THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Adolescent Self-Esteem as Related to

Family Composition, Perception of Family Relationships,

and Cognitive Coping Style

by

Laurie   Lynn   Milthorp

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

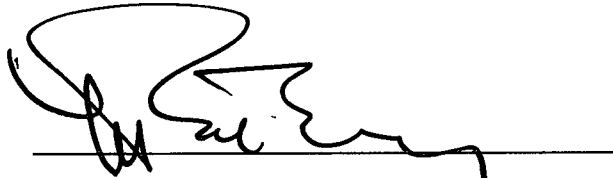DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

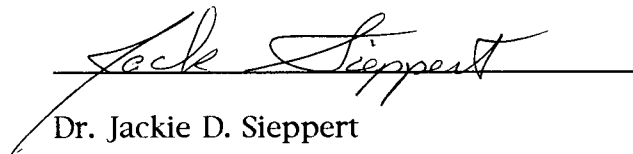FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK

CALGARY, ALBERTA

JULY, 1995

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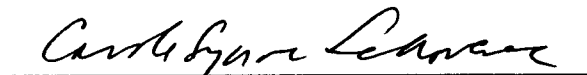
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Adolescent Self-Esteem as Related to Family Composition, Perception of Family Relationships, and Cognitive Coping Style" submitted by Laurie Lynn Milthorp in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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Abstract

This study explores the area of adolescent self-esteem as it relates to family variables and cognitive coping style and attempts to address the question: Does family composition have a significant relationship to the development of an adolescent's self-esteem? The conclusions drawn from these findings are that the relationship existing between adolescents and their parents has a far more significant impact on the development of self-esteem than does the type of family within which those relationships occur. It is further concluded that the perception of family relationships is also related to cognitive coping style, in this case measured through the use of self-control variables, and that this coping style also has a significant relationship to self-esteem. Theoretical applications are discussed with regard to how families, and significant others, can impact adolescent self-esteem in positive ways to effect healthy emotional growth.

Preface

My interest in this area of study originally grew out of my involvement in the field of adoption and my concern regarding the prevalent belief that adoption, as one type of family composition, creates identity and self-esteem problems for adoptees. As this belief is largely based on studies of clinical populations, it was my hope that through studying a normative sample a more accurate picture might be presented. However, due to the relatively small numbers of adoptees in the general population, it became evident that a focus on adoption would be impractical due to the sample size that would be required to obtain valid results, as well as the difficulty inherent in identifying a population of adolescent adoptees in a non-clinical environment. Consequently, the focus of this study was broadened to consider all types of family composition, as similar identity and self-esteem concerns are increasingly voiced regarding children from "broken homes".

I would suggest that family composition alone does not significantly affect adolescent self-esteem within a normative population, thus raising a further question regarding differences in self-esteem that may be found to exist. It is my belief that it is adolescents' perception of the relationships within their families that will be seen to have a significant role in explaining these differences. Also, recent writings in the area of coping skills have suggested that personality variables such as "learned resourcefulness" (Rosenbaum, 1990) may account for such differences.

Acknowledgments

Dedication

TO MY FAMILY:

Without you, this wouldn't have been possible

TO ALL FAMILIES:

Whatever form you may take

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Relevance to Social Work Practice

The purpose of this thesis to explore and integrate the connections between a number of significant research areas pertinent to the practice of social work, in particular, and the helping professions, in general. The areas that will be explored include the study of families and how certain family issues relate to the development of adolescent perceptions of self, and furthermore, how these variables may interact with patterns of cognitive functioning related to the development of coping skills. More specifically, this thesis will consider the different forms of family composition, as well as how the experience of family is perceived by the adolescent; and will explore how these factors may relate to the adolescent's self-esteem and the development of "learned resourcefulness" (Rosenbaum, 1980, 1988, 1990a, 1990b) as one cognitive coping strategy related to the development of self-control. In integrating these areas of study it is hoped that conclusions may be drawn that might enhance our understanding of these issues toward the goal of more effective intervention with adolescents and their families.

Defining the Problem

My interest in this area of study originally grew out of my involvement in the area of adoption and my concern regarding the belief that adoption, as one type of family composition, creates disproportionate identity and self-esteem problems for adoptees (Mackie, 1982; Schneider & Rimmer, 1984; Kirschner & Nagel, 1988; Stewart, 1990). Historically, this belief was largely

based on studies of clinical populations (Kirschner & Nagel, 1988). However, in their more recent study of normative (volunteer) populations, Brodzinsky, Schechter, and Henig (1992) have summarized current beliefs as follows:

> The clustering of certain symptoms in troubled adoptees actually led some researchers, in the early 1980s, to theorize the existence of an "adopted child syndrome." Few professionals today believe such a syndrome exists.

