

THE SCHOOL-AGE JAMAICAN CHILD'S DEVELOPING  
CONCEPT OF THE FAMILY

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Tuskegee, Alabama

1981

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College  
of the Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE  
December, 1982

Thesis  
1982  
B795s  
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indeed grateful to the many people who have helped to produce this thesis. Chief among them is my adviser, Dr. Judith Powell. I would like to thank her for her guidance, patience and support during this process. Appreciation is also given to Dr. Frances Stromberg and Ms. Leone List for their support.

I also wish to acknowledge the Jamaican children from the four schools, their principals and teachers who cooperated to make this study a success. Appreciation is also expressed to the children of Pembroke Hall and their parents. Appreciation is also due to Mrs. Amy Miller who served as my Jamaican contact, and to my friends Cynthia Burton and Al and Yvonne Stone who made the reproduction of my research papers possible.

I would also like to acknowledge my husband Anthony, who did the drawing of my graphs for this study, and my children, Karimah and Jamon, for their love, support and understanding throughout this study.

Acknowledgments would not be complete without the expression of my appreciation to my parents, Oscar and Mable Dooley; my mother-in-law, Mrs. Joyce Rose; my brother-in-law, Glenford Rose, and to my sisters and brother for their love and encouragements. Also to my primary school teachers Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Francis, I sincerely extend my appreciation for all they have done for me during the early years of my schooling.

To my husband and children, I dedicate this study with all my love.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The family and the school are important agents for educating the young child. The family passes on the culture of society to the child, that is, habits, customs, values, from one generation to another. It provides care and satisfies the physical needs; it provides social and emotional relationships; and it also provides the child with opportunities for intellectual development.

Ragan and Shepherd (1977) state that the family is the first socializing influence in the child's life. It is from the mother and father that the child learns about living with other people, then from brothers and sisters, then from other relatives, and then from an ever-widening circle of people. A study by Bowerman and Kinch (1959) shows that as the child increases in age there is a shift from an orientation toward family to peer orientation. Mussen, Conger and Kagan (1974) support these statements by saying,

As the child enters the school years, his horizons are expanded, and he is subjected to an ever-widening series of influences--teachers, peers, books, television. Nevertheless, the kind of parents a child has and the kind of relationships he has with them remain, for the average child, the most significant environmental factors in determining the kind of person he will become, the problems he will face in his quest for maturity, and the ways in which he will deal with these problems (p. 422).

Some of the changes that affect today's family are the shrinking size of the family, mobility, increase in the number of mothers employed

outside the home, and increase in single-parent families. In order to be able to understand or predict the implications of the changes in the family and how these affect children, adults need to listen more to what children think about the things that affect them most--what is and is not important to them. The child's concept of the family is one of these factors. This will also be useful to adults in helping children to develop to their fullest potential as functional human beings.

A number of researchers have found that white middle-class children, regardless of their own family experiences, usually think of the family as being a mother, a father, and one or two children and perhaps grandparents (Moore, 1977; Jones, 1979; Camara, 1980; Norris, 1981; Powell and Thompson, 1981; Armbruster, 1982). Moore (1977) interviewed children at the three highest levels of cognitive development in order to determine their perceptions of "family" and found that for all three stages "family" was defined as two parents and a child. She also found that children in single-parent families were more likely to accept a single parent and a child as a family than were children from intact families. Moore's data was suggestive of a relationship between cognitive level and frequency of mention of eight dimensions of family, which included membership, domestic functions, guidance of children, co-residence, biology, emotions, legal factors and social role factors. While results of subsequent studies (Jones, 1979; Powell and Thompson, 1981; Armbruster, 1982) have been fairly consistent and have indicated that children's responses can be classified according to these eight dimensions, the data thus far have been limited to samples of white middle-class children in the mid-western part of the United States and one cross-national comparison of a small sample of white pre-school children

in Australia. Although explanations of these children's responses have been formulated, it will be of interest to know whether the same explanations will be appropriate for other societies, especially in a different culture. Since the investigator is a Jamaican and will be working with the Ministry of Education in developing curriculum and teaching in grades K - 5 in Jamaica, it is desirable to establish to what extent the findings of previous research might apply to the development of Jamaican children's concepts of family.

#### Family Patterns in Jamaica

The way that family groups are formed, the customs they follow, and their child-rearing practices are determined to a large extent by their racial and historical background. In Jamaica a child's race matters little to him and the most important part of his environment is his family, therefore, it is important that these factors be taken into account by those who educate him.

Although the common family type depicted in school materials for children is the two-parent family with one or more children, a number of different kinds of families exist in Jamaica. Many Jamaican children are born to unmarried mothers and the family consists only of mother and child or children. Although there may be several children and the father or fathers may appear occasionally and go away again, the permanent center of the family is the mother. In many cases, especially when the mother is young, the baby is given over to the care of grandparents so that the parents can go to work. There are many of these grandparent families where the grandmothers bring up a number of grandchildren, the offspring of several daughters, perhaps with some of their

own younger children too. In other cases, there may be several relatives living together with their children and grandchildren (extended family), and these families may be very different according to the number, age, and sex of the family members.

Children growing up in Jamaica may, therefore, pass most if not all of their early years in varied kinds of family. While some may have the continued care and protection and security of both a father and mother in their homes, many of these children grow up without a father always there to provide for and to help to train them. Many of these children are not brought up by their own mothers, but may perhaps join the mother later if she marries.

Most teachers are aware of these environmental differences, but do not always realize the difference it makes to the children. There is a tendency to speak and act as though the father-mother-child family is the only existing family even though it is well known that this is so for only some of the children (Walters and Castle, 1967).

Research related to expressed ideal family size of fertile couples in Jamaica found that twenty-seven percent of these Jamaican couples desired one to two children; fifty-five percent designated more than two; seven percent said, "God decides," and eleven percent said they did not know (Farley and Tokarski, 1975). Another study of the relationship of actual and expressed family size of fertile couples in Jamaica showed that twenty percent of Jamaican couples who have fewer than three children said they had already had more children than they wanted; seventeen percent who have three children said they had as many children as they wanted, and sixty-three percent who have more than three children said they wanted more children.

Kaluger and Kaluger (1974) state that the way in which the parent views the child and the circumstances under which the child was born will also affect the parent-child relationship. Such circumstances as, for example, the arrival of a long-awaited baby to older parents, an unwanted child to quarrelling parents, or the first child of a young, happy couple will surely have some effect on how the parents feel toward the child, their treatment of the child, and the child's adjustment and social development. The literature supports the view that the presence of siblings within a family will also have an effect on the child's development. The number of siblings, their ages, and birth order help to determine the socialization practices found in the home, as the parents tend to give more attention to the first-born which is more anxious and dependent, whereas later-born children are more aggressive and self-confident.

No study has been done on how Jamaican children actually perceive the family. Therefore, we cannot understand or predict the effects that changes in their family structures will have on them until we can further establish this.

#### The Purpose of the Study

This study will be an in-depth investigation of the school-age Jamaican child's concept of the family. The results will provide a cross-national sample to compare to the results of Armbruster's (1982) investigation of American school-age children's developing concepts of the family. Jamaican children's concepts of the family will be compared to American children's concepts. Results of this study will help the investigator and parents and educators of Jamaican children to determine to what extent they may be able to generalize the results of American

studies of young children's concepts of the family to Jamaican children's concepts. This will also assist the investigator in planning family-related curriculum for children in Jamaica.

The specific purposes of the study are to explore: (a) which structures Jamaican children define as "family" and which structures they do not define as "family," (b) dimensions which Jamaican children use in defining family membership and family roles, and (c) differences which exist between Jamaican and United States school-age children's concepts of family and dimensions used in defining family membership and family roles.

These concepts will be explored with regard to any differences which exist according to family type. The dimensions of family to be explored in this study are those defined by Moore (1977) in her introductory study. Included are: membership, domestic functions, guidance of children, co-residence, biology, emotions, legal factors, and social role factors.

Previous work (Jones, 1979, and Moore, 1977) using the methodology of coding children's spontaneous responses for dimensions of family have not indicated co-residence as a frequently identified dimension. When questions relating to co-residence were presented, fifty percent of pre-school children (Jones, 1979), and ninety percent of school-age children (Armbruster, 1982) felt that a family could still be a family if they did not live together. Of the school-age sample, eighty-five percent felt that a mother could still be a mother if she did not live with her children and eighty-eight percent felt that a father could still be a father if he did not live with his children. The children from intact families felt that co-residence was an essential feature of being a

mother or father more often than did children of single-parent families. Since it has been projected (Glick and Norton, 1979) that forty-five percent of all children born today will be living in a single-parent household at some point of their lives, it is essential to investigate the salience of the concept of co-residence. Therefore, probing questions about co-residence will be included in this study.

