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

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ABSTRACT

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

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INTRODUCTION

Factors impacting on family relationships are numerous and include such things as conflict (Tolan, Miller, & Thomas, 1988; Pawlak & Klein, 1997), degree of support (Hoffman, Ushpiz, & Levi-Shiff, 1988; McClun & Merell, 1998), the development of social understanding and the provision of values (Berg, 1985), and the provision or (moderation) of "family pressure" (Eskilson, Wiley, Muehlbauer & Dodder, 1986). There is also considerable agreement that the important developmental tasks of adolescence and early adulthood find their resolution within the context of family relationships (Lapsley, Rice, & FitzGerald, 1990).

Self-concept formation has been considered the most significant developmental milestone of adolescence (Richman, Clark, & Brown, 1985). Growing adolescents experience developmental changes which bring about reconsideration of self-concept (Harter, 1991). New experiences bring about a great deal of uncertainty and adolescents begin to ask themselves "who am I" and "where do I belong." The important developmental task for the late adolescent, ages (17-19) is to find their own sense of identity and individuation. They must resolve conflict regarding independence, sexuality, morality and vocational choice or career aspiration to achieve a sense of individuation as a person (Colarusso, 1992). Personality developmentalists, meanwhile, have argued that adolescent individuation is closely related to aspects of psychological well being such as self-concept, depression and anxiety (Chun & MacDermid, 1997).

Individuation may be viewed as two complementary processes (Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Youniss & Smollar, 1989). One process involves moving away from the development of the self that was valid during childhood to construct a self that fits with the adolescent's own experiences rather than parental demands or desires. The other process involves remaining connected to parents so that validation can be received from parents for the self-concept the adolescent has constructed. Family relationships that encourage and support individuation in this way, while allowing the adolescent a close connection to the family are thought to be the most effective in generating psychosocial

competence (Bell, Avery, Jenkins, Feld, & Schoenrock, 1985). This will enable the adolescent to develop a healthy sense of self s/he can carry forward to their adult years.

Unfortunately, far too many families do not provide this type of environment and the effects can be devastating. Young people who experience extensive family conflict and blame themselves for this conflict are likely to be at risk for derogatory self-evaluations. (Shagle & Barber, 1993). Adolescents in such family environments may come to believe that they are the source of family problems, internalise the conflict, and therefore feel guilty, rejected and unloved. These adolescents, unable to cope with this emotional pain may consider suicide as a way of resolving the problem (Sands & Dixon, 1986). For example, a study by Wright (1985) who used youth-reported data found that high school and college students who were high on suicidal ideation were more likely than their classmates to state they had experienced both parent-adolescent and interparental conflicts. Those with low self-concepts are much more likely to have suicidal ideation, and contemplate suicide than young people who feel good about themselves (Hagborg, Masella, Palladino, & Shepardson, 1991; Patton, 1991; Merrell, Cendeno, & Johnson, 1993).

Currently, there are many pressures and demands on the late adolescent age group, which past generations did not experience. This age group remains living with their family of origin much longer than did adolescents twenty to thirty years ago. This is mainly due to financial and accommodation pressures. The increasing length of time these adolescents remain within their family context allows one to examine the direct effects of family interaction. This is now possible rather than relying on retrospective accounting for late adolescent development once removed from the family context.

The present study investigates late adolescent self-concept and how it is affected by the family context. Self-concept is examined because it is related to many other areas of competence, achievement, relationships and mental health during a persons developing years, and throughout life in general. There is limited research dealing with family dynamics for this age group as compared with younger adolescents. For example, sibling experiences change as adolescents grow older but at present most of the information on sibling experiences along with birth order comes from studies of younger children's relationships (Tucker, Barber, & Eccles, 1997). An extensive

review of the literature has not uncovered a study that has explored all the variables investigated in the present project with late adolescents. In addition to this there are no documented studies which address this topic within a New Zealand context.

SELF-CONCEPT DEFINED.

The definition of self-related terms has varied from study to study in the psychological literature. Particular definitions are often designed by the researcher to fit the needs and purpose of the particular study under investigation (Calhoun, Connley, & Bolton, 1984). Many studies have used the term's self-concept and self-esteem interchangeably. The following studies claim self-concept and self-esteem are strongly related but also claim they can be distinguished from each other. Calhoun and Morse (1977) define self-concept as "the way an individual perceives himself and his behaviour, and his opinion of how others view him" (p. 321). Self-esteem on the other hand is defined as "the individual's satisfaction with the self-concept" (p. 312). Self-concept has been described as the picture one possesses of himself including attributes of attractiveness, achievement, capacities and relationships. Self-esteem has been defined as the value the individual places upon such perceptions (Juhasz, 1985). Another example is that of Fleming and Courtney (1984) who consider self-concept to be a general term that subsumes the construct of self-esteem. These authors go on to state "Self-concept.... includes pure self-descriptions, which are distinguishable from self-esteem, because such descriptions so necessarily imply judgment" (p. 406).

Other researchers have claimed there is no conceptual difference between self-concept and self-esteem. Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976) argue that the distinction between self-concept and self-esteem has not been demonstrated empirically and is conceptually unclear. Braken, Bunch, Keith, and Keith (1992) also failed to find a distinction between self-concept and self-esteem measures in a multiple instrument factor analysis. It has not been possible to find studies where the distinction has been operationalised such that differential conclusions arise from studies based on self-concept or self-esteem. (Crain, 1996).

Harter (1990) defined self-concept as an individual's perception of the combination of different aspects of the self. Harter viewed self-concept as a multidimensional construct wherein an individual may have different perceptions of their competence in various areas of functioning but have an overall view of their self-worth that is more than the mere sum of these areas. The above definition is how self-concept is perceived in the present study. This study has used the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (2nd Edition) (Fitts & Warren, 1996) which is multidimensional. The TSCS:2 covers areas that tend to be quite important to people and so there is good reason to suspect a high correlation between self-concept and self-esteem scores.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL NATURE OF SELF-CONCEPT.

The measurement of self-concept has been an important part of psychological assessment in both clinical and research contexts. The original focus in research was on a uni-dimensional global self-concept (Coopersmith, 1967). This measured how good or bad people felt about themselves in general. Therefore there was an assumption that people have a single self-concept they carry into every interaction. However, emphasis on a global self-concept did not show consistent results between self-concept and behaviour in specific situations (Townsend, 1976).

In an attempt to remedy this problem Shavelson, et al (1976) developed a theoretical model of self-concept which emphasises it is multifaceted, hierarchically organised, and becomes increasingly differentiated with age. Multidimensionality conveys the idea that the self-concept is made up of a number of relatively independent dimensions related to the perception of selfhood (West, Fish, & Stevens, 1995). In accordance with the model specified by Shavelson, et al (1976) the different dimensions reflect the category system adopted by an individual and or shared by groups "The category system appears to include such areas as the school, social acceptance, physical attractiveness and ability" (p. 412).

The model contains general or total self-concept at the apex of the hierarchy which presents the over arching construct with particular domains and sub domains nested

underneath (Shavelson et al., 1976). For example, academic self-concept can be further divided into particular subjects and physical self-concept can be divided into physical appearance and physical ability. An advantage of measuring self-concept across particular domains is it allows an examination of a particular pattern of perceived strengths and weaknesses (Harter, Whitesell, & Junkin, 1998).

There is now considerable evidence that a person may have a high self-concept in one domain and a low self-concept in another domain. For example, in a study by Griffin, Chasin, and Young (1981) 100 high school students completed semantic differential self-ratings of themselves in four roles: student, athlete, best friend, and son / daughter. Results showed self-ratings differed across these four roles. In a study by Marsh (1989) 279 high school students' different levels of self-worth were examined in four contexts: with parents, with teachers, with male classmates and with female classmates. Of these students 75% rated their worth as a person different across the four contexts.

AGE DIFFERENCES IN SELF-CONCEPT.

Some researchers have stated that early adolescence is associated with self-consciousness and an unstable view of the self and that those characteristics will decline somewhat in late adolescence. (Simons, Rosenberg, & Rosenberg, 1973; McCarthy & Hodge, 1982; Savin-Williams & Demo, 1984). A five-year longitudinal study based on large nationally representative random samples by O'Malley and Bachman (1983) found systematic increases in self esteem of about 1 standard deviation a year from early to late adolescence. A study by Marsh, Parker, and Barnes (1985) found that despite older adolescents possessing a higher global self-esteem their self-evaluation of specific qualities such as honesty, diligence, intelligence and good behaviour declined from early to late adolescence.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SELF-CONCEPT.

The effect of gender on self-concept is not conclusive. A study by Simmons, Burgeson, Carlton-Ford, and Blyth (1987) failed to find a consistent result with gender effects and self-concept. Other studies have found that late adolescent males tend to score higher than adolescent females on total self-concept (Patridge & Kotler, 1987; Chiam, 1987).

A study by Salawu (1995) found that adolescent girls had higher general/total self-concept than boys. This research was undertaken in the states of Sokoto and Kebbi in Nigeria where much more emphasis is placed on female development than male development. Chiam (1987) found self-concept improved between 4th form and 6th form for males but not for females. This study was conducted in Malaysia and the explanation offered was that as girls age they become more aware of the discrepancy in status between males and females that exists in Malaysian society. It would seem from these two studies that cultural factors have played a part in how males and females define themselves and the difference between the genders in self-concept.

The above studies only assessed total self-concept. More recently, Crain (1996) concluded that many studies have "reported gender differences in domain specific self-concepts of boys and girls that tend to run along gender-specific stereotypic lines" (p. 412). For example, Marsh (1989) reported statistically significant but small gender differences for adolescents on the Self-Description Questionnaire, Second Edition (SDQII). Some of these differences favoured girls and some favoured boys. Girls had consistently higher verbal self-concepts and boys had higher self-concepts in physical ability. The total self-concept between genders in this study did differ, favouring males. However, the gender difference explained only 1% of the variance in self-concept scores, and therefore gender was only weakly related to total self-concept. A study by Mboya (1994) using the Self-Description Inventory (SDI) found that adolescent boys had higher self-concepts than girls in the domains of family, physical abilities, physical appearance, music ability and health. Girls had higher self-concepts in the general school, and emotional stability domains. A study by Studer (1993) also found that males scored more highly on the self-concept facets of physical ability and physical appearance but in contrast to the Study by Mboya (1994) males scored higher on emotional stability and had higher total self-concepts than females.

It would seem that gender stereotypes are operating. The available research suggests that the gender of an individual affects patterns of parent-child and parent-adolescent interaction and therefore individual self-concept. (Block, 1983). This is due to the fact that boys and girls receive different parental behaviours during the course of their development (Fagot, 1978). Therefore, how one is raised as a male or female may be causing these differences in self-concept. For example, males in all studies quoted, that have measured different domains, have had a higher self-concept in physical ability and physical appearance. This could be related to the literature that suggests females are more concerned with their physical self-concept than males, particularly with regard to physical appearance and weight control (Collins, 1991). Evidence that self-perceived attractiveness is linked to the body for women, but not for men, and self-esteem is strongly linked to the body for women, but weakly linked to the body for men has been documented (Wade & Cooper, 1999).

The literature also suggests that parenting styles conducive to positive male self-concept development are related to independence and competitiveness (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986). Males may therefore be more encouraged in sports to demonstrate the facets of independence and competitiveness. The reason that females are scoring better in verbal self-concept could be related to the fact females have traditionally been encouraged to express themselves and their feelings much more than males.

In both New Zealand and Australian contexts there has been much concern about the school performance of adolescent males compared with adolescent females. For example, in Australian research by McCann (1995) trends in gender differences were analysed over a decade in performances on higher school certificate achievement tests taken in different school subjects by all graduating high school students. McCann found a steady increase in the performance of girls relative to boys that were increasingly consistent across all school subjects. Marsh and Yeung (1998) also found relative gains for girls in achievement and course work selection in Maths and English compared with males. These findings have lead educators to propose special programmes to improve male educational outcomes.

THE FORMATION OF SELF-CONCEPT.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective an individual's sense of self develops gradually and is a social product of the reflected appraisals of others, especially those of significant others, which are transmitted in the course of social interaction (Demo, Small & Savin-Williams, 1987). It is further argued that the individual's perceptions of other's behaviours are more important to the individual and his or her self-concept than the actual behaviours of others. It is the perceived level of support or approval from others that the individual incorporates into their judgment of worth as a person (Harter et al., 1998). If this is the case, then it would be expected that the behaviour and interactions of family members as perceived by adolescents would be strongly related to their self-concepts (Mahabeer, 1993).

Parish and Nunn (1989) conducted a survey of 128 college students regarding many of their perceptions concerning themselves, their mothers, and their fathers. They reported a significant positive relationship between college students' evaluations of their families and the evaluations of themselves. A study by Strage (1998) of 465 college students using the Student Attitude and Perception Survey (SAPS) found perceptions of parents as authoritative and of the family as emotionally close were found to be predictive of a positive sense of self. It therefore seems, the quality of the relationship with family members is not only important in childhood but will continue to have an influence on self-concept in late adolescence.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY STRUCTURE, FAMILY CONFLICT AND SELF-CONCEPT.

