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An investigation of family cohesion : the influence of gender and family structure

Holly C. Dorman

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Holly C. Dorman entitled "An investigation of family cohesion : the influence of gender and family structure." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Counseling.

Teresa Hutchens, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Schuyler W. Huck, Priscilla Blanton

Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges

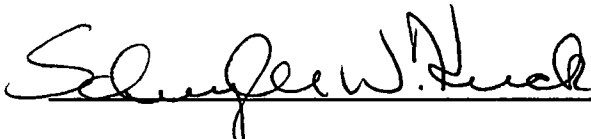Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Holly C. Dorman entitled "An Investigation of Family Cohesion: The Influence of Gender and Family Structure." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Counseling.

Teresa A. Hutchens
Teresa Hutchens, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and

recommend its acceptance:

Schuyler W. Huck

Priscilla Blanton

Accepted for the Council:

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The Graduate School

AN INVESTIGATION OF FAMILY COHESION:
THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND FAMILY STRUCTURE

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Holly C. Dorman
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents

Frank and Cathy Dorman

and to my grandparents

Frank and Virginia Dorman

who have given me invaluable educational

and personal support.

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Abstract

Perception of familial cohesion within family of origin was explored; differences based on gender-role orientation and family structure were investigated. Participants' gender-role orientation was classified as either Masculine, Feminine, or Androgynous using the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1978). Family structure was assessed using a series of open-ended questions that asked participants to describe their families of origin. Participants were then classified as being part of either a traditional nuclear family, a single-parent family, or a blended family. Analyses revealed significant difference in cohesion scores based on gender-role orientation but failed to find significant differences based on family structure. No interaction between gender-role orientation and family structure was found. Results were interpreted cautiously due to unequal cell sizes. Directions for future research and practical implications are also discussed.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The family is commonly recognized as a critical socializing institution for
individuals and particularly children (Petzold, 1998). The lessons learned, values
instilled, and views of the world that are developed are all fundamentally linked to
the family experience. The influence of the family therefore cannot be minimized.
That is why it is important that we strive to examine and understand the dynamics of
the family and the components of the family environment in an effort to discover the
optimal family environment in terms of developing socially responsible individuals.

As an analogy, the process of examining the family environment and
functioning is influenced by the process of creating a "lens" with which to view the
family. The perspectives through the lenses created by gender or culture, for
example, would be different from the perspectives through the lenses created by birth
order or developmental stages. Each of these perspectives adds a different element to
the lens, whether it is a particular cut, angle, bend, or tint. Thus, the family has
involved many dynamics, often overlapping, which contribute to the overall picture
of the environment

The importance of understanding the lenses of the family members relates to
discovering the dimensions that contribute to the family's overall functioning.
Researchers have emphasized numerous dimensions as being important factors
related to optimal functioning including communication, boundaries, authority

structure, parenting style, conflict resolution style, discipline, adaptability, and level

of cohesion (Kerig, 1995; Minuchin, 1974, Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1993). Factors

combine to create an environment through which the individual members of the

family then view the world. This study will focus on one of these factors, or one facet

of these lenses, cohesion, as it relates to the family environment. In particular, family

structure and gender differences in the perception of family cohesion will be

examined.

The environment provided by the family exists within a larger context defined

by the culture in which the family exists. This cultural context has dictated the rules,

expectations, values, and mores that are considered acceptable by the society and

which the family seeks to uphold and instill in the children. In this way, the family has

represented an institution defining itself within the cultural milieu as well as teaching

the values and beliefs of this culture to the younger generations. Numerous studies

have documented the influence that culture and ethnic identity have on the definition

of family as well as on family dynamics and functioning. African-American families

have been shown to include more extended kin and non-biologically related

individuals (Watts-Jones, 1997) while Korean families have tended to make the

parent-child relationship the primary dyad as opposed to the marital relationship

emphasized within the American culture (Chun & MacDermid, 1997). In addition,

Asian cultures have been shown to hold different social expectations for family

members as compared to the American culture (Jain & Belsky, 1997; James, Kim, &

Moore, 1997; Martini, 1996). Cimmarusti (1996) has examined the Filipino-

American family and has reported that the sanctity of the Filipino-American family is

highly respected and membership often includes an extended family network integral

to the functioning of the family. This family network has influenced personal identity,

role development, and problem solving and is the main source of support. In terms of

family roles, oldest children have held special roles and responsibilities. Males have

been shown to be more highly valued than women who must be publicly submissive,

but may yield considerable authority within the boundaries of the family. Cimmarusti

has written that first-generation Filipino-Americans often find it difficult to meld

traditional ethnic expectations with the expectations espoused by the larger American

culture resulting in family conflict. Thus, cultural identification has been shown to

govern family functioning and define the family environment.

One component of the family environment, cohesion, has received

considerable attention by researchers interested in family functioning. Cohesion has

been defined as a continuous variable measuring the degree of emotional bonding

among family members or sense of togetherness that one feels within one's family

(Olson, 1995; Olson & Defrain, 1994). Factors such as time spent together,

boundaries, communication, conflict resolution, and the sense of emotional support

has influenced one's perception of family cohesion (Minuchin, 1974; Noller &

Fitzpatrick, 1993; Olson, 1995). High levels of cohesion, known as enmeshment,

have been characterized by extreme togetherness and minimal autonomy, whereas

low levels, known as disengagement, have been characterized by emotional isolation

and lack of loyalty (Bakken & Romig, 1994; Fisiloglu & Lorenzetti, 1994).

Functional families are those who have effectively balanced levels of cohesion, thus

balancing autonomy with togetherness. Olson (1995) has written that families

balanced on cohesion "can experience the extremes of the dimensions when

appropriate but do not typically function at these two extremes for a long period of

time" (p. 133).

Noller and Fitzpatrick (1993) have written that this definition of cohesion

assumes that extremely cohesive families restrict and discourage an individual's

independence and autonomy. Bowen (1978) and Minuchin (1974) have agreed that

autonomy is sacrificed when a family fosters too high a degree of togetherness and

closeness. On the other hand, perceiving a lack of familial closeness may be

demonstrated in a diminished sense of security and a turning to others outside of the

family for fulfillment of emotional needs (Feldman, Fisher, & Seitel, 1997).

Additionally, resolution of autonomy, i.e. separation-individuation, issues may be

ignored in disengaged families leading to difficulties in the successful establishment

of personal identities for adolescents (McCullough & Scherman, 1998).

Researchers have viewed family cohesion as an important component of the

overall family environment in terms of healthy functioning on an individual as well as

familial level (e.g. Brody, Stoneman, & McCoy, 1994; Waldren, Bell, Peek, & Sorell,

1990; White, 1996). Cohesion has often been considered to be a protective factor

shown to enable a family's ability to successfully recover from a stress. For example, Coughlin and Vuchinich (1996) have surveyed families living in neighborhoods with high rates of juvenile delinquency and found that close parent-child relationships may serve a protective function against delinquency. Ego-development, moral reasoning, alcohol drinking behavior, and school performance have all been associated with levels of cohesion—balanced levels of cohesion exhibiting the most desirable outcome in each case (Bakken & Romig, 1994; Hein & Lewko, 1994; Novy, Gaa, Frankiewicz, Liberman, & Amerikaner, 1992; Shucksmith, Glendinning, & Hendry, 1997). Protinsky and Shilts (1990) have found that adolescents who abused drugs perceived less cohesion and attachment within their families more often than did nonabusing students. Related to this, McKeown, Garrison, Jackson, Cuffe, Addy & Waller (1997) have conducted a longitudinal analysis of adolescents and found an inverse relationship between perceived family cohesion and depressive symptoms. Finally, Feldman, Fisher, and Seitel (1997) have theorized that family cohesion during adolescent development provides a supportive environment than enables the development of emotional security and positive transition into young adulthood.

Research on cohesion has demonstrated that individuals within the family perceive levels of cohesion differently, but few researchers have focused on the difference between genders. In studies that have included gender in their analysis of family cohesion, the majority have found that females perceive greater cohesion than do males (e.g. Hampson & Beavers, 1987; McKeown et al., 1997). Jackson,

Dunham, and Kidwell (1990) have found that female college students perceived

greater cohesion than did males which the researchers attributed to the reluctance of

males to express or admit feelings of closeness and to a greater need by females for

social desirability. Another hypothesis has attributed gender differences to differing

autonomy expectations that parents communicate to their sons in contrast to their

daughters (Ohannessian, Lerner, Lerner, & von Eye, 1995; Russell & Russell, 1989).

According to this explanation, males are expected by the parents to be more

autonomous than females, which may influence males to adopt more independent

roles within the family. This may in turn lead to males feeling less cohesion within the

family.

Gender differences in the perception of cohesion have been shown to be

expressed differently by each gender (Romig and Bakken, 1992; Weist, Freedman,

Paskewitz, Proescher, & Flaherty, 1995). In a study of adolescents conducted by

Romig and Bakken (1992), females who perceived higher levels of cohesion have

demonstrated higher levels of intimacy development, while for males, perceived

levels of cohesion seem to have had little impact on intimacy development. For

males, balanced levels of family cohesion have been shown to serve as a protective

factor for the development of discipline problems, and for females it has been

associated with higher self-concept (Weist et al., 1995).

Another variable that has been largely neglected within cohesion research is

the relationship between differing family structures and the perceived level of

cohesion. Multiple writers have noted the diversification of family forms that have

developed and proliferated within the last half century. According to the U. S.

Census Bureau (1998), 9.8 percent of the adult population was currently divorced in

1998, 27.7 percent of all children under the age of 18 lived with one parent, and 5.6

percent of all children lived with their grandparents. Still, most researchers have

continued to focus predominantly on the traditional nuclear family structure,

comprised of a father, mother, and children all residing in the same household.

Forgays (1998), however, has written in her review of the literature "an adolescent in

a family with both biological parents is more likely to be bonded with the family than

an adolescent who has experienced the disruptive effects of divorce and remarriage

of his/her parents" (p. 3). In his study of college students, Kennedy (1989) has found

that students from single-parent or blended families reported less family satisfaction

than did students from intact families. As noted earlier, one element influencing

perception of cohesion is time spent with family members. Thus one explanation for

Forgays and Kennedy's findings, according to the results of a study conducted by

Drapeau and Bouchard (1993), may be that the children from disrupted families

indicate less time spent with immediate family members.

The purpose of the present research is to examine the relationships between

gender and family structure on the perception of cohesion within one's family of

origin. Two research questions are addressed: 1) Whom do individuals include

when asked about "family?" 2) Do males differ from females in terms of their

perception of family cohesion? And 3) Do family structure variations produce

differences in later perception of family cohesion?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The family may be characterized by a number of dynamics operating simultaneously and impacting family functioning in a variety of ways. Family cohesion has been shown to be a family dynamic which impacts both familial and individual functioning throughout the family lifecycle. Perception of family cohesion, or one's sense of bonding to one's family, has been shown to be influenced by a number of factors including culture, gender-role orientation, and family structure composition.

Culture

The family represents a social system that exists within a larger context largely defined by the cultural milieu in which the family system functions. This cultural milieu has dictated the social norms regulating dress, etiquette, patterns of communication, and patterns of interaction. The culture has also impacted the religion and rituals of the society. Thus, it is ethnocentric to ignore the element of culture as it provides a context in which families develop and change. The component of culture in family studies has often not been included as a major factor in the investigation or purposefully been controlled. Nonetheless, the importance of understanding the particular culture of the family in order to fully understand the functioning of the family system has been demonstrated.

Definitions

Within the literature, the meaning of the terms culture, ethnicity, and race have often overlapped or been used interchangeably and deserve further clarification. According to the Structural-Functional Theory of family development, culture has included the common beliefs and values of a collection of people (Winton, 1995). Culture has been defined as the social environment that communicates values regarding what is prized, moral, acceptable, and beautiful (Adams, Bell, and Griffin, 1997). Further, culture has been described as the avenue through which society has generated a context which provides the meaning and directions for appropriate maintenance and progress within that culture. The vehicles for the transmission of culture have included language, standards of attractiveness, festivals and rituals, and definition of a 'normal' family. The development of one's particular culture may be influenced by such factors as ethnicity, race, religion, geography, gender, and sexual orientation, thus one may be part of many cultural groups simultaneously, depending on point of reference.

Whereas culture has been presented to be a very broad construct, ethnicity has been defined more specifically. The term ethnicity comes from the Greek concept of ethnos which refers to the citizens of a nation (Batancourt & López, 1993) and therefore one's ethnicity has derived from one's affiliation with a particular national group. Usually, the reference group for defining an ethnicity shares a common

culture, but ethnicity has also been a determinant of culture (Batancourt & López, 1993). Frable (1997) adds that "ethnic identity is supported by environmental structures (cultural background); it's fluidity is visible across changing contexts (home to school); and identity negotiation take multiple forms (varying with the importance of the identity of the individual)" (p. 149). The meaning attached to any particular ethnicity has been shown to be continuously evolving by both ethnic group members as well as those outside the particular ethnic group (Nagel, 1994). The process of achieving an ethnic identity has been thought of similarly to the process of achieving an ego identity in that it has developed over time and that it has involved active decision making (Nagel, 1994; Phinney, 1990). Hence, ethnicity has been tied to nationality and has been expressed through culture.