The specific questions for this study will include:

1. Which of a number of twenty possible family structures do Jamaican school-age children most often identify as family? Based on the findings of Jones (1979) and Camara (1979), an expectation would be that school-age children will most often identify "family" as a mother, father and a child. There should be no significant differences based on the type of family in which the respondents are living (single-parent or two-parent family).

2. What are the dimensions which Jamaican school-age children use to define mothers, fathers and families? Based on the findings of Camara (1979), it would appear that school-age children will use the dimensions of membership and biology most often to define mothers, fathers and families. However, it may be predicted that children from single-parent families will verbalize the dimensions of membership and co-residence less often than children of two-parent families.

3. Are there differences between U. S. and Jamaican school-age children in the family structures they identify as family? Since there is no evidence available, it can be assumed that there are no differences. If there are no differences, then the same curriculum materials used for U. S. children in the area of the family will be valid for Jamaican children.

### Definition of Terms

Some of the terms used in this study have specific meanings. The following definitions will provide for a uniform interpretation of these terms:

1. Pre-Operational Thought - The stage of intuitive intelligence, of spontaneous interpersonal feelings, and of social relationships in which the child is subordinate to the adult (ages two to seven years, or 'early childhood') (Piaget, 1967, p. 5).

2. Concrete Operational Thought - The stage of concrete intellectual operations (the beginning of logic and of social and moral feelings of cooperation (ages seven to eleven or twelve, or 'middle childhood') (Piaget, 1967, p. 6).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Some theorists believe that children will generalize the attitudes they hold toward their parents to other individuals. Cox (1962) found a positive correlation between a child's attitudes toward his parents and the quality of his interpersonal relationships with others with whom he enters into similar relationships.

Every child who is exposed to any family environment eventually arrives at an understanding of what it means to belong to a family or what one means by mention of the word "family." Serot and Teevan (1961) suggest that studies of the dynamics of child psychology must discover the course of development of children's perceptions of their familial environment, since the way children view the situation is what affects their behavior and development.

#### The Concrete Operational Child's Formation of Concepts

Piaget (1967) defines the concrete operational level as the stage of concrete intellectual operations (the beginning of logic) and of moral and social feelings of cooperation (ages seven to eleven or twelve or middle childhood). The theory of Piaget (1967) describes how

symbols developed during the pre-operational stage are restructured by the new logical grouping with its system of reversible mental operation. Piaget (1928) in his study of the relationship between the developing concept of family and the cognitive developmental stages, outlined three stages of children's identification of family. According to this theory, children who are in the first stage of cognitive development will identify all those living with them as "family." In the second stage, family members are identified as blood relations who reside in the immediate vicinity, and in the third stage, all blood relations are included in their definition of family.

Ragan and Shepherd (1977) and Mussen, Conger and Kagan (1974) believe that the first socializing influence in the child's life is the family followed by an ever-widening circle of people. Mussen et al. (1974) also state that the kind of parents a child has and the relationships he has with them remain, for the average child, the most significant environmental factors in determining the kind of person he will become, the problems he will face in his quest for maturity, and how he will deal with these problems. Kaluger and Kaluger (1974) also agree that the parent-child relationship is a factor that has great influences on the social development of the child. Walters and Castle (1967) state that although the racial and historical background of a people determines very largely the way that the family groups are formed, etc., to a child the most important part of his environment is his family.

#### Studies Relating to Children's

#### Concepts of Family

Moore (1977) developed a study to determine whether cognitive level

affects a child's understanding about family and to explore the effects of social learning factors on a child's understanding of family. She interviewed twenty-eight children at each of the three Piagetian cognitive levels. Each child was given an interview focusing on their concepts of family. Half of each group were from intact families and half were from divorced families. Piagetian cognitive level was shown to have a strong influence on the concept of the family. Children from divorced families mentioned emotional factors more, listed more activities for adults, and used membership as a criterion for family less than children from intact families. All of the children agreed that two parents and a child make a family. Three-quarters of the children said that an elderly couple was a family; two-thirds said a young couple was a family, and half thought that a single parent and a child did not represent a family.

Jones (1979) interviewed fifty-six children between the ages of three and six who were tested at the pre-operational level of thought. Twenty-eight of these children were chosen from intact families and twenty-eight were from divorced families, with the mother being the head of the household. The samples were evenly divided by sex. The eight dimensions used to classify the children's responses were membership, domestic functions, guidance of children, co-residence, biology, emotions, legal factors, and social role factors. Membership was most often mentioned, followed by biology. Jones compared her study with Moore (1977) and found that children of both two-parent and one-parent families identified the mother, father, child, grandmother, grandfather and mother, father, child structures as a family most often.

Camara (1979) conducted a similar study using a sample of thirty-two children between the ages of nine to eleven. Half were from intact families and half were from single-parent families with mothers as heads of households. These samples were also equally divided by sex. There were no significant differences between the divorced family group and the intact family group children on the concept "family," and what functions a family serves. It was unanimously agreed by Camara's subjects that two parents and a child make a family.

Powell and Thompson (1981) studied thirty-four four- to five-year-old Australian children, seventeen of whom were from single parent families and seventeen from intact families. Seventy-five percent of all subjects identified as a family all of the combinations of adults and children presented to them. Those structures with two adults were more often identified as "families" than those with one adult. There were no differences between the responses of children from single-parent families and those from intact families.

The purpose of a study by Norris (1981) was to further establish the validity of the methods used by Jones (1979) and the reliability of young children's responses to the set of family structure drawings used by Jones (1979). Norris determined that only twenty-six to thirty-eight percent of a sample of seventy preschool children identified drawings of sets of objects and groups of related animals as "family" compared to over seventy-four percent positive responses for the drawings of groups of human figures used by Jones. Norris concluded that in identifying "families" children did indeed distinguish drawings of human figures from drawings of unrelated objects and animals. Norris further determined that pre-school children's responses to Jones'

(1979) drawings were highly reliable over a period of one week.

Armbruster (1982) is presently conducting a study with an expanded number of family structures.

#### Summary

Although the children interviewed were of different ages, sexes, and from differing family types, the research reviewed indicated the family composed of two parents and a child or children was identified most frequently as a family. Four studies of pre-schoolers' concepts of families were found in the literature, but only two studies relating to school-age children's concepts were found. More studies in this area are needed.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

#### Introduction

The specific purposes of this study are to explore:

- a. which structures Jamaican student-age children define as "family" and which structures they do not use
- b. dimensions which Jamaican school-age children use in defining family membership and family roles
- c. differences between U. S. and Jamaican school-age children's concepts of family structures and dimensions used in defining family membership and family roles

An additional purpose of this study was to compare Jamaican children's responses to the results of Armbruster's (1982) investigation of American school-age children's concepts of the family.

#### Instruments

Instruments were the same as those in Armbruster's (1982) study of American school-age children's concepts of family. These instruments were based on earlier studies by Moore (1977) and Jones (1979). They are discussed below.

#### Cognitive Developmental Level Interview

The Cognitive Developmental Level Test used in this study was

based on the writing of Philips (1969). The purpose of these tasks was to determine the child's cognitive developmental level by classifying each child's performance according to the pre-operational or concrete operational level. These levels were defined by Piaget (1967) as:

The pre-operational level is the stage of intuitive intelligence, of spontaneous interpersonal feelings, and of social relationships in which the child is subordinate to the adult (ages two to seven years, or 'early childhood'). The state of concrete intellectual operations (the beginning of logic) and of moral and social feelings of cooperation (ages seven to eleven or twelve or 'middle childhood') (pp. 5-6).

Subjects were tested in three areas of conservation: (1) mass, (2) number, and (3) volume (Appendix A). For interview and scoring procedures, see Appendix C. Those who passed only one area were classified as pre-operational, and those who passed two or all three areas were classified as concrete operational.

#### Family Configuration Interview

The interview was based on line drawings representing twenty possible family structures and a number of open-ended questions related to dimensions of family life (Appendix B). Six of the family drawings were those used by Jones (1979); an additional two had been added by Norris (1981); and the remaining twelve had been added by Armbruster (1982) (Appendix C). Those added by Norris and Armbruster were replications of the same drawings adapted to depict families with a variety of ages and sexes of adults and ages of children. Drawings were mounted on twenty separate pieces of sturdy cardboard eight and one-half by eleven inches and covered with clear contact paper.