Divorce and remarriage involve a series of changes that can affect all aspects of family functioning, requiring mutual adaptation in the marital, parental and sibling relationships (Hetherington, 1988; MacKinnon, 1989). This is a time characterised by a diminished capacity to parent (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Many custodial parents who are distressed and overburdened will become less supportive to their adolescents (Hetherington, 1993). A number of studies have found that adolescents from divorced families demonstrate significantly lower self-concepts than adolescents from intact families. (Parish & Dostal, 1980; Parish & Taylor, 1979; Young & Parish, 1977; Harpe & Ryder, 1986; Parish, 1991). Many of these studies have failed to consider the time since divorce disruption. There is a time period of approximately eighteen months to two years for negative effects of divorce to dissipate and for the new lifestyle to be integrated and accepted by family members (Rubin & Price, 1979; Enos & Handall, 1987; Chase-Lansdale & Hetherington, 1990). In a study by Studer (1993) adolescents in families where the non-custodial parent had been absent for two or more years scored significantly higher in academic self-concept than those families where the custodial parent had been absent for less than two years.

Other researchers have argued it is not the structure of the family but general family disharmony and subsequent loss of parental care that often accompanies divorce that is related to lowered self-concept (Rashke & Rashke, 1979; Slater & Haber, 1984; Patridge & Kotler, 1987; Bolwes & Falloon, 1996). A study by Lawler and Lennings (1992) found that family conflict accounted for a greater amount of variance (14.23%) in predicting self-concept score than family structure (2.65%). A major criticism of the family structural model is it does not give information about different family experiences or identify the family processes that mediate the effects of family type. (Hoetler & Harper, 1987)

The theory that it is family conflict and not family structure that causes lowered self-concept is based on the idea that when comparing adolescent boys and girls from bereaved families with those from separated or divorced families, bereaved adolescents had fewer contacts with mental health professionals. This is believed to be due to the

fact that bereaved families are less likely to experience prolonged family conflict (Ambert & Saucier, 1986).

Research has also found that adolescents in intact families with high conflict had significantly lower levels of well being than those living in families of divorce with low conflict (Mechanic & Hansell, 1989). This may indicate that divorce is not necessarily associated with extreme amounts of conflict. In a three-year longitudinal study by Forehand and Thomas (1992) involving interparental conflict and mother adolescent-relations, it was found that divorced families did not experience more conflictual home environments than intact families. As suggested by Slater and Calhoun (1988) it would therefore not be beneficial for parents to remain together when the family is characterised by excessive conflict.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONFLICT WITHIN THE FAMILY SYSTEM.

Family conflict is defined as a situation in which family members believe they have incompatible goals and are involved in emotionally upsetting interactions aimed at resolving their differences (Chafetz, 1981). The dimensions of frequency and intensity would determine the effects of the conflict. Openly hostile conflict will be more pathological as will conflict that lasts a long time (Emery, 1982).

From a systems perspective, the family is an open system, with organised patterns of interaction that form a complex integrated whole (Minuchin, 1988). From this perspective, each family member's behaviour both contributes to and is constrained by an ongoing family pattern. To conceptualise the complexity of family dynamics researchers commonly characterise the family as a social system composed of marital, parent-child and sibling subsystems each of which in turn influences the other. (Gehring, Wentzel, Feldman, & Munson, 1990).

Most research investigating the relationship between conflict in the family and adolescent adjustment has focused on parental conflict to the neglect of other forms of conflict such as parent-adolescent conflict, sibling conflict and general conflict in the family unit. (Enos & Handall, 1986). Although there is an expected moderate

correlation between parental-adolescent conflict, marital conflict and general family conflict these types of conflict have different effects (Shagle & Barber, 1993). These researchers found that conflict perceived to be triggered in direct relation to the adolescent for example direct parent-adolescent conflict and general family conflict can lead to a greater degree of self-blame on the part of the adolescent. Marital conflict does not appear to be directly related to self-derogation and suicidal behaviour. Marital conflict does however, influence adolescent adjustment indirectly by altering some aspect of the parent-adolescent relationship (Faubert & Long, 1991). Conflict within one family subsystem serves as an "emotional primer" for the generalization of the same behaviour to other family members (Harold & Conger, 1997). For example, in the study by Gehring, et al (1990) it was found that conflict in the mother-adolescent dyad decreased closeness in the sibling dyad.

GENDER AND FAMILY CONFLICT.

Studies by Jaycox and Repetti (1993) and Tolan, Miller, and Thomas (1988) on adolescent development have indicated that girls are more vulnerable to the effects of family conflict than boys. This could be due to a number of factors which include 1) There is some evidence that females experience greater conflict with parents than do males (Ellis-Schwabe & Thornburg, 1986; Montemayor, 1986). And 2) girls are more susceptible to self-blame as they are more prone to taking responsibility for the conflict (Studer, 1993).

Other research has indicated that males have more difficulty maintaining positive connections with the family (Moore, 1987), and male adolescents report greater independence from their families than females (Gavazzi & Sabatelli, 1990). If adolescent males are encouraged to be more independent than females it could be they are less aware of, and therefore less involved in the conflict. However, a longitudinal study by Shek (1998) found that the impact of parent-adolescent conflict on adolescent psychological well being is relatively similar for male and female adolescents. This was a Chinese study and a cultural factor existed: Parent-adolescent conflict involving either gender is very strongly discouraged in Chinese society.

A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILY MEMBERS AS A BUFFER AGAINST FAMILY CONFLICT AND DISCORD.

A Longitudinal study by Roberts and Bengston (1996) of 275 people aged between 16-26 years at baseline found that youths who reported stronger affective ties to their parents reported greater self-esteem at baseline and at a twenty year follow up. Therefore, it would seem that a good quality emotional bond between the adolescent and their parents might relate to the development of a coping efficacy that can be called upon if family disharmony occurs (Cummings, Davies, & Simpson, 1994).

A good relationship with one parent provides considerable protective effect from stress coming from family conflict (Rutter, 1971; Aseltine, 1996). A study by Hetherington (1979) found this close relationship had to be between the adolescent and their mother. Rutter (1971) however, found the relationship could be with either their mother or their father to have positive effects. The relationship has to be of a close nature, a moderate relationship will not act as a buffer (Emery, 1982).

Even in a family environment that contains abuse, close parental relationships can reverse the long-term effects the abuse has on self-concept. A study by Lopez and Heffer (1998) involving 660 college students found that the relationship between physical abuse and self-concept was mediated by perceived parental support. Parental support accounted for 27% of the variance in self concept which suggests that the adverse influence of physical abuse on self-concept must be understood in the context of unsupportive relationships.

The understanding and experience which comes from adolescence can allow brothers and sisters to grow particularly close to each other. They are now more capable of teaching, supporting, imitating one another, and exploring issues through intense discussion (Drummond, 1991). A study by Cicirelli (1980) found that college age women still preferred their mothers for active help, advice, and leadership function but they turned to their siblings just as much as their mothers for emotional support.

The quality of sibling relationship has been consistently associated with high levels of social and scholastic competence in children from intact, divorced, and remarried

families (Feiring & Taska, 1996). In a significant number of families experiencing discord, the sibling relationship was the strongest and most enduring relationship. Wallerstein (1985) has reported preliminary findings from a 10 year follow up of older children and adolescents of 60 divorced Californian families. Recollections of these young adults provide important anecdotal data. The solidarity between siblings was particularly noticeable and comments such as the following were common place: "Divorce forced me and my brother to grow up and be close to each other"; "My relationship with my sister has been the saving of our emotional and physical selves" (p. 546). Wallerstein felt that as the relationship between parents weakened and became disturbed siblings turned toward each other for protection and love. Other researchers have argued that there is a positive relationship between parent-adolescent and sibling relationships whereby positive parent-adolescent relationships will be linked to positive sibling relationships (Bryant & Crocenberg, 1980).

BIRTH ORDER.

Much research has been conducted on various aspects of birth order and its relationship to many variables. Developmentalists take the position that the first born as compared with the last born enters at a very different point in the family's lifecycle (Hoffman, 1991). Differences between siblings may be the result of experiencing different environments within the same family. Consistent differences in parenting practices have been found by birth order (Jacobs & Moss; Falto & Polit 1986; Heer 1986; Eisenman, 1992). Differential treatment could be more a result of age rather than birth order. However, when looking across families with children of different ages but with the same sibling status first and last born children tend to receive different responses from parents for the same type of behaviour (Baskett, 1984).

Adults have been shown to have different expectations regarding children's characteristics based on the children's birth order (Baskett, 1984). For example, parents showed higher behaviour and achievement-orientated expectations and aspirations for their first borns (Burdern & Perkins, 1987). First borns were expected to be more responsible and look after the needs of younger children (Pulakos, 1987).

Parents seemed to be highly involved in the behaviour of the first born and frequently provide feedback indicating their evaluation of that behaviour (Newman, Higgins, & Vookles, 1992). Data from a questionnaire revealed parents were much more intrusive of their first born daughter than daughters' of other birth orders. The differences in intrusiveness as a function of birth order may persist for women into young adulthood. (Olver, Aries, & Batgos, 1989).

BIRTH ORDER AND SELF-CONCEPT.

If self-concept differs due to interactions with significant others, then one would expect self-concept to differ by birth order if parents treat siblings differently due to their birth order. However, review of the relevant studies suggests that there may be no clearly established conclusions regarding variations in self-concept as a function of birth order. Limited theoretical structure and conflicted research findings and the many differences in the populations examined as well as considerable variations in measurement procedures have also made descriptions of birth order characteristics difficult to replicate (Toman, 1993).

Sears (1970) concluded that the first born would tend to develop a more positive self-concept because they have had more time to develop social skills to compete for parental admiration than the second born child has. In comparison, Zimbardo and Formica (1963) claimed that first borns would have a lower self-concept than later borns because of parental inexperience, inconsistency, and anxiety or over indulgence followed by attention reduction when the next sibling is born. Neither of these two theories has shown sufficient evidence to be proved valid. More recently, Nystul (1976) and Parish (1991) have found no consistent difference between birth order and self-concept.

FAMILY SIZE

Parents of small families can provide more family resources (Ware, 1973) and more attention (Heer, 1986). Research from Kalliopuska (1984) suggested that in large families with more than three children the youngest child receives less parental attention than the oldest child because parents transfer responsibility for caretaking to the older siblings. Wagner, Schubert, and Schubert (1985) found that as family size increases, parents' disciplinary attitudes and style of parenting tend to become more punitive and authoritarian. Falbo, et al (1986) reviewed findings that children from smaller families had warmer relationships with their parents than children from larger families. Family support has been found to be constrained by the number of children in the family (Hoetler et al .,1987). Due to the findings of the above studies it could be anticipated that those from smaller families would have higher self-concepts than those from larger families. However, contradictory findings by Nystul (1976) and Parish (1991) found no relationship between self-concept and family size. And in a study by Studer (1993) adolescents with three or more siblings showed a higher self-concept in the general, emotional and physical domains than adolescents with less than three siblings.

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS.

There is some evidence in the literature that adolescents from different socioeconomic classes perceive themselves differently (West, Fish, & Stevens, 1995). If a family is financially poor this may affect characteristics such as appropriateness of dress, social activities and the living conditions of the family, contributing to a negative self-evaluation in comparison to others (McCloyd, 1989).

Adolescents are likely to perceive the structure of their society and of their parent's position in it (Rosenberg & Pearlin, 1978; Demo & Savin-Williams, 1983). This can have important implications for self-concept. A study by Orr and Dinur (1995) investigated self-concept in relation to the adolescent's perception of their family's social status. Results found that adolescents who perceived their parents as respected and successful in the community had the highest social self-concepts.

Socioeconomic status has tended to be confounded with family structure. Non-intact families can have a decline in standard of living with many female-headed families falling below poverty level (Eggbeen & Lichter, 1991). In single parent families task overload can mean more stress in the family and less positive parent-adolescent interaction (Hetherington, 1979). It could therefore, be argued that in studies that found a significant difference in self-concept between intact and non-intact families the difference might have been due to the fall in socioeconomic status rather than the structure of the family.

THE CONFOUNDING EFFECTS OF BIRTH-ORDER, FAMILY SIZE, AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS.

Many of the inconsistencies in the birth order literature have appeared because birth order needs to be studied along with family size and social class as these variables are all interrelated (Adams, 1972). For example, middle borns are more likely to come from larger families and social class is negatively related to family size (Falbo, 1981). Studies only comparing first borns and last borns and failing to look at middle borns could also be responsible for inconclusive findings. Kidwell (1982) stated "middle borns are conceptually distinct from other birth order positions with different experiences and attitudes concerning their role within the family"(p. 225-226). Relative to first and last borns, middle borns are thought to experience less interaction and less attention as they do not receive the uniqueness and recognition often given to first and last born children.

BIRTH ORDER, CONFLICT AND FIRST BORN AS BUFFERS FOR YOUNGER SIBLINGS.

Older children are more sensitive to emotion and may feel pressure to become involved with interparental conflict thus making themselves more vulnerable to negative effects (Emery, 1982). Older children in the family are more affected by parental divorce because of their years of exposure to family conflict (Wallerstein, 1984). First borns have been found to seek adult approval more and be more dependent than later borns (Staffieri, 1970). This could mean first borns would be more aware of any conflict that exists within the family. Parents may use first borns as confidants and therefore first borns could be triangulated into conflict. In studying college students from divorced families Parish (1987) found first borns were more negative in their evaluation of their parents. It is possible they still hold feelings of resentment that accumulate from having to serve as a buffer for younger children without having the same done for them. They are also more likely to have been asked to assume responsibility in the family with the departure of one parent.