Compared to ethnicity, race has been more of a social construct that has been biologically determined (Frable, 1997) Race has often referred to physical characteristics such as skin color, physical features, eye shape, and hair type. Two persons of a particular race will not necessarily share the same culture since culture has had more to do with the society than with the physical features of the people. The cultural identification of a fourth generation Korean in the United States, for example, has differed greatly from the cultural identification of a native Korean and yet has shared many similarities with the average white American. Thus, the concept of race has presented multiple difficulties in terms of a concrete definition and because of this, Batancourt and López (1993) have considered racial identity an

inappropriate factor for exploration within psychological studies. They have

specifically pointed to the inadequacy of race for investigating between-group

differences stating that there are more within-group than between-group differences

among the races.

For the purposes of this study, culture will be one focus in the investigation

of the influences of the family environment. Culture has been defined the most

broadly of the three terms and therefore has incorporated more variations and yet has

remained an element of both ethnicity and race. Although both ethnicity and race

have been shown to impact the family, it is the cultural element of both that has been

the most salient and pervasive influence. Nagel (1994) has stated that "culture

dictates the appropriate and inappropriate content of a particular ethnicity and

designates the language, religion, belief system, art music, dress, traditions, and

lifeways that constitute an authentic ethnicity" (p. 161). Since culture has defined the

boundaries of acceptability and dictates the rules, mores, and norms, culture has been

demonstrated to be the factor that is most relevant when seeking to understand the

family environment. Therefore, this discussion will address ethnic minorities and

racial differences, but the focus will be on how the cultures differ among these

groups and not on ethnic or racial differences per se.

Collectivist versus individualist cultures

Regardless of the cultural context, the family has remained a vital element

within every society and affects how the society functions through its instrumental

role in socialization (Georgas et al., 1997). Culture, however, has played a part in the functioning of the family by influencing the dynamics of the family environment such as communication patterns and family boundaries. Families with differing cultural backgrounds have been shown to hold different attitudes toward interpersonal relationships and thus communicate, adapt, and cohere in different ways (Martini, 1996). Georgas et al. (1997) have differentiated between families in collectivist countries versus those in individualist countries. They have surveyed families in five different countries, three individualist and two collectivist, and found increased emotional closeness to distant relatives in collectivist countries, though no difference was found when examining the emotional closeness of the nuclear family. They have summarized by stating that the emotional ties with grandparents, uncles and aunts, and cousins in collectivist countries are stronger than such ties in individualist countries, and thus "family structure extends to a larger kinship network" (p. 315). Within these family networks, enmeshment may be a positive and adaptive dynamic rather than a negative one as claimed by the literature using Caucasian participants (Dilworth-Anderson, Burton, Johnson, 1993).

Acculturation

The United States has often been described as a "melting pot" or a "salad bowl" because of the great mixture of ethnicities, races, and cultures. With our society becoming increasingly mobile and transitory, many children have experienced more than one culture in their developmental environment that they must negotiate.

Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, and Buriel (1990) have examined ethnic minority

children in the United States in an effort to understand the family ecologies of these

children; because minority children must compromise and negotiate their culture with

the dominant culture, "the family ecologies of ethnic minority, when compared to

majority, families have the potential of differential outcomes in the development of

children" (p. 348). Minority families have often adopted adaptive strategies such as

maintaining an extended family network as a coping resource for the stress and crises

of the dual culture situation and acculturation (Brown, Graves, & Williams, 1997;

Harrison et al., 1990). Watts-Jones (1997) has written about the importance of

extended family networks among the African-American community which often

include both related and nonbiologically related individuals who perform roles within

the family. Obviously, children who must negotiate among cultures often experience

unique family and developmental environments.

Not all extended networks, however, necessarily have served only beneficial

functions. Some recent immigrants, for instance, may be hindered by extended

family. Rouseau, Drapeau, and Corin (1997) have reported that for Southeast Asian

immigrants in the United States, a strong network of individuals from the country of

origin showed a strong relationship with low family cohesion and an increase in

family conflict. It may be that extended family becomes a "burden" that increases the

difficulty of successfully functioning in the new country, particularly for young

working adults.

Acculturation within a new society has been a process experienced by each individual family member, not one that the family encounters uniformly. In other words, each individual has negotiated with the majority and minority cultures in a personally unique way and acculturation has been influenced by the individual's values, beliefs, and interpretations regarding these interactions and negotiations. For this reason, acculturation may impact how individual family members relate to each other (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990). Jain and Belsky (1997) have investigated the impact of acculturation on the parenting practices of immigrant fathers from India living in the United States. The Indian culture has emphasized traditional gender roles in which the male is the breadwinner and the female is the primary childcare provider. Their study has indicated that male parenting practices are impacted by the acculturation process in that they found a positive relationship between acculturation and the father's engagement in active parenting (F (df = 1, 33) 7.91, p < .001). In other words, the least involved fathers were from the least acculturated families and the most involved fathers were from the most acculturated families. Studies such as this have demonstrated the bi-directional influence of culture on the functioning and environment of the family.

The clash of a traditional ethnic culture of the family and the majority American culture has been shown to leave a gap in the coping resources of the youth trying to find a cultural identity. James, Kim, and Moore (1997), in an investigation of the increased drug abuse among Asian American youth, have interviewed Asian

American adolescents referred for assessment of suspected drug. Within the Asian culture, filial piety is expected, and shame is used to help members conform to traditional values, philosophies, and customs. The authors have reported that as the Asian youth increased time spent with American peers, the Asian youth became influenced by the American custom of striving for independence. The authors have suggested that this may have led to emotional and physical distancing from parents and continued closeness and identification with peers; youth may not feel fully accepted by American society, and yet they feel different from the Asian community leaving youth confused about their roles. James et al. (1997) have found that none of the students turned to their parents for assistance or guidance with their problems and many stated that their parents did not understand the issues with which they were dealing.

Family cohesion

Family cohesion has been studied and one relational element which differs across cultures. In the Japanese culture, which values family dependency and rigid adherence to traditional roles, family cohesion has tended to be very high and even enmeshed (Martini, 1996). In contrast, Western Culture has emphasized individualism and autonomy, specifically in identity formation, and has tended to exhibit more balanced levels of cohesion (Martini, 1996; Paguio, Skeen, & Robinson, 1989). Hawiian families have been shown to value strong ties with immediate and extended family members, but each generation has tended to interact with members

of his or her own generation and thus little intergenerational interaction occurs.

These families have often appeared disengaged (Martini, 1996). These differences in

role and functioning expectations have resulted in differing family environments

including different norms for cohesion levels. Culture has served to define the

indicators of healthy functioning for any particular group (Dilworth-Anderson,

Burton, Johnson, 1993).

The family has also been shown to be impacted by their religious culture.

World religions and denominations have prescribed various ideals in terms of family

dynamics and functioning and have thus presented another ingredient within the

cultural milieu in which the family operates. In the same way, an absence of religious

influence has also been shown to impact family functioning; the family must then find

another model for "normal" and optimal family functioning. Religious membership

has varied within and across cultures, and has provided individuals and families with

official support systems, social networks, and family activities designed to encourage

positive family relationships (Pearce & Axinn, 1998). Pearce and Axinn (1998) have

observed that many religions including Hinduism and Judeo-Christian religions

specifically advocate strong family bonds, both within the marital relationship, as well

as defining roles in the parent-child relationship. Other religious groups, such as the

Amish and Mormons, have advocated and expected high family togetherness and

minimal adaptability (Olson, 1995). Researchers have also found that the themes of

tolerance, patience, and unconditional love which have permeated most Judeo-

Christian religions have served as resources for improving relations among family

members. Clearly the various aspects of culture and the process of acculturation have

impacted family processes and therefore family dynamics. Culture has served to

define the indicators of healthy functioning for any particular group (Dilworth-

Anderson, Burton, Johnson, 1993).

<u>Defining Family</u>

The first hurdle in studying the family has been defining what is meant by the

term "family." Experiences define family, but have included different individuals and

roles: step-parents, foster-parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents. Individuals have

been shown to conceptualize their families in a personally unique usually experiential

way, and therefore we cannot dictate what "family" means (Levin and Trost, 1992;

Sabatelli and Bartle, 1995). Further, individuals may have different definitions for *a*

family and for *their* family. In addition, one's definition for family has been

influenced by the culture in which the family unit exists.

From a legal standpoint, family has involved a legal union and legally adopted

or biologically created offspring (Petzold, 1998). Petzold (1998) has discussed the

myriad of definitions; from a biological perspective, family has included individuals

who share a common set of genes. From a governmental statistical perspective for

the purposes of statistics, the key to family has been those forming a household with

one's children. Sociologically, the family has not been viewed as a tangible entity, but

as a relationship that is abstract and subjective. In addition, Edwards (1987) has

pointed out that household and family have represented two different concepts and should not be assumed to be synonymous. No typical family form has been shown to exists in postmodern Western society, thus we have no model for singular definition (Petzold, 1998). Gumrium and Holstein (1990) have posited that, as a system of social relations, the interpretation of the family has been shown to vary depending upon the context in which the assessment occurs. Within one's home, for example, family has one meaning that includes all residents of the home. At a family reunion, however, family may have a slightly different meaning that includes all those related either by blood or by marriage to some ancestor. Other writers have noted that such organizations as gangs, churches, sports teams, schools, and the workplace can arguably be classified as families, depending on one's perspective.

Because inclusion in family membership has seemed to be such a subjective experience, for the purposes of this study, a definition of family that have emerged from a social perspective might give us more information because it may allow the qualitative examination of the set of relationships within a family. Therefore, family can be seen as relationships in which one feels a sense of belonging to others in terms of emotional and/or biological ties. The individuals that comprise the family unit are not viewed as important as the roles they play, according to each family member's perspective. In other words, the title of the role is not believed to be as crucial as whether or not an individual has experienced a relationship, considered that person

part of his or her family system, and contributed to the individual's family

environment.

Family Structure

As we have examined the families of the postmodern society, we have not

been able to escape the transformation of the traditional nuclear family form and the

context in which change has occurred. Current data has shown the divorce rate to be

around 50% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992); a large percentage of children will

spend significant periods of time as part of non-nuclear families. A 1998 Census

Bureau report has stated that at least 1.4 children were living with their grandparents

in households in which neither biological parent was present. In addition, the birth

rate to unmarried women has increased by 54% between 1980 and 1991 (National

Center for Health Statistics, 1995). These data have suggested an increasing number

of children reside with individuals other than their biological mother and father, the

majority living with one biological parent or with one biological parent and a

stepparent (Wojtkiewicz, 1992). In fact, the percentage of youth under the age of 18

living in an intact family system has steadily declined from 85% in 1970 to 69% in

1994 (Hines, 1997).

In general, however, the traditional nuclear family has been defined as a

father, mother, and at least one child, who are all biologically related, and has been

the model of family targeted by researchers, writers, and policy makers. Hill (1995)

has pointed out that families often experience a number of changes in terms of

membership and structure over time; this makes defining family that much more difficult. In his study of the 1985 Survey of Income and Program Participation, Hill has noted that at least a quarter of individuals under age 20 do not live in a coresident, biologically nuclear family. Research by Wojtkiewicz (1992) has supported this data in his investigation of the 1987 National Survey of Families and Households. He has found that as a cohort ages, the percentage of individuals in families described as mother-only and mother-stepfather increases, whereas the percentage in mother-father families decreases.

Many households cannot be categorized easily into either a one-parent or a two-parent family structure. At a basic level, there has been found to be at least seven different family structures: mother-child only, father-child only, one biological parent and one stepparent caring for the child, two adoptive parents caring for the child, grandparents or other relatives caring for the child, foster parents or other non-relatives caring for the child, and two biological parents caring for the child (Edwards, 1987). Alternate family forms to the traditional nuclear family have emerged and become more common as the demographics of the Western world has changed (Petzold, 1998). Such alternate family forms has included: singles, childless couples, homosexual couples, unmarried cohabitation, successive families, living apart together, and elderly care (Petzold, 1998). Thus the definition of family may not be dependent upon a biological structure.

Historically, research has focused on traditional nuclear family structure when

examining the family, and thus has left a gap in our investigation of the dynamics of

families with alternate structures. Remarried spouses have been shown to be

qualitatively different from first-married spouses, especially when children are

involved, and the internal dynamics involved necessarily change (Waldren, Bell,

Peek, & Sorrell, 1990). A stepmother-stepdaughter relationship may be qualitatively

different from a traditional mother-daughter relationship; the dynamics of the

relationship between a single mother and her son may be qualitatively different from

the relationship between a mother and son in a nuclear family with a father present.