Norris (1981) tested the reliability of the use of eight of these

drawings through the use of test-retest with her subjects. She also compared her results with the results of previous studies using the original six drawings. Norris found an overall agreement of ninety-one percent between the initial test responses and the retest responses.

The twenty family structures included were:

1. Mother, father, child, grandmother, grandfather
2. Mother, father, child
3. Mother, father, two children
4. Mother, father, three children
5. Mother, father, six children
6. Mother, child
7. Mother, two children
8. Mother, three children
9. Father, child
10. Father, two children
11. Father, three children
12. Mother, father
13. Grandmother, grandfather
14. Mother, child, grandmother
15. Father, child, grandfather
16. Two same-age adult females, child
17. Two same-age adult males, child
18. Two children
19. Three children
20. Six children

These are shown in Appendix D.

### Dimensions of "Family" Interview

In this part of the interview, the following open-ended questions relating to family life were asked:

1. What is a family?
2. What is a mother?
3. What is a father?

In order to further explore the dimension of co-residence, the following questions were asked:

1. Can a family still be a family if they do not live together?
2. Can a mother still be a mother if she does not live with her children?
3. Can a father still be a father if he does not live with his children?

### Data Collection

Data were collected on-site in Kingston, Jamaica, during March, 1982, through individual interviews. When the researcher got to Jamaica on March 2, the Jamaican contact had already contacted the principals of the following five schools: August Town Primary, St. Francis Primary, St. Richards Primary, Hope Experimental and St. Aloysius Primary. The researcher was told by the Jamaican contact that these schools were expecting her and that the contact had already provided an introductory letter to take to the schools.

The researcher encountered various problems while in Jamaica. The major problem was transportation to and from the schools. The investigator was delayed by public transportation. Despite these difficulties,

the researcher was able to obtain a sample from four of the five schools. To obtain additional data, the investigator decided on going to homes, and, with permission of parents, collected data in the evenings after leaving the schools. Additional data were collected in this manner in Pembroke Hall, a middle class neighborhood in Northwest Kingston.

#### Description of the Research Sample

The sample consisted of sixty-four children from four different schools and one neighborhood in Kingston, Jamaica. Equal representation of boys and girls from single-parent and two-parent families were achieved (Table I). A description of the distribution of the sampling by age and sex is given in Table II.

TABLE I  
DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE

	Boys		Girls	
	One-parent Families	Two-parent Families	One-parent Families	Two-parent Families
<u>Schools</u>				
St. Aloysius	4	4	4	4
St. Richards	4	4	4	4
St. Francis	4	4	4	4
August Town	3	3	3	3
<u>Neighborhood</u>				
Pembroke Hall	1	1	1	1

TABLE II  
DEMOGRAPHIES OF THE SAMPLE

Age	One-parent Families N = 32		Two-parent Families N = 32	
	Boys N = 16	Girls N = 16	Boys N = 16	Girls N = 16
7	3	2	2	2
8	2	3	6	7
9	5	3	4	4
10	3	6	0	2
11	3	2	4	1

#### Conducting the Interview

Upon arrival at the respective schools, and after a brief review of the purpose and methods of the study, children were cleared one at a time and interviewed by the researcher in either the staff room or the library. The researcher introduced herself to the children and told them she had come to play a game with them, and would also ask them some questions so she would get to know them better. Some of the children were reluctant at first, but after the researcher explained the purpose of the study and gained rapport with the children the interview went as planned. The interview proceeded in the following order: (1) the Cognitive Developmental Level Test, (2) the Family Structure Interview, and (3) the Dimension of Family Interview.

For the gamelike task of the Cognitive Developmental Level Test,

subjects were tested in three areas of conversation: (1) mass, (2) number, and (3) volume. Those who passed only one area were classified as pre-operational, and those who passed two or all three areas were classified as concrete operational. Interviewing and scoring procedures for the Cognitive Developmental Level Test may be found in Appendixes A and C.

The second part of the presentation was the Family Structure Interview. The twenty cards depicting various family structures were presented to the subjects face down. Children were allowed to make random selections by deciding which card to choose first. They chose additional cards until all cards were chosen. For each drawing children were asked, "Is this a family?" "Why?" or "Why not?" Children's responses were recorded verbatim.

Finally, the following questions related to dimensions of family life and co-residence were asked:

1. What is a family?
2. What is a mother?
3. What is a father?
4. Can a family still be a family if they do not live together?
5. Can a mother still be a mother if she does not live with her children?
6. Can a father still be a father if he does not live with his children?

Children's responses to these questions were recorded verbatim in writing by the investigator. For each question, a score was given for each of the dimensions which was mentioned. Scoring was done by the investigator after establishing ninety-one percent agreement with an

experienced coder.

The dimensions of family that were explored in this study were those defined by Moore (1977) and Armbruster (1982). They are membership, domestic functions, guidance of children, co-residence, biology, emotions, legal factors, and social role factors. Definitions of the dimensions are:

Membership: The child gives a list of specific persons or roles when referring to the composition of the family.

Domestic Functions: The child mentions general family maintenance or activity (e.g., studies, cooking, earning money, going on a picnic).

Guidance: The child refers to family activity geared specifically toward the nurturance of children (e.g., taking care of children, helping with homework, or solving problems).

Co-residence: The child's answer refers to the personal proximity of co-residence of persons (e.g., living together or having a house).

Biology: The child mentions things having to do with biological relationships or physical age (e.g., being a child).

Legal Factors: The child makes reference to a legally defined status or process (e.g., being a wife, getting married, having custody of a child).

Social Role Factors: The child's answer explicitly includes mention of roles, expectations or social customs (e.g., flowers at weddings, being a good parent).

The extent to which these eight dimensions were found useful in classifying Jamaican children's concepts of family life was also observed. The nature and number of activities attributed to mothers, fathers, and families were also explored.

### Data Analysis

In order to establish inter-rater reliability in coding children's responses to the Dimension of Family Interview, the researcher and another researcher experienced in coding for the dimensions, coded all of the children's responses separately, and reached ninety-one percent agreement.

Since this was primarily a descriptive study, analysis of children's responses to the Family Structure Interview were primarily based on frequencies and percentages. Chi-square analysis was used to determine whether differences existed between the responses of children from single-parent families and those from two-parent families in defining family structure.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was an in-depth investigation of the school-age Jamaican child's concept of the family. The study was descriptive in nature. Differences between school-age children's concept of (a) family membership (family structure concept), and (b) dimensions used in defining family membership and family roles, were explored with regard to differences which exist according to type of family in which the child is currently living.

Results of interviews with Jamaican children were also compared to results of a similar study with a sample of school-age children in the South Central United States (Armbruster, 1982). Overall responses of Jamaican children were similar to those of American children in Armbruster's study.

#### Cognitive Developmental Level Test

On the basis of children's responses to the Cognitive Developmental Test, eighty-two percent of the subjects were classified as concrete operational, and only nineteen percent were classified as pre-operational. Therefore, this sample of children can be generally described as concrete operational.

### Family Membership or Family Structure Concept

Results of children's identification of groups of children and adults as "family" are depicted in Figure 1.

The groups most often identified as "a family" were:

1. Mother, father, large child, middle child, small child
2. Mother, father, large child, middle child
3. Mother, father, grandmother, child
4. Mother, father, two large children, two middle children,  
two small children
5. Mother, father, child

There were no significant differences between single-parent and two-parent children in their affirmation of these five structures as families. Although not statistically different, a higher percentage of children from single-parent families identified the mother and child and the father and child structures as "family" than did children from two-parent families (Figure 1).

The five structures most often identified as family included both an adult male and an adult female with one or more children. When children were presented the father and child and the mother and child structures and asked whether these represented a family, 45 of the children responded, "the mother is missing," or "the father is missing." These structures were depicted as "family" more often by children of single-parents than by children in two-parent families (Figure 1). Structures with children only were not identified as family.

Figure 2 presents a comparison between the responses of Jamaican and the American school-age children in Armbruster's (1982) study.