Other data looking at sibling behaviour in the face of parental under involvement have found that if a mother ignores a younger child this appears to mobilise a nurturing and resourceful behaviour in the firstborn (Baskett, 1984). In later adolescence older siblings may act as a guide and give advice about life plans and personal problems to younger siblings. Younger siblings may also seek comfort and direction from older siblings because they have the experience and resources to provide younger siblings with advice and emotional support (Buhrmester & Furman, 1990). A study was conducted by Tucker, Barber, and Eccles (1997) of 223 adolescents with a mean age of 17.5 years. Analysis revealed that both second borns and females reported receiving more advice and being more satisfied with sibling support and being more influenced by their sibling than first borns and males respectively. Because males are less skilled at intimate exchanges and less likely to discuss feelings and issues with their siblings, males may be less likely to seek advice from their siblings which may account for lower satisfaction, and the fact girls view sibling relationships as more supportive than boys.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM.

The main purpose of this study is to determine if there is a relationship between self-concept measures and family conflict and self-concept and family structure in a late adolescent sample. Gender and birth order are other major variables of interest due to the conflicted findings in the literature in regard to these variables. If conflict is significantly related to total self-concept another aim of this study is to evaluate whether a close relationship with other family members has a buffering effect against the impact family conflict has on total self-concept.

Having reviewed the literature the following hypotheses have been formulated:

Hypothesis 1

There will be no significant difference in the moral self-concept scores, academic/work self-concept scores, physical self-concept scores, family self-concept scores, social self-concept scores, personal self-concept scores and total self-concept scores between those adolescents in intact families and those in non-intact families.

Hypothesis 2

Adolescents characterised by families with low conflict will score significantly higher on moral self-concept, academic/work self-concept, physical self-concept, family self-concept, social self-concept, personal self-concept and total self-concept than those adolescents from families characterised by high family conflict.

Hypothesis 3

Males will have a significantly higher physical self-concept score and total self-concept score than females.

Hypothesis 4

There will be no significant difference between scores for males and females on academic/work self-concept, moral self-concept, social self-concept, personal self-concept and family self-concept.

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

A total of 204 (107 females and 97 males) volunteers were recruited from three Palmerston North public high schools and first year Massey university lectures. The age of the participants ranged from 17-19 with the mean age being 17.4 (S.D.= .57). 60.3% were 17 years old and 98% were either 17 or 18 years old. The majority of participants classed themselves as European New Zealander (70 %). Asians made up 10% of the sample, Maori 8%, Pacific Islanders 2.5%, Europeans 2.5% and 5.9% ticked the other category. 80% of participants came from intact family structures and 91% were still living with either of their parents. Only 18 out of the 204 participants were living in situations that did not involve family members. These situations included hostels, living with flatmates/ and /or partners. The majority of subjects (62.5%) classed their parents' occupations as neither high nor low status professions, which would indicate more of a middle class background. Family constellation variables included 38% first borns, 27% middle borns 30 % last borns, and 4 % were only borns. 85% of participants were from two, three, or four child families with the average size family being 2.99 (S.D=1.09).

PROCEDURE

The original idea for this study was to gain a sample of two hundred late adolescents between the ages of 17-19 years through first year lectures at Massey University. First year lectures were to be used because most first year students will fall within this age range. Second semester lecture times were reviewed and a plan was worked out to approach a number of lectures in the first week of the semester. Lectures that were targeted were large first year classes. Course controllers were approached via telephone and asked for permission for a brief overview of the study to be given at the beginning of class. During the first week of the second semester the researcher approached targeted lectures. Students were given an explanation of the study and what was expected of them if they decided to participate. They were also given a sheet containing information about the study (Appendix A) which was passed to people in the lecture. Attached was another sheet that included possible time slots during the week where they could come to a room in the Psychology department that was allocated for this research. Those who attended were given the survey to fill out. The questionnaires were then placed in a box in the research room on completion. Participants' names and addresses were filled in on a separate sheet if they wanted a summary of the results. This was detached from the questionnaires in order to maintain anonymity.

Due to the poor response rate from the university students (who appeared to be an overused sample), a decision was made to target seventh formers from the local high schools as they were in the same age range as first year university students.

The Human Ethics Committee of Massey University was advised regarding the change in recruitment. The appropriate protocol was followed whereby the Principals and Board of Trustees of each school were given a detailed outline of the study. Five high schools within the Palmerston North area were sent a covering letter along with a copy of the two measures used in this study. Of the five schools approached three granted permission for research to be undertaken, one declined, and one gave no response.

After discussion with the three Principals from each of the accepting schools it was decided that the Dean of the seventh form would be directly involved in the administration of the questionnaires to possible volunteers. Deans administered the

questionnaires in form class to those that wanted to participate. Procedures to guarantee anonymity were followed. Completion of the questionnaires and appropriate responding was almost 100%.

MEASURES

Two instruments were employed in this research. 1) A questionnaire developed by the researcher and 2) The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (2nd Edition) (TSCS:2). Participants were instructed to complete both instruments. This normally took about ten to fifteen minutes.

1) Questionnaire (Appendix B).

The questionnaire developed by the current researcher consisted of 23 questions. The first six questions asked information regarding demographics such as age, gender, race, their current living situation, age they had left home, if they had done so, and parents' marital status.

Question 7 asked participants to state the occupations of their mother and father and stepmother and stepfather if appropriate. Occupations were then divided into "high status professions" "middle status professions" and "low status professions" This was employed to gain an understanding of social status of the family. "Social Status" is a term used to describe the position of the individual or a group in a hierarchical social structure. Parameters of the social structure include normative patterns, inequalities of power, and material privileges which give members of society and their children widely different opportunities and alternatives (Orr et al., 1995).

Question 8 and 9 deal with family constellation variables. Question 8 asks the participant to outline their birth order in their family of origin. According to the birth order literature middle born is the only position that is not first, last or only born. A gap of five or more years' means that child is considered an only born (Jordan, Whitehouse & Manaster, 1982). Question 9 asks the participant to state the ages and gender of all siblings in the family. From this information the family size was determined along with

gaps between siblings and the gender makeup of those siblings. Family size was then coded into small families (2 children); medium size families (3-4 children); and large families (5 or more children) (Shulman & Mosak, 1977).

The next ten questions required Likert type responses on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 Always False, to 5 Always True. This scale is used for response simplicity and ease as the TSCS:2 also used the same process of responding. Questions 10-15 make up a simple scale to measure general family conflict. These questions are similar to a variety of scales that have assessed family environment. These questions are both positively and negatively worded to control for response bias.

The literature emphasises that in looking at family conflict it is important to look at the family as a whole. The literature has tended to focus on marital conflict and parent-adolescent conflict rather than general family conflict. For this reason, it was important to develop a general family conflict scale. Question 19, a measure of parental fighting has been added to see how highly correlated general family conflict and parental conflict are. However, the parental conflict question is not part of the general family conflict scale.

When the participant answers the questions relating to the family conflict scale they are responding to the family as a whole. Even if the conflict does not directly involve them, it could have an indirect effect that could cause a perception of high family conflict. Therefore, conflict was defined by how many adversarial interactions are perceived within the family system. The perception of conflict has been shown to be more important than actual amount of conflict per se (Grync & Fincham, 1990).

The original plan when designing this study was to use a well-established conflict measurement such as the conflict subscale on Moos' Family Environment Scale. However, after discussion with American Consulting Publishers the cost could not be justified so areas of conflict, which the author of the present project wished to target, were derived from first principles.

To summarise, the conflict scale was designed to capture different aspects of conflict, which can be important in determining the overall effect of conflict. Question 10 and 12

focus on the frequency of conflict / and or arguments in the family. Question 11 looks at how disruptive conflict can be to the family household. Question 13 looks at verbal aggression such as swearing, putting down and insulting comments that symbolically hurt or threaten the person. Question 14 looks at how easy it is to solve possible conflicts and therefore, how long conflict could last. Question 15 is a measure of open expression of anger and aggression and possibly physically violent behaviour. These six questions were added together to give the total family conflict score.

Questions 16-18 were designed to be used as a buffering scale. Each of these questions determines how close or distant the participant is to their mother, father, and sibling with who they have the most supportive relationship with. This scale was developed to see if close relationships within the family environment would act as a buffer against a conflictual family environment.

Question 20 was analysed qualitatively as this provides the participant with a chance to mention any information about their family environment they feel important but which was not captured by the previous questions.

The last three questions (21-23) were for those participants from divorced or separated families. They asked how old they were when their family separated. They also include two open-ended questions about living arrangements after the separation/divorce and other long-term relationships that either parent may have formed after the divorce. Important themes that arise will be discussed further.

2) Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (2nd Edition) (Appendix C).

The TSCS:2 developed by Fitts and Warren (1996) has been updated and streamlined to provide researchers and clinicians with materials that are easy to use, yet which retain the characteristics that have given the test such a wide appeal over the past several decades.

The TSCS: 2 adult form which is appropriate for ages 13 to 90 and is standardised on 1784 individuals, contains 82 items on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 Always False, to 5 Always True, to their perception of the degree to which the item applies to

them. An equal distribution of positive and negative items comprises the subscales defining self-concept. These subscales include the Physical Self-Concept Scale, Moral Self-Concept Scale, Academic/Work Self-Concept Scale, Social Self-Concept Scale, Family Self-Concept Scale, and Personal Self-Concept Scale. All of these scales combine to give the Total Self-Concept Score. All raw scores on the TSCS:2 are transformed into *T* scores with a mean score of 50*T* and a standard deviation of 10*T*. Because *T* scores are normalised it means that the distribution of scores from each scale approximates a normal distribution. The TSCS:2 scores for most individuals tend to fall between 40*T* and 60*T*. These flat profiles indicate no disturbance or only mild disturbance in self-concept.

The Total Self-Concept (TOT) score is the most important score on the TSCS:2. It reflects the individual's overall self-concept and associated self-esteem. Individuals with high TOT scores ($T > 60$) tend to define themselves as generally competent and to like themselves. They are self-confident and flexible and feel they are people of value and worth. People with high TOT scores generally view themselves as having many positive aspects that can be called upon to compensate for threats to specific aspects of their self image, and they can view areas in which they are not competent as less valuable than those in which they are competent.

In seeking and processing information about themselves, people who obtain high TOT scores are sensitive to positive information about themselves in those areas that they believe are changeable. They actively approach situations and seek information that would enhance their level of self-esteem. They tend to take credit for their successes and to blame external factors for their failures. Nevertheless, they are able to modulate unrealistically positive self-views and usually have at least one area of their self-view that is cast in a negative light.

Very high TOT scores ($T > 70$) are deviant and are often found in conjunction with serious psychological distress or disturbance. Such scores may be obtained by individuals in circumstances that create a grave ego threat. A person with a very high TOT score may be experiencing a sense of failure and unhappiness because the magnitude of discrepancy between their overall self-concept and actual level of functioning is likely to be great. They may set goals that are too high and insufficient

reality testing may be a problem. These individuals find it difficult to consider the possibility that their own actions may have led to the difficulties or failures that they encounter. They therefore do not experience the associated remorse or sadness and subsequent desire for change that often stimulates personal growth, wisdom, and maturity.

Individuals with low TOT scores ($T < 40$) are doubtful of their own worth. This does not necessarily mean they are self-hating although they may see themselves as undesirable, but they are conservative and cautious in their self-descriptions. They are less likely to say positive things about themselves without necessarily being more likely to say negative things or be self-effacing. They often feel anxious, depressed, and unhappy, and exhibit little self-confidence. It is difficult for people with low TOT scores to dismiss areas in which they are not competent as less valuable than those in which they are competent, because their competent self-view may not be a reliable source of satisfaction. As a result, individuals with low TOT scores do not take risks. They avoid taking responsibility when expressing themselves, and in other situations where they might experience failure or rejection.

In seeking and processing information about themselves people with low TOT scores are sensitive to negative information about themselves that can help them avoid failure or ego threat in areas where they believe change is possible. They have trouble perceiving and thus benefiting from positive, supportive communication from others that could enhance their view of themselves. They set unchallenging goals and achievement is usually lower than what they are capable of.

People with very low TOT scores ($T < 30$) are likely to be experiencing long standing personal difficulties such as chronic depression, eating disorders, persistent self defeating behaviour and other kinds of persistent conflict or disturbance. Nevertheless, even under adverse circumstances such individuals are likely to have at least one area or set of circumstances where they hold a positive self-view and to which they can turn for satisfaction.

The Physical Self-Concept (PHY) score presents the individual's view of his or her body, state of health, physical appearance, skills and sexuality. People with a positive

view of how they look and of their health status obtain high scores. Low PHY scores indicate dissatisfaction with the body, which may reflect actual liabilities or may be the result of a distorted body image and unrealistic expectations about how one's body should look.

The Moral Self-Concept (MOR) score examines moral worth feelings of being a "good" or "bad" person and for adults satisfaction with one's religion or lack of it. Individuals with high MOR scores are generally satisfied with their conduct and do not experience any great amount of dissonance between their ideal and actual personal ethics. People with low MOR scores perceive in themselves an impulsivity that overrides moral considerations.

The Personal Self-Concept (PER) score reflects the individual's sense of personal worth, feelings of adequacy as a person, and self-evaluation of the personality apart from the body or relationships to others. This score is a good reflection of overall personality integration, and particularly well-adjusted individuals will obtain a high score on this scale. Individuals with low PER scores are particularly reactive to temporary circumstances and to the opinion and behaviours of others.