Farrell and White (1998) have reported that "adolescents who lived with their fathers

also reported better relationships with their mothers than those living without

fathers" (p. 255). This has emphasized the important impact that family structure has

on the relationships within the family system. With the dramatic growth in divorce

and out-of-wedlock births, the traditional nuclear family structure has diminished and

become non-normative (Edwards, 1987). The inclusion of alternate structures has

thus been demonstrated to be essential when studying the family.

Role and function

One must go beyond genetic relatedness to explore family and to include the

roles and functions that each member provides. Watts-Jones (1997) has argued that

defining "family" according to a biological perspective is inadequate, particularly for

the African-American family in which kinship has been largely determined by

function. African-American children have been found to reside more frequently in single-parent homes and homes with grandparents than Caucasian children, they have experienced more frequent changes in living arrangements (Wilson & Tolson, 1990). Although the nuclear family has traditionally been the model for researchers, it has failed to exemplify the diversity of family structures primarily existing among minority groups (Dilworth-Anderson, 1993). Values and perceptions of normality have been shown to differ across races and ethnicities (McKeown et al., 1997). Each has created a narrow and specific definition for family, ethnocentric and only one part of view in which the true spectrum of family forms.

Hill (1995) has written that five themes related to defining the family can be concluded from policy-making and research in the area of families: 1. *Family structure* has often been examined in terms of household head and children. 2. *Economic behavior* has looked at who is the breadwinner and who is part of the labor force. 3. *Relational ties* has been related to the importance of blood, adoption, and marital ties in defining the boundaries of family membership. 4. *Living arrangements* has included the individuals who reside in the family home. 5. *Resource distribution* has examined how resources are pooled and shared regardless of living arrangements (Hill, 1995). She has suggested that traditional methods for collecting demographic information related to family structure and membership often has prevented a complete understanding of relational bonds. She has argued that an approach which examines relationships other than merely in terms of the household

head and which incorporates the possibility for both resident and nonresident

members might provide more information to reflect a more accurate view of the

family system.

<u>Impact on youth</u>

The structure of the family, in terms of who is included and what roles are

performed, has been shown to influence the transmission of values to the younger

generations. Biblarz, Raftery, and Bucur (1997), from data of the 1973 Occupational

Changes in Generation Survey (OCG), have found that mothers were instrumental in

the intergenerational transmission process. Thus, alternative family structures in

which the mother is more removed from the child has been shown to lead to a decay

in the intergenerational transmission process. Additionally, youth from single-parent

families have been shown to exhibit lower levels of well-being on such indicators as

compared to youth from stable intact families, regardless of how young the youth

were when the divorce occurred (Spruijt & de Goede, 1997). Coughlin and

Vuchinich (1996) have conducted a longitudinal analysis of families with one fourth

grade child in the initial phase of the study and found that the children from

stepfamilies or single-parent families were more than twice as likely to experience an

arrest by age 14 as children from intact families.

Composition of the family and resultant cohesion among family members has

also been shown to be an important factor related to adolescent drug and alcohol

use. Alcohol use has been correlated with family structure in that adolescents from

intact two-parent families are less likely than adolescents from single-parent and

stepparent families to engage in regular drinking (Shucksmith, Glendinning, &

Hendry, 1997). Farrell and White (1998) have surveyed urban adolescents and have

found that the presence of a father-figure in the home reduced the influence of peer

pressure and drug use (R^2 = .39, p < .001). The authors have theorized that parental

monitoring may be increased in homes with both parents present, or that family

resources and coping capacities may become limited in female headed single-parent

homes where the mother experiences increased stressors.

Hannon and Eggebeen (1995) have analyzed the 1986 and 1988 National

Longitudinal Survey of Youth with a total sample of 1,513 mothers and their

children. They have found that disruptions in children's sibling system or in their

mother's marital situation negatively correlated with their sense of emotional support

(F = 6.06, p < .01). Additionally, for children whose families experienced no stressful

events in their home environment, the emotional support scores increased on an

average of 1.69 points. They declined slightly, however, when the child experienced

one stressful event and declined dramatically as the stressful events became more

numerous. Thus, the step-parent or blended family situation has presented the family

with an accumulation of stressors such that the perception of family cohesion is low.

Step-parent/blended families

In her review of the literature, Hines (1997) has concluded that stepfamilies

with children dissolve earlier and more frequently than first marriages signifying that

children in stepfamilies have often experienced multiple family transitions. Research

has indicated that children adjust more successfully to multiple transitions, such as

family restructuring, when they experienced an environment high in support and low

in stress. Such an environment was characterized by strong parent-youth affective

bonds that allow the expression of the youth, thus a balance between enmeshment

and disengagement. Feldman, Rubenstein, and Rubin (1988) have stated that

"cohesion may be a powerful protective factor in that it reflects the family's ability to

reorganize following the upheaval of divorce" (p. 291). However, the process and

demands of divorce, both before and after the actual event, have been hypothesized

to shape the pattern of relationships within the family system such that the parent-

child relationship becomes secondary (Hines, 1997).

Whether due to divorce or chosen singlehood, single-parent families in

general have been found to report lower cohesion ratings than intact two-parent

families (McKeown et al., 1997; Waldren, Bell, Peek, & Sorrell, 1990). Indeed,

research has found that youth from single-parent families have reported significantly

lower psychological and relational well-being than have youth from stable intact

families (F (3, 2472) = 10.255, p < .0001) (Spruijt & de Goede, 1997). In a study of

287 undergraduate students, Evans and Bloom (1996) have reported that women

whose parents have divorced indicated significantly less attachment to their own

families than women from intact families (F = 2.07, p = ns). They have concluded

that parental divorce has impacted the development of one's social identity, i.e. the sense of self in relationships.

After a divorce, many parents have chosen to remarry, creating step-parent relationships or blended families. According to Olson (1995), cohesion levels within families have been shown to adaptively change to deal with stressors that affect the family system; blending changes the family system and additional stressors may impact the dynamics within the system. Thus the restructuring of families has served as a period of stressful transition with roles, boundaries, relationships, and rules all being renegotiated.

In contrast, other researchers have failed to find such significant differences between intact and blended families in levels of perceived cohesion and concepts related to the perception of cohesion. For example, Drapeau and Bouchard (1993) have examined the support networks of 191 six- to eleven-year-olds who were from two groups, either intact families or disrupted families (single-parent, step-families, blended families). They have found that "children of disrupted families reported as high a satisfaction with the quantity of support given by the immediate family as did children from intact families" (p. 90). Drapeau and Bouchard have also suggested that the degree of support that children perceive is more a function of their adjustment than it is a function of the family structure. Supportively, data from Spruijt and de Goede (1997) have revealed that an increased number of family structural changes did not necessarily mean that youth experience decreased well-

being. Data from the 1991 Utrecht Study of Adolescent Development, a Dutch

national panel study, have found that youth from stepfamilies scored similarly to

youth from intact families on measures of relational well-being. Smith (1991) has

also failed to find cohesion differences between remarried families and intact families,

unless the remarried family included an adolescent. Smith has interpreted these

results that the presence of an adolescent in the family impacts the perception of

family cohesion more than the fact that the family is remarried.

In another perspective to interpret such findings, MacDonald and DeMaris

(1995) have written that step-families have a number of strengths unique to this

family structure. They have suggested that single parents actively evaluate

prospective mates in terms of their ability to co-parent stepchildren, providing an

entry-level opportunity to develop functional relationships within the family system.

To negotiate and establish parenting roles throughout courtship may allow "trial"

parenting" to become possible and the potential step-parent a "trial" experience in

this role. MacDonald and DeMaris have also concluded that additional advantage to

the stepfamily system is that the partners avoid the stress associated with the "new

parent" situation. In addition, they have found less marital conflict in family systems

in which both spouses are remarried, as compared to first-married couples. Thus,

step-family systems have been theorized to contain certain strengths which have

previously been overlooked in the literature.

Although it has seemed that there is some disagreement in the literature regarding the perceived levels of cohesion in step-families, single-parent families, and intact families, the literature has shown consistent indications that the various family structures differ qualitatively from each other. For this reason, it has become important to consider various family forms when studying the family environment as well as each subject's personal definition of family in terms of who in included. Not only will it help researchers to clarify the relationship that family structure has on the family environment, but it also allows researchers and clinicians to better understand the dynamics involved in the analysis of the family.

Gender and Gender-Role Orientation

Factors such as socio-economic status, marital relationship, parenting style, and parents' education level have usually been considered constant within a single family; it would seem that members of the same family would describe it similarly and would perceive the environment similarly as well. Researchers, however, have not found this to be the case. In fact, they have increasingly found that individuals perceive their families in personally unique ways (Graham-Bermann, 1994; Ohannessian, Lerner, Lerner, & von Eye, 1995; Skopin, Newman, & McKenry, 1993). In other words, no two children who have grown up in exactly the same family tend to describe that family in the same way, and gender is one factor that seems to influence one's perception of the family environment.

Gender-role socialization

One area of research has been gender differences during the socialization process of childhood leading to gender role identity. Many studies continue to use the term gender when referring to biological differences, then interpret the "gender differences" along more sociological or psychological lines. Assessing males versus females, for example, then attributing any discovered differences to gender expectations and socialization. This has lead to confusion with the literature as the terms gender and sex have often been used interchangeably with little attention given to the correct definitions of these terms. The result has been confusion and inaccuracies in the use of these terms such that the terms have lost their distinctions or worse, have lost their exact and appropriate definitions within the literature. It therefore becomes necessary to clarify the use of the term gender within the context of the present study. The term gender traditionally has transcended biological sex markers and been defined as one's psychological sense of being male or female (Frable, 1997). This will be the definition of the term gender as it is used in this study, but for further differentiation, the terms gender-role and gender-identity will also be used in respect to one's psychological masculinity or femininity.

Research has confirmed the sociological tendency for boys and girls receive differential reinforcements during childhood which contributes to their development of gender roles and gender identities. Weis and Worobey (1991) have stated that "before they are three, children begin to develop scripts for their gender, sex-roles,

families, and parenting simply by observing and modeling family members, classifying

and then storing this information for their use throughout life" (p. 111). Data has

shown that from infancy, male children experience more physically active interactions

with parents whereas females' experiences are more gentle. Masculine play activities,

such as war, have been encouraged for male children and traditionally feminine play

activities such as dolls, have been discouraged. Gender appropriate activities have

been defined by culture, both the majority and familial subculture. The family's

environment for the child has thus been instrumental in gender identity and gender

role developed in childhood and expressed throughout his/her life.

Gilligan (1982) has emphasized the importance of role in female socialization

to value and to develop a sense of identity from their relationships in the family,

whereas males are socialized to be more autonomous and develop their identity from

accomplishments and status attainment. Females have been shown to develop a

greater sense of social responsibility for others, to care and nurture others and

relationships. Males have been shown to develop a sense of separateness, or

relatively greater autonomy, in which they feel free to assert themselves and their

views independently. Therefore, because females have experienced a different

socialization process than males, each gender has been shown to develop a gender

family role identity based on differing values (Gilligan, 1982).

The changing cultural standards and social demographics have included

diversification of roles, family forms, and increased female participation in the

workplace. Androgynous gender roles may be increasing generationally and have

been emphasized as being the ideal for healthy and successful participation in society

(Russell & Ellis, 1991). Androgynous individuals have been defined as possessing

both masculine and feminine gender role abilities and characteristics, according to

traditional classifications. Russell and Ellis (1991) have noted positive relationships

between androgyny and level of identity. Behavioral choice across a wider repertoire

may indicate greater adaptability. Since the dynamics of the traditional, nuclear

family as well as of the larger society have been changing from those that supported

traditional gender roles, androgyny may be more adaptable to meet the demands of

today's society. Such roles have been first defined by observed and imposed demands

within the family.

Gender roles and family structure

The development of gender roles has been a point emerging in study across

differing family units. Russell and Ellis (1991) have found a significantly greater

percentage of individuals who were reared in single-parent households being

classified as androgynous when compared to two-parent households

($\underline{X}^2$ = 4.61, $\underline{p}$ < .05). They have theorized that employed, single-parent models

presented a less traditional gender role; these single parents may model a wider range

of behaviors, making role boundaries less restrictive.

Maternal employment, along with family structure, in an analysis of gender-

role attitudes was the subject of a 1993 General Social Survey of Adults. In this

study, Wright and Young (1998) have found that participants from father-headed, single-parent households had the most traditional gender attitudes across their sample (-.343 unstandardized beta). Children from mother-headed, single-parent families have demonstrated the most egalitarian perceptions of gender role (.246 unstandardized beta), supporting the conclusions of Russell and Ellis (1991). The presence of a working mother, regardless of the family composition, has produced significantly more egalitarian attitudes. Male children in particular have appeared to be influenced by the working status of the mother, while females were impacted by both the presence of a father and the working status of the mother. The authors have concluded that "as family structures continue to change and women continue to advance in paid employment, it would be expected that gender-related attitudes would become more egalitarian" (Wright and Young, 1998, p. 311).