What has been observed, however, is that adopted children and adolescents make up a higher-than-expected proportion of children in psychological distress. Only 1 to 2 percent of the population under age eighteen are adopted by non-blood relatives, yet adoptees comprise an unusually high proportion of children involved in outpatient psychotherapy (5 percent rather than the expected 1 or 2 percent), young patients in residential treatment centers and psychiatric hospitals (10 to 15 percent instead of 1 or 2 percent), and children identified by school systems as either perceptually, neurologically, or emotionally impaired (6 to 9 percent instead of 1 or 2 percent). (p. 10)

As "the vast majority of adoptees manage to live productive lives without major psychopathology" (Brinich, 1990, p. 43), it becomes important to question, using the above statistics as an example, who then comprises the remaining 95 percent of children involved in outpatient psychotherapy, the additional 85 to 90 percent of young patients in residential treatment centers and psychiatric hospitals, and the 91 to 94 percent of children identified by school systems as either perceptually, neurologically or emotionally impaired? What is occurring in these non-adoptive families that is resulting in them utilizing the majority of the treatment facilities for children and adolescents?

In comparing non-clinical adopted and non-adopted populations, Hoopes and Stein (1985) found no significant differences in identity development and self-esteem between the two groups. Longitudinal studies appear to indicate that adoptees may, in fact,. fare better than those children born to single women (Seglow, Pringle, & Wedge, 1972) or raised by teenage mothers (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, & Morgan, 1987; Brooks-Gunn, 1990). A recent longitudinal study on divorce raises the question of whether children of divorce may not also be at higher risk (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

The intent of this study, therefore, is to explore these issues within the context of a normative adolescent population by addressing the question: Does family composition have a significant relationship to the development of an adolescent's self-esteem? Based on the statements provided above, I would intend to hypothesize that family composition alone does not significantly affect adolescent self-esteem within a normative population. This raises a further question regarding differences in self-esteem that may be found to exist. Hoopes and Stein (1985) stated at the conclusion of their study that the "quality of family relationships was most predictive of positive identity and adjustment across all groups" (p. 63). Consequently, this study will attempt to explore the quality of family relationships by measuring the quality of these relationships as perceived by the adolescent.

A further question arises as to how the quality of these relationships influences identity development and self-esteem. One possible factor that will be considered in this study is how family relationships may influence the development of coping skills, which may, in turn, influence the development of self esteem. Rosenbaum (1980, 1988, 1990a, 1990b) has suggested that

personality variables such as "learned resourcefulness" may play a role in how individuals cope. "Learned resourcefulness", a term originated by Meichenbaum in 1977, is defined by Rosenbaum (1990a) as "a set of well-learned behaviors and skills by which a person self-controls his or her behavior" (p. 4). He has chosen to study this variable through the use of a measure that quantifies an individual's level of self-control. In this study, Rosenbaum's Self-Control Schedule has been chosen as an indicator of one type of "cognitive coping style" that may have a relationship to the development of self-esteem. Self-esteem will be measured by the use of scales which reflect "a *personal* judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitude the individual holds toward himself" (Coopersmith, 1967, pp. 4-5).

Based on the above considerations, and working within the context of a normative adolescent population, the following hypotheses will be explored in this study: :

Hypothesis #1: No significant relationship can be shown to exist between an adolescent's family composition and self-esteem.

Hypothesis #2: A significant relationship can be shown to exist between an adolescent's perception of family relationships and self-esteem.

Hypothesis #3: A significant relationship can be shown to exist between an adolescent's cognitive coping style and self-esteem.

Hypothesis #4: A significant relationship can be shown to exist between an adolescent's cognitive coping style and perception of family relationships.

Problem   Statement

There has been little research examining the relationship between family structure, adolescent's perceptions of their parents and adolescent's self concept.   (Rosenthal, Peng, & McMillan, 1980, p. 442)

Although this statement is 15 years old, little research has occurred during the intervening period to considerably alter the statement's validity. The majority of research in this area has focused on "parental influences on children; many of these studies were prompted by an interest in the adjustment of children to paternal loss resulting from death or family breakup" (Ternay, Wilborn, & Day, 1985, p. 261-262).   Although some would argue that family structure and family composition are different concepts, for the purpose of this study it is argued that the intent of the statement remains the same.