The Family Self-Concept (FAM) score reflects the individual's feelings of adequacy, worth, and value as a family member. Individuals with a high FAM score have expressed a sense of satisfaction with their family relationships. They have indicated that they derive a sense of support and nurturance in the context of their families. Individuals with Low FAM scores have indicated a sense of alienation from or disappointment in their families.

The Social Self-Concept (SOC) score is a measure of the self, as it is perceived in relation to others. It reflects in a more general way the individual's sense of adequacy and worth in social interactions with people. Individuals who obtain high SOC scores are usually viewed by themselves and others as being friendly, easy to be with, and extroverted. Low SOC scores are a sign of social awkwardness related to perceived lack of social skill.

Academic/Work Self-Concept (ACA) score is a measure of how people perceive themselves in school or work settings, and how they believe they are seen by others in those settings. People with high ACA scores feel confident and competent in learning and work situations. People with low ACA scores have expressed difficulty in work or school settings. This difficulty may be related to actual performance levels or it may indicate the presence of unrealistic expectations about how they should perform.

There are three supplementary scores which group TSCS:2 items from each self-concept subscale that have historically been classified as expressing one of three primary messages: (a) Identity. This is who I am and how I identify myself; (b) Satisfaction. This is how satisfied I am with myself; and c) Behaviour: This is what I do and this is how I behave. These are scores that have been delineated on a theoretical basis only and they are assumed to represent an internal frame of reference within which the individual describes him or herself.

Validity scores (Inconsistent Responding, Self-Criticism, Faking Good, and Response Distribution) are designed to identify defensive, guarded, socially desirable, or other unusual or distorted response patterns. When any of these scores are unusually high or low, caution in interpretation is recommended. Any particularly invalid scores in the following study will be eliminated from the data analysis.

Psychometric Properties

The TSCS:2 was chosen for this research because of its psychometric properties. The widespread use of TSCS:2 in diverse counselling, educational, clinical and medical settings have provided an acceleration of evidence for its validity.

Content validity derives in part from an analysis based on unanimous agreement by expert judges on classification into the fifteen row by column subsets; rows being Identity, Satisfaction and Behaviour, columns being the self-concept scales: Physical, Academic/Work, Social, Moral, Personal and Family (Bledsoe, 1981).

The multiple dimensions represented by the self-concept scales have generally been verified in factor analytic studies. Factor analysis of the TSCS:2 standardisation data

provides strong support for the self-concept dimensions. A study by McGuire and Tinsley (1981) of 678 university students used a multiple group factor analysis to examine the existence of the self-concept and frame of reference facets of the TSCS. It was found that 80% of the items were assigned to the appropriate self-concept category and 79% of the items were assigned to the hypothesised frame of reference category.

To determine concurrent validity a number of studies have compared the TSCS with other scales that would be expected to relate to the construct of general self-concept. Van Tuinen and Ramanaiah (1979) showed a correlation of .75 between the widely used Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and TSCS Total scores as part of a larger multitrait, multimethod validity. Marsh and Richards (1988) examined the correspondence between scores obtained on the TSCS and on the Self-Description Questionnaire III (Marsh & O'Neil, 1984). In general, correlations between conceptually related scales were the highest for those scales and were in the expected direction. For example, the correlation was .71 between Total Scores on each instrument; .68 between Family Self-Concept and Parent Relations; .61 and .59 between Social Self-Concept and Same Sex and Opposite Sex Relations, respectively; .53 and .71 between Physical Self-Concept and Physical Abilities and Physical Appearance, respectively; .53 between Moral-Ethical Self-Concept and Honesty/Trustworthiness; and .71 and .60 between Personal Self-Concept and General Self-Esteem and Emotional Stability, respectively.

A study by Roid and Fitts (1988) compared the TSCS responses of 363 psychiatric patients with those of 626 non-patients. The groups differed significantly on every TSCS score except Self-Criticism and Response Distribution. The TSCS would then seem to discriminate between these two groups and thus provide evidence of discriminant validity.

Internal consistency for the Adult Form scores on the TSCS: 2 range from .73 to .85 for the subscales: (Moral, Academic/Work, Social, Family, Physical and Personal). The Total Self-Concept score has an internal consistency estimate of .94 (Fitts & Warren, 1996). The internal consistency of the TSCS: 2 indicated quite good consistency for an instrument of this type. (Piers, 1991)

The test-retest reliabilities of the TSCS:2 scales were evaluated by examining the responses of 135 high school students who took the Adult form twice. The test-retest period for the adult form group was one to two weeks. The estimated retest reliabilities range from .47 for Inconsistent Responding to .82 for the Total Self-Concept score. The median was .76. These are well within psychometric limits (Fitts et al., 1996).

DESIGN

This study is an exploratory correlational survey. The relationship between variables can therefore not imply cause and effect. The following variables are analysed in this study: The six self-concept scales as measured by TSCS:2 (Moral Self-Concept, Academic/Work Self-Concept, Physical Self-Concept, Family Self-Concept, Social Self-Concept, and Personal Self-Concept, and the Total Self-Concept Score). The Family Conflict Scale and Buffering Scale designed by the researcher, and demographic variables including Gender, Birth Order, Family Size, Family Structure, and Social Status. The eight hypotheses will be tested in the following way:

- 1) A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) to test the relationship between family structure and the multiple dependent measures of the TSCS:2 (Moral Self-Concept, Academic/Work Self-Concept, Physical Self-Concept, Family Self-Concept, Social Self-concept, Personal Self-Concept and Total Self-Concept).
- 2) A MANOVA to test the relationship in self-concept scores from the TSCS:2 for participants whose families are characterised by low conflict and those families characterised by high conflict.
- 3) A MANOVA to test the relationship between gender and the multiple dependent measures of the TSCS:2 (Physical Self-Concept and Total Self-Concept).
- 4) A MANOVA to test the relationship between gender and the multiple dependent measures of the TSCS:2 (Moral Self-Concept, Academic/Work Self-Concept, Social Self-Concept, and Personal Self-Concept).

- 5) Three between-subject Anovas 1 (first born, middle born) 2 (middle born, last born) 3 (first born, last born) with birth order as the independent variable and total self-concept as the dependent variable to test the relationship between total self-concept and birth order.
- 6) Three between-subject anovas 1 (first born, middle born) 2 (middle born, last born) 3 (first born, last born) with birth order as the independent variable and conflict as the dependent variable to test the relationship between conflict and birth order.
- 7) Correlation coefficients for total self-concept and conflict for each birth order converted into z scores. Then the difference between the z scores of each birth order combination (first-middle) (middle-last) (first-last) is tested. This tests the relationship between the differing total self-concept conflict correlations among birth orders.
- 8) A hierarchical regression performed with conflict and buffering at step 1 and conflict x buffering at step 2, to test for a moderating effect for conflict and buffering on total self-concept.

RESULTS

Initial analysis of the results involved a reliability analysis of both the conflict and buffering scales and a Principal components Factor Analysis of the conflict scale to assess the psychometric properties of these scales and therefore their suitability as measures for this research. The Tennessee Self-Concept Scales were also analysed via an SPSS package before testing the hypotheses as outlined in the methodology section.

Preliminary Analyses-Psychometric Properties

Because the researcher designed the conflict scale, which intends to measure general family conflict and the buffering scale, which is the combined score of emotional closeness with family members, their reliability has not been established. Therefore, internal consistency estimates of reliability were computed for both the conflict and buffering scales. The reliability analysis indicated that the conflict scale, which has six items, has a standardised alpha of 0.75. The alpha is above 0.7 which is the commonly used criterion of acceptable internal consistency (Nunally, 1978). The buffering scale consists of three items (relationship with mother, relationship with father, and relationship with sibling) and had a standardised alpha of 0.63. Although the standardised alpha is under 0.7 it is deemed acceptable because there are only three items in this scale (Nunally, 1978).

A Principal Components Factor Analysis revealed one factor with an eigen value greater than 1. This factor accounted for 45.76% of the total variance of the conflict scale. The results of the Principal Components analysis along with the reliability analysis provide a good indication that this conflict scale had an acceptable level of psychometric properties to be used as a measure for this research.

Comparison of General Family Conflict with Parental Conflict

Question 10 in the conflict scale ‘There are many conflicts in our family’ was compared with question 19 in the conflict scale ‘My parents fight a lot’. These questions can be seen in (Appendix B). This comparison has been made because family conflict is different to parental conflict (Shagle et al., 1993). When looking at the frequency of responses for the two questions on the five Likert choices, the frequencies are very different indicating they are probably measuring different phenomena. The data concluded that 42% of participants claimed that their parents never fought frequently. However, only 13% of respondents indicated there was never any family conflict.

Descriptive Statistics.

The main variables of interest, their means, standard deviations and ranges are presented in table 1. These variables include the Tennessee Self-Concept Scales (Moral, Academic/Work, Physical, Family, Social, Personal, and Total) The conflict and buffering scales designed by the researcher and the demographic variables of birth order, family size and social status.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations and Ranges of Study Variables.

Variables	Mean	SD	Range
Moral	45.35	6.01	28-60
Aca/Work	43.08	6.62	20-60
Physical	51.89	7.78	27-68
Family	44.86	7.40	22-60
Social	46.69	6.13	27-60
Personal	47.00	6.18	23-60
Total	278.88	30.70	166-364
Birth O	2.02	0.94	1-4
Fam Size	2.99	1.09	1-7
Social S	2.05	1.25	1-3
Conflict	15.74	2.83	6-30
Buffering	9.63	3.96	3-15

All self-concept scores were computed into *T* scores. The total self-concept score had a standardised mean of 50*T* (277-281). The mean for this sample fell within the 50*T* range at 278.88. 72.5 % of total self-concept scores fell between 40*T* and 60*T* (a total self-concept score between 249-312). These scores are “flat profiles” and indicate no disturbance or only mild disturbance in self-concept. A low self-concept score (214-248) which is obtained by people who are doubtful of their own worth was obtained by 12.5% of participants. A high self-concept score (312-338) obtained by people whom are consistently self-confident was obtained by 9.3% of participants. A very low total self-concept score (under 214) was obtained by 4% of participants and an extremely high self-concept score (over 338) was obtained by 2% of participants. Very low and very high scores are extremes. Very low scores are likely to be obtained by those experiencing long-standing personal difficulties while very high scores are obtained by those experiencing serious psychological distress or disturbance. The mean for the other six self-concept scales all fall at approximately 50*T* indicating the sample is normally distributed.

The conflict scale ranged from 6 (the lowest possible conflict score) to 30 (the highest possible conflict score). The mean for this scale at 15.74 divided by six (the number of questions in the conflict scale gave an average of 2.6 for each score). Therefore as an indication of how conflictual participants perceive their family environments to be, the average participant is perceiving a family environment that is in between mostly not conflicted and partly conflicted (between the Likert response of 2-Mostly False and 3-Partly False/Partly True). Question 15 ‘Family members have a tendency to become violent when angry’ has a substantially lower mean at 1.6 (falling between Mostly False and Always False) than the other conflict questions due to its extreme nature in regard to family conflict.

The buffering scale had a mean of 9.63 and therefore the average response for the buffering scale is Partly False/Partly True. This is a measure of how emotionally close a person feels towards other family members. Participants on average felt closer to the sibling who was most supportive with a mean of 3.53 (falling between Partly False/Partly True and Mostly True) than to their mothers (3.25) or fathers (2.85).

Pearson’s correlation coefficients were formulated to express the relationships between the dependent variables (Moral Self-Concept, Academic/Work Self-Concept, Physical Self-Concept, Family Self-Concept, Social Self-Concept, Personal Self-Concept and Total Self-Concept) and all continuous independent variables (Scores from the Family Conflict Scale and Buffering Scale).

Table 2. Correlation Coefficients among scores on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (2nd Edition), Family Conflict Scale and Buffering Scale.

	Conflict	Buffering	Moral	Aca/Work	Physical	Family	Social	Personal
Buffering	-0.44**							
Moral	-0.37*	0.20**						
Aca/Work	-0.28**	0.19**	0.37**					
Physical	-0.39**	0.23**	0.39**	0.54**				
Family	-0.64**	0.51**	0.45**	0.40**	0.60**			
Social	-0.25**	0.16*	0.53**	0.35**	0.48**	0.40**		
Personal	-0.39**	0.30**	0.54**	0.57**	0.68**	0.63**	0.66**	
Total	-0.51**	0.35**	0.69**	0.70**	0.82**	0.77**	0.73**	0.88**

p* <0.05; *p* <0.01

The correlations were all in the hypothesised direction. The results revealed that the conflict scale had a significant negative correlation with all other scales. Therefore, increases in conflict are associated with decreases in the self-concept scores. Or alternatively increases in self-concept scores are associated with decreases in conflict. The exact direction cannot be determined because this analysis is correlational and therefore does not determine cause and effect. The self-concept scale that had the highest correlation with the conflict scale was family self-concept (*r* = -0.64, *p*<0.01). The self-concept scale that had the lowest correlation with the conflict scale was social self-concept (*r* =-0.25, *p*<0.01). This indicates that relationship between an individual’s feelings of adequacy, worth and value as a family member is more strongly correlated with family conflict than social self-concept which is a measure of how the self is perceived in relation to others more generally, not just within the family. The buffering scale also had a significantly negative correlation with the conflict scale

($r = -0.44$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore increases in conflict are associated with decreases in buffering or alternatively increases in buffering are associated with decreases in conflict.

