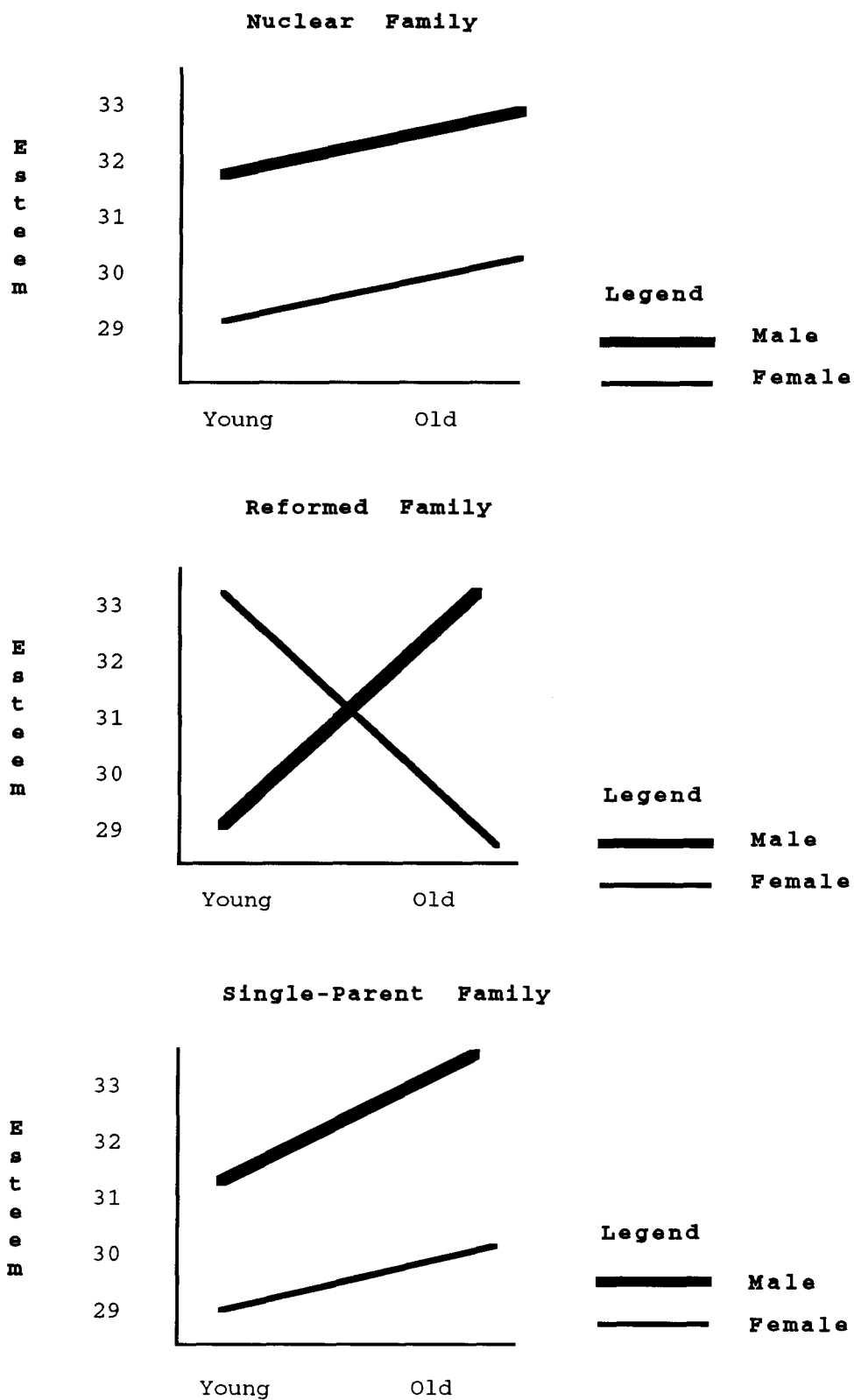