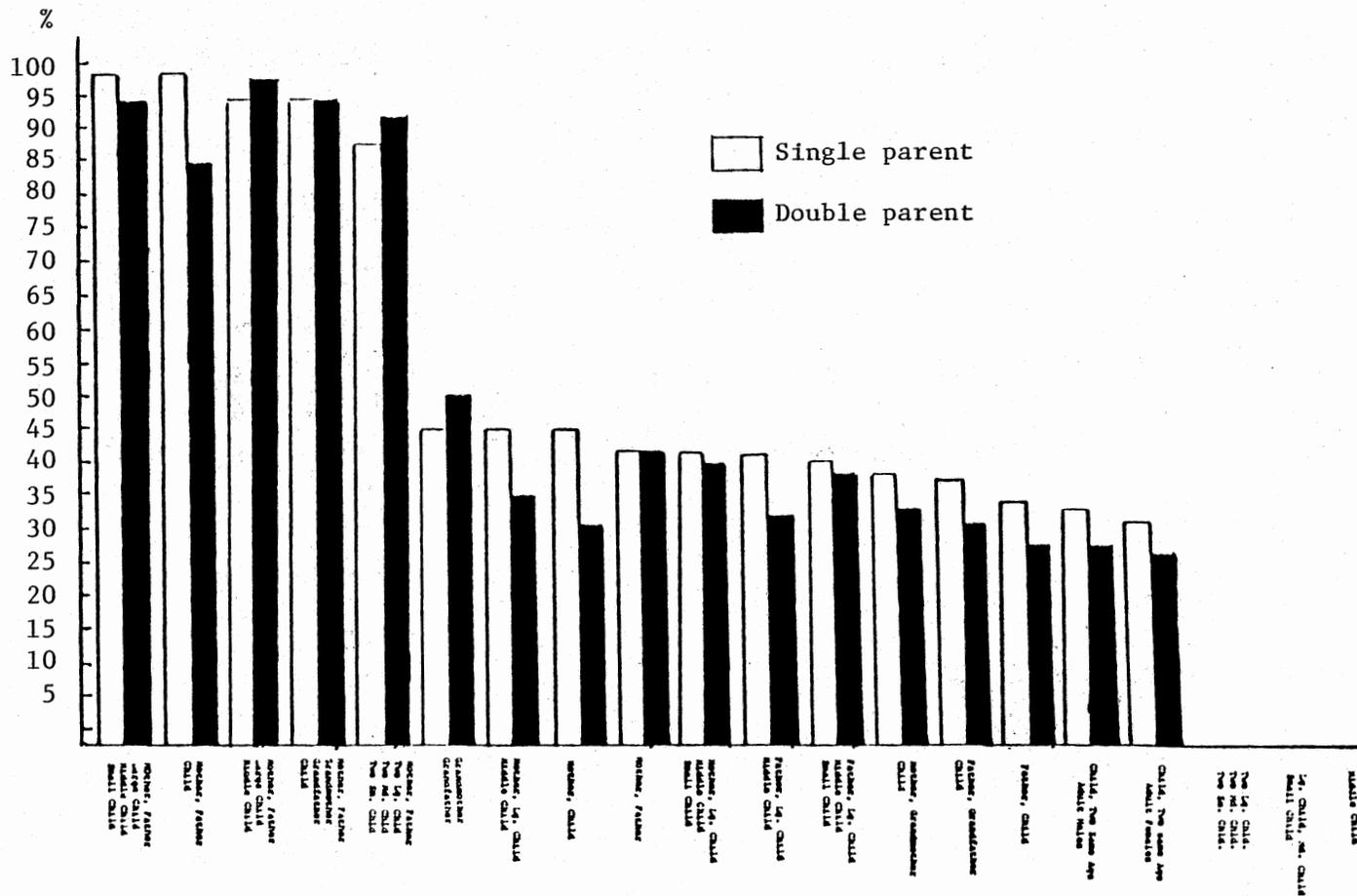


Figure 1. Identification of Family Structure as "Family" by Family Type.

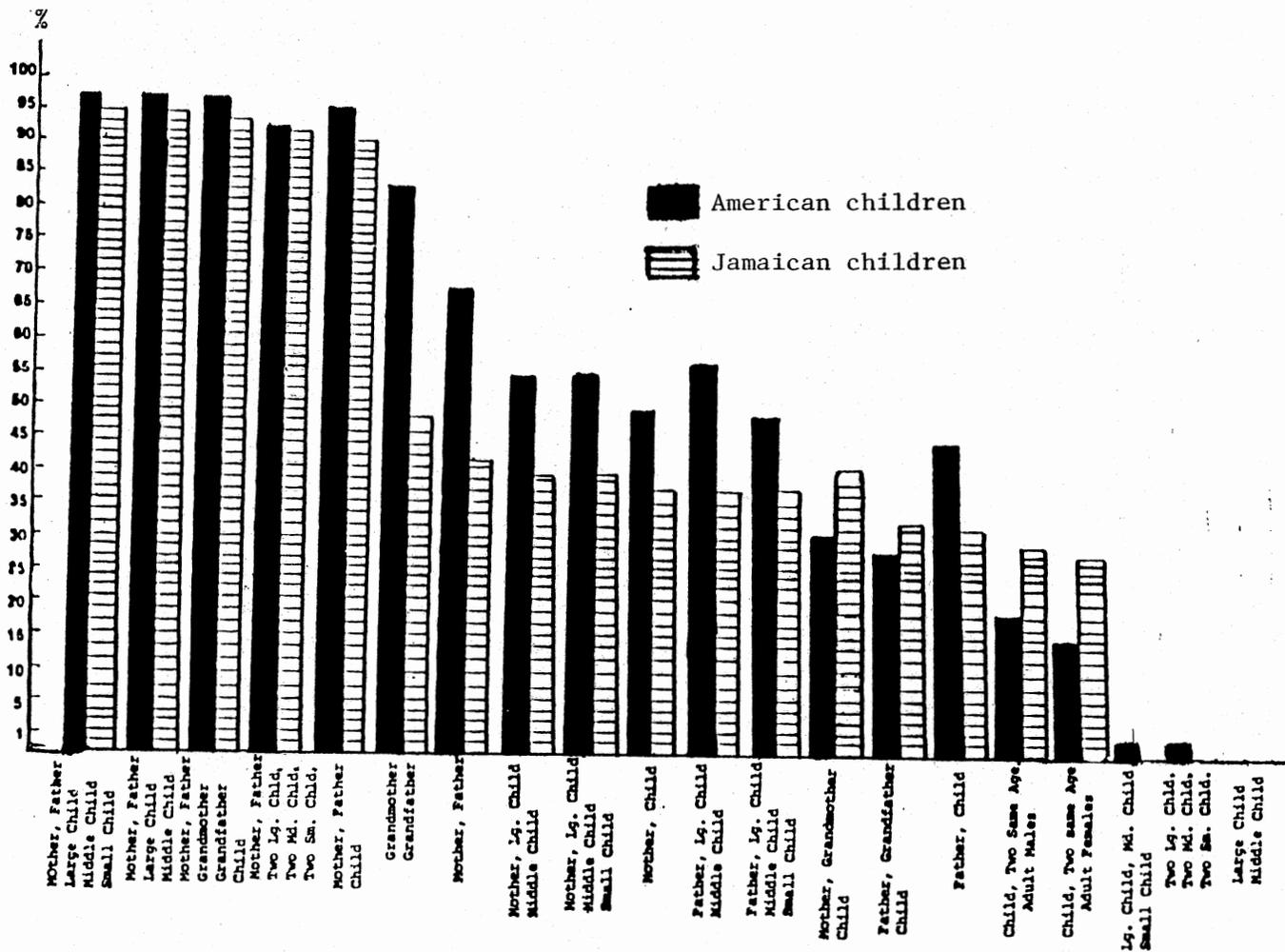


Figure 2. Comparison of American and Jamaican School-age Children's Identification of Family Structures as "Family"

Basically, responses of the two separate populations of children affirmed the same first five structures as "family." A larger percentage of American children identified grandmother and grandfather structures and single-parent family structures as "family." While more replication would be necessary in order to draw statistical inferences, it appears that these populations of Jamaican and American children perceived "family" in much the same way.

When Jamaican children were shown the family structure of two female adults of the same age and a child, twenty-seven percent of the children responded that that structure was a family, and for the structure of two males the same age and a child, twenty-eight percent said that that structure represented a family. There were no significant differences between the responses of single-parent and two-parent children ( $\chi^2 = 1.16, 1 \text{ df}, p = \text{ns}$ ) when both were compared. The responses of the Jamaican single-parent and two-parent children were similar to the responses of the American single-parent and two-parent children in Armbruster's (1982) study.

Although in Jamaica a number of different kinds of families exist, Jamaican children made the "mother, father and children" family their first choice in affirming family structures. The family structure which has "mother, father, two large children, two middle children, two small children" was their fourth choice, even though the only difference between these two structures was that the fourth choice had twice the amount of children. Therefore, it would seem that the traditional large family (family with many children) is not the ideal stereotype for Jamaican children.