There was a significant positive relationship between buffering and all the self-concept measures. Therefore, increases in the buffering score are associated with increases in self-concept score. family self-concept has the highest correlation with the buffering scale ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$) and the lowest correlation with social self-concept ($r = 0.16$, $p < 0.05$). Individuals who express a sense of satisfaction with their family relationships have a high buffering score as indicated by close relationships with family members. This is more significantly related to high buffering than those individuals who obtain a high social self-concept who are usually viewed by themselves and others as being friendly, easy to get on with, and extroverted.

Hypothesis 1. Self-Concept and Family Structure.

A MANOVA presented in table 3 (p.37) includes the self-concept scales (Moral, Academic/Work, Physical, Social, Family, Personal and the combined Total) as the multiple dependent measures and the independent variable family structure. These variables were analysed to test the hypothesis that there was no significant difference on the TSCS:2 between intact (those participants that indicated their parents are still married) and non-intact (those that indicated their parents were now separated or divorced) family structures.

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations and F statistic for Intact and Non-Intact Family Structures on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (2nd Edition).

TSCS:2	MEAN		SD		F Statistic
	Intact	Non-Intact	Intact	Non-Intact	
Moral	45.50	44.73	6.04	5.92	0.54
Aca/Work	43.27	42.34	6.57	6.50	0.65
Physical	52.34	50.08	7.51	8.63	2.74
Family	45.15	43.70	7.08	8.58	1.23
Social	46.49	47.53	5.83	7.26	0.92
Personal	47.10	46.40	5.71	7.90	0.21
Total	279.84	274.95	29.93	36.66	0.81

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

The MANOVA results reveal the F statistic is not significantly different for intact and non-intact groups on any of the self-concept scales. Therefore, those participants whose parents are no longer together did not have significantly lower self-concepts than those participants whose parents are still together.

Hypothesis 2. Self-Concept and Family Conflict.

A MANOVA presented in table 4 (p38) was used to analyse whether there was a difference between the self-concept scores of those families characterised by high conflict and those characterised by low conflict. Consistent with Anastasi (1988) the distribution of scores determined the percentage of cases assigned to the high conflict group (upper quartile—approximately 25% of scores) and the low conflict group (lower quartile -approximately 25% of scores).

Table 4. Means, Standard Deviations and F Statistic for Low and High Conflict Groups on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (2nd Edition).

TSCS:2	MEAN		SD		F Statistic
	L-Conflict	H-Conflict	L-Conflict	H-Conflict	
Moral	48.52	42.83	5.59	6.33	23.74***
Aca/Work	45.63	40.71	6.62	6.56	14.72***
Physical	55.54	47.95	6.56	8.65	24.96***
Family	49.49	39.22	6.10	7.29	65.75***
Social	48.62	44.94	5.80	6.42	9.46**
Personal	49.67	44.34	5.70	6.96	18.17***
Total	297.90	260.03	27.95	31.75	41.86***

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. L=low, H=high.

Results show that high conflict is significantly associated with a lower self-concept for all self-concept scales. This included Total Self-Concept $F(1,106)=41.86$, $p < 0.001$; Moral Self-Concept $F(1,106)=23.74$, $p < 0.001$; Academic/Work Self-Concept $F(1, 106)=14.72$, $p < 0.001$; Physical Self-Concept $F(1, 106)=24.96$, $p < 0.001$; Family Self-Concept $F(1, 106)=65.75$, $p < 0.001$; Social Self-Concept $F(1,106)=9.46$, $p < 0.01$; and Personal Self-Concept $F(1, 106)=18.17$, $p < 0.001$. A post hoc multiple comparison Scheffe test was performed in order to ascertain which conflict categories differed significantly from one another. The results concluded that only categories 1 and 3 low and high conflict respectively, differed significantly from one another with respect to academic/work self-concept, physical self-concept, social self-concept and personal self-concept. The medium conflict category did significantly differ from the low and high conflict categories (those experiencing high conflict had significantly lower self-concepts than those experiencing medium conflict and those with medium conflict had significantly lower self-concepts than those experiencing low conflict) for total self-concept, family self-concept and moral self-concept.

Hypotheses 3 and 4. Self-Concept and Gender.

A MANOVA presented in table 5 was used to investigate whether there was a significant difference in the self-concept scores for males and females. This analysis used gender as the independent variable and the self-concept scales are the dependent variables.

Table 5. Means, Standard Deviations and F Statistic for Male and Female Adolescents on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (2nd Edition).

TSCS:2	MEAN		SD		F Statistic
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Moral	45.06	45.61	5.74	6.26	0.52
Aca/Work	44.19	42.08	6.12	6.92	5.23*
Physical	55.11	48.97	6.38	7.80	37.43***
Family	46.26	43.60	6.27	8.11	6.77*
Social	46.86	46.54	6.29	6.01	0.72
Personal	48.48	45.65	5.37	6.58	11.20**
Total	285.95	272.45	30.70	32.34	10.23**

$p < 0.05^*$; $p < 0.01^{**}$; $p < 0.001^{***}$

Males scored significantly higher than females on Total Self-Concept $F(1, 203)=10.23$, $p < 0.01$; and Physical Self-Concept; $F(1,203)=37.43$, $p < 0.0001$, predicted by hypothesis 3. Males also scored significantly higher than females on Personal Self-Concept $F(1, 203)=11.20$, $p < 0.001$; Academic/Work Self-Concept $F(1,203)=5.23$, $p < 0.05$; and Family Self-Concept $F(1,203)=6.77$, $p < 0.01$. There was no significant difference between the scores for males and females on Social Self-Concept $F(1,203)=0.18$, $p > 0.05$; and Moral Self-Concept $F(1, 203)=0.52$, $p > 0.05$.

Hypothesis 5 Total Self-Concept and Birth Order.

The relationship between total self-concept and birth order was assessed via three between-subject Anovas. The means, standard deviations and numbers in each birth order are presented in table 6. The results of the three Anovas revealed that there was no significant difference between total self-concept scores for first borns and middle borns $F(1,131)=0.02, p>0.05$. There was no significant difference in total self-concept scores between middle borns and last borns $F(1, 116)=1.34, p>0.05$. There was no significant difference between the total self-concept scores of first borns and last borns $F(1, 138)=0.83, p>0.05$.

Table 6. Means, Standard Deviations and Numbers for Birth Order, Family Size and Social Status

Variable	Mean	SD	Number
first born	280.47	35.29	77
mid born	281.25	23.41	62
last born	275.24	31.61	55
small fam	277.96	31.97	61
med fam	277.72	29.50	112
large fam	285.64	35.24	21
low stat	275.25	29.78	24
mid stat	275.92	27.98	127
high stat	291.46	27.74	48

Family Size and Social Status.

Family size was divided into small family (2 children); medium size family (3-4 children); and large family (5 children). Social status was defined by parents' occupation and whether it was high status, middle status or low status. These variables have been brought into the analysis because it was noted in the literature that the variables of birth order, family size and socioeconomic status are all interrelated. The means, standard deviations and numbers for each family size and social status, along with birth order are presented in table 6

A one-way Anova revealed there was no significant difference between the self-concept scores of those from small families, medium families or large families $F(1, 194)=0.64$, $p<0.05$. A one-way Anova also revealed there was a significant difference between total self-concept scores amongst social status groups. $F(1, 203)=4.84$, $p<0.05$. A post hoc multiple comparison Scheffe test revealed that those in the high social status group had significantly higher total self-concept scores than those in the low and middle status groups. The total self-concept scores of those in the middle status group did not significantly differ from those in the low status group.

Hypothesis 6. Birth Order and Conflict.

The relationship between birth order and conflict was analysed via three between-subject Anovas. Conflict was the dependent variable and each birth order combination (first-middle) (middle-last) (first-last) were the independent variables. The difference between the mean conflict score for first borns (16.85) and last borns (14.89) was statistically significant with first borns perceiving more conflict than last borns $F(1, 138)=5.21$, $p<0.05$. The difference between the mean conflict score for middle borns (15.49) and first borns was not statistically significant, and therefore there is no significant difference between the amount of conflict perceived in the family between middle borns and first borns. $F(1,128)=1.83$, $p>0.05$. There is no significant difference in the amount of conflict perceived by middle borns and last borns $F(1,113)=0.68$, $p>0.05$.

Hypothesis 7. Birth Order, Conflict, and Total Self-Concept.

To analyse whether there was a significant difference between the conflict total self-concept relationships between different birth orders, participants were divided into their relevant birth orders, and a correlation coefficient was computed for conflict and total self-concept for each birth order: First born ($r = -0.67$, $p<0.01$); middle born ($r = -0.28$, $p<0.05$); and last born ($r = -0.49$, $p<0.01$). After this was computed, tests were conducted to measure the difference between two correlation coefficients for uncorrelated data (Downie & Heath, 1974). Therefore each birth orders' correlation coefficient was analysed along with each other birth order and the correlations were

changed into z scores. The only z score that was significant at the 0.05 level ($z < 1.96$) was the correlation coefficient for first born and middle born. This means that the conflict total self-concept relationship was significantly stronger for first borns than middle borns but there was no significant difference in the conflict total self-concept correlation between first borns and last born or last borns and middle born.

Hypothesis 8. Conflict and Buffering.

A hierarchical regression presented in table 7. was conducted to test the hypothesis that there will be an interaction effect between conflict and buffering whereby close relationships with other family members will provide a buffering effect and moderate the relationship between total self-concept and conflict. A moderator is one that affects the relationship between two variables so that the nature of the impact of the predictor on the criterion varies according to the level or value of the moderator (Holmbeck, 1997). Therefore, if buffering is high then the effect conflict has on total self-concept will be lower.

Table 7. Hierarchical Multiple Regression for Conflict and Buffering on Total Self-Concept Showing Standardised Regression Coefficients (β) , R^2 , R^2 , Adjusted R^2 , and R^2 Change.

Predictor	β	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	R^2 Change
Step 1					
Conflict	-0.46***	0.54	0.30	0.29	0.30
Buffer	0.15*				
Step 2					
Conflict	-0.47***	0.54	0.30	0.28	0.00
Buffering	0.15*				
Con x Buff	-0.02				

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; $p < 0.001$ ***

The total self-concept score is the dependent measure, conflict the independent variable and buffering the moderator. Conflict and buffering were entered into the equation at step 1, and after step 1 with conflict and buffering in the equation $R^2=0.30$ $F(2,184)=38.1$, $p<0.0001$. Conflict and buffering contributed significantly to the prediction of self-concept accounting for 30% of the variance on the total self-concept score.

The conflict and buffering interaction score is then entered at step 2. The conflict and buffering interaction score is represented by the product of the two main effects of conflict and buffering called deviation scores. Deviation scores were computed by subtracting each conflict score and each buffering score by its respective mean and thus producing a revised sample mean of zero (Baron & Kenny, 1986). By using a hierarchical step approach the variance accounted for by the interaction term was assessed after controlling for the main effects of conflict and buffering. After step 2, with the conflict x buffering interaction in the equation $R^2= 0.30$ $F(3,183)=0.105$, $p>0.05$. The conflict x buffering interaction term resulted in a non-significant increment in R^2 (R^2 change = 0.00, $p>0.05$). Therefore the conflict x buffering interaction was insignificant and does not add to the prediction of the total self-concept score. This means buffering does not significantly moderate the conflict total self-concept relationship. Therefore, having either a high buffer (emotionally close relations with family members) or a low buffer will not change the relationship between conflict and total self-concept. This does not support hypothesis 8.

Supplementary Analysis

Because some of the participants stated they had a close relationship with their mother and a distant relationship with their father this would combine to give an average buffering score and mask the fact there was a close relationship with their mother. Because the literature indicates just one close relationship with a family member is enough to create a buffering effect, three separate analyses were conducted with close relationship with mother, father and siblings as the moderators. Three hierarchical regression analyses were performed following the same procedure as hypothesis 8, except with each individual buffering relationship as the moderator. All three relationships were significant at step 1. After step 2 with conflict x mother interaction

$R^2 = 0.27$ $F(3, 197) = 0.10$, $p > 0.05$. After step 2 with conflict x father interaction $R^2 = 0.29$ $F(3, 191) = 1.21$, $p > 0.05$. After step 2 with conflict x sibling interaction $R^2 = 0.29$ $F(3, 185) = 1.70$, $p > 0.05$. Therefore, conflict x buffering for each individual family relationship did not create a significant change in R^2 and therefore generated no evidence of a moderating effect.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The questionnaire used in this study contained three open ended questions 1) asking the participant if they would like to add any information that they feel would add to the understanding of their family situation, 2) non-intact families were asked to describe their living situation after the divorce and 3) if their parents had formed any other long term relationships.

Only about 20% of participants chose to respond to the first open ended question and although most of the non intact group discussed their family situation after the divorce this was very brief, therefore the qualitative information is quite limited. Some comments made by people included recurring themes that contained the following:

Direct blaming of a particular family member for the problems and conflicts in the family were very common. For example "Immature younger brother causes all the arguments"; "Dad is often in a bad mood"; "Older brother rebellious towards home and school"; "Brothers' violence causes most of the arguments"; "Parents stress a lot and get angry with younger sister because she doesn't listen to them"; "Mother has lots of issues to deal with in her life and a lot of arguments in the family are due to this."