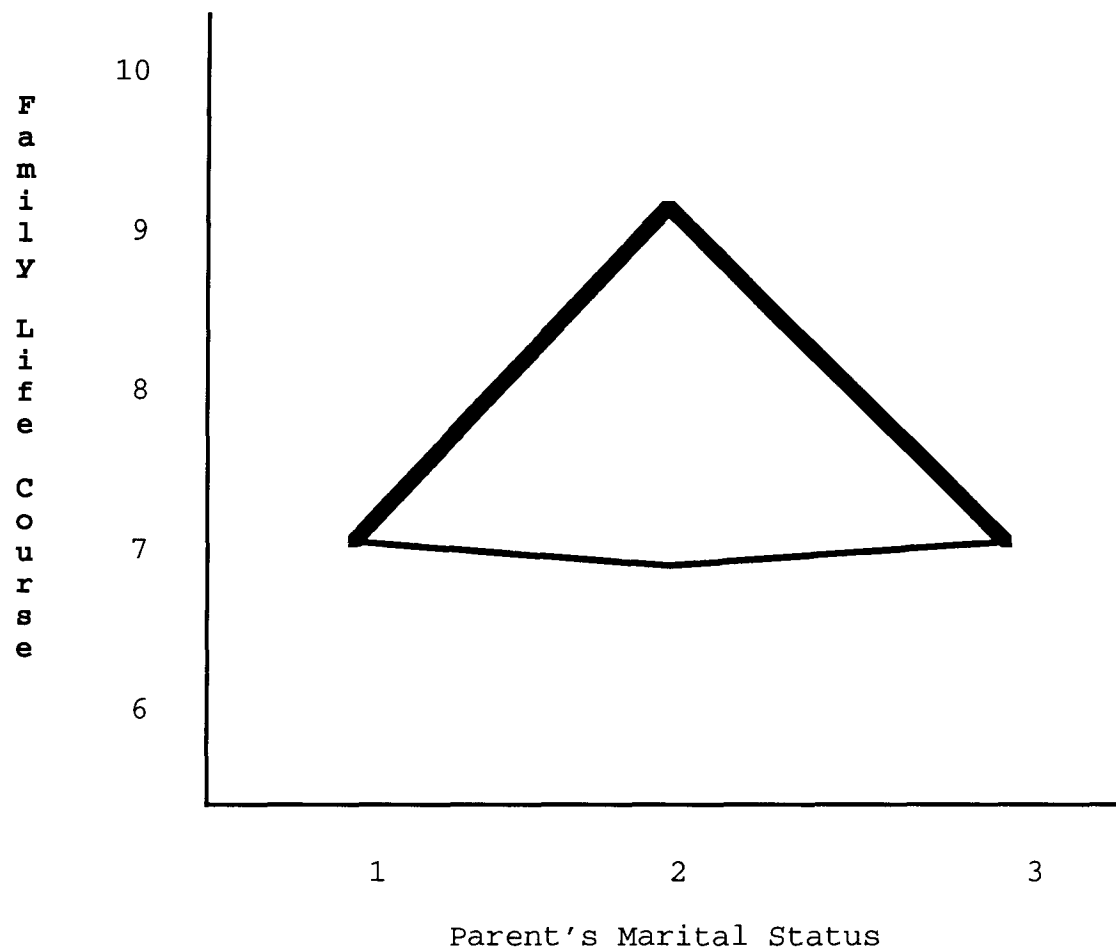