### Dimensions Involved in Family Definitions

Responses to the following questions were coded according to the eight dimensions used to define "family."

1. What is a family?
2. What is a mother?
3. What is a father?

Examination of the total responses to the three family questions revealed that "biology" was mentioned most often, followed by "domestic functions," then by "co-residence," and "membership" which were mentioned an equal number of times (Figure 3). Examples of some of the responses in these categories are as follows: Biology - "a mother is a lady who works at the office and has children and takes care of them." Domestic functions - "a father takes care of his wife and children and works and earns money to give to his family things that they need." Co-residency - "a group of people who live together like a husband, a wife and children." Membership - "People who live together in their homes like a brother and sister, cousins and mother and father." Guidance, emotions, legal factors and social factors were mentioned the fewest number of times.

For each of the three questions the children might respond by mentioning more than one dimension. The highest mean number of dimensions mentioned was 2.40 (Table III) compared to 2.20 for the American children in Armbruster's (1982) study. Families were most often described in terms of membership and co-residence (Figure 4). Mothers and fathers were described in terms of "biology," "domestic functions," and "guidance of children" (Figures 5 and 6). Twenty

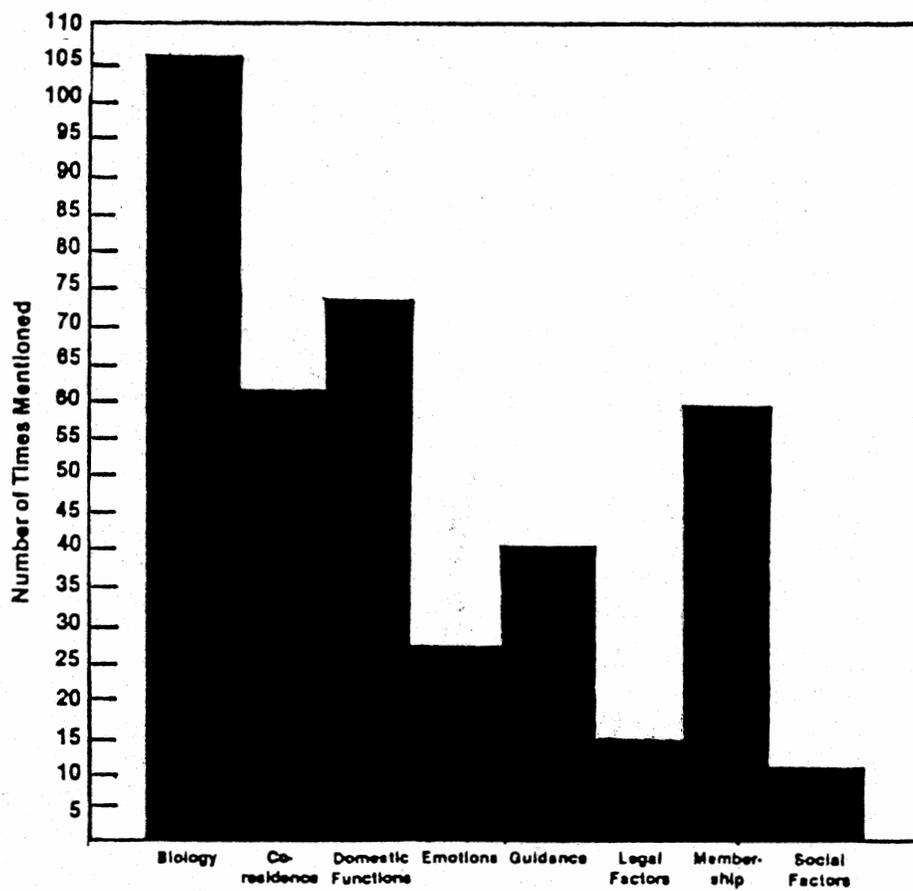
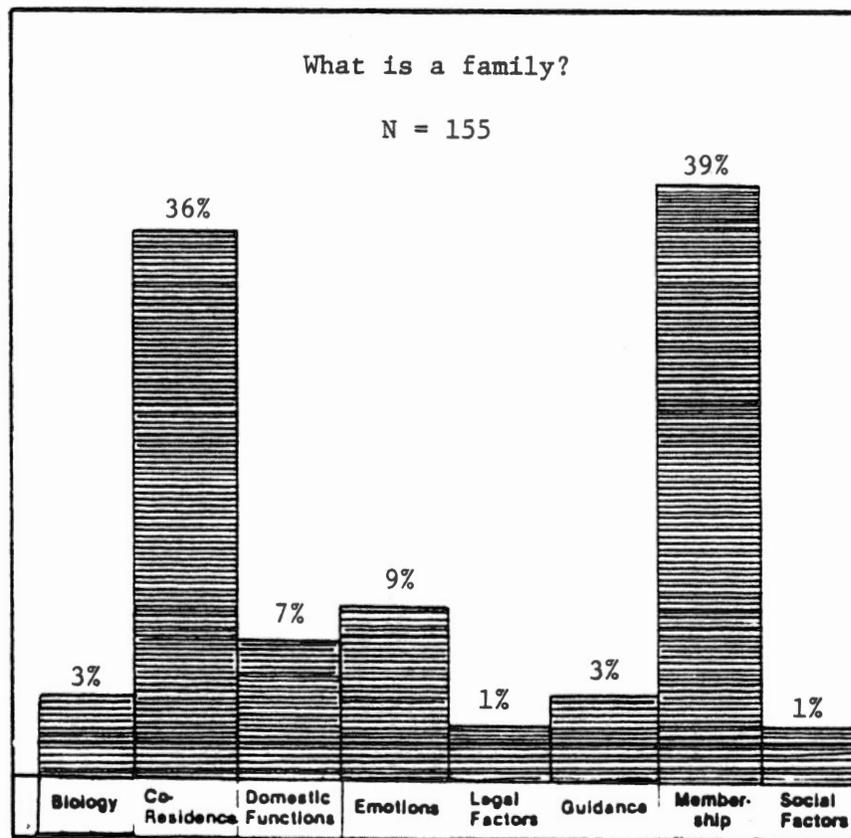
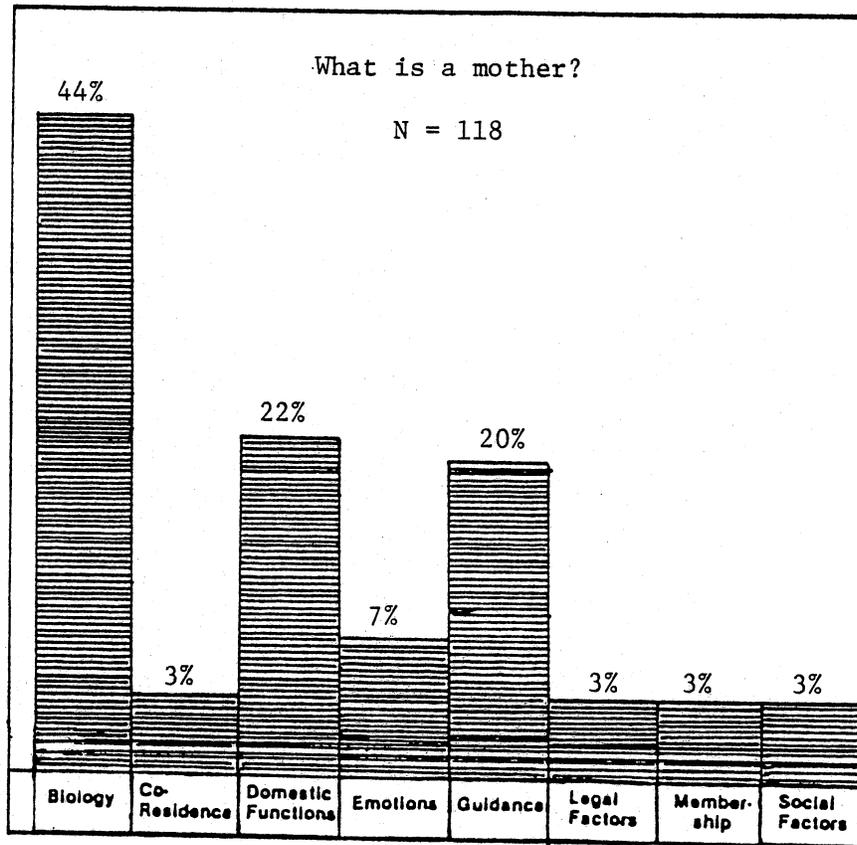