Others expressed fighting wasn't necessarily a bad thing and that conflicts were just arguments over trivial things. For example, "arguing for arguments sake"; "There is lots of fighting between mum and I but that is because we are very close and mostly just to get at each other half the time"; "Fights are short lived "; "Fighting occurs, but it is still a loving stable family". "There are lots of debates, rather than conflicts and this is due mainly to stubbornness, we still get along though"; "There are lots of arguments but most of them are just for fun or end up funny."

There was indication that conflict was due to personality clashes and a general lack of understanding between family members. Several participants expressed they felt isolated and different from their family even though there was little conflict. One participant remarked "My family does not understand or appreciate my critical thinking." Another remarked "My father still treats me as a child and like I am very foolish."

Several people also mentioned lack of income as an issue and that this caused a lot of stress within the family system. "Not enough money in the family has a lot to do with the reason we fight"; "Father was out of work for a long time so money was a problem."

Some of the participants indicated that communication was not very good within the family and they did not feel their family was particularly supportive of them. One participant remarked "Parents get annoyed at us kids, but this does not include conflict, just a lack of support within the family. Another participant commented "My parents are only supportive when they are in a good mood. Otherwise they tell me "to go away." There were only a few examples of extreme unsupportiveness and verbal abuse for example "Mum has never been supportive and always puts me down, mainly because of my disability, she made me feel I was dumb and would never be successful in life."

Only a few participants indicated that physical abuse had occurred in their family, although they did not expand on the effect it had. One participant did however remark "In our family there has been abuse, drugs, and divorce but we are still the most interesting family you will ever meet."

In terms of closeness a common bond or interest seemed to create a strong bond between family members. One person said "Me and my brother do well at sport nationally and support and interest from parents helps us get along well." Another participant said "We all work on our farm, and so spend a lot of time together, because of this we have to get along in all situations so this keeps us close." Other people just remarked that they felt they had the best family but did not elaborate.

For those participants who have experienced divorce and /or separation the majority stayed with their mother but saw their fathers regularly, often on weekends. Or, they would live several years with mother, then father, then mother again. The majority of divorces happened before these participants had turned 12. The fact there was no significant difference between intact and non-intact families could be due to the fact the

two-year crisis period would be well over. At least one of the parents seemed to go on and form other long-term relationships after the separation/divorce.

There was not much elaboration on the effect divorce had. Some indicated it was difficult and they did not like the effect it had on their parents but several others saw it as a generally good thing. For example, one person stated "My parents are happier now, and we all get on better." Some people saw the divorce as a strengthening experience that shaped the people they are today. One participant remarked "It was difficult, but I felt it helped me grow up and shape the mature person I am today."

DISCUSSION

FAMILY STRUCTURE AND SELF-CONCEPT.

The first hypothesis predicted there would be no significant difference for scores between intact and non-intact family structures on any of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scales. The results support this hypothesis, as there was no significant difference in the mean scores between the two groups on moral self-concept, academic/work self-concept, physical self-concept, family self-concept, social self-concept, personal self-concept and total self-concept. This does not confirm findings by Parish and Dostal (1980); Parish and Taylor (1979); Young and Parish (1977); Harpe and Ryder (1986); and Parish (1991). These researchers found that adolescents from divorced families demonstrated significantly lower self-concepts than those from intact families. The majority of the participants in non-intact family structures experienced the separation and divorce at least two years ago. This may partly account for why there is no significant difference in self-concept between intact and non-intact family structures, which would support findings by Rubin and Price (1979); Enos and Handall (1987); and Chase-Lansdale and Hetherington (1992) that the period of adjustment for the new family structure, usually takes approximately eighteen months to two years.

This finding could also be related to the research of Forehand (1992) that the effect parental divorce has on adolescent functioning is substantially less than is portrayed by the media. And although differences have been found to exist in self-concept for intact and divorced families the effect sizes are weak rather than strong. In this study effect sizes were so weak they were insignificant. A low sample size for the non-intact group could play a major part in this. Therefore, although divorce may have negative effects on self-concept for some adolescents, it would not appear to be a major factor that distinguishes between high and low self-concept.

Divorce is a process, not just an event. Information on different aspects of this process that could enhance or impede a person's self-concept would be useful to gain a better

understanding of just how much (if any) being in a non-intact family structure will affect a person's self-concept.

Another explanation of the non significant finding between those from intact and non-intact structures is that of the 'sleeping effect'. That is, while appearing to adjust well to divorce, adolescents at some point later on, may display adjustment problems that were attributed to the divorce (Forehand, 1992). Therefore, a 'sleeping effect' may not have appeared for adolescents in the non-intact group yet, accounting for the lack of significant difference.

Family self-concept is not significantly lower for those in non-intact family structures. This suggests that those participants who have parents who are separated or divorced are not expressing significantly less satisfaction with their family relationships and do not feel significantly more alienated from their families than adolescents from intact families. Social self-concept is the only self-concept scale in which people from non-intact family structures scored higher than those from intact family structures, although the difference was not significant. One possible explanation that would need to be followed up with a larger non-intact family sample is that those from non-intact family structures put more effort into social interaction outside the family to compensate for any negative interactions within the family during the time of major disruption.

FAMILY CONFLICT AND SELF-CONCEPT.

Results support the second hypothesis that participants characterised by families with low conflict would have higher moral, academic/work, physical, family, social, personal and total self-concepts than those families characterised by high family conflict. This finding supports the research of Raschke and Raschke (1979); Slater and Haber (1984); Patridge and Kotler (1987); Bowles and Falloon (1996).

Family self-concept had the highest mean difference between low and high conflict groups at 49.92 and 39.22 respectively. Despite this, the mean for high conflict and low conflict still falls within the flat self-concept profile, between 40T and 60T (37-52)

which indicates little or no disturbance in family self-concept. The mean total self-concept score for low and high conflict fall within the same profile, the flat self-concept profile, despite a difference in score of 30T. This suggests that although the conflict scale could have predicted a high conflict score for a person, this high conflict may not have been the most severe type of conflict ie physical conflict, or verbal abuse on a daily basis. Only 1% of participants indicated that when family members become angry they have a tendency to become violent on all occasions (Question15 Appendix B) while 25% of participants formed the high conflict group. If more people perceived in their families conflict of the most severist kind it is much more likely that self-concept scores for the high conflict group would fall below 40T (248) into the low self-concept profile.

A post hoc multiple comparison Scheffe test revealed that moral-self concept, total self-concept and family self-concept had significantly different means not only for low and high conflict groups but for low, medium and high conflict groups. High conflict was associated with significantly lower self-concept than medium conflict and medium conflict was associated with a significantly lower self-concept than low conflict. For physical and personal self-concept there was no significant difference between the mean scores of those from medium and low conflict families but there was a significant difference between the scores of those from medium and high conflict families. This means that those who perceived a small or medium amount of conflict are much more likely to feel more comfortable about the way they look, and to be better adjusted than a person perceiving a high amount of family conflict. The reason that level of conflict appears to have a similar effect for physical self-concept and personal self-concept is very feasible because in samples where the TSCS:2 has been administered, personal and physical self-concept tended to be at the same level for a person. For social and academic/work self-concept only low and high conflict significantly differentiated between scores. This indicates that the level of conflict does not affect different domains of self-concept in an identical manner.

Because there was a significant difference between the self-concept scores of those from low conflict families and high conflict families but not between the differing family structures, this indicates that family conflict is not necessarily more prevalent in non-intact families. This parallels the findings of a three-year longitudinal study by

Forehand and Thomas (1992) that those from non-intact families did not have more conflictual environments than those from intact families.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SELF-CONCEPT.

The third hypothesis that males would score significantly higher on physical self-concept than females was confirmed by the results and is consistent with that of Marsh (1989); Mboya (1994); and Studer (1993). That males would score significantly higher than females on total self-concept as suggested by hypothesis 3 is also confirmed by the results and supports the research of Marsh (1989) and Patridge and Kotler (1987).

By far the most significant gender difference in the self-concept scores was on physical self-concept. This suggests that sex stereotyping is still prominent, a finding supported by Crain (1996) who found many studies reported differences in self-concept domains that are consistent with gender stereotyping.

Bowles and Falloon (1996) found that males scored significantly higher than females on the Physical Ability and Physical Appearance components of the Self-Description Questionnaire. However, because the TSCS:2 combines both a measure of physical appearance and physical ability together to make physical self-concept, a distinction between them cannot be made in this study. The large gender difference in physical self-concept could be the difference in how males and females view their physical appearance. Young women in late adolescence may still be gaining a message through the media and from society in general that they must look a certain way to be successful and happy and when they don't feel they live up to this image, they may, feel very negative about their physical appearance. During adolescence young people are overwhelmed with messages and peer pressure about how they should look and dress and perhaps this pressure affects how females perceive themselves much more than how males perceive themselves.

Physical ability may play just as important a part in this difference between male and female physical self-concept. In an age where women are given more opportunities to participate in sports and to be competitive in them one would wonder where a

difference in physical ability perception is coming from. It could be that even in the 21st century boys are getting more encouragement from parents and/ or schools to get involved in physically challenging sports and activities that increase their confidence in physical abilities.

Hypothesis 4 stated there would be no significant difference between the self-concept scores for males and females on academic/work self-concept, moral self-concept, social self-concept, family self-concept and personal self-concept. This hypothesis is only partially supported by the results. There was no significant difference between male and female self-concept scores on social-self concept and moral self-concept but males scored significantly higher than females on family self-concept, personal self-concept, moral self-concept and academic/work self-concept. Because males did score significantly higher than females on all self-concept scales except social and moral self-concept it is not surprising that males have a significantly higher total self-concept.

The fact that males scored significantly higher than females on academic/work self-concept was unexpected and does not support the findings of MacCann (1995) who found a steady increase in the performance of girls relative to that of boys over a decade in final year high school students. It is possible however, that this significant difference may have been much larger ten years ago and hence the gap is closing. It would be interesting to test this theory in 5-10 years time and see if the difference has diminished or even if females are scoring higher academically than males.

However, caution must be used when comparing the very general academic/work self concept of the TSCS:2 that only very broadly assessed the concepts of math and verbal ability with scales that have specifically tested many different areas of schooling and education. academic and work self-concept could be somewhat mutually exclusive. A person could believe they have strong math ability but not think they work that well or would be successful at almost any job. A stronger focus on academia and particular school subjects would be suggested for a closer comparison to MacCanns' findings.

Family self-concept was significantly higher for males than for females, which supports the findings of Mboya (1994). Family self-concept is a measure that reflects the individual's feeling of adequacy, worth and value as a family member. It would be easy

to conclude that the differences between males and females on family self-concept is due to the fact females perceive more and are more sensitive to family conflict as suggested by Jaycox and Repetti (1993), and Tolan Miller and Thomas (1988). However, by investigating the frequency of perceived conflict and the effect it has on total self-concept the level is very similar for both. Although the original hypotheses did not call for an analysis of gender by family conflict, an investigation of gender by conflict on family self-concept was conducted to take account of the fact males did score significantly better on family self-concept. It would therefore appear that the differences between males and females on family self-concept were due to factors other than conflict.

Overall, the results found that males had significantly higher total self-concepts than females when adding up the six self-concept scales of (physical, academic/ work, social, personal, moral, and family). Although two self-concept scores (social and moral) did not show a significant difference between genders none of the scales showed a difference in mean scores favouring females. This does not support the findings of Marsh (1989) who reported statistically significant but small gender differences in using the Self-Description Questionnaire (SDQ). Marsh found that some facets of self-concept favoured boys but some facets also favoured girls.

There may be several reasons why males are scoring higher than females in various self-concept domains. When looking at the frequency of people whose parents' professions were classed as "high status" it is recognised that a larger percentage of males than females make up the high status group. Because participants from the high status group were found to have significantly higher self-concepts than those from the low or middle status groups this could account for some of the gender effect.

This sample also consisted of three schools, two of which were single sex schools, and one co-educational school. The co-educational school had a much smaller number of participants than the two single sex schools. Therefore, this sample is far more representative of students from single sex schools than co-educational schools. For example, it is possible that some aspects of self-concept could be affected by the gender environment in which people interact. Therefore, it may be more beneficial for the self-concept development of adolescent girls to be involved in more of a mixed gender

environment. If this were the case, the difference between male and female self-concepts would be smaller in a sample that contained a greater proportion of females from co-educational schools.

BIRTH ORDER, FAMILY SIZE, SOCIAL STATUS, AND SELF-CONCEPT.

Hypothesis 5 stated that there would be no significant difference in total self-concept scores for first borns, middle borns, and last borns. This was confirmed by the results and supports the research of Parish (1991) and Nystul (1976). In these studies no significant difference was found between first and last born but middle born was excluded from the analysis. Kidwell (1982) contended that comparing just first borns and last borns will mask the effects of the middle born. However, there was no significant difference in total self-concept scores between middle borns and last borns or middle borns and first borns.

Family size and perceived social status were analysed along with birth order. Family size did not significantly differ on total self-concept. Therefore, supporting the finding of Parish (1991) and Nystul (1976) but contradictory to the findings of Studer (1993) who found a higher self-concept for adolescents with three or more siblings.

An investigation of social status found that total self-concept was significantly higher for those from high social status backgrounds than those from low or middle status backgrounds which supports research by Orr and Dinur (1995). When comparing social status with family size it can be seen that each family size was proportionally represented by each social status which is inconsistent with the literature that suggests family size is negatively related to socioeconomic status (Falbo, 1981). However, it does seem that the social status result is independent of the birth order and family size result.