Figure 2

Family Life Course as a Function of Parental Marital Status and Gender



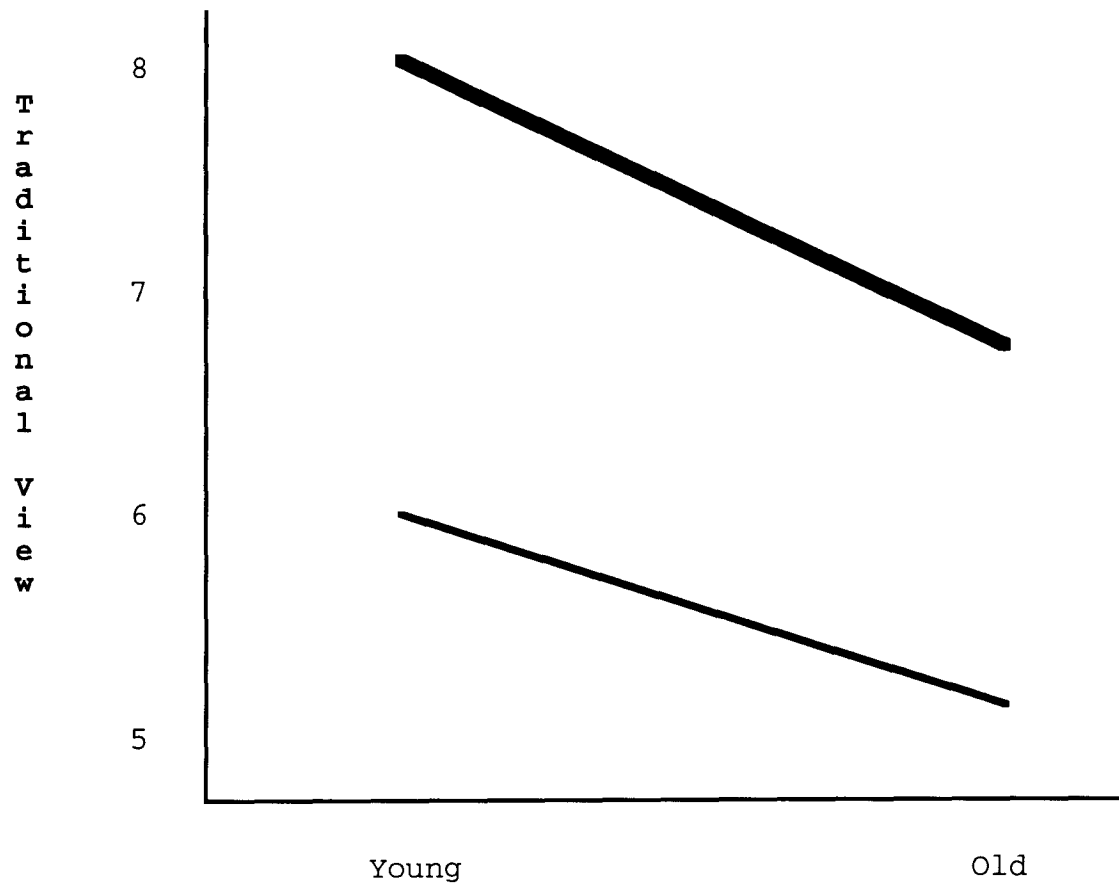
Legend

Male

Female

Figure 3

Traditional View as a Function of Age and Gender



## Legend

Male  
Female

**APPENDIX A**

Date

Dear Students,

I am a counsellor in this school, and I am completing my Masters programme in Family Studies at the University of British Columbia. As part of this program I am required to complete a research thesis. Chilliwack has been chosen as the district where this study will take place.

The purpose of the study is to identify adolescent attitudes toward marriage and family life and to determine how these are related to selected personal and family variables. It is anticipated that this study will make an important contribution to the Canadian literature about adolescents and families and will provide useful information for those who work with Canadian adolescents in the educational setting.

In the research questionnaire, you will be asked to provide some information about yourself and your family, your views about yourself and your family, and your expectations toward your own future family.

The questionnaire will take about 20 minutes to complete. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, and this will have no bearing on your standing in this class. If, however, the questionnaire is completed, it will be assumed that your consent has been given. Individuals will not be identified in any way and all information will be kept completely confidential.

Thank you for participating in this study.

J. Cyrull

**ATTITUDES TOWARDS MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE**

This questionnaire asks about your views and expectations regarding marriage and family life. Please answer each question by circling the best response for each item.

-----

**SECTION I:** THIS SECTION ASKS FOR INFORMATION ABOUT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY. PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSE.

1. What is your gender? (1) male (2) female
2. How old are you? (1) 12 (2) 13 (3) 14 (4) 15  
(5) 16 (6) 17 (7) 18 (8) 19 (9) other
3. Are the parents you live with:  
(1) married ?  
(2) remarried (less than 3 years)?  
(3) remarried (3 years or more)?  
(4) previously married, now living alone?  
(5) previously married, living with someone?  
(6) other  
(7) don't know
4. Is the mother you live with:  
(1) your biological mother?  
(2) your step-mother?  
(3) your adopted mother?  
(4) other
5. Is the father you live with:  
(1) your biological father?  
(2) your step-father?  
(3) your adopted father?  
(4) other
6. What is your father's highest level of education?  
(1) Some high school  
(2) Finished grade 12  
(3) Had some college or trade training  
(4) Bachelors Degree  
(5) Masters Degree or more  
(6) Don't know
7. What is your mother's highest level of education?  
(1) some high school  
(2) Finished grade 12  
(3) Had some college of trade training  
(4) Bachelors Degree  
(5) Masters Degree or more  
(6) Don't know

**SECTION II:** THIS SECTION ASKS ABOUT YOUR VIEWS ON YOUR PRESENT FAMILY. PLEASE CIRCLE THE RESPONSE WHICH BEST REFLECTS YOUR VIEWS. FOR QUESTIONS IN THIS SECTION, PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING RESPONSE CODE.