Figure 3. Number of Dimensions Mentioned in Family Definitions



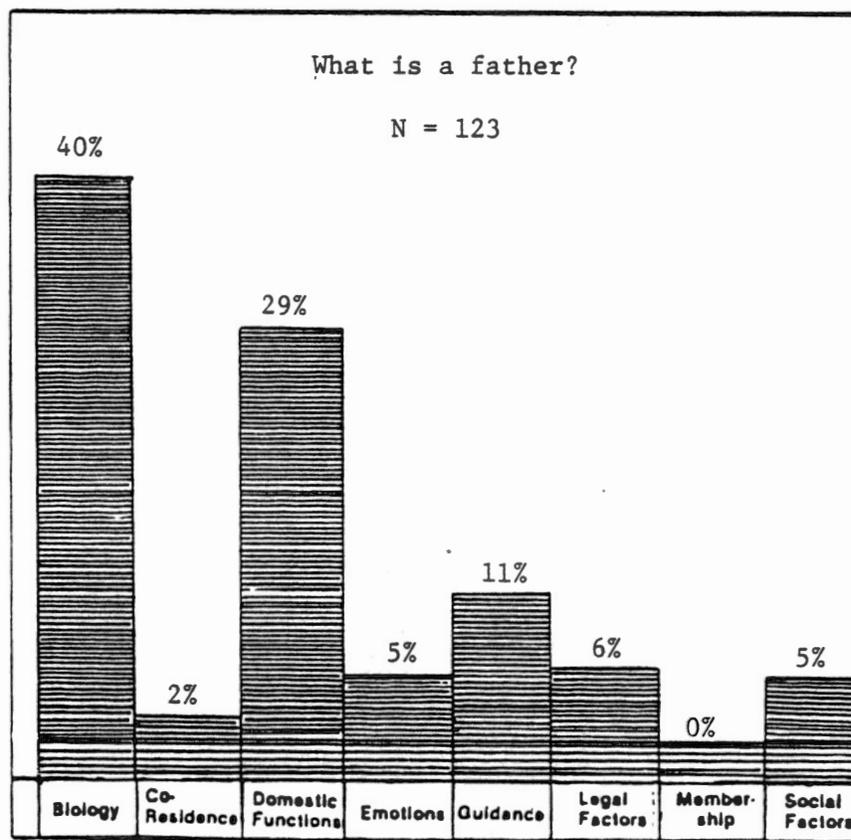
N = total number of respondents

Figure 4. Dimensions Involved in Describing "Family"



N = total number of responses

Figure 5. Dimensions Involved in Describing "Mother"



N = total number of responses

Figure 6. Dimensions Involved in Describing "Father"

percent of the responses described mother in terms of guidance, while eleven percent described father in terms of guidance. Biology was the most frequently used dimension in describing both mother and father; forty-four of the responses described mother in terms of biology while forty percent described father in terms of biology. Twenty-two percent of the responses described mother in terms of domestic functions and twenty-nine percent described father in terms of domestic functions.

TABLE III  
 AVERAGE NUMBER OF DIMENSIONS MENTIONED  
 IN DEFINING CONCEPTS OF FAMILY,  
 MOTHERS, FATHERS

Questions	Total Responses	Mean of Dimensions Mentioned
1. What is a family?	155	2.40
2. What is a mother?	118	1.80
3. What is a father?	123	1.90

Many of the Jamaican children's responses seem to deal with the provision and preparation of food. An example of this is, "a father is a male who works and provides money to give to the mother to buy food for his family." Some of the terms used by Jamaican children which did not appear in the American study of Armbruster (1982) were "sharing,"

"respect," "head of family," "communicating," and "relating to each other."

#### Further Exploration of Children's Understanding of Co-residence

The following questions concerning co-residence were asked:

1. Can a family still be a family if they do not live together?
2. Can a mother still be a mother if she does not live with her children?
3. Can a father still be a father if he does not live with his children?

Children's responses were recorded by the investigator in writing. Table IV shows that seventy-three percent of Jamaican children said that a family could still be a family if they did not live together. Eighty percent of Jamaican children said that a mother could still be a mother if she did not live with her children, and eighty-one percent said that a father could still be a father if he did not live with his children. These percentages were similar to those found in Armbruster's study in which ninety percent of the sample of sixty children felt that a family could still be a family if they did not live together. Therefore, co-residence does not seem to be a prominent factor for either Jamaican or American children in their understanding of the concept of family.

TABLE IV  
 FURTHER EXPLORATION OF THE DIMENSION  
 OF CO-RESIDENCE

Question	Total Responses	Yes Frequency	Percentage
1. Can a family still be a family if they do not live together?			
Total sample	64	47	73
one-parent children	32	25	78
two-parent children	32	22	69
2. Can a mother still be a mother if she does not live with her children?			
Total sample	64	51	80
one-parent children	32	26	81
two-parent children	32	25	78
3. Can a father still be a father if he does not live with his children?			
Total sample	64	52	81
one-parent children	32	27	84
two-parent children	32	25	78

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Summary

##### Purpose and Methods of the Study

The specific purposes of this study were to explore: (a) which structures Jamaican children define as "family" and which structures they do not use, (b) dimensions which Jamaican children use in defining family membership and family roles, and (c) differences which exist between Jamaican and U. S. school-age children's concepts of the family and dimensions used in defining family membership and family roles.

These factors were also explored with regard to the type of family in which the child is living and in comparison with the responses of a group of U. S. children of similar ages and from similar types of families. The dimensions of family which were explored in this study are those defined by Moore (1977) in her introductory study which included membership, domestic functions, guidance of children, co-residence, biology, emotions, legal factors, and social role factors. Children were given the Family Concept Interview (Appendix C).

The sample consisted of sixty-four children from four different schools and one neighborhood in Kingston, Jamaica. There were equal numbers of boys and girls from both single- and double-parent families.

The sample was classified as concrete operational using a Piagetian Cognitive Developmental Level Test (Appendix B).

### Results

Three research questions were formulated in the planning of this study. The questions with a brief summary of results related to each follow:

1. Which of a number of possible configurations do Jamaican school-age children most often define as "family"? The configurations identified as "family" by the largest percentage of two-parent and one-parent children were:

- a. Mother, father, large child, middle child, and small child
- b. Mother, father, large child, middle child
- c. Mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, child
- d. Mother, father, two large children, two middle children, two small children
- e. Mother, father, child

The responses of children from two-parent and single-parent families showed no apparent differences in affirmation of these structures according to type of family in which the child was living.

2. What are the dimensions which Jamaican school-age children use to define mother, father and families? The mean number of dimensions mentioned was 2.40 for "family," 1.80 for "mother," and 1.90 for "father." The dimensions most often used to describe "family" were membership and co-residence, while those used to describe mother and father were biology, domestic functions and guidance. Legal factors, emotions, social role factors were least mentioned.

3. Are there differences between U. S. and Jamaican school-age children in the structures they identify as "family"? Responses were similar in this study and Armbruster's (1982) study with the first five structures being identified by both groups as a family.

In both American and Jamaican studies only one percent of the children used social factors to describe family. In describing mother three percent of Jamaican children used this dimension while four percent of American children did so. In describing fathers five percent of Jamaican children used this dimension and three percent of American children used that dimension. For all eight dimensions the responses for both Jamaican and the American children in Armbruster's study were similar.

#### Conclusions

Jamaican school-age children who were classified at the concrete operational level of cognition seem to reflect their understanding of the nuclear family structure or "norm" when identifying groups of individuals who might be a family. The mother, father, large child, middle child and small child were identified as a family by the largest percentage of children; mother, father, large child and middle child were next; the traditional extended family including mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, and child structure was third. The group consisting of mother, father, two large children, two middle children and two small children was fourth and the mother, father and child group was fifth.

Results of the present study support those of previous studies: Moore (1977), Jones (1979), Camara (1979), Powell and Thompson (1981),

Norris (1981) and Armbruster (1982). Structures with two parents of the opposite sex and at least one child were most often identified as families. In this study, the mother and child structure was defined as family by thirty percent of the two-parent family children and by forty-five percent of the single-parent family children. The father and child grouping was identified as family by twenty-eight percent of children from two-parent families while thirty-three percent of children from single-parent families did so.