Gender roles and gender identity have been shown to be influenced by behavior and attitudes and to develop largely out of the socialization process during childhood. Researchers have acknowledged that males and females are socialized differently during childhood, and data have supported that they experience the family environment differently. Males have been shown to develop more negative perceptions of the family environment, hypothesized to be because of the encouragement they receive to be more independent from the family (Ohannessian, Lerner, Lerner, and von Eye, 1995). They have reported feeling less familial support (Forgays, 1998). Females, on the other hand, have been encouraged to be

relationally-oriented and more dependent on familial support (Windle, 1992); thus, they have been socialized to value family warmth and expressiveness (Hampson & Beavers, 1987). Perception of family and one's role in it may therefore be influenced by the degree of inclusion felt by family members.

Family Cohesion

Whenever two individuals form a relationship, a bond or a connection develops between them which defines the association. This relational bond helps the individuals know the boundaries and expectations of the relationship as well as the roles each person will play. This bond has been labeled cohesion and has been used to describe the degree of bonding, or level of togetherness, within the relationship. Most often, cohesion, investigated within the familial relationship, has been found to be an integral dynamic within the overall environment of the family and instrumental in optimal family functioning. Furthermore, it can also be detrimental to family and individual functioning by increasing isolation through pathognomic enmeshment or by lack of family ties through extreme disengagement.

The Circumplex Model

Olson has investigated cohesion extensively and has used this information to develop his Circumplex Model of family functioning. Within this model, family adaptability, communication and cohesion may be measured and used to chart the overall functioning of the family. According to this model there are four levels of cohesion: disengaged, separated, connected, and enmeshed. Olson (1995) has

described cohesion as a dynamic of which the most functional families exhibit midrange levels, rather than extremely high or low levels which are considered dysfunctional. Disengaged relationships have been characterized by a lack of loyalty, little closeness, and high separateness, and independence. Separated relationships have exhibited moderate loyalty, low to moderate closeness, and more independence than dependence. Connected relationships have been characterized by loyalty, moderate to high closeness, and more togetherness and dependence. Enmeshed relationships exhibit high loyalty, closeness, togetherness, and dependence. According to Olson (1995) "extreme families have the most difficulties functioning as a family" (p. 134). Cohesion levels have shown change throughout the family lifecycle. Although families may occasionally experience extreme levels as an adaptive response to stressors, healthy families have tended to possess the ability to return to a more balanced level of cohesion once the stressor has been resolved. In this way, cohesion may serve as an indicator of family functioning as well as a resource in stressful times that helps the family cope. The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES) were developed to measure cohesion and adaptability in collaboration with the circumplex model.

The hypothesized curvilinear relationship among cohesion and adaptability has been contested by researchers who argue that these constructs exhibit more linear relationships. Eckblad (1993), for example, has stated that the term "circumplex" refers not to curvilinear associations, but rather to "...a special

structure of linear relations among variables, which is quite different from the

structure assumed in Olson's model" (p. 476). Other researchers have argued that a

curvilinear relationship would be better supported by a bipolar response set than a

unipolar Likert-type format as on the FACES instruments (Pratt & Hansen, 1987).

Pratt and Hansen (1987) have investigated the FACES instruments and the

circumplex model by asking respondents to complete the FACES II and III twice,

once describing a "healthy" family and once describing a "dysfunctional" family.

Their results have supported claims finding a linear relationship between cohesion

and adaptability and healthy family functioning.

More recently, Olson has revised his Circumplex Model to reflect a 3-

dimensional representation of family functioning in response to such criticism that the

cohesion and adaptability constructs may not exhibit the hypothesized curvilinear

relationship. In a 1991 article, Olson acknowledges that cohesion, as measured by

FACES III, is a linear construct, but maintains that the general construct continues to

be curvilinear and that the revised model better demonstrates this. The 3-D model

has incorporated second-order change and has better expressed the similarities within

the Balanced types versus the Mid-Range types versus the Extreme types. By

revising the Circumplex Model in this way, Olson has stated that the model continues

to be a valid representation of family cohesion and adaptability which has been

demonstrated and supported empirically.

Cohesion as a protective factor

Data generated by Weist et al. (1995) have served to validate the influence of family cohesion in examining the protective factors of urban adolescents experiencing stressful situations. Inner-city youth may be a group particularly vulnerable due to lack of resources in their environment, increased poverty, frequency of violence, and family characteristics including low parental education and parents in low-status occupations. These factors have been shown to be the stressors for such adolescents. Of inner city high school students (N=164, 87 girls, 77 boys), Weist et al. have used The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Environment Scales II (FACES II) to measure perceived family functioning including cohesion. It was hypothesized that family cohesion would be an important factor for these youth in promoting healthy psychosocial adjustment.

From their analyses, Weist, Freedman, Paskewitz, Proescher, & Flaherty(1995) have reported that levels of family cohesion were negatively correlated with behavior problems for boys experiencing high stress (r [69] = -.31, p < .05), and positively correlated with self-concept for girls experiencing high stress (r [76] = .34, p < .01). Although their results were interpreted to suggest that cohesion may serve a protective function for boys, results also indicated that cohesion may not serve the same type of protective function for girls; family cohesion may impact their psychological adjustment and sense of well-being. In fact, Weist et al. have suggested that cohesion may be a "vulnerability

factor" (p. 716) for girls in that girls reporting high family cohesion were found to have more negative teacher comments with increasing stress. The authors theorized that girls, being more relationally-oriented, tended to neglect schoolwork and rely on family and friend support networks during times of stress. Obviously these results are limited because Weist et al. have measured family cohesion during stressful times and used a non-representative sample composed of low income, inner-city youth. Nonetheless, their results have shown the important role that family cohesion can play in individual functioning as well as how cohesion influences males and females differently.

Cohesion and self-esteem

Another approach within family cohesion research has been to examine identity development within the context of the family functioning. Kawash and Kozeluk (1990) have attempted to explore self-esteem levels and perceptions of family functioning using FACES III. Surveying 310 Canadian eighth-grade students ($N_b = 112$; $N_g = 198$), the authors have hypothesized that family functioning would relate to children's self-esteem levels. Further, they have stated that "it is possible that it is the child's perceptions of interactions with the parents that is the most direct route to understanding this relationship" (p. 190).

Results reported by Kawash and Kozeluk (1990) have indicated that self-esteem scores increase as perceived cohesion scores increase. In other words, youth who have reported higher cohesion levels within their families also generated higher

self-esteem scores. The authors have expressed surprise at these findings because of

the research on the Circumplex Model, upon which FACES III is based, which has

argued that most desirable cohesion levels should be found in respondents whose

scores fell within the middle most ranges for this model. Analyses, however, have

also shown a moderate relationship between how far a respondent's FACES III score

falls beyond the midpoint score or center of the Circumplex Model and the self-

esteem score ($r = -.35$, $p < .05$). The authors have concluded that perceptions of

parental warmth were significant predictors of children's self-esteem levels, "...to the

extent that self-esteem is correctly viewed as involving this affective dimension

cathected towards the self, the perception of a warm and/or emotionally close family

environment would be a logically necessary but not sufficient condition for the

development of a positive sense of self" (Kawash and Kozeluk, 1990, p. 194). This

study has demonstrated the importance of the family environment, and particularly

the dimension of cohesion, on individual development of the children within the

family.

Cohesion and psychological well-being

McKeown et al. (1997) have summarized the research demonstrating the

relationship between family environment and youth's psychological well-being; data

have consistently found a negative relationship between perceived family cohesion

levels and depression, with cohesion being found to be an important factor in

postdivorce adjustment for youth. Unlike previous researchers, however, McKeown

et al. have included race and family structure in their investigation recognizing that these factors may have additional influence upon adolescent depression.

McKeown et al. have employed longitudinal study with cross-sectional data for a cross-sequential research design. Students ($\underline{N}$=3,191; 1,627 females, 1,564 males) were surveyed over three consecutive Autumns and then resurveyed in the subsequent two years. Demographic data include 84% White and 16% African-American; 52% reported living with both natural parents. The authors have chosen the FACES instrument for measuring cohesion and the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) for measuring depression, along with a demographic questionnaire assessing age, race, gender, grade in school, family constellation, and parental education.

Analyses of the data (McKeown et al., 1997) have revealed an inverse relationship between cohesion scores and depression for all groups; higher depression levels were demonstrated by those reporting lower levels of perceived family cohesion ($\underline{R}^2$ = .11-.29). Cohesion levels were also shown to be higher for families with both natural parents in the home, regardless of race. Among African-American students in this study, cohesion has not been found to be as strongly related with depression as it was among White students, additional cultural factors such as association with a minority community may have had an influence on the effect of familial cohesion, specifically on the depressive symptomatology of African-

American adolescents. Longitudinal analysis has revealed that the variance in Year Two depression scores can be explained by Year one cohesion scores.

McKeown et al. (1997) have drawn a number of conclusions based on the results of this study, and have suggested that levels of depression seem to be affected by the degree of family bonding that the adolescent perceives. It has been difficult to conclude, however, whether family cohesion is a cause or consequence of depression—whether family function is affected by the adolescent depression or whether the adolescent depression is affected by the family's functioning. Further, the authors stated that the "significant effect for cohesion in longitudinal models may indicated the relation between cohesion and depressive symptoms is a mutual one; that is, low levels of family cohesion may increase the risk for depressive symptoms that may, in turn, adversely impact the adolescent's perception of the level of emotional bonding in the family" (McKeown et al., p. 279).

The effects of race were particularly interesting in this study. McKeown et al. have pointed to the diversity of family systems prevalent with African-American families, particularly extended family networks, as an explanation, at least on part, for the weaker relationship between cohesion and depression in this study. Thus, "normal" family functioning may be perceived differently across cultures and the norms of the majority culture may not be appropriate for assessing participants belonging to minority cultures. Obviously, race and culture have been important factors in considering family functioning, and although the explanations are still

unclear, different relationships may be indicated. Family structure has also seemed to demonstrate differing levels of cohesion depending on family structure such as whether or not the adolescent lives with both natural parents. Regardless of race and family structure, however, this study has demonstrated that the perceived family environment may be related to individual psychological functioning.

Gender and perception of cohesion

In studies that have examined gender differences in the perception of cohesion, the results have been mixed, but a significant number have found not only that the genders perceive different levels of cohesion, but also that they express perceived levels of closeness differently. Perosa and Perosa (1993) have investigated gender differences in perceived levels of cohesion and found that females perceived more cohesion than males; the greater perception of relational significance among family members thus supported this gender effect. Although their sample was disproportionately female, the findings have suggested that family cohesion may have been socialized to be more important to females than to males and, thus, may have been more instrumental for female identity achievement. Females have further reported relying on family to cope with concerns, while males were more likely to use alcohol, drugs, or other reckless activities (Perosa & Perosa, 1993).

Bakken and Romig (1994) have also studied gender perceptions and focused on a sample of high school students and have found that females report higher levels of cohesion within their families than do males. Results have yielded a negative

relationship between principled moral reasoning and level of family cohesion for

males ($r = -.31$, $p < .05$). The authors have suggested that for males, lower levels of

family cohesion may have encouraged the development of principled moral

reasoning. The level of perceived family cohesion has also been shown to be a

protective factor against discipline problems for males (Weist, Freedman, Paskewitz,

Proescher, & Flaherty, 1995) as well as drug abuse (Malkus, 1994). For females,

perceived levels of family cohesion have shown a positive relationship with self-

concept (Weist et al., 1995).

Hence, children have experienced unique family environments throughout

childhood and adolescence depending on family interaction and socialization based

on and influenced by gender and gender role. From this experience they have learned

to differently interpret and adapt to their environments. However, due to the

increased diversification of family forms, gender attitudes and roles may be becoming

increasingly egalitarian thereby narrowing the gap between gender perceptions of the

family environment. Nonetheless, the research has indicated that males and females

not only perceive the family dynamics differently, but also that those dynamics impact

the genders differently.

Statement of the Problem

The literature has clearly demonstrated the importance of family cohesion,

but ambiguity remains regarding factors influencing individual perceptions of levels

of cohesion within the family system. Each individual within the family system has

experienced the family in a personally unique way, and from these experiences has

interpreted the family environment and dynamics. Since it is individual perceptions of

family functioning that most impact individual behavior and functioning, it has

become important that we strive to understand factors related to individual

perceptions.

Research has shown that individuals are socialized differently based on

gender, and although the research has suggested that these differences in

socialization lead to differing experiences and perceptions of the family environment,

it is incomplete. Similarly, data have suggested that differences in family structures

necessarily impact the dynamics of the family environment. However, the way in

which the various family structures differ in terms of family dynamics like cohesion, if

indeed at all, remains unresolved. The present study will examine the influence of

both gender and family structure on the individual's perception of family cohesion in

an effort to interpret the influences of these factors.