- (1) Very true for my family
- (2) Fairly true for my family
- (3) Fairly untrue for my family
- (4) Very untrue for my family

[Cohesion]

- 8. Family members really help and support one another.  
(1)        (2)        (3)        (4)
- 9. There is a feeling of togetherness in our family.  
(1)        (2)        (3)        (4)
- 10. Our family do not do things together.  
(1)        (2)        (3)        (4)
- 11. Our family really get along well with each other.  
(1)        (2)        (3)        (4)
- 12. Family members seem to avoid contact with each other  
when at home.  
(1)        (2)        (3)        (4)

[Conflict]

- 13. We fight a lot in our family.  
(1)        (2)        (3)        (4)
- 14. Family members sometimes get so angry they throw things.  
(1)        (2)        (3)        (4)
- 15. Family members hardly ever lose their tempers.  
(1)        (2)        (3)        (4)
- 16. Family members sometimes hit each other.  
(1)        (2)        (3)        (4)
- 17. Family members rarely criticize each other.  
(1)        (2)        (3)        (4)

[Family Idealization]

- 18. I don't think any family can live together with greater  
harmony than my family.  
(1)        (2)        (3)        (4)

19. I don't think anyone could possibly be happier than my family and I when we are together.  
(1) (2) (3) (4)
20. My family has all the qualities I've always wanted in a family.  
(1) (2) (3) (4)
21. Our family is as well adjusted as any family in this world could be.  
(1) (2) (3) (4)
22. My family could be happier than it is.  
(1) (2) (3) (4)

**SECTION III:** THIS SECTION ASKS FOR YOUR VIEWS ABOUT YOURSELF. PLEASE CIRCLE THE RESPONSE WHICH BEST REFLECTS YOUR VIEWS. FOR QUESTIONS IN THIS SECTION, PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING RESPONSE CODE.

- (1) I strongly agree  
(2) I agree  
(3) I disagree  
(4) I strongly disagree

23. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.  
(1) (2) (3) (4)
24. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.  
(1) (2) (3) (4)
25. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.  
(1) (2) (3) (4)
26. I am able to do things as well as most other people.  
(1) (2) (3) (4)
27. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.  
(1) (2) (3) (4)
28. I take a positive attitude toward myself.  
(1) (2) (3) (4)
29. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.  
(1) (2) (3) (4)
30. I wish I could have more respect for myself.  
(1) (2) (3) (4)
31. I certainly feel useless at times.  
(1) (2) (3) (4)

32. At times I think I am no good at all.  
(1) (2) (3) (4)

SECTION IV: THIS SECTION ASKS ABOUT YOUR EXPECTATIONS CONCERNING YOUR FUTURE FAMILY. PLEASE CIRCLE THE RESPONSE WHICH BEST REFLECTS YOUR EXPECTATIONS.

33. Most people will live fuller happier lives if they choose legal marriage rather than staying single or just living with someone.  
(1) disagree (4) mostly agree  
(2) mostly disagree (5) agree  
(3) neither
34. One sees so few good marriages that one questions it as a way of life.  
(1) disagree (4) mostly agree  
(2) mostly disagree (5) agree  
(3) neither
35. How important is it to you to have a good marriage and family life?  
(1) extremely important (3) somewhat important  
(2) quite important (4) not important
36. Do you think that you would prefer to have a mate for for most of your life or would you prefer not to have a mate?  
(1) Definitely prefer to have a mate  
(2) Probably prefer to have a mate  
(3) Not sure  
(4) Probably prefer not to have a mate  
(5) Definitely prefer not to have a mate
37. Which do you think you are most likely to choose in the long run?  
(1) Getting married (3) Not getting married  
(2) I have no idea (4) Am already married
38. If it were up to you what would be the ideal age for you to get married?  
(1) Before 20 (4) 25-30  
(2) 20-25 (5) 30+  
(3) 25-30 (6) Not marry
39. When there are children in the family, parents should stay together even if they don't get along.  
(1) strongly agree (4) disagree  
(2) agree (5) strongly disagree  
(3) don't know

40. Divorce is usually the best solution when a couple can't seem to work out their marriage problems.  
(1) strongly agree (4) disagree  
(2) agree (5) strongly disagree  
(3) don't know
41. If you did get married, how likely do you think it is that you would stay married to the same person for life?  
(1) Very likely (4) Fairly unlikely  
(2) Fairly likely (5) Very unlikely  
(3) Uncertain
42. Do you feel almost all married couples who can, ought to have children?  
(1) Yes  
(2) No  
(3) Depends
43. Being a father and raising children is one of the most fulfilling experiences a man can have.  
(1) Disagree (4) Mostly agree  
(2) Mostly disagree (5) Agree  
(3) Neither
44. Being a mother and raising children is one of the most fulfilling experiences a woman can have.  
(1) Disagree (4) Mostly agree  
(2) Mostly disagree (5) Agree  
(3) Neither
45. If you did get married, how likely is it that you would want to have children?  
(1) Very likely (4) Fairly unlikely  
(2) Fairly likely (5) Very unlikely  
(3) Uncertain (6) Already have children