BIRTH ORDER, FAMILY CONFLICT, AND SELF-CONCEPT.

Hypothesis 6 that first borns would perceive more family conflict than the other birth orders (due to years of exposure, taking responsibility for younger siblings etc) was not supported by the results. The results showed that first borns perceived significantly more conflict than last borns but first borns did not perceive significantly more conflict than middle borns and middle borns did not perceived significantly more conflict than last borns. If the analysis had included only first borns and last borns then the hypothesis would be supported because first borns did perceive significantly more conflict than last borns. Because of this it can be understood why the inclusion of middle borns is so important as recognised by Kidwell (1992). By including middle borns into the analysis not only can the hypothesis not be supported because middle borns did not perceive significantly less conflict than first borns but they did not perceive significantly more conflict than last borns. This makes interpretation difficult and complicated.

One possible explanation for this finding is that first borns perceive more conflict than last borns but only in families with two children, where perhaps their birth order roles are more clearly defined. In families with more than two children and hence the addition of middle borns different factors could be operating. In larger families, for example six children, there may be little difference in the perception of conflict between the 5th and 6th born which is a middle born and a last born and somehow they are both less exposed or buffered from conflict by older siblings. However, because the family is so large both the first born and the second born (classed as middle born) could take on responsibility for the family and therefore the first and middle born could perceive similar levels of conflict. This would account for the significant difference between first borns and last borns and lack of significant difference between middle borns and first borns and middle borns and last borns. The variability in being a middle born may come from the fact it is not one position in a large family, in a family of six middle born can be one of four positions (2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th). Each of these positions within themselves may resume different roles in the family and may perceive different amounts of conflict, which was not anticipated by this study. Therefore, family size may have interacted with birth order in a way that has not been controlled for.

Hypothesis 7 stated that first borns would perceive more conflict in the family and therefore the effect conflict has on total self-concept would be greater than the effect on middle borns and last borns. However, this is not supported by the results. Analysis of the separate total self-concept conflict correlations for first borns, middle borns and last borns does not show a clear interpretable pattern. First borns did have the strongest conflict total self-concept correlation but it was only significantly different from middle borns. For the hypothesis to be supported the correlation needed to be significantly higher than the correlation for both middle borns and last borns.

It is interesting that middle borns have a significantly lower conflict self-concept correlation than first borns but not last borns, and don't perceive less conflict than first borns. One possible explanation is that although self-concept does not differ by birth order, each birth order may contain different aspects that make up their self-concepts. For all of the birth orders conflict will make up a percentage of variance in total self-concept. However, the significantly higher conflict total self concept relationship for first borns compared to middle borns may demonstrate that the level of family conflict is more important to self-concept for first borns than middle borns. On the other hand being the neglected birth order, and receiving less attention as suggested by Kidwell (1982) would have a stronger relationship with self-concept for middle borns than first borns. The birth order literature also suggests that middle borns have more role flexibility than first borns and last borns. They don't have the role of responsible surrogate parent like the first born or the baby of the family like the last born (Toman, 1993). This role flexibility could provide some resilience in conditions of high family conflict for example, adapting their role to suit conditions of the family. This could explain why the conflict total self-concept relationship is significantly lower for middle borns than first borns.

CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY MEMBERS AS A BUFFER AGAINST FAMILY CONFLICT.

Hypothesis 8 predicted that emotionally close relationships with other family members would act as a buffer in the presence of high conflict, and therefore moderate the relationship between conflict and total self-concept. This would protect that self-concept against the effects of high conflict. There was no significant interaction between conflict and buffering so this hypothesis is not supported by the results. Additional analyses were conducted and buffering, as an individual's relationship with their mother, father, and closest sibling did not moderate the relationship between self-concept and conflict either. These findings would appear not to support those of Emery (1982); Rutter (1971); and Aseltine (1996) who found that a relationship with one parent will buffer the child against family discord. However, it must be remembered that unlike the above studies, this study measured general family conflict and not exclusively parental conflict. It would be a lot easier for the adolescent to have a close relationship and therefore high buffering when the conflict is interparental because they are not directly involved in that conflict. This idea is supported by Gehring, Wentzel, Feldman, and Munson (1990) who found that cross-generational coalitions were perceived to increase more during conflict in the marital dyad than any other family dyad.

In general family conflict the adolescent could be directly involved in the conflict with their mother, father and /or siblings. Therefore, establishing a close relationship would be more difficult. They may also feel alienated from the whole family if they perceive the family to be dysfunctional. In the case of family conflict involving sibling conflict, this could reduce a close relationship not only between siblings but also between parents and the adolescent. For example, if the parent took sides or because of the stress it may place on the parents in general. The opposite contention could also exist whereby conflict with parents creates distant amongst siblings. This would support research by Gehring, et al (1990) that mother-adolescent conflict has been found to increase the power differentials between siblings and therefore, decrease closeness in the sibling dyad. The results of this hypothesis along with support from the above literature suggest that conflict in a particular subsystem can decrease cohesion in subsystems that are not directly involved in the conflict as well as reducing cohesion in the family as a whole.

Therefore, it would be difficult for buffering to have an effect and moderate the relationship between total self-concept and conflict.

Although a moderating relationship does not seem to be operating, two probable explanations may account for the fact buffering is significantly positively correlated with total self-concept and significantly negatively correlated with conflict. Firstly, close family relationships are more likely to foster an environment that will not lead to medium or high levels of conflict, or alternatively low conflict could create an atmosphere whereby family members can interact in a way that promotes close family relationships. Because conflict and buffering are negatively related, it would be unusual to have a situation whereby one can have emotionally close relationships in an environment where a substantial amount of conflict and adversity is taking place. This would also account for the fact there is no interaction effect between conflict and buffering.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.

Firstly, the TSCS:2 may not be as appropriate in defining self-concept for New Zealand adolescents as it is for American adolescents on which it was standardised. For example, in the measure of moral self-concept there are two religious based questions. It could be argued that in the New Zealand culture not having a strong religious identity does not have a relationship to how one feels about his or her behaviour morally. A number of participants chose not to answer the religious questions as they felt it didn't apply to them.

The conflict scale does not contain information regarding who in the family system the conflict is between and whether the participant feels they are indirectly involved with the conflict surrounding them (via conflict between other family members) or if they are directly involved in the conflict. Much more information is needed regarding who the conflict is between, whether the conflict is parent-adolescent conflict, or sibling conflict or interparental. Because conflict seems to be important to self-concept it would be reasonable to focus on better measures of conflict that are multidimensional, to examine

more fully how the dimensions of conflict (frequency, severity etc) are related to different aspects of self-concept and psychological well being in general.

Information regarding the nature of the conflict and how important the adolescent feels these conflicts are to him or her will provide insight into possible prevention measures as well as providing insight into issues relating to conflict of this age group. A rating scale could be used to determine the five most conflicted areas in the family and the ones the adolescent feels most strongly about.

Future conflict scales may need to state the difference between state and trait conflict: the difference between ongoing conflicts versus occasional arguments. It came across from the qualitative information that many conflicts 'were just arguments'. For example, family members getting at each other but that the adolescent did not feel seriously threatened. Results would probably be different if there had been a wider spread of people from severely conflicted families. Such as conflict that leads to violence. In this case it would be expected that adolescent self-concept in different domains would be much lower than that of a person who perceives occasional high conflict minus frequent verbal or physical abuse.

The buffering scale only included three items that probably did not substantially capture all important and relevant information regarding family relationships. In future studies information from the adolescent's perspective about how they feel particular relationships enhance or detract from their view of themselves would be useful. There are also other forms of buffering that have not been looked at in this study. The peer group could act as a source of support in conflicted families. This idea is supported by Cotteroll (1992) who found peer attachment was important to developmental aspects during adolescence such as body image and social relationships.

Future research needs to include more qualitative information through interviews with more than one member of each family. The small amount of qualitative information that was gained indicates that families and their interactions are very diverse and any effects on the individual's self-concept linked to interpretation of events are not easily understood. There are limitations to exclusively using self-report measures with one family member in that the representation of that family may be totally different from the

representation of another member of the same family. A greater diversity of qualitative information could give more understanding about why representations would differ. Qualitative information could also be used to gain a better understanding of birth order and if people feel their birth order equates with a particular role in the family. Is it that first borns still see their role as the responsible surrogate parent? Or has responsibility for family caretaking been distributed between siblings more?

Analysis in respect to spacing between siblings and the gender makeup of siblings is needed to see if these variables add more insight into the relationship of birth order and family size to self-concept. For example, Pulakos (1987) found that the uniqueness of being the only girl or only boy overrides the birth order effect in two child families. There were only 21 participants in the large family group. Therefore, statistical significance would be difficult to reach. A larger spread of families would enrich this data. Further analysis should also divide birth order into family size. For example, the birth order effects of two child families, birth order effects of three child families etc as the results indicate the role of first born and last born may be quite different in two children families than larger families.

The social status effect on self-concept needs to be determined using a psychometrically reliable socioeconomic scale. The measure of perceived social status placed adolescents into a social status category with regard to their parent's occupation but this has numerous problems associated with it. Being in a higher social status profession (for example a doctor or lawyer) does not necessarily mean that parents can provide a better standard of living or provide their children with greater opportunities. A job perceived as "middle status" may in fact have greater financial rewards. Parents may also have more flexi-time available enabling them to spend more time in meaningful activities with other family members. Some of the occupations were also very difficult to categorise due to limited information.

This measure of social status was used rather than getting adolescents to state what class they came from ie upper, middle, or working class often used in other studies because it was felt by the researcher that this type of categorisation is far less user friendly. Terms of social class are out dated and a class system does not prevail in New Zealand as it does in other western countries such as Britain. Participants of this age

group may be unfamiliar with these terms, which could cause inaccurate responding and social response bias if participants did not want to indicate they were from the “working class” option.

Another limitation of the present study centres around the fact that there are very few people in the non-intact family structure (40) compared with the intact structure (164). Therefore the lack of significant difference could be due to a small sample size in the non-intact group and hence low statistical power. Therefore, it cannot be stated that a difference between groups of intact and non-intact family structures does not significantly differ on self-concept until the non-intact structure has a larger sample.

It was surprising to the researcher that the non-intact group was so small. It was expected that at least a third (approximately 70) participants would come from broken families, as suggested by the divorce rate. Because it is more likely that people in divorced groups and even the highest conflict groups had left school several years earlier as there is a documented tendency for academic performance of children to deteriorate in conflicted families (Liang & Sugawara, 1996). The fact this study tapped into 7th formers only, may mean that a high percentage of the students came from stable families. It is also possible that lower self-concept extremes may not feel they have the ability to continue their education. Therefore, this sample is somewhat biased toward a group of people who have a strong enough belief in themselves and their capabilities to complete the final year of high school. This idea is supported by Blake and State (1990) who found that poor self-esteem was an indicator of students being “at risk” for academic failure and less likely to complete high school.

Because this study used three predominantly white middle class urban high schools the results can not be applied to adolescents beyond this group. Future studies should aim to reflect more cultural, ethnic and economic diversity in participants so results can be applied to a more representative group. A possible future follow up should sample many more schools in a larger urban area. Private schools should be compared with lower socioeconomic schools in poorer areas to gain a better understanding of the role socioeconomic status plays in self-concept and conflict.

It is possible there is a difference between the self-concept and family environment of urban and rural adolescents. One theme which emerged from the qualitative information supplied by people in farming families, was that due to the work done on the farm, it meant more time was spent together and a common need of a well functioning farm enabled family members to be close and get on together. In urban communities perhaps there is more outside influence and less time spent together. This could conceivably decrease closeness and /or increase family conflict.

Future research could also concentrate on non-European families. Because this sample was predominantly white it would be interesting to investigate the variable of ethnicity along with the other variables proposed in this study. Within New Zealand European society a nuclear family identity exists which focuses on independence between family members. However, in many Maori and Pacific Island families, as well as other cultural groups, an extended family identity is often common that focuses on interdependence of family members (Soto-Fulp, DelCampo, & DelCampo, 1993). Therefore, Maori and Pacific Island adolescents' self-concept may be shaped much more by extended relatives rather than just parents. If they have more interdependent links with their family they may find it more difficult to avoid conflicted issues than European adolescents.

Another follow up study could investigate the gender issues surrounding self-concept. A measure of physical self-concept should differentiate between appearance and ability. A comparison of single sex schools with mixed gender schools may provide information regarding the influence of how classmates gender could affect their physical and academic self-concept. For example, females may learn better in single sex schools and feel better about their physical ability in single sex schools whereby they are not competing in sports with males.

Another major limitation of this study is that due to its correlational nature, direction of causality cannot be surmised. It cannot be said that family conflict causes a low self-concept. Although it is logical to assume this may be the case some aspect of the self concept that is poor in both childhood and/ or later adolescence may play a role in family conflict. Just as emotional closeness with family would appear to lead to low conflict the opposite contention that low family conflict leads to more emotionally close

relations among family members is equally viable. Only through a longitudinal design can confidence be gained regarding the direction of the effect. It would be interesting to retest these participants in another five years time and see if the relationships between variables are consistent. Because many of the participants would no longer be living in their direct family environment their relationships with their families would probably take on new dynamics.