In discussing perception of cohesion, the important of clarifying the domain

in which the perception will be measured has been demonstrated. Individuals may

feel a sense of cohesion within many varying relationships including church groups,

friendships, and mentors. For the purposes of this study, the cohesion element within

the family of origin will be of primary interest. As discussed earlier, family, and even

family of origin, can have many different definitions depending on the individual's

perspective and the purpose of the inquiry. I would argue that the individual's

personal definition of family of origin provides a greater depth of information regarding family cohesion than does a definition set by an outside person because it allows the researcher to understand the important individuals in the participant's perception of cohesion without setting boundaries on inclusion. However, for the purposes of this study, I will use a broad definition of family of origin in an effort to provide the participants with the opportunity of including all relevant individuals according to their interpretation of family. To this end, family of origin in this study will be comprised of any and all individuals considered part of the immediate family system during youth; participants will be asked to define their individual families for themselves.

The individuals considered part of the family of origin are important because it is these individuals who have created and have constantly influenced the level of family cohesion. Based on interactions within this family system, individuals have developed a perception of the level of cohesion among relationship dyads and triads, and the entire system. A review of the literature has shown that this perceived level of cohesion plays an important role in individual and family functioning and may be impacted by events and stressor occurring within and around the family system. Because of this, individual members if the family may perceive levels of cohesion differently than other members based on such variables as gender, culture, and family structure. This study will seek to clarify the role that gender role and family structure play in individual perceptions of cohesion within the family of origin.

Hypotheses

Based on the above review of the relevant literature, the following are given as hypotheses stated in the null:

Hypothesis 1: There will be no differences in levels of perceived cohesion in families of origin based on gender role orientation.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no differences in the levels of perceived cohesion in families of origin based on family structure.

Hypothesis 3: There will be no interaction between gender role orientation, family structure, and levels of perceived cohesion in families of origin.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 49 students drawn from classes in

Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology. Classes were chosen for their

recurring availability in curriculum offerings and the nature of the courses' content,

as well as the maturity of students eligible to enroll; these classes were designed for

senior-level undergraduate and first-year graduate students. All students were invited

to participate in the completion of target questionnaires (see Appendices D, E, & F),

which were completed either as regular classroom activities or outside of. So that all

could participate and data collection could be completely voluntary, only those who

wanted their completed questionnaires to be included in the study submitted them to

the researcher. (Please see informed consent statement, Appendix C.) Responses

were then filtered to include an exclusively Caucasian sample to specifically control

for racial diversity and any inherent cultural difference, thus, increasing the

homogeneity of the sample. Participants were not offered extra credit for their

participation since neither the professor nor the researcher was able to identify the

students who returned or did not return the forms. All participants were treated in

accordance with APA Ethical Standards (American Psychological Association,

1994).

A total of 74 participants completed data. Of those, 11 (14.86%) were excluded due to incomplete questionnaires, 4 (5.40 %) were excluded due to reporting an ethnicity other than Caucasian, and 10 (13.51%) were excluded for scoring as Undifferentiated on the BSRI, leaving a total of 49 (66.22%) completed sets of questionnaires for analysis. The final sample consisted of 33 females (67.3%) and 16 (32.7%) males. Participants ranged in age from 21 years to 48 years with a mean age of 26.96 years (SD = 7.13).

<div align="center">Measures</div>

Demographics Sheet

Each participant was asked to complete a demographics questionnaire that assessed age, sex, parents' marital status, and family structure. Participants were asked to characterize their family structure according to one of three options: traditional-nuclear, single-parent, or blended. To determine those whom they include in their family system, an additional open-ended question was used, allowing participants to define family membership in their own unique ways. Each participant was asked to list whom he or she includes in their family system

Bem Sex-Role Inventory

Adherence to gender role schema was made using the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1978), a 60-item, self-report inventory. It was used to measure gender role perceptions by assessing each person's identification with adjectives associated with traditional masculine and feminine gender roles; 20 items

were scored as positive feminine characteristics, 20 were scored as positive

masculine characteristics, and 20 items were a combination of neutral positive and

neutral negative characteristics. The scale asked participants to respond to what

degree each personality characteristic described them using a seven-point Likert

format (i.e., 1 = *never true of self* to 7 = *always true of self*). The scale was not

male/female exclusive and was not forced-choice. Each of the scales were totaled,

averaged, and compared to the normative sample as identified in standard procedure

(Bem, 1978).

Previous research has demonstrated the strong psychometric properties of the

BSRI. Bem (1974) has reported a high reliability for Masculinity (alpha = .86) as

well as for Femininity (alpha = .82), with test-retest reliability over a four-week

period (Masculinity r = .90; Femininity r = .90; Androgyny r = .93). More recently,

Wong, McCreary, and Duffy (1990) have indicated that the BSRI has remained a

highly reliable measure (Masculinity alpha = .90, Femininity alpha = .83). Holt and

Ellis (1998) have reported even higher alphas of .95 for Masculinity and .92 for

femininity.

Some researchers have suggested that the BSRI may be outdated due to

changing social mores which have resulted in altered masculine and feminine gender

roles Current studies have demonstrated the continuing validity of the BSRI. A

sample of middle-class adults surveyed by Harris (1994) has yielded data supporting

the traditional pattern: masculine adjectives significantly more desirable for males

($t = 23.58$, $p < .01$) than for females ($t = 15.43$, $p < .01$) and female adjectives

significantly more desirable for females ($t = -14.98$, $p < .01$) than for males

($t = -12.77$, $p < .01$). In like fashion, Holt and Ellis (1998) have reported that all

feminine adjectives, with the exception of "loyal" and "childlike," were rated were

significantly more desirable for women than for men ($p < .001$); all of the masculine

adjectives as significantly more desirable for men than for women ($p < .001$).

Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales III

The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale III (FACES III;

Olson, Portner, & Lavee, 1985) was used to assess perceptions of family cohesion.

This self-report questionnaire was developed with 20 statements in a Likert-type

format with 10 items measuring Cohesion and Adaptability each. Respondents were

asked to respond on a scale of agreement from 1, "Almost Never," to 5, "Almost

Always," for each statement. Higher scores on the cohesion scale have been

purported to indicate a greater degree of emotional bonding with the family of origin;

possible raw scores ranged from a low of 10 to a high of 50 and possible standard

scores ranged from a low of 1 to a high of 8. The instrument was designed to be

available for use with a variety of family structures including traditional nuclear

families, single-parent families, and blended families (Olson, 1986).

Olson, Portner, and Lavee (1985) have reported a low interscale correlation

($r = .03$) for the FACES III, and a Cronbach's reliability alpha of .68; a test-retest

reliability of .83 for Cohesion and .80 for Adaptability were also shown. Moreover,

Olson (1986) has contended that the measure shows good evidence of validity based on other theoretical approaches dependant on concepts similar to cohesion and adaptability. More recently, Crowly (1998) has reported internal consistency ratings of .82 for Perceived Cohesion and .69 or Perceived Adaptability; subsequent one-year, test-retest reliability scores of .48 and .55 respectively have been obtained. Franklin and Streeter (1993) have confirmed the validity of the cohesion subscale within the FACES III measure by comparing it with two measures of individual functioning. These authors found that the cohesion subscale has demonstrated a linear quality in that families who reported enmeshed or disengaged levels of family cohesion also scored lower on a measure of self-esteem, and a negative relationship was found between perceived family cohesion and adolescent behavior problems.

<div align="center">Procedure</div>

Participants were given the opportunity to complete the instruments and demographics sheet as part of an in-class exercise or outside of class and returned to the investigator. The purpose of the study was explained to the classes and the instruments were completed and returned on a voluntary basis. To control for the variable of race, completed surveys were filtered so that the final sample was comprised of solely Caucasian participants, others were excluded from further analysis.

Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were generated for all variables as well as for the demographics. The factorial design of this study

was a 3 (gender role orientation) X 3 (family structure). Using the BSRI, gender-role orientation was assigned as either masculine, feminine, or androgynous. The three levels of family structure were single-parent, traditional-nuclear, and blended families. A check on equal variance assumption was employed prior to analyzing the data in order to assure proper cell sizes for later statistical analyses. The following are specific hypotheses stated in the null: (a) There will be no differences in levels of perceived cohesion in families of origin based on gender role orientation. Descriptive statistics were used to explore the data set and a two-way ANOVA was employed to determine if cohesion levels differ based on gender. Significant results were further analyzed using post-hoc comparisons when appropriate. (b). There will be no differences in the levels of perceived cohesion in families of origin based on family structure. Descriptive statistics were used to describe cohesion data; a two-way ANOVA was employed to determine if perceived cohesion levels differ based on family structure. Significant results were further analyzed using post-hoc comparisons when appropriate. (c) There will be no interaction between gender role orientation, family structure, and levels of perceived cohesion in families of origin. Descriptive statistics were used to describe each construct separately. Correlation matrices were construct to reflect single relationships between each two variables respectively. A two-way ANOVA was employed to determine the interaction between gender, family structure, and levels of perceived cohesion. Significant

results were further analyzed using post-hoc comparisons when appropriate.

Additionally, descriptive statistics were used to explore whom individuals consider

part of the family.

Chapter 4

Results

Completed data were individually scored and analyzed by the principle investigator. Testing for homogeneity of variance revealed that the cell sizes were unequal. To control for this, Type III Sums of Squares were used throughout analysis that allowed for statistical analysis with unequal cell sizes. In addition, Appendix A_1 presents correlations for the factors of family structure and gender-role orientation demonstrating that there were no significant results[1].

Descriptive statistics were conducted to describe the present data. Using the key provided with the Bem Sex-Role Inventory, raw masculinity and femininity scores were computed for each participant. Raw scores were converted into masculinity and femininity standard scores that were then used to compute single T-scores. Utilizing the median split method, as advocated by the BSRI manual, participants were classified as either Masculine, Feminine, or Androgynous based on their self-reported raw scores. In this sample, 22 participants were classified as Masculine (44.90%), 14 were classified as Feminine (28.57%), and 13 were classified as Androgynous (26.53%). Appendix B_1 illustrates that for the males, 11 (68.75%) were classified as Masculine, 2 (12.5%) were classified as Feminine, and 3 (18.75%) were classified as Androgynous. For the females, 11 (33.33%) were classified as Masculine, 12 (36.36%) were classified as Feminine, and 10 (30.30%) were classified

as Androgynous. Using Pearson Correlation, results indicated that sex was not

significantly related to gender-role orientation ($\underline{r}$ = .27, $\underline{p}$ < .06).

The FACES III scores were calculated by adding each participant's

responses on the ten odd-numbered statements as these measured cohesion. The

even-numbered questions measured adaptability that was not a focus of this

investigation and therefore was not calculated. The raw scores from cohesion items

were then converted into standard scores using the key provided in the manual.

Standard scores ranged from 1 to 7 ($\underline{M}$ = 3.57, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.76) out of a possible high of

8. Appendix A_2 shows the cohesion means and standard deviations by gender-role

orientation and sex. Males reported a lower mean cohesion than females. Masculine

participants reported the lowest mean cohesion score while Feminine participants

reported the highest mean cohesion score. This information is further illustrated in

Appendix B_2. Appendix A_3 demonstrates that nuclear family structures in this study

reported a lower mean cohesion score than either single-parent family structures or

blended family structures. Single-parent family structures reported the highest

cohesion score.

In assessing the completed demographic sheets, 35 (71.40%) of the

respondents reported traditional nuclear family structures, 6 (12.20%) reported

single-parent family structures, and 8 reported blended family structures (16.3%)

(Appendix B_3). Appendices B_4 and B_5 show the breakdown of reported family

structures by sex. Twenty-two (66.67%) women participants reported traditional

nuclear family structures, 5 (15.15%) reported single-parent family structures, and 6 (18.18%) reported blended family structures. For the men, 13 (81.25 %) reported traditional nuclear family structures, 1 (6.25%) a reported single-parent family structure, and 2 (12.50%) reported blended family structures. In assessing family structure and gender-role orientation, 15 (68.18%) Masculine participants reported traditional-nuclear family structures, 3 (13.64%) Masculine participants reported single-parent family structures, and 4 (18.18%) Masculine participants reported blended family structures. For Feminine participants, 11 (78.57%) reported traditional-nuclear family structures, 2 (14.28%) reported single-parent family structures, and 1 (7.14%) reported a blended family structure. Finally, for Androgynous participants, 9 (69.23%) reported traditional-nuclear family structures, 1 (7.69%) reported a single-parent family structure, and 3 (23.08%) reported blended family structures. Appendix A_4 shows the means for and standard deviations in cohesion scores by family structure and gender-role. Feminine participants from blended families reported the highest cohesion scores while Masculine participants from nuclear families reported the lowest cohesion scores.

