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**An Exploratory Study of the Perception of Family Conflict and it's  
Relationship to Family Structure and Birth Order:  
Effects on Late Adolescent Male and Female Self-Concept.**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The relationship between self-concept, birth order, family structure and family conflict is an area of potential interest to researchers due to the complexity of factors, which can influence development in adolescence. The purpose of the following study was to explore the relationship between self-concept, gender, birth order, family structure, family conflict, and family relationships for the late adolescent between the ages of 17 and 19. The sample consisted of 204 people, the vast majority of which came from three Palmerston North high schools. The sample also consisted of a few first year Massey university students. Demographic information along with a scale to measure family conflict and relations with family members came from a questionnaire designed by the researcher. Self-concept was measured by the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Results indicated there was a significant difference in the self-concept scores between those from high and low conflict families but no significant difference in self-concept scores between those in intact and non-intact families. Males scored significantly higher than females on the Total Self-Concept Scale, Moral Self Concept Scale, Academic/Work Self-Concept Scale, Social Self-Concept Scale, Physical Self-Concept Scale, Family Self-Concept Scale, and Personal Self-Concept Scale. There was no significant difference on total self-concept scores between birth orders. First borns did perceive significantly higher conflict in their families than last borns but did not perceive significantly higher conflict than middle borns. The total self-concept correlation coefficient was highest for first borns but this only differed from middle borns. Family relationships as a buffering measure did not interact with family conflict and therefore, does not moderate the relationship between total self-concept and conflict.

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