It is important to realise that conflict is not necessarily a bad thing. Issues within families will inevitably come up and it is not realistic to expect there will always be agreement. No conflict whatsoever could imply a lack of communication and not acknowledging problems as they appear. Adolescents who have substance abuse problems have often been found in disengaged families that have very low conflict but also lack of emotional involvement within the subsystem and entire family system (Friedman, Utada, & Morrissey, 1987).

A better understanding of “good” conflict that promotes healthy personality development and “bad” conflict that is destructive to self-concept and mental health may aid in understanding the relationship between conflict and self-concept. Montemayor (1986) recognised it is the way that families communicate during conflict that will have either constructive or destructive outcomes. Effort should be made to encourage families that engage in destructive conflict (assigning blame, leaving nagging tensions unresolved, avoidance, psychological separation) to gain the skills and awareness to engage in constructive conflict (acknowledge the other person’s feelings, accept their responsibility in the problem, include disclosure and solicit disclosure and trying to work on a fair compromise). Upon changing conflict into a more constructive nature, it will be beneficial both to the family environment and the adolescents’ sense of self.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study has attempted to look into the effects of birth order, gender, family structure, family conflict and family relationships and the part they play in the development of late adolescent self-concept. Despite the limitations of the present study, it does seem that family conflict, family relationships, and gender play at least some part in how the late adolescent defines him or herself. Gender especially appears to play a larger part than previously thought. A recognition of the part society and the media play in the recorded differences in physical self-concept may begin to close the gap. This inevitably will lead to much smaller differences in the total self concept between males and females.

Very few people feel confident in all of the six self-concept areas and a low score on one can usually be compensated for by a higher score on another. It is important to recognise that as individuals each person has areas of weakness and strength and that dwelling on weaknesses rather than recognising strengths will be detrimental to a person's overall view of themselves.

Specific follow ups that would enhance this study should focus on scales that differentiate between forms of conflict, what the conflict involves and whom the conflict involves. It would also be useful to look into relationships that are esteem threatening and esteem enhancing and looking at the independent effects of these on self-concept. Also, the inclusion of a psychometrically sound socioeconomic measure, and a sample that is more racially diverse would allow these factors to be included as major study variables.

Above all else, this study has recognised that the family context is still a very important part of the late adolescent's life. This applies even when they seem to treasure their independence and indicate they want to establish themselves away from the family environment. A healthy family environment will provide a valuable resource in terms of enhanced self perception and self-efficacy that these young adults can carry forward into their adult life

It is hoped that through this study teachers, and parents will become aware and gain a better understanding of how the variables investigated by this study may not only have an effect on the value of the self in the short term but could have huge implications in the long-term. It is also hoped that an increased awareness of late adolescents' vulnerability and their need for emotionally supportive relationships with family members will be recognised. Hopefully, the results of this study will help school counsellors and other mental health professionals gain a better understanding of how to assist in enhancing self-esteem and providing input, which will increase a sense of self-efficacy and self-concept in both males and females. By doing this, along with further research into prevention strategies the needs of adolescents from highly conflicted and dysfunctional families will be met.

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APPENDIX A

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

Information Sheet for Participants.

My name is Sasha Wealleans and I am completing a Masters of arts in psychology at Massey University. I am undertaking this research study as part of my thesis project of which you are invited to participate. I am supervised in this project by Cheryl Woolley who is a senior child and family psychologist based in the school of psychology at Massey University.

The purpose of this study is to see whether or not an individual's self-concept is affected by family conflict, family structure and birth order.

This study invites you to fill out questionnaires that ask questions about you and your family. This should not take longer than 15 minutes to complete. These questionnaires will be administered in a group setting, at the venue and your choice of time attached to this sheet.

Because this study is looking at late adolescence (17-19 years) first year lectures were specifically targeted as the majority of people who attend these lectures are in this age group. Participation will have no effect on your course of study. This research is completely independent of any papers you are doing at Massey University.

This study will be kept completely anonymous, as your name is not required on any of the questionnaires. Confidentiality is assured as only the researcher and her supervisor have access to the material from this study.

As an invited participant, you have the right:

- *To decline to participate**
- *To withdraw from the study at any time prior to handing in the questionnaire.**
- *To refuse to answer any question for whatever reason.**
- *To ask any questions about the study at any time during participation.**

If you decide to withdraw from the study all answers completed will be destroyed and not used in the analyses of results. If you would like a summary of results of this study they will be posted to an address provided once the results are known.

If you have any queries about this research project you can leave a message for me at the Psychology department on (06) 3569099 and I will get back to you, or you can contact my supervisor Cheryl Woolley whose phone number is (06) 3505799 Ext 2076.

Thankyou for your time.

APPENDIX B

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

Thankyou for agreeing to be a participant in this study. Your time and effort are very much appreciated.

This questionnaire includes 23 questions in total. Questions 21-23 only need to be answered by those whose parents are separated or divorced.

1. What is your age in years? _____

2. What Gender are you? Please tick the appropriate category.

Male _____

Female _____

3. What ethnic group do you identify yourself as? Please tick the appropriate category.

Pakeha/European New Zealander _____

Maori _____

Pacific Islander _____

Asian _____

European _____

Other (If other please state) _____

4. If you are living with at least one other person, please tick which of the following categories best describes your current living situation. (You may tick more than one category if appropriate).

Living with both parents	_____
Living with one parent	_____
Living with flatmates	_____
Living with a partner	_____
Living in a hostel with other students	_____
Other (If other please state)	_____

5. If you are no longer living with either of your parents , at what age did you leave home? (Please state below)

6. Please tick which best represents your parents current relationship.

Married	_____
Separated	_____
Divorced	_____
Widowed	_____
Never Married	_____

7. Please state the occupations of the following people:

Your Mother_____ Your Father_____

Stepmother (if any)_____ Stepfather (if any)_____

8. Please tick your birth order in your family of origin. **NOTE: Middle born refers to all birth orders except first born, last born and only born. For example in a family of six the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th born would tick middle born.**

First born _____

Middle born _____

Last born _____

Only born _____

9. Please list the gender and ages of siblings in your family in order of birth.

1st _____ Age_____

2nd _____ Age_____

3rd _____ Age_____

4th _____ Age_____

5th _____ Age_____

6th _____ Age_____

Others (if any)_____

Here are a number of statements about your family and people within your family. Please read each one carefully and indicate whether you think these statements are true or false and to what extent by circling a number . Some of these questions may not be applicable for example question 18 if you are an only child. If this is the case please write N/A for non applicable next to the question. If you have lived in more than one family situation, think back to the one you lived in the longest and can remember the most about.

	Always False	Mostly False	Partly False/ Partly True	Mostly True	Always True
10. There are many conflicts in our family.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Family members rarely raise their voices.	1	2	3	4	5
12. We argue a lot in our family.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Family members are critical of each other.	1	2	3	4	5
14. If family members disagree A solution is easily found.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Family members have a tendency to become violent when angry.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I have an emotionally close relationship with my mother.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I have an emotionally close relationship with my father.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Think of the brother or sister You feel closest to. That relationship is supportive?	1	2	3	4	5
19. My parents fight a lot.	1	2	3	4	5

20. If there is anything else you would like to add about your family situation that may aid understanding of the experiences you had within your family please feel free to comment in the following space provided.

The following questions are only to be answered by those whose parents are separated or divorced.

21. How old were you when your parents separated? ____

22. Please comment on your living arrangements after the separation and/or divorce.

23. If divorce occurred did either of your mother or father get remarried or form other long term relationships? Please comment.

APPENDIX C

TENNESSEE SELF-CONCEPT SCALE (2nd EDITION)

Name _____

Examiner's Name _____

Administration Date _____

Age (Required) _____

1 = Always False
2 = Mostly False
3 = Partly False and Partly True
4 = Mostly True
5 = Always True

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1. I am an attractive person. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 2. I am an honest person. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 3. I am a member of a happy family. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4. I wish I could be more trustworthy. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5. I do not feel at ease with other people. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Math is hard for me. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 7. I am a friendly person. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 8. I am satisfied with my moral behavior. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9. I am not as smart as the people around me. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 10. I do not act the way my family thinks I should. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 11. I am just as nice as I should be. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 12. It is easy for me to learn new things. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 13. I am satisfied with my family relationships. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 14. I am not the person I would like to be. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 15. I understand my family as well as I should. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 16. I despise myself. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 17. I don't feel as well as I should. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 18. I do well at math. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 19. I am satisfied to be just what I am. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 20. I get along well with other people. |

Continue unless you have been instructed to stop at Item 20.

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 21. I have a healthy body. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 22. I consider myself a sloppy person. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 23. I am a decent sort of person. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 24. I try to run away from my problems. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 25. I am a cheerful person. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 26. I am a nobody. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 27. My family would always help me with any kind of trouble. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 28. I get angry sometimes. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 29. I am full of aches and pains. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 30. I am a sick person. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 31. I am a morally weak person. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 32. Other people think I am smart. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 33. I am a hateful person. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 34. I am losing my mind. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 35. I am not loved by my family. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 36. I feel that my family doesn't trust me. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 37. I am not good at the work I do. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 38. I am mad at the whole world. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 39. I am hard to be friendly with. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 40. Once in a while I think of things too bad to talk about. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 41. Sometimes when I am not feeling well, I am cross. |

continue on back

Adult Form

TSCS:2 AutoScore™ Form

W. H. Fitts, Ph.D. and W. L. Warren, Ph.D.

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Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Grade/Years of Education Completed

<input type="checkbox"/> <7	<input type="checkbox"/> 9	<input type="checkbox"/> 12	<input type="checkbox"/> 15
<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 13	<input type="checkbox"/> 16
<input type="checkbox"/> 8	<input type="checkbox"/> 11	<input type="checkbox"/> 14	<input type="checkbox"/> >16

Ethnicity

<input type="checkbox"/> Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> Native American
<input type="checkbox"/> Black	<input type="checkbox"/> White
<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Directions

This scale asks you to describe how you feel about yourself. There are no right or wrong answers, so please just describe yourself as honestly as you can. When you are ready to begin, read each statement and decide how well it describes you according to the scale below. Read each statement carefully. Then circle the number that shows your answer. Circle only one number for each statement, using this scale:

Answer 1 if the statement is ALWAYS FALSE.

Answer 2 if the statement is MOSTLY FALSE.

Answer 3 if the statement is PARTLY FALSE AND PARTLY TRUE.

Answer 4 if the statement is MOSTLY TRUE.

Answer 5 if the statement is ALWAYS TRUE.

If you wish to change a response, cross it out with an X, and circle the new response you have chosen.

PLEASE PRESS HARD WHEN CIRCLING YOUR RESPONSE

1 = Always False

2 = Mostly False

3 = Partly False and Partly True

4 = Mostly True

5 = Always True

- 1 2 3 4 5 42. I am neither too fat nor too thin.
- 1 2 3 4 5 43. I'll never be as smart as other people.
- 1 2 3 4 5 44. I like to work with numbers.
- 1 2 3 4 5 45. I am as sociable as I want to be.
- 1 2 3 4 5 46. I have trouble doing the things that are right.
- 1 2 3 4 5 47. Once in a while I laugh at a dirty joke.
- 1 2 3 4 5 48. I should have more sex appeal.
- 1 2 3 4 5 49. I shouldn't tell so many lies.
- 1 2 3 4 5 50. I can't read very well.
- 1 2 3 4 5 51. I treat my parents as well as I should.
- 1 2 3 4 5 52. I am too sensitive about the things people in my family say.
- 1 2 3 4 5 53. I should love my family more.
- 1 2 3 4 5 54. I am satisfied with the way I treat other people.
- 1 2 3 4 5 55. I ought to get along better with people.
- 1 2 3 4 5 56. I gossip a little at times.
- 1 2 3 4 5 57. Sometimes I feel like swearing.
- 1 2 3 4 5 58. I take good care of myself physically.
- 1 2 3 4 5 59. I try to be careful about my appearance.
- 1 2 3 4 5 60. I am true to my religion in my everyday actions.
- 1 2 3 4 5 61. I sometimes do very bad things.
- 1 2 3 4 5 62. I can always take care of myself in any situation.
- 1 2 3 4 5 63. I do as well as I want to at almost any job.
- 1 2 3 4 5 64. I feel good most of the time.
- 1 2 3 4 5 65. I take a real interest in my family.
- 1 2 3 4 5 66. I try to understand the other person's point of view.
- 1 2 3 4 5 67. I'd rather win a game than lose one.
- 1 2 3 4 5 68. I am not good at games and sports.
- 1 2 3 4 5 69. I look fine just the way I am.
- 1 2 3 4 5 70. I do not know how to work well.
- 1 2 3 4 5 71. I have trouble sleeping.
- 1 2 3 4 5 72. I do what is right most of the time.
- 1 2 3 4 5 73. I am no good at all in social situations.
- 1 2 3 4 5 74. I solve my problems quite easily.
- 1 2 3 4 5 75. I am a bad person.
- 1 2 3 4 5 76. I am satisfied with my relationship with God.
- 1 2 3 4 5 77. I quarrel with my family.
- 1 2 3 4 5 78. I see something good in everyone I meet.
- 1 2 3 4 5 79. I find it hard to talk with strangers.
- 1 2 3 4 5 80. Sometimes I put off until tomorrow what I ought to do today.
- 1 2 3 4 5 81. It's easy for me to understand what I read.
- 1 2 3 4 5 82. I have a lot of self-control.

There are no right or wrong answers.
Just answer as honestly as possible.
Please answer ALL items.

**PLEASE PRESS HARD
WHEN CIRCLING YOUR RESPONSE**