Although children from Jamaica and those from the U. S. in Armbruster's (1982) study were from different cultural backgrounds, their responses were similar. Societal norms or stereotypes appear to be more salient factors in children's concept development than the structure of the family in which the child is living. For example, a child in a single parent family would often make two parents and a child or children the first choice when identifying family structures. Results indicated that the dimensions most often used to define mother were biology, domestic functions and guidance. Co-residence, membership, social role factors, legal factors were least mentioned. Although it was predicted that children from single-parent families would verbalize the dimensions of membership and co-residence less often than children from two-parent families, it should be noted that American children (Armbruster, 1982) verbalized these dimensions equally and Jamaican single-parent children verbalized these two dimensions more often than children from double-parent families. Therefore, although this may not be generalized to American children, it is the investigator's opinion that these single-parent Jamaican children's perceptions were affected by their needs as well as values. The single-parent children may

verbalize the membership and co-residence dimensions more because of their strong desires to have two parents within their families.

Overall, results of the study of Jamaican children's concepts of the family were very similar to studies done with American children in Moore (1977), Jones (1979), Camara (1979), Norris (1981), Armbruster (1982) and a sample of Australian children by Powell and Thompson (1981). Although these samples were from three different populations, the children held similar concepts of what structures make up a family. To the researcher, this indicates that no matter what the child's race, color or national origin may be, children hold many similar ideas as they develop concepts of the family. Overall, previous findings on American children can also be applied to the population of Jamaican children. Therefore, curricula designed for American school-age children can be used with Jamaican school-age children.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL TEST

## CHILDREN'S FAMILY CONCEPT INTERVIEW

## Introduction

N \_\_\_\_\_, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. Before we begin, I would like to tell you a little about this study and why we have asked you to help us. Our study is about families that have children your age. We want to know what children think about parents and families. I will ask you some questions and I will write the answers that you give to those questions on my score sheet. Do you have any questions about this?

Before we begin talking about families, let's play some thinking games.

Part I. Cognitive Developmental Level Test

The materials in this kit which are related to these tasks are: two balls of clay, four red disks, four blue disks, two small beakers and a large beaker. (Investigator will place these materials in a convenient spot before beginning.)

(Three Piagetian Tasks will follow. Investigator will complete these tasks with each child.)

Mass

Investigator: "I have two balls of clay for you to look at."  
Place before the child two balls of clay of equal size. Ask the child, "Are the balls of clay the same size?" If the child does not feel that

the balls are equal, ask the child, "Which one is bigger?" Take a little off the bigger one and place it on the smaller one until the child agrees that they are the same. Then in front of the child roll one of the balls out into a sausage shape. Now ask the child, "Are they still the same size?" Yes, "How do you know?" No, "Which one is bigger?"

Scoring: When the one ball of clay is rolled out into a sausage shape, the pre-operational child will say they are not equal. The concrete operational child will be able to say that they are still equal.

#### Number

Investigator: Place before the child four red disks in a row and then just below that row in one-to-one correspondence another row of four blue disks. Ask the child, "Do these two rows have the same number of disks?" Then the investigator will take the red row of disks and put them into a pile in front of the child. Now ask the child, "Do they still have the same number?" Yes, "How do you know?" No, "Which one has more?"

Scoring: The pre-operational child will not be able to say the rows are the same after one has been made into a pile. The concrete operational child will be able to say that they are the same even after the shape has changed.

#### Volume

Investigator: Place before the child two beakers of water, the same size beakers and the same amount of water in each. Ask the child, "Do these two beakers have the same amount of water?" If the child

doesn't think they are equal, ask the child, "Which one has more?" Adjust the beakers until the child agrees that they are the same. In front of the child, pour one beaker of water into a taller and smaller cylinder type container, then ask the child, "Do they still have the same amount of water?" Yes, "How do you know?" No, "Which one has more?"

Scoring: The pre-operational child will not be able to say that the amount of water is equal after the shape has been changed. The concrete operational child will be able to agree they are still equal even after the shape has been changed.

APPENDIX B

FAMILY CONCEPT INTERVIEW

(INSTRUCTIONS)

## FAMILY CONCEPT INTERVIEW

Part II. Family Structure and Dimensions of "Family" Interview

A. What is a family? What do you have to have in order to have a family? (Record the child's response verbatim on the appropriate sheet.) Can a family still be a family if they do not live together? (Record the child's responses and the rationale for the response.)

(Place the family structure pictures face down in front of the child. Let the child determine the order of viewing. Record the subject's response on the corresponding score sheet by checking the appropriate box. Then write the child's rationale for the answer verbatim in the space provided. The numbers on the back of the pictures are to facilitate the scoring procedure.)

Here are some pictures which I would like for you to look at and tell me if you think that they are pictures of families. I will let you decide which pictures we will look at. Which picture should we look at first?

B. Is this a family? Why is this a family? or Why is this not a family?

1. Mother, father, child, grandmother, grandfather
2. Grandmother, grandfather
3. Mother, father
4. Mother, father, child
5. Mother, father, large child, middle child

6. Mother, father, large child, middle child, small child
7. Mother, father, two large children, two middle children,  
two small children
8. Mother, child, grandmother
9. Father, child, grandfather
10. Child, two same age adult females
11. Child, two same age adult males
12. Mother, child
13. Mother, large child, middle child
14. Mother, large child, middle child, small child
15. Father, child
16. Father, large child, middle child
17. Father, large child, middle child, small child
18. Large child, middle child
19. Large child, middle child, small child
20. Two large children, two middle children, two small  
children

Now I would like for you to answer two more questions by telling me what you think.

C. What is a mother? (Record the child's response verbatim on the appropriate answer sheet.) Can a mother still be a mother if she does not live with her children? (Record the child's response and the rationale for it.)

D. What is a father? (Record the child's response verbatim as before.) Can a father still be a father if he does not live with his children? (Record as before.)

APPENDIX C

CHILDREN'S FAMILY CONCEPT INTERVIEW

SCORE SHEETS

Subject Number \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Sex \_\_\_\_\_

**Part I. Piagetian Tasks**

**A. Conservation of Mass**

Passed \_\_\_\_\_

Did Not Pass \_\_\_\_\_  
(if not, describe \_\_\_\_\_  
child's response) \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Conservation of Number**

Passed \_\_\_\_\_

Did Not Pass \_\_\_\_\_  
(if not, describe \_\_\_\_\_  
child's response) \_\_\_\_\_

**C. Conservation of Volume**

Passed \_\_\_\_\_

Did Not Pass \_\_\_\_\_  
(if not, describe \_\_\_\_\_  
child's response) \_\_\_\_\_

Part II Family Concept Interviews

Q1 . What is a family? (response verbatim) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

What do you have to have in order to have a family? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Can a family still be a family if they don't live together? \_\_\_\_\_

Q2 . Is this a family? (drawings)	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW</u>	<u>WHY? OR WHY NOT?</u>
1. Mother, Father, Child Grandmother, Grandfather				
2. Grandmother, Grandfather				
3. Mother, Father				
4. Mother, Father, Child				

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW</u>	<u>WHY? OR WHY NOT?</u>
5. Mother, Father, Lrg. child, Md. Child				
6. Mother, Father, Lrg. Child, Md. Child, Sm. Child				
7. Mother, Father, 2 Lrg Child, 2 Md Child, 2 Sm. Child				
8. Mother, Child, Grandmother				
9. Father, Child, Grand father				
10. Child, Two Same Age Adult Females				
11. Child, Two Same Age Adult Males				
12. Mother, Child				
13. Mother, Lrg Child, Md. Child				
14. Mother, Lrg. Child, Md. Child, Sm Child				
15. Father, Child				
16. Father, Lrg. Child Md Child				

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW</u>	<u>WHY? OR WHY NOT?</u>
17. Father, Lrg. Child Md. Child, Sm. Child				
18. Lrg. Child, Md. Child				
19. Lrg. Child, Md. Child Sm. Child				
20. 2 Lrg. Child, 2 Md. Child 2 Sm. Children				

Q2. What is a mother? (response verbatim) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Q3. What is a father? (response verbatim) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Q4. Can a family still be a family if they don't live together? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