It is interesting, therefore, to question why so little research has been done on the relationship between these variables.   In part, this may be due to research questions surrounding the validity of self-report (La Greca, 1990), in general, and the validity of measures in the area of perception, in particular. Historically, adolescent self-perceptions have been seen to be unreliable; consequently, externally identifiable variables such as behavior, academic performance, and parent or teacher assessment have been used as objective indicators or validators of the adolescent's self-concept.   Only recently have researchers "found the self-report of the adolescent to be reliable and valid" (Offer & Schonert-Reichl, 1992, p. 1009).   Offer and Schonert-Reichl (1992) , in their review of recent research in this area, go on to indicate that "the

manner in which an adolescent's symptoms are evaluated by parents, teachers, and mental health professionals may be different from those endorsed by the adolescent himself or herself" to the point that "the prevalence of disturbance increases when the self-report of the adolescent is taken into account" (p. 1009). Such findings give credence to the need for greater use of adolescent perception and self-report tools in adolescent research.

As I was conducting my own review of the literature, I felt that family variables were often lacking in the research related to adolescents and mental health in the psychiatric literature. Adams, Overholser, and Lehnert (1994) have acknowledged that " many dimensions of parent-adolescent relationships remain unexamined in relation to the risk of adolescent suicidal behavior" (p. 498). Further to this, Howser and Bowlds, in their 1990 review of the literature, found that "little is known about the coping behaviors that adolescents employ . . . as well as the individual variation that exists with regard to their specific coping behaviors" (Offer & Schonert-Reichl, 1992, p. 1009).

As a social worker providing services to adolescents and their families, it is my hope to emphasize, through this study of normative adolescents, the importance of family variables and their relationship to the ways in which adolescents formulate their coping strategies and develop self-esteem.

<u>Research Questions and Hypotheses</u>

<u>Hypothesis #1</u>.

No significant relationship can be shown to exist between an adolescent's family composition and self-esteem.

Findings in this area are contradictory. For example, Parish and Parish (1991) found, in their study of midwestern college students, that "those whose parents were divorced demonstrated more negative self-concepts ($t = 2.13$, $p < .05$) but not less adequate social skills than did those who had not experienced parental divorce" (p. 446). On the other hand, Fend (1990) concluded in his study of German adolescents (12-16 years) that critical life-events (including divorce and death of a parent) "in themselves, do not appear to lead directly to specific effects" (pp. 101-102), a finding which he judged to be consistent with theories regarding stress and coping. Fend emphasized the importance of culturally determined criteria of success or failure and the resulting impact of "social inductions of 'completeness' or 'incompleteness' " (p. 90). He acknowledged in his conclusion that "the subjective interpretation which is made of such events is of greater importance than their objective occurrence" (p. 109). Because this subjective interpretation appears to be a critical element in studies of this nature, the cognitive and perceptual variables in the succeeding hypotheses are offered.

One example of the possible complications created by the role of perception may be found in the work by Dornbusch, Mont-Reynaud, Ritter, Chen, and Steinberg (1991), whose study of family variables as they related to

stress outcomes in American adolescents confronted an interesting conundrum that may also explain some of the inconsistencies in the literature:

> Youth from two-natural-parent households report fewer stressful events, but there is a tendency for stress experienced by these youth to have a greater negative impact than for youth in other types of households. Alternatively, youth from other types of households report more stressful events but appear less vulnerable to them. (p. 127)

These findings may lead to the conclusion that although life in a two-parent natural family may be smoother, it may fail to present the kind of challenges that allow its members to cope with stressors in the outside world, with corresponding consequences for the development of long-term coping skills and self-esteem.

Another reason for conflicting findings in this area is the variety of intervening variables that affect study outcomes, as well as the differing variables used to measure adolescent adjustment. Using perceived level of stress as an adjustment indicator, Lutz (1983) studied a sample of 103 West Virginian adolescents (12-18 years) living in stepfamilies as a result of divorce or the death of a parent. Her findings suggest that one such intervening variable may be the novelty of the adjustment experience. Lutz found that "adolescents who lived in stepfamilies two or less years reported more stress than those who had lived in a stepfamily more than two years" (p. 373). From this she concluded that "it may be that stepfamily life is not as stressful as the literature suggests. Perhaps after the initial period of adjustment, the stepfamily milieu is not decidedly different from other family systems in relation to stress" (p. 375).