Participants were asked to report whom they include in their definitions of family using an open-ended question on the demographic sheet. As Appendix B_6 demonstrates, a variety of answers were provided, the most common of which were immediate family members and grandparents. Parents were named by 41 (83.67%) participants, siblings by 32 (65.31%) participants, and grandparents by 31 (63.27%)

participants. Aunts and/or Uncles were also reported by 20 participants (40.82%).

Participants also mentioned: cousins, extended family, nieces and/or nephews,

spouse, children, friends, dating partner, co-workers, and pets. One participant stated

that she did not include anyone except herself in her definition of family. While the

large majority of the definitions included immediate family members, responses were

quite diverse and seem to reflect the diversity of family arrangements present in

today's society.

A two-way ANOVA was employed to determine any differences in levels of

perceived cohesion based on gender-role orientation in families of origin.

Participants' FACES cohesion standard scores served as the dependent variable

while participants' BSRI gender role orientation label served as the independent

variable. Appendix A_5 shows that a significant main effect was found

(F (2,46) = 4.81, p = .013), which indicated that there was a significant difference

between the groups in terms of perceived cohesion. Appendix A_6 shows the results

of a Tukey's HSD post hoc analysis which revealed that participants categorized as

Feminine scored significantly higher on the FACES III than did participants

categorized as Masculine; participants categorized as Masculine scored significantly

lower on the FACES III than did participants categorized as either Feminine or

Androgynous (both at p < .05).

Data were further broken down by sex and significant results were found.

Appendices A_7 and A_8 demonstrate the results of the two-way ANOVAs. A

significant main effect was found between gender-role and cohesion scores for females (F (2, 24) = 6.844, p < .05) as well as for the interaction between gender-role and family structure with cohesion (F (4, 24) = 3.76, p < .05). However, post hoc analysis was unable to interpret these results due to insufficient cell sizes. For males, a significant main effect was found only for gender-role and cohesion (F (2, 10) = 7.026, p < .05). A Tukey's HSD post hoc analyses revealed that Androgynous males were significantly more like to report higher cohesion scores than Masculine Males.

To determine whether there were any differences in the levels of perceived cohesion based on family structure in families of origin, a two-way ANOVA was employed (Appendix A9). This analysis revealed no significant differences in cohesion scores among the family structure types, F (2, 46) = 2.49, p = .094.

To determine whether there was an interaction between gender role-orientation, family structure, and level of perceived cohesion in families of origin, a two-way ANOVA was employed. As illustrated in Appendix A10, this analysis revealed no significant interaction among the factors, F (4, 40) = 1.198, p = .33. The participant classified as Feminine from a blended household was found to have the highest cohesion mean (M = 7, SD = 0), however, there was only one participant in this category. Participants classified as Masculine from nuclear families were found to have the lowest cohesion mean (M = 2.67, SD = 1.68).

Data were also analyzed for effect size and statistical power. Results showed

that the effect size was small for gender (.11) as well as for family structure (.03).

The statistical power proved to be less than .15, which is extremely low. These

results indicated that a sample size of over 1000 would be required to achieve

significance at this power level.

Footnote

1. All tables and figures appear in the appendix section.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The intent of this study was to examine gender-role orientation and family structure difference in relation to the perception of cohesion within one's family of origin. The results of this study provided limited support for the existence of differences in perception of cohesion based on gender-role orientation, but failed to support any differences based on family structure or the interaction of gender and family structure. In addition, this study sought to examine whom individuals consider part of their family.

Defining Family

Writers have discussed, and will continue to debate, how to define the term family. One approach has been to define family along intergenerational relationship lines, while another approach has been to assess the intimacy and nature of the relations (Petzold, 1998). The present research, while preliminary, seemed to lend support for an intergenerational definition of family in that the majority of participants included parents, grandparents and siblings when defining their families. This is tentative, however, since a large number of participants either included other individuals as well, or did not include one or more of the previous members.

As an exploratory branch of this study, information was sought to investigate whom individuals include in their definitions of family and whether there is similarity among reported membership across the sample. Results indicated that participants

included a wide variety of individuals in their definitions of family. The large majority

of participants continued to define family based on a traditional nuclear family

archetype, but many participants went beyond this and reported individuals in the

extended family or outside of the biological family. Levin and Trost (1992) have

investigated the concept of the family and also found that a majority of participants

classified family along traditional nuclear terms. It is not surprising that individuals

mostly included parents and siblings in their definitions of family, as this traditional

definition of family have continued to be the stereotype which pervades our society.

It is interesting, however, that definition also included co-workers, extended family

members, boyfriends/girlfriends, and pets, many of these reported by numerous

participants, perhaps indicated the expansion of the traditional definition of family.

Dilworth-Anderson, Burton, and Johnson (1993) wrote that "...important

organizing, relational bonding of significant others, as well as socialization practices

or sociocultural premises, are overlooked by researchers when the nuclear family

structure is the unit of analysis" (p.633). Thus, this study sought to expand

understanding of the family by broadening analysis beyond solely the nuclear family

unit allowing the opportunity to better understand the realities of contemporary

families. Based on the present results, then, individuals still place primary importance

on immediate family members including parents, siblings, and grandparents when

seeking to conceptualize their "family." Consistent with previous research (i.e. Levin

& Trost, 1992), however, results also indicate that definitions of family are subjective, unique to the individual.

This focus of this question in the study was broadly exploratory and therefore was unable to address the quality of the relationships reported. It was therefore impossible to discern what role the reported family members played in the family functioning of the participants or how these individuals have impacted the family dynamics. Due to the broad nature of the question asking participants to define family, it is conceivable that participants used various standards in responding such that responses may not be suitable for direct comparison.

<u>Gender-Role Orientation</u>

In the first hypothesis, this study predicted that there would be no differences in levels of perceived cohesion based on gender-role orientation in families of origin. This hypothesis was rejected as results indicated that participants who scored as Feminine perceived significantly greater levels of cohesion within their families of origin than did participants who scored as Masculine. Participants who scored high on both Femininity and Masculinity, thus being classified as Androgynous, also reported significantly higher cohesion levels than those reported by Masculine participants. However, there was no significant difference in perceived cohesion scores between Feminine participants and Androgynous participants.

These findings were consistent with previous research which found Androgynous individuals as a balance between Masculine and Feminine

characteristics. Thus, the findings supported the idea that Androgynous individuals balance Feminine and Masculine conceptualizations of family functioning. These findings also supported previous research which found that Feminine individuals have been socialized to rely on and participate more in the family cohesion element, whereas masculine individuals have been socialized to be more independent of the family. Researchers have previously theorized that Feminine participants were more sensitive to the affective nature of the family whereas Masculine participants were more sensitive to familial respect for autonomy (Babladelis, 1978; Jackson, Dunham, & Kidwell, 1990). Androgynous individuals fell between the Feminine and Masculine participants on both the affective and autonomous nature of the family. Thus, individuals possessing more Feminine characteristics have been shown to recognize and report higher levels of family cohesion. One explanation for these findings is that those who have developed a Masculine gender identity experience, or create, a more competitive emotional tone within the family, as compared to individuals with a Feminine gender identity (Hampson & Beavers, 1987). This leads to differing expectations within the family for males versus females. Because of the greater emphasis of physical and emotional autonomy often expected of males, this emphasis may lead to males viewing familial warmth and bonding as enmeshing and undesirable (Hampson & Beavers, 1987). In response, family members may take a more disengaged relational pattern with the males in the family. Females, however,

have been expected and encouraged to be more emotionally expressive and thus

come to respond to and nurture family cohesion.

Another explanation has been that females have a higher need for social

desirability which leads them to portray their families in a more positive light. Olson,

Portner, and Lavee (1985) have reported that that the cohesion scale of the FACES

III instruments is moderately related to social desirability (r = .39). Since females

have been shown to score higher than males on measures of social desirability (Plaud,

Gaither, & Weller, 1997), female responses to questions assessing family cohesion

may be inflated. Alternatively, male cohesion scores may be deflated as males have

been shown to be less likely to admit feelings of warmth or closeness (Shaffer,

Pegalis, & Bazzini, 1996).

However, the present results would seem to contradict this social desirability

theory due to the fact that no relationship was found between sex and gender-role

indicating that sex is not a sufficient marker for gender or gender-role. So few

studies have investigated gender-role and its relationship with family dynamics, most

choosing instead to use sex, that little research exists investigating the relationship

between sex and gender. This has resulted in an acceptance that sex is an adequate

predictor of gender. The present research would refute this and would argue that

further research is need to clarify the similarities and dissimilarities between sex and

gender so that accurate conclusions can be drawn.

It was particularly interesting to find significant gender-role orientation and cohesion results when examining the sexes separately. A significant relationship was found for the female participants, but due to the unequal cell size, however, further investigation into this relationship was impossible. One would hypothesize that with a proportional cell size increase similar to the direction of the present data, females who were classified as Feminine would have significantly higher cohesion scores than either Androgynous or Masculine females. This is speculative, however, as further research would be required to examine this relationship.

Males also showed a significant relationship between gender-role and cohesion scores in which males characterized as Masculine had significantly lower cohesion scores than did males characterized as Androgynous. Males, in general, were overwhelmingly characterized as Masculine which may have played a factor in the results. Nonetheless, these results were interesting in light of the literature on sex, gender-role, and cohesion. Previous research has found that both males and Masculine individuals perceive less cohesion in their families than either females or Feminine individuals (Bakken & Romig, 1994; Hampson & Beavers, 1987; Perosa & Perosa, 1993), as did the present results. Although no relationship was found between sex and cohesion, males who were classified as Masculine had the lowest cohesion mean, suggesting that males with a Masculine gender-role orientation may be an area of further investigation in terms of their relationship to the family.

Considering that males were more likely to be characterized as Masculine than either Feminine or Androgynous, while females were more equally distributed among the gender-role orientation, these results may indicate that males have received more direct and indirect socialization toward stereotyped Masculinity. On the other hand, it may be that the changing societal expectations have resulted in increased support for diversity of gender-roles among females. Previous investigators have posited that society's expectations for Masculine and Feminine individuals, and for males and females in terms of the roles they may take, have changed since the BSRI was first introduced, producing results quite different from those reported from Bem's original sample (Blanchard-Fields, Suhrer-Roussel, & Hertzog, 1994; Holt & Ellis, 1998). Investigating studies utilizing the BSRI over a 20-year time span, Tweng (1997) found that women's Masculinity scores have consistently increased while men's Femininity scores have changes little over time. She stated that her results reflected "a general trend in gender stereotypes which allows women to adopt masculine roles while prohibiting men from taking on more feminine ones" (p. 316). This demonstrates a trend toward role reversal for females, with role reversal remaining relatively rare for males. The present data would support this trend

Family Structure

In the third hypothesis, this study predicted that there would be no differences in the levels of perceived cohesion based on family structure in families of

origin. This hypothesis was supported by the present data. Results in this study indicated that traditional nuclear families, single-parent families, and blended families do not differ significantly in terms of individual perception of family cohesion and thus that family structure is not a significant predictor of family cohesion.

Previous research has demonstrated similar findings that family structure does not significantly impact perception of family cohesion (i.e. Drapeau & Bouchard, 1993; Smith, 1992; Spruijt and de Goede, 1997). Perhaps the cohesive dynamic has more to do with the quality of the individual relationships than it does with the family membership composition. Skopin, Newman and McKenry (1993) found that among remarried families, the marital relationship served as the salient factor related to quality and nature of parent-child relations, a result that reflects similar findings with traditional nuclear families (Rogers & White, 1998).

Additionally, nontraditional families have received increased acceptance and support in our society as they have become more normative (Weiten & Lloyd, 1997), and with this increased support, single-parent, and blended families may have found the resilience and resources necessary to maintain healthy and positive family functioning. The results of a study conducted by Smith (1992) on remarried families seemed to indicate that even complex remarried families were able to handle the stress created by the transitions and family structure such that levels of family cohesion did not differ significantly from less complex family structure arrangements.

The present study lacked equal representation of family structures, however, as the large majority of participants reported nuclear family structures. In fact, the deficiency in single-parent and blended family structures confounds any interpretation of the present results.

Interaction of Gender and Family Structure

The fourth hypothesis stated that there would be no interaction between gender role orientation, family structure, and levels of perceived cohesion in families of origin. This hypothesis was supported by the present results. It seems that because of the lack of relationship between family structure and perception of cohesion, the interaction with gender also proved insignificant.

One potentially influencing factor was the ages reported by the present sample in that the average age was 27 years and the ages ranged from 21 to 48 years. A lifespan developmental stages perspective would seem to argue that as individuals get older, cohesion levels with one's family of origin would decrease as independence and autonomy increase. The present sample, with a mean age of 27 years, would put the majority of the sample at stages of development where they are increasing their supports outside of the family and establishing personal identity. Research had demonstrated that the perception of family cohesion changes with differing life stages (Alessandri and Wozniak, 1989; Scabini & Galimberti, 1995), and therefore future research should consider the impact of lifespan development when investigating family dynamics.