## **APPENDIX B: INSTRUMENTS REVIEWED FOR STUDY**

- Attitude toward Marriage Scale.** (R. J. Hill, 1951). In Attitude toward Marriage Scale. Unpublished manuscript, Stanford University. [Cited in Ganong, L., Coleman, M., & Brown, G. (1981). Effect of family structure on marital attitudes of adolescents. *Adolescence*, 16, 62, 281-288.]
- Child-Parent Relationship Scale.** (G. E. Swanson, 1950). The development of an instrument for rating child-parent relationships. *Social Forces*, 29, 84-90.
- Colorado Self-Report Measure of Family Functioning.** (B. L. Bloom, 1985). A factor analysis of self-report measures of family functioning. *Family Process*, 24, 225-239.
- Conflict Tactics Scales (CT).** (M. A. Straus, 1979). Measuring intrafamily conflict and violence: The conflict tactics scales. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Feb., 75-88.
- Familial Specificity-Diffuseness.** (L. Podell, 1967). Occupational and familial role-expectations. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 29, 492-493.
- Familism Scale.** (P. L. Heller, 1970). Familism scale a measure of family solidarity. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Feb., 73-80.
- Family Attitude Measure.** (P. R. Amato, 1988). Parental divorce and attitudes towards marriage and family life. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 50, 453-461.
- Marriage Role Expectation Inventory.** (M. S. Dunn, 1960). Marriage role expectations of adolescents. *Marriage and Family Living*, May, 99-110.
- Monitoring the Future.** (A. Thornton, 1989). Changing attitudes towards family issues in the United States. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 51, 873-893.
- Romantic Love Complex.** (C.B. Spaulding, 1970). The romantic love complex in american culture. *Sociology and Social Research*, 55, 82-100.
- Self-Esteem Scale.** (M. Rosenberg, 1962). *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Self-Report Family Inventory.** (W. R. Beavers, R. B. Hampson, & Y. F. Hulgus, 1985). *Commentary: The*

beavers systems approach to family assessment. Family Process, 24, 398-405.

**Untitled instrument** on Orientations of college girls towards feminine role behavior. (K. Kammeyer, 1967). Sibling position and the feminine role. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 29, 494-499.

**Untitled instrument** on adolescent's perception of conflict. (M. J. Martin, W. R. Schumm, M. A. Bugaighis, A. P. Jurich, & S. R. Bollman, 1987). Family violence and adolescents' perception of outcomes of family conflict. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 49, 165-171.

**Untitled instrument** on Conflict and Family Structure. (H. J. Raschke, V. J. Raschke, 1979). Family conflict and children's self-concepts: A comparison of intact and single-parent families. Journal of Marriage and the Family, May, 367-375.

**Untitled instrument** on Family Images. (W. L. Slocum, & C. L. Stone, 1959). A method for measuring family images held by teen-ages. Marriage and Family Living, Aug., 245-250.

**APPENDIX C**

Date

I am a counsellor at Sardis Secondary School, completing my Master of Arts degree in Family Studies at the University of British Columbia. One of the requirements of this degree is the completion of a research thesis. The purpose of this letter is to request your permission to carry out my thesis study at Sardis Secondary School.

The purpose of my thesis is to investigate the attitudes of Canadian adolescents towards marriage and family life and to determine how these are related to selected personal and family variables (age, gender, conflict). Since most similar studies have been carried out in United States, it is anticipated this study will make an important contribution to the Canadian literature about adolescents and families and will provide useful information for those who work with Canadian adolescents in the educational setting.

I would like to include all students in Sardis Secondary School in my study. However, letters will be sent to parents, requesting permission to include their children in the study, and parents will have the right to refuse to allow a child to participate. As well, students will have the right to refuse to participate in the study, and this refusal will in no way affect their standing in the school. If the student completes the questionnaire, however, it will be assumed that their consent has been given to participate in the study. Permission to conduct this study has been

submitted simultaneously for approval to the University of British Columbia Human Subjects Research Ethics Committee. A copy of their approval will be forwarded to you as soon as it is received.

A copy of the questionnaire to be used in my study is attached. It should take students approximately 20 minutes to complete this instrument. These would be administered in all English classes either by the classroom teacher or by myself, at a time to be determined in consultation with the school principal. Students absent at the time of writing will be given an opportunity to participate in the study at a later date. Responses of individuals will not be identified in any way, and all responses will be kept confidential.

If you have questions regarding this study, I would be pleased to meet with you to discuss these questions. Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Yours truly,

Jean Cyrull

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