Smetana, Yau, Restrepo, and Braeges (1991) used parent-child conflict to measure adjustment in adolescents (grades 5-12) from two-parent (implied biological) families and stable, divorced, single-parent families. "The results of these analyses suggest that the lower level of conflict reported among adolescents in divorced compared to intact, married families [particularly in early adolescence] may reflect positive styles of interaction and adaptation" (p. 60). The authors cite studies conducted in 1979 and 1989 by Hetherington and Weiss that indicate one possible explanation for their findings: "divorced mothers expect greater maturity from their children than do married parents" (p. 60). However, one possible disadvantage of this expectation of maturity is found in a study conducted by Parish and Parish (1991) who suggest that this expectation may result in a lack of care or inadequate supervision and that:

> those who indicated that they had lacked adequate supervision also manifested more negative self-concepts ($t = -2.45$, p < .05) and poorer social skills ($t = -2.49$, p < .05) than did those who indicated that they had received adequate supervision while not in school. (p. 445)

However, recognizing, as did Lutz (1983), that timing may have a significant bearing on outcome variables, Smetana et al. (1991) go on to conclude that "if the family has been divorced prior to the child's adolescence, giving the family system more time to stabilize, conflict may be attenuated" (p. 61). Both these studies appear to be supported by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) where conclusions drawn from a 10 year longitudinal study of divorce appear to indicate that "very few older children, age nine and over at divorce, developed good relationships with their stepfathers, with some important exceptions" (p. 248) which included the fact that "girls are much more likely to welcome the stepfather's participation in the family after the initial period

of worry, distrust, and testing of each other is behind them" (p. 249), again indicating that the processes of transition and acclimatization to a new family are factors that influence study outcomes.

Parish (1991) used the following statistics to show the possible effects of transition when he compared Kansas youths (ages 10-18) from intact, divorced non remarried, and divorced remarried families, and stated that:

> The only significant main effect was the result of family status, with those from intact families (X = 12.18) demonstrating significantly higher self-concepts than those from divorced remarried families (X = 11.03). The self-concept of youths from divorced nonremarried families (X = 11.47) was not found to vary significantly from the other groups. (p. 107)

Amato and Ochiltree (1987), in a study which used multiple measures of competence as indicative of adjustment in Australian children and adolescents (ages 8, 9, 15, & 16) from intact, single-parent, and step-families, also concluded that:

> Children from one-parent families were essentially equivalent to children from intact two-parent on all measures. If anything, it appeared to be children from step-families that had a disadvantage . . . [including] a marginally significantly lower level of self-esteem, compared to children from intact two-parent families. If anything, these findings suggest the debilitating effects of gaining a new parent, rather than losing an old one. (pp. 93-94)

In concluding, however, these authors felt that their findings supported the theory that "family processes are probably of greater importance in understanding child outcomes than is family type as such"

(p. 94). This idea is also supported by Shaffer (1990) whose extensive review of the literature led him to conclude that:

> As the divorce literature shows, children for the most part do settle down eventually following such an event, provided it does not lead to any enduring crisis in the family's affairs . . . . it is the enduring nature of stress that constitutes the cruicial [sic] factor in producing long-term consequences . . . (p. 231)

Similar conclusions have been drawn with regard to adoption. Stein and Hoopes (1985) in their study of identity formation in 50 adopted American adolescents found that "most adolescents asserted that it was not adoptive status per se that necessarily engendered difficulty, but problematic relationships within the family, especially with one's parents" (p. 61). This finding is echoed by Kaye (1990) in his study regarding the acknowledgment or rejection of differences in adopted families, where "at least half of our sample of adolescents showed extremely low self-esteem at the time we tested them, and that fact was strongly associated with a history of family problems" (p. 136).

In keeping with the emphasis on family processes, and echoing Fend's (1990) concern regarding the importance of subjective interpretation, a second hypothesis is hereby suggested which coalesces the multiple intervening variables addressed above into one variable which measures the adolescent's perception of family relationships.

<u>Hypothesis #2.</u>

A significant relationship can be shown to exist between an adolescent's perception of family relationships and self-esteem.