Also influencing the results of this aspect of the investigation is the lack in sample size for each cell. Only one Androgynous participant reported a single-parent family structure. Similarly, only one Female participant reported a blended family structure. This limitation of the study made interpretation of the results extremely limited.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

Sample size and diversification was a main limitation for this study. Although 49 participants were theoretically sufficient to address the research questions, it would have been beneficial to collect equal numbers of participants from each family structure. Results of this study are, at best, inconclusive due to lack of participants reporting single-parent and blended family structures. This limitation resulted in low statistical power which made it virtually impossible to confidently interpret the findings. Increasing the sample size for each of the factors would add strength to the analyses and provide clearer direction for future analyses.

An additional limitation of the present study was the exploratory nature of the qualitative question assessing participant's definitions of family. The question was purposely designed broadly in order to allow participants the opportunity to define family along their own personally unique qualifications. This openness, while not limiting possible responses, allowed participants to individually interpret the question thus promoting the possibility that responses are not equal. Further questions probing the nature of the relationships reported would have allowed the researcher a better

understanding of the participants' perspective in defining their family. Other

researchers have discussed the limitations of a pencil and paper questionnaire, and

have advocated the addition of interviews or direct observation in order to better

understand family interaction and relation patterns (Skopin, Newman, & McKenry,

1993).

Finally, data from participants who scored as Undifferentiated on the BSRI

were omitted perhaps limiting the richness of the results. Undifferentiated results

were omitted since this particular gender-role is considered more of a non-role in the

sense that such participants did not score high on either Masculinity or Femininity

and therefore did not demonstrate a specific gender-role. Inclusion of

Undifferentiated participants may yield interesting results in light of the significant

results found between gender-role and cohesion and may provide more information

regarding this relationship.

<div align="center">Directions for Future Research</div>

The present study suggests many avenues for future research. The initial

exploration into individual definitions for family yielded preliminary results. Future

research would be wise to further probe the nature of the associations designated as

familial and investigate how participants decided who to include in their definitions of

family. This will provide clarification into the nature of the family relation—whether

family is defined as a function of intergenerational connections or as a function of a

series of intimate relationships. Also, by assessing the nature of the relationships,

more information can be gained in regards to how individuals determine who can participate in family interactions and provide information regarding members' behaviors rather than merely amassing respondents' abstract opinion of family membership and functioning (Sabatelli & Bartle, 1995).

Another area for future research would be in the area of culture and ethnicity. The present data were limited to a purely Caucasian sample limiting the possibility for generalization of the results. To truly understand families, we must include culture and ethnic identity in our investigations due to the extreme impact that these factors play in family rules, norms, and values. Future research should further examine the impact and relationship that culture and ethnicity have in family functioning.

Because the results of this study discovered significant results for gender-role orientation differences in the perception of family cohesion, future research may want to focus on this issue. Previous research has almost exclusively assumed that sex differences in the perception of cohesion equaled gender differences. This study, however, directly measured gender using the BSRI and found significant results in that participants scoring high on femininity perceived significantly higher levels of cohesion than did participants scoring high on masculinity. Further research is needed to validate the present results and clarify this relationship.

Future research should continue to investigate the relationship between sex and gender. Since no relationship was found in the present study, perhaps our

understanding of gender as largely predicted by sex is inadequate and inaccurate. Further investigation would be useful in validating the present results as well as further clarifying our understanding of gender and gender-role.

Additionally, future research is needed to clarify the relationship between family structure and perception of family cohesion. Future research, by increasing the sample size for various family structures, would enable a more conclusive understanding of the nature of diverse family structures such that we can make better and more accurate statements regarding family functioning in single and blended families. As Hill (1995) pointed out, increasing comprehension of the modern family functioning has implications for both social and political policy. For this reason, further research examining family dynamics, and particularly the dynamic of cohesion, will continue to be an important area of research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A$_1$. Correlations for family structure and gender-role orientation.

	Family Structure		
Gender-Role	Traditional-Nuclear	Single-Parent	Blended
Masculine	-.082	.088	.087
Feminine	.071	.076	-.146
Androgynous	-.044	-.044	.087

Appendix A$_2$. Means and standard deviation for cohesion scores by gender-
role orientation and sex.

Gender-Role	N	Cohesion Score Mean	SD
Masculine	22	2.77	1.63
Feminine	14	4.29	1.64
Androgynous	13	4.15	1.63
Sex			
Male	16	2.45	1.44
Female	33	3.09	1.81

Appendix A$_3$. Means and standard deviations for cohesion by gender-role and family
               structure.

| Family Structure | N | Cohesion Score | |
		Mean	SD
Nuclear	35	3.23	1.55
Single-Parent	6	4.50	1.38
Blended	8	4.38	2.45

Appendix A$_4$. Means and standard deviations for cohesion by gender-role and family structure.

Gender-Role	Family Structure		
	Nuclear	Single-Parent	Blended
Masculine	2.66	3.33	2.75
	SD = 1.68	SD = .58	SD = 2.22
	(15)	(3)	(4)
Feminine	3.82	5.5	7
	SD = 1.47	SD = .71	SD = 0
	(11)	(2)	(1)
Androgynous	3.44	6	5.66
	SD = 1.24	SD = 0	SD = 1.53
	(9)	(1)	(3)

Appendix A$_5$. ANOVA summary table for the relationship between gender-role and cohesion scores.

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Model	2	25.59	12.79	4.81*
Error	46	122.41		
Total	48	148.00		

* p< .05

Appendix A$_6$ Mean differences and pairwise comparisons for gender-role orientation and cohesion scores.

	Masculine	Feminine	Androgynous
Masculine	0.00	-1.51*	-1.38*
Feminine		0.00	.13
Androgynous			0.00

* p < .05

Appendix A$_7$. ANOVA summary table for the relationship between gender-role orientation and family structure on cohesion scores for females.

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Gender Role (GR)	2	25.98	12.99	6.84*
Family Structure (FS)	2	8 85	4.42	2.33
FS X GR	4	28.55	7.14	3.76*

* $p < .05$

Appendix A$_8$. ANOVA summary table for the relationship between gender-role orientation and family structure on cohesion scores for males.

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Gender Role (GR)	2	7.64	3.82	3.51*
Family Structure (FS)	2	15.30	7.65	7.03
FS X GR	1	1.71	1.71	1.57

* $p < .05$

Appendix A$_9$ ANOVA summary table for the relationship between family structure
and cohesion scores.

| Source	df	SS	MS	F
Family Structure	2	14 45	7 23	2.49**
Error	46	133 546	2.903	
Total	49	773 000		

** p = .094

Appendix A$_{10}$.   ANOVA summary table for the interaction between gender-role
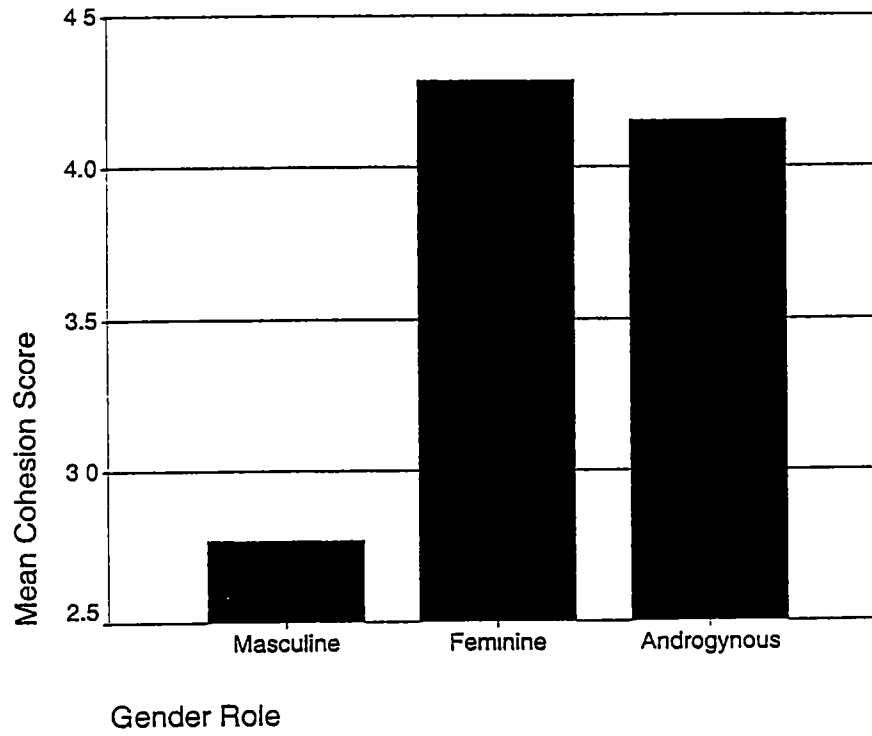orientation and family structure and cohesion scores

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Gender (G)	2	34.67	17.33	7.39*
Family Structure (FS)	2	24 44	12.22	5 21*
G X FS	4	11 24	2.81	1.198