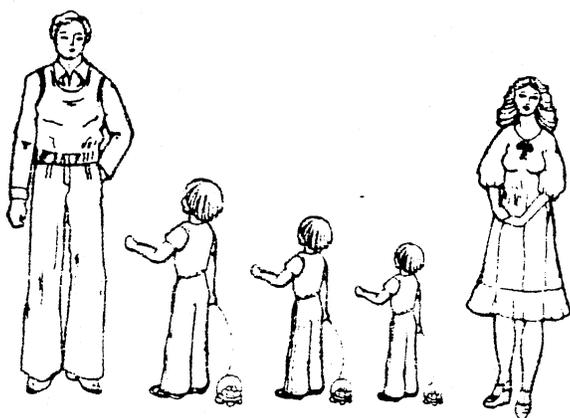
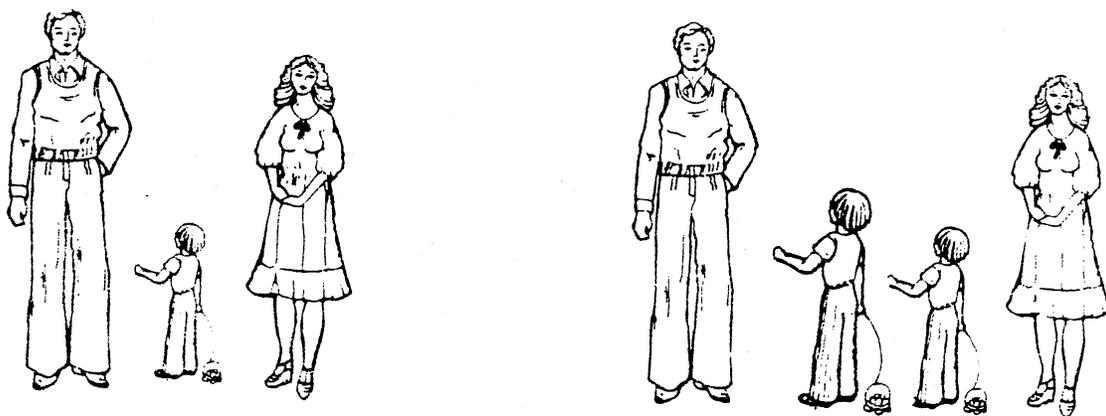
Q5. Can a mother still be a mother if she doesn't live with her children? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

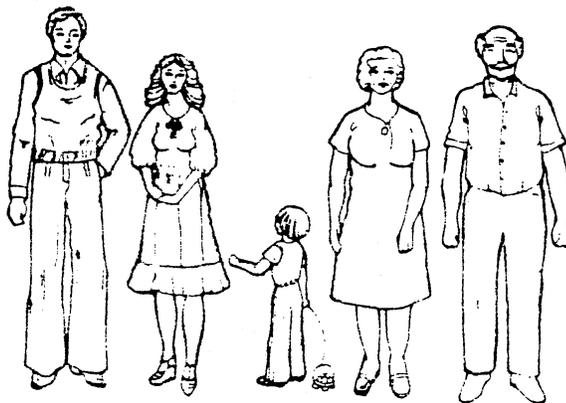
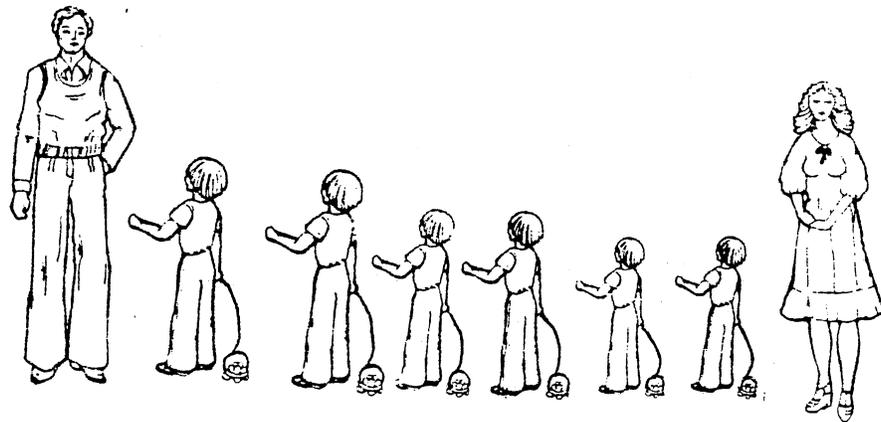
Q6. Can a father still be a father if he doesn't live with his children? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

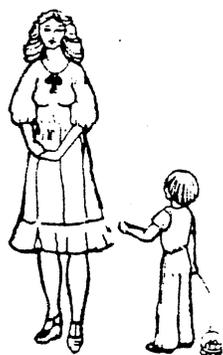
Q7. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about families? \_\_\_\_\_

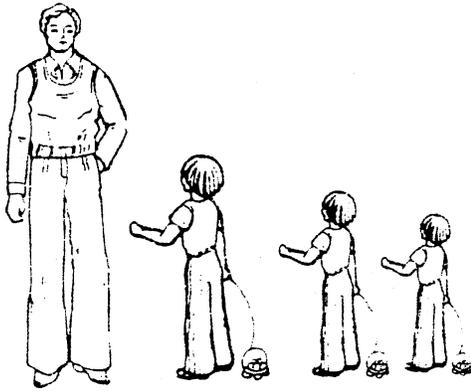
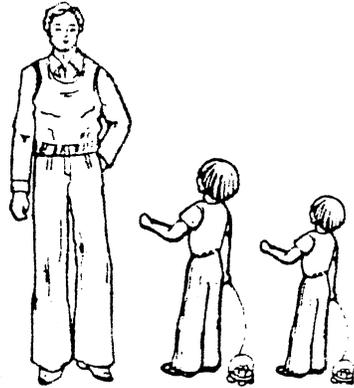
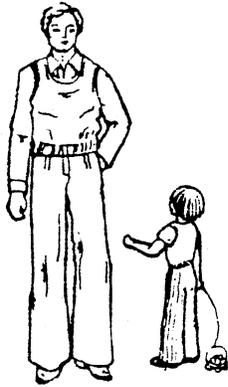
APPENDIX D

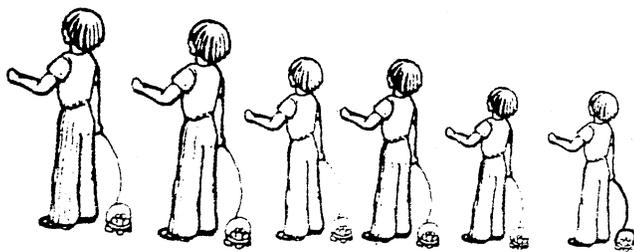
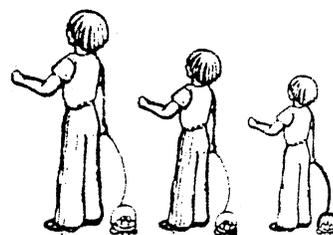
FAMILY STRUCTURES

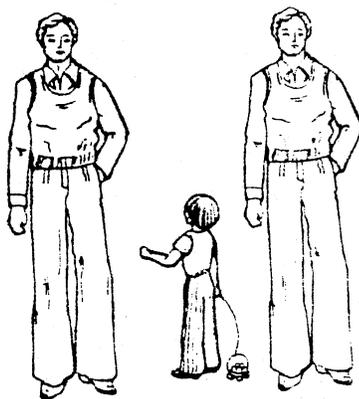
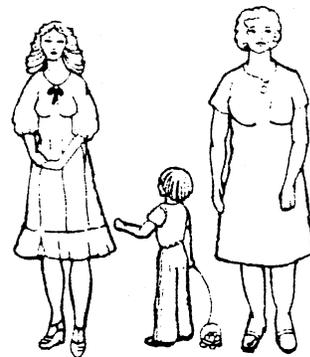
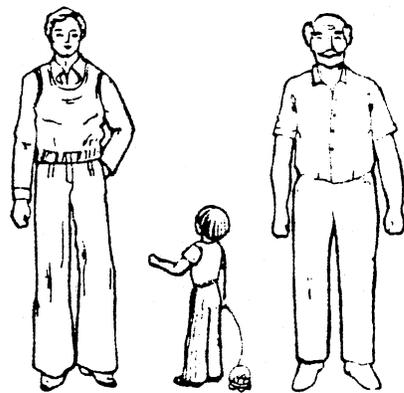


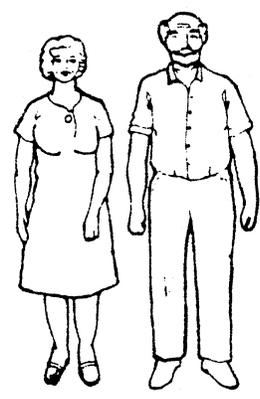
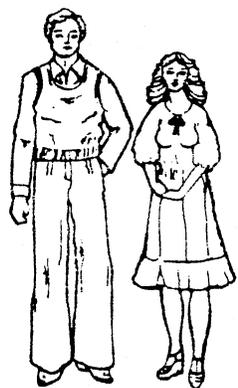












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