Support for this hypothesis has been provided by a number of studies, including those already addressed, which have assessed children's perceptions of various components of their family relationships. Fend (1990) found a "clear parallel between the perception of parental support and the development of ego-strength" (p. 103) in his study of German 12-16 year olds. According to a literature review by Noller and Patton (1990), similar findings were obtained in studies conducted by Buri, Kirchner, and Walsh and Hoelter and Harper in 1987; Gegas and Swalbe in 1986; and Harris and Howard in 1984. Stein and Hoopes (1985), in their study of adopted American adolescents, also concluded that "the predictive strength of positive family relationships in the overall process of identity formation cannot be overemphasized" (p. 64).

With respect to self-esteem, these findings are consistent with the findings of Rosenberg (1965) who found significant evidence that American high school students "who report a lack of parental interest have lower self-esteem than others" (p. 145); and Coopersmith (1967) who found significant differences in a group of 10-12 year old American males where "over one-third of the children with low self-esteem do not see their mothers as concerned and interested in their friends" (p. 172). Although Coopersmith also found non significant differences in self-esteem between those children who perceived their mothers to be accepting and those who did not, his data indicated a trend whereby children "with high self-esteem are less likely

(17.6 percent) to perceive their parents [mothers] as negative or destructive influences than are persons with medium (41.2 percent) of [sic] low (41.2 percent) self-esteem" (p. 174).

More recently, Rosenthal, Peng, and McMillan (1980), in their New York study of 7th, 8th, and 9th graders from single parent (separated, divorced, widowed, and remarried) and two-parent families, reported that "self concept was consistently found to be positively related to perceptions of parental love and negatively related to perceptions of parent's rejection" (p. 451). Parish and Parish (1991), using retrospective indicators of perceived support system failure in their study of 256 midwestern American university students, found that "individuals who experienced parental divorce, more so than their counterparts who had not, were more likely to encounter parental hostility and/or lack of care, inadequate supervision when not in school, lack of concern by teachers, and more financial hardship" (p. 446). The consequence of these experiences was that:

> Those who indicated that their parents were hostile and uncaring demonstrated significantly more negative self-concepts ($t = 2.32$, $p < .05$) and poorer social skills ($t = 2.45$, $p < .05$) than did those who indicated that their parents were *not* hostile and uncaring. (pp. 444-445).

In explanation of these findings, Shaffer (1990) describes some families as remaining:

> More or less continuously in a state of tension and discord, creating an atmosphere which becomes a constant part of growing up for the children involved. It is the sheer continuity, the fact that these influences form part of the child's experience all day and every day,

that makes them in the long run so potent a force in shaping personality development. (p. 230)

While it should also be noted that other factors, such as birth order (Parish, 1987), may affect an individuals' perception of their family relationships, and thereby their self-esteem, it is also important to note that no causal relationship has been determined between perception of family relationships and self-esteem:

> There is fair consistency over the studies reviewed in supporting the judgment that various manifestations of subjective adjustment tend to covary: adolescents who are happy with themselves tend to be pleased with most aspects of their lives. It is not clear, however, whether there is a single direction of causation operating here: whether self-esteem derives from subjective success in one's dealings with the world, or whether self-esteem affects that level of success. Disentangling these two directions of causation would require longitudinal studies, which have been exceedingly rare in the published literature. Such studies could well shed light on another causal issue, namely, the effect of life events (e.g., unemployment or illness) on subjective adjustment: the degree to which these events alter self-esteem or are themselves influenced by it. (Scott, 1990, p. 253).

In recognition of the need for longitudinal data, Raja, McGee, and Stanton (1991) studied perceived attachment to parents and peers in a cohort group of 15 year old New Zealand students who had been participating in another longitudinal study regarding medical, behavioral and developmental issues since they were three years of age. Using measures to assess mental health and the impact of life events on their subjects, these researchers stated

that "an important relationship between mental health and attachment to parents was observed in this study. Generally, low perceived attachment to parents was associated with greater problems of conduct, inattention, depression, and the frequent experience of negative life events" (p. 483). While "the adolescent's positive view of himself or herself derived from both parents and peers" (p. 484), "psychological well-being in early adolescence was more strongly associated with the perceived level of attachment to parents rather than peers" (p. 482).

Hypothesis #3.

A significant relationship can be shown to exist between an adolescent's cognitive coping style and self-esteem.

Although empirical support for this hypothesis is lacking, theoretical support for this hypothesis was provided by Rosenberg (1965) who indicated an awareness of the relationship between coping and self-esteem when he stated that "the individual develops certain 'coping mechanisms' which interrupt the direct translation of objective failure into a sense of personal inadequacy. Research into these coping mechanisms appears to merit high priority" (p. 282). Despite the confidence with which Rosenberg made this statement, however, a quarter century later researchers continue to struggle with this question. As Fend (1990) states at the conclusion of his study of self-esteem stability and its relationship to school career: "Further research needs to examine closely the mediating cognitive and social mechanisms between subjective information processing and the objective indices" (p. 102).