* p < .05

Appendix B₁. Breakdown of gender roles by sex

Male

Female

Bem Label
Masculine
Feminine
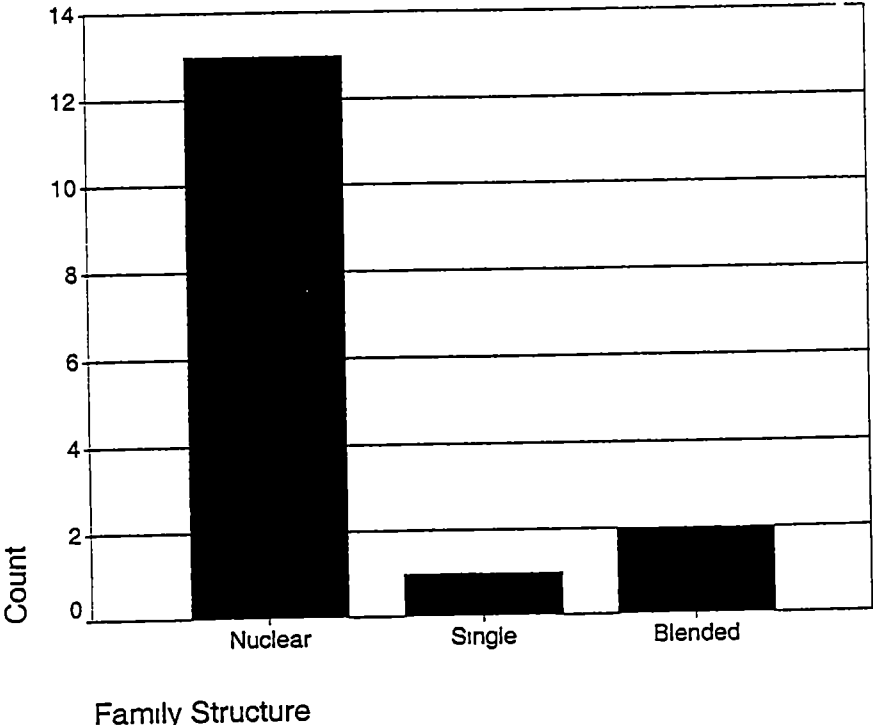Androgynous

Pies show counts
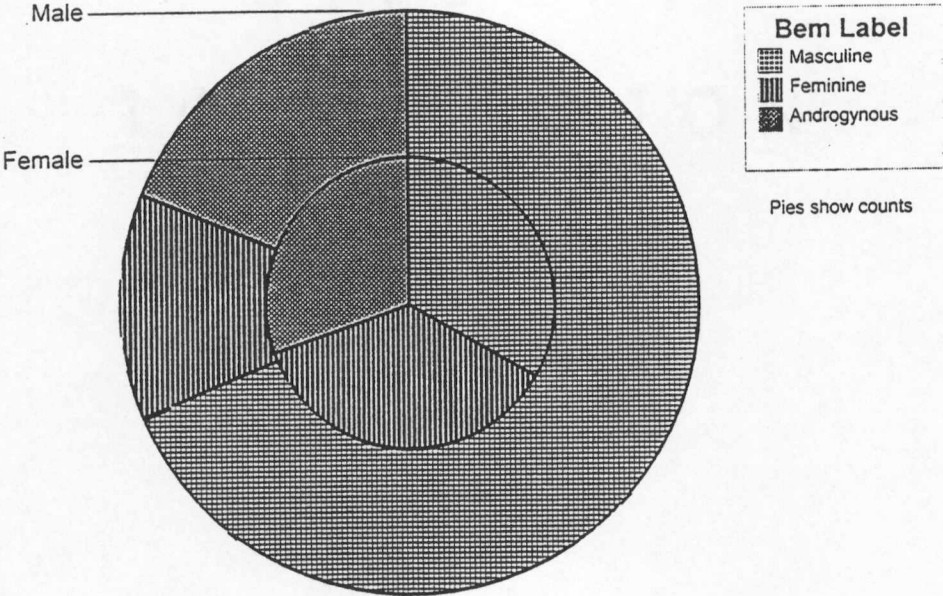
Appendix B₂   Mean cohesion scores by gender role
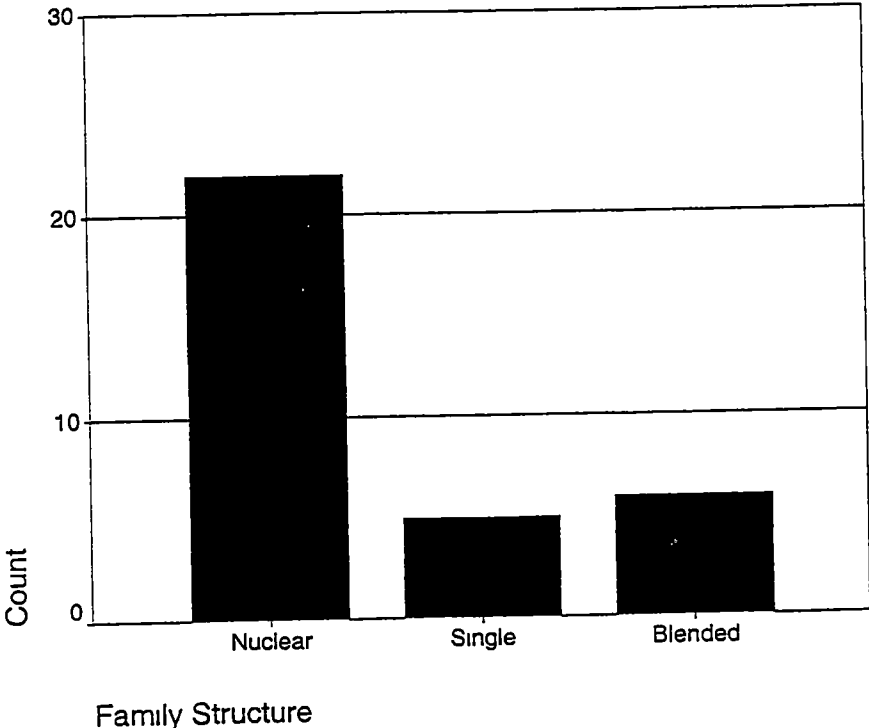
<u>Appendix B$_3$</u>   Frequency of reported family structures
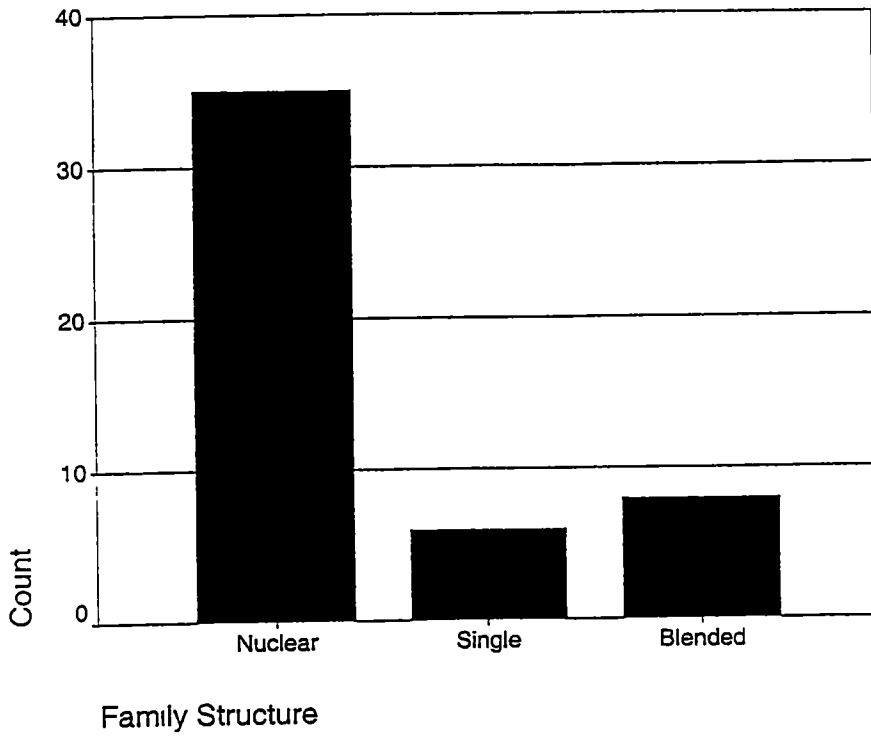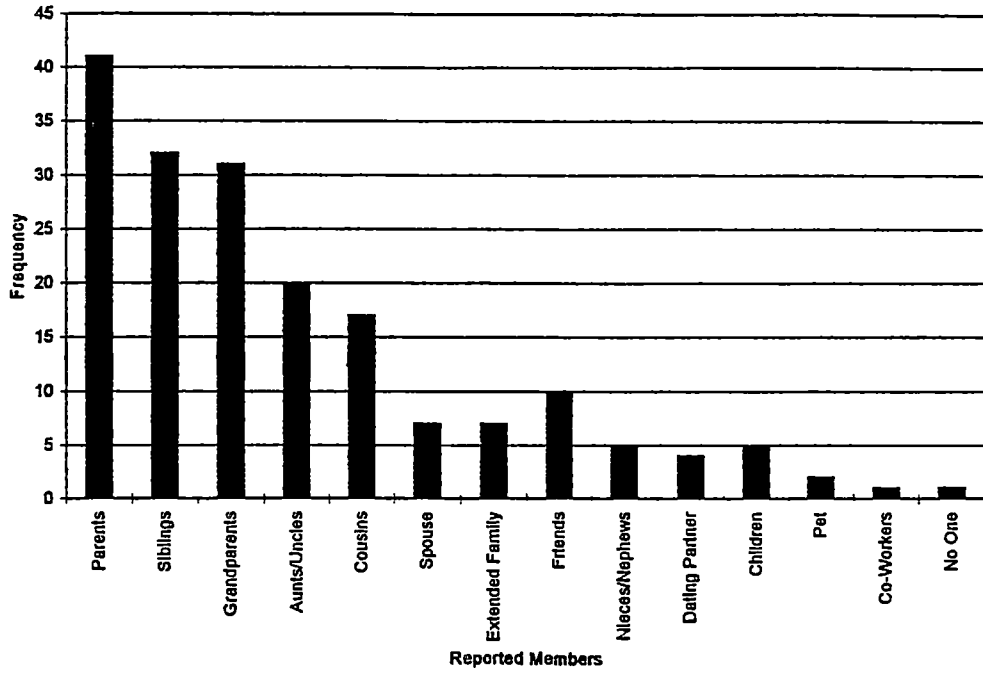

Family Structure

Appendix B₄   Frequency of family structures reported by males

Appendix B₅   Frequency of family structures reported by females

Appendix B₆   Frequency of reported family members

<u>Appendix C</u>. Informed Consent

Diversity Issues in Gender and Culture

Re: "Diversity Issues and Multi-Cultural Awareness," being conducted by principle investigators Dr. Teresa Hutchens, CECP faculty, and Holly Dorman, CECP masters student, all of Counseling, Deafness, and Human Services (102 Claxton Addition; UTK Campus; 974-5131). My participation is entirely voluntary. My submission of the following, completed questionnaires constitute by informed consent.

The following has been explained to me in class: The purpose of this study is to obtain information about students' perceptions and experiences of gender roles, cultural roles, and the gender-culture interaction. Current perceptions and past experiences in the family, developmental, and social contexts is the subject of these questions. Measures include questionnaires that have been completed as classroom activities:

1.) "How do you feel about gender roles?" – A qualitative, open-ended expository on gender role experiences and development

2.) "Multicultural Awareness Questionnaire" (Hutchens, 1995) – demographic coversheet followed by a likert-type scale about cultural perceptions including · gender and diversity as elements of inquiry. It concludes with 6 quantitative, open-ended questions of cultural emphases.

3.) "Bem Sex Role Inventory," BSRI – A standardized and validated, concurrent validity measure.

4.) "Family Adapability and Cohesion Environment Scale III – FACES – III" – A standardized assessment of family and cohesion behavior.

The first two are as yet, informal, non-standardized survey instruments used as classroom activities for all class participants (CECP/WSS 410 – Sex Role Development; CECP/PES 431 – Personality and Mental Health, Unit IV in the unit on gender roles); and an informal research group comprised of graduate students whose research include cultural and gender diversity. The third and fourth "formal" instruments are the BSRI and FACES III, previously validated and found useful to describe facets of gender role experiences, person perception, and familial inclusion behavior will be administered to volunteers as a "control" group (CECP520). Administration of the BSRI and the FACES III will yield quantitative data for analysis for data collection in the on-going research engaged as a thesis investigation by H. Dorman. They serve as a concurrent validity measure, specifically for comparison with Hutchens' "Multicultural Awareness Questionnaire."

To voluntarily participate in the research study, please submit your activities result sheets for the data pool. Results will be confidential and analyzed descriptively, qualitatively, and quantitatively using collapsed, group data. The original data will be housed in room 243 Claxton Addition. Should you NOT wish to submit your results from these activities, no penalty will be possible as your identity will not be know. Further, there are no known risks associated with participation: no discomfort, stress, social, or psychological risk are anticipated by participation. The investigator will be available to answer any questions now and at any point of the study.

<u>Appendix D</u>   Demographic Sheet

Demographic Data Sheet

Please indicate your position in your family of origin:

Firstborn _____   Lastborn _____   Middle child _____   Only child _____

Number of people who lived in your primary residence during your childhood _____

Please provide the following information regarding your family:

Biological Father:

Age _____

Current marital status _____

Please give a brief description of your biological father's marital history: (ex. - married biological mother in 1973, divorced in 1977, remarried in 1985)

Biological Mother:

Age _____

Current marital status _____

Please give a brief description of your biological mother's marital history:

Siblings:

Number of biological siblings _____   Number of step siblings _____

Number of half siblings _____

Please give a brief description of your siblings including ages and relationship (half, st(

Please give a brief history of your residence including number of years in each location if possible:

Finally, please answer the following questions:

1. Did your family attend church regularly?   Y   N
   If so, what denomination(s)?

2. When I think of family, I would have to include these individuals. .

Appendix E   Bem Sex Role Inventory

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never or almost never true	Usually not true	Sometimes but infrequently true	Occasionally true	Often true	Usually true	Alway almost a true

1	Defend my own beliefs		31	Self-reliant	
2.	Affectionate		32.	Yielding	
3.	Conscientious		33.	Helpful	
4.	Independent		34.	Athletic	
5.	Sympathetic		35	Cheerful	
6.	Moody		36.	Unsystematic	
7.	Assertive		37.	Analytical	
8.	Sensitive to needs of others		38.	Shy	
9	Reliable		39.	Inefficient	
10.	Strong personality		40.	Make decisions easily	
11.	Understanding		41.	Flatterable	
12.	Jealous		42.	Theatrical	
13.	Forceful		43.	Self-sufficient	
14.	Compassionate		44.	Loyal	
15.	Truthful		45.	Happy	
16.	Have leadership abilities		46.	Individualistic	
17.	Eager to soothe hurt feelings		47.	Soft-spoken	
18.	Secretive		48.	Unpredictable	
19.	Willing to take risks		49.	Masculine	
20.	Warm		50.	Gullible	
21.	Adaptable		51.	Solemn	
22.	Dominant		52.	Competitive	
23.	Tender		53	Childlike	
24.	Conceited		54.	Likable	
25	Willing to take a stand		55.	Ambitious	
26.	Love children		56.	Do not use harsh language	
27.	Tactful		57.	Sincere	
28.	Aggressive		58	Act as a leader	
29	Gentle		59.	Feminine	
30.	Conventional		60.	Friendly	

Appendix F   Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales III

FACES III – Family Version

David H. Olson, Joyce Portner, and Yoav Lavee

1	2	3	4	5
ALMOST NEVER	ONCE IN A WHILE	SOMETIMES	FREQUENTLY	ALMOST ALW

DESCRIBE YOUR FAMILY NOW:

_____ 1. Family members ask each other for help.

_____ 2. In solving problems, the children's suggestions are followed.

_____ 3. We approve of each other's friends.

_____ 4. Children have a say in their discipline.

_____ 5. We like to do things with just our immediate family.

_____ 6. Different persons act as leaders in our family.

_____ 7. Family members feel closer to other family members than to people outside the family.

_____ 8. Our family changes its way of handling tasks.

_____ 9. Family members like to spend free time with each other.

_____ 10. Parent(s) and children discuss punishment together.

_____ 11. Family members feel very close to each other.

_____ 12. The children make the decisions in our family.

_____ 13. When our family gets together for activities, everybody is present.

_____ 14. Rules change in our family.

_____ 15. We can easily think of things to do together as a family.

_____ 16. We shift household responsibilities from person to person.

_____ 17. Family members consult other family members on their decisions.

_____ 18. It is hard to identify the leader(s) in our family.

_____ 19. Family togetherness is very important.

_____ 20. It is hard to tell who does which household chores.

VITA

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