Although the specific dynamics of this relationship continue to remain unclear, the fact that a significant relationship is believed to exists is witnessed by our continuing support for Rosenberg's (1965) belief that the purpose of psychotherapeutic techniques is to "enable us consciously and systematically to produce change in the individual's self-image" (p. 288). This statement is supported by the growing body of therapeutic literature which addresses the effectiveness of cognitively-oriented counseling techniques on improving one's feelings about oneself (Dryden & Trower, 1989). Further support is found in the growing use of "self-talk" as a self-esteem enhancing strategy (Braiker, 1989).

It is important to note, however, that no direct causal relationship is implied. As Palazzi, De Vito, Luzzati, Guerrini, and Torre (1990) concluded in studying the impact of life events (including parental separation and death of a parent) on the self-image of Italian adolescents :

Personal attitudes which help to cope with external difficulties, such as self-image dimensions, may be shown to be important in further analysis.

It certainly seems possible that self-image may play a role in determining the distress an individual experiences in the longer term. (p. 61)

With reference to the role of cognition, it has long been recognized that adolescence is the time in which the formal operational thought processes are developed. During this time adolescents become capable of what Piaget called "second degree thinking": "Adolescents not only think beyond the present but analytically reflect about their own thinking" (Muuss, 1988, p. 187). Along with this ability comes an increased capacity for social cognition: a "growing

ability to understand how others feel and think about one another's behavior as well as how the adolescent conceptualizes the other people's thinking" (Offer & Schonert-Reichl, 1992, p. 1006). Thought processes are further expanded by the increased awareness of options and alternatives: "Adolescents, who have mastered formal operations, begin by thinking of all logical possibilities and then consider them in a systematic fashion; reality has become secondary to possibility, reality now being reduced to a subset of possibility" (Muuss, 1988, pp. 187-188). It is this increased ability to reflect on past, present, and future in an analytical fashion that propels the adolescent into the cognitive and behavioral exploration process that Erikson described in 1950 as the "identity crisis": "The search for an identity involves the establishment of a meaningful self-concept in which past, present, and future are brought together to form a unified whole" (Muuss, 1988, p. 60).

Although contemporary researchers studying adolescence now view the concept of identity "crisis" as a myth (Offer & Schonert-Reichl, 1992), the process of identity development remains relevant. As cited by Muuss (1988):

Adolescence has been characterized by Erikson (1950) as the period in the human life cycle during which the individual must establish a *sense of personal identity* . . . . Identity achievement implies that the individual assesses his strengths and weaknesses and determines how he wants to deal with them. He must answer for himself where he came from, who he is, and what he wants to become. Identity, or a sense of sameness and continuity, must be searched for. Identity is not readily given to the individual by society, nor does it appear as a maturational phenomenon when the time has come, as do the secondary sex characteristics. Identity must be acquired through sustained

individual effort. Unwillingness to work actively on one's identity formation carries with it the danger of role diffusion, which may result in alienation and a sense of isolation and confusion. (p. 60)

While "new research also supports the concept that adolescence is a period of development that can be traversed without turmoil and that the transition to adulthood is accomplished gradually and without undue upheaval" (Offer & Schonert-Reichl, 1992, p. 1004), it would appear reasonable to maintain the supposition that cognitive coping style and self-esteem are dynamically interwoven during this transition period.

Hypothesis #4.

A significant relationship can be shown to exist between an adolescent's cognitive coping style and perception of family relationships.

Assuming that the second and third hypotheses are found to hold true - that there exists a relationship between both of these variables and adolescent self-esteem - it would appear to follow as a logical corollary that a relationship of some form exists between cognitive coping style and perception of family relationships. Again, no causal relationship can be applied, but the possibility of an existing relationship can be explored.

Bell, Avery, Jenkins, Feld, and Schoenrock (1985) in their study of American University students found that "those who report greater closeness to the family also report . . . greater social self-esteem and social competence" (p. 113), competence often being used as a measure of successful coping strategies.

A review of the literature would suggest that other factors, such as the overall quality of family relationships, would also be reflected in how these relationships are perceived. Although an adolescent coping study by Moriarty and Toussieng (1976) did provide some descriptive information regarding the relationship between family and coping variables, the authors did not correlate these variables as this was not the study's primary focus. Scott (1990), in his study of Australian adolescents, found that "agreement between children and their parents concerning family relations is rarely high" (p. 253). This may in part be accounted for by developmental variations in formal thought processes. However, as Mussen argues, "a child's perception of his/her parents may or may not be accurate, but the perception influences their behaviors" (cited in Rosenthal et al., 1980, p. 442). An exploratory study by Earl (1991) explored the dynamics of perceived trauma as it related to symptoms of post traumatic stress syndrome in a clinical population of female adolescents. He concluded that "perceived trauma, as a concept, contains elements of an unstable and possibly unrealistic belief system as well as unfulfilled expectations which appear to be associated more with age than with cognitive style" (p. 102), thereby providing further support that perceptions may be influenced by age related issues during the adolescent period. Although these examples provide further confirmation that cognitive-perceptual processes play a role, little evidence is presently available regarding the interrelationship of these variables. Based on the limited information available in this area, exploration of this fourth hypothesis is directed toward addressing this issue.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Preamble

This literature review attempts to provide an overview of the significant elements explored in this thesis: family, adolescence, self-esteem, and cognitive coping style. This review is in no way intended to be exhaustive as the quantity of information available on any one of these topics alone is extensive. It is hoped, however, that this review will serve as an outline of the basic tenets in each of these areas of study, as well as illustrate the ways in which the topics are related and interconnected. In the interest of brevity, secondary sources are at times used to highlight historical or conceptual connections. It is the premise of this paper that these are dynamically interrelated variables in the developmental process.

Family

A Historical Look at Families

Enormous social change in the past several decades has raised new questions about what constitutes a "family" and has challenged previous conclusions based on the traditional definitions. (Copeland & White, 1991, p. 3)

Traditional definitions of the family in Western society parallel the views of Leslie (1967), who, while acknowledging that exceptions to the rule did exist, stated that "the 'normal' way to live is with one's own spouse and one's own children, and it is toward this model that societies strive" (p. 13).

It has been the pervasiveness of this type of thought that has created difficulty for the large number of individuals whose experience has been an exception to this norm. Over time this difficulty has led to such individuals as Sussman and Cogswell (1972) advocating for the use of the term "variant" family forms as opposed to describing families who do not meet the norm as "deviant". Just how broad the definition of family is becoming is reflected in the need for journals such as *Family Relations* to publish a special issue dealing specifically with family diversity (July, 1993), including such topics as gay male step-families (Crosbie-Burnett & Helmbrech) and children raised by lesbian couples (Hare & Richards). Current social and political dilemmas confront the question of whether same sex-couples constitute a family or should share the same legal rights (Canadian Press, 1994; Amiels, 1994). Popenoe (1993) argues that the very fact that the definition of family is changing reflects the decline of the family rather than a movement toward diversity.

Family Composition

> Family constellations that were once rare (blended families, homosexual parenting, never-married mothers) are now more common . . . . Demographic changes, including a broadening of the age range (in both directions) during which women marry or have children, a decrease in the number of full-time homemakers, and an increase in single-parent families, make much of the psychological research on children, marriage, and families outdated or at least limited in generalizability. (Copeland & White, 1991, p. 3)

Biological Families

Biological families have historically comprised the "norm" against which other family forms have been judged. In current literature they are often referred to as "intact" two-parent families - identifying them as families comprised of the "original" biological parents and their joint offspring only. The composition of such families was considered to be static in that birth and death were the only means of entering or exiting the family constellation, and single parenting was an exception which occurred only as the result of the loss of one parent through death.

Current literature, however, is coming to recognize that family composition is no longer static in nature and that "family structure is not fixed but can change at any time" (Statistics Canada, 1993, p. 11). Current literature refers to the concept of "serial marriages" and the growing likelihood that the biological family system - the family into which one is born - will be, for many children, the first in a series of families to which a child will belong in a lifetime.

Adoptive Families

When looked at in the greater scheme of things, adoption is a wonderful solution. It solves the problem of the adoptive parents, people who - because of infertility or other complications - cannot have the families they had dreamed of. It solves the problem of the birth parents, who are facing an unplanned, unwanted pregnancy. And it solves the problem of the adoptee, who otherwise would be without a home and a sense of permanency. (Brodzinsky, Schecter, & Henig, 1992, pp. 7-8)

The most common form of "variant" family composition has historically been the adoptive family. Through adoption, married couples who have been unable to have children biologically have been able to imitate or appear to belong to the "norm" through acquiring an "unwanted" child - usually the product of an "illegitimate birth" - so labeled because it is non-normative due to the unmarried status of the mother. The adopting family then raised this child "as their own". The fact that adoption was viewed as different or "less than" the norm was seen in the manner in which inheritance laws were affected by whether or not a child was "of one's blood". In England "it was not until 1969 . . . that all strictures against adopted persons inheriting were removed" (Cole & Donley, 1990, p. 275)

Brodzinsky, Schechter, and Henig, (1992) state that "only 1 to 2 percent of the population under age eighteen are adopted by non-blood relatives" (p. 10). Canadian infant adoption statistics for 1974 to 1977, as quoted by Eichler in 1983, show a higher rate at 4.0 to 4.9 percent (cited in Young, 1985, p. 1·17). In 1978, the year in which the majority of subjects in this study were born, statistics compiled by the Alberta Department of Social Development and Social Services indicated that 1790 adoptions were granted in the province (cited in Young, 1985) . This figure was further broken down to indicate that 1058, the majority of these adoptions, fell into the "non-ward" category which is largely composed of step-family or extended family adoptions, as opposed to the more traditional "ward" adoptions which numbered 732.

It becomes clear from this information that even the term adoption is deceptive as it is often assumed that adoption refers to placement with "strangers" as opposed to family members. While working as an adoption worker, I was often taken aback by the fact that "adoptees" in step-family

adoptions would view themselves as "adopted" as they were still being parented by one biological parent. This led me to question what the impact of the adoption process might be for these individuals and how it might differ from the "adoptee" who was not biologically related to either adopted parent.

In Alberta, as elsewhere, current statistics show that the number of children being placed for adoption has dropped sharply. "In 1990, about 2,840 Canadian children were placed in adoptive homes, down 47% from 5,380 in 1981" (Daly & Sobol, 1994, p. 3). As adoption becomes an even greater rarity, it will be interesting to discover whether this increases the difficulties experienced by adoptees because they feel increasingly "different", or whether this will be balanced by the greater "normalizing" influence of an increase in variant family forms. As stated by Baran and Pannor (1990):

> Adoptive families are as vulnerable to the myriad of problems as any other family group. Adopted children now live in as many different families as do biological children. Adoptees see around them a variety of family constellations. This change in family patterns helps them overcome the feeling that they are different from everyone else. (p. 331)

That the adoption experience is also changing is further seen in the growing movement toward open adoption placements in which the identity of the birth and adoptive parents is known to each other, as well as potentially known to the child (Lindsay, 1987; Baran & Pannor, 1990). It will be interesting to examine the impact of these open adoptions in which the birth families and adoptive families take on the form of extended families with all parties maintaining varying degrees of ongoing relationship with each other. The premise behind the open adoption concept is that this "knowing", as

opposed to the traditional secretism in adoption, will be emotionally healthier for all concerned, and that "adoptees who know their birth relatives are the same as their friends who know their step, half, and foster relatives" (Baran & Pannor, 1990, p. 331).

Families of Divorce

The annual divorce rate in Canada has increased dramatically over the last two decades. This occurred largely because of the easing of legal restrictions on marital dissolution as a result of the 1968 Divorce Act, and the Divorce Act, 1985. (Adams, 1990, p. 146)

According to Statistics Canada figures quoted by Ambert (1980), between 1921 and 1978 the divorce rate in Canada increased from 6.4 divorces per 100,000 population to 243.3 divorces per 100,000 population (p. 21). "The highest rates go to provinces with higher per capita income, higher immigration rates, and a higher level of economic development and urbanization" (p. 28). Alberta and British Columbia have the highest divorce rates according to Adams (1990, p. 146). Statistics Canada figures quoted for 1990 show that the number of divorces in Canada had continued to increase to 294 per 100,000 population (Statistics Canada, 1993, p. 17). Britain, France, and the United States all show similar increases in divorce rates (Ferri, 1993; Lefaucheur & Martin, 1993; McLanahan & Garfinkel, 1993) with a corresponding increase in lone parent families and the child-rearing issues this creates:

Regardless of who petitions for the divorce, mothers have been, and continue to be, more likely than fathers to receive custody of the

children. For instance, mothers were given custody of 73% of children affected by these court orders in 1990, while 14% of cases involved joint awards to both parents. In only 12% of cases did the father receive custody. (Statistics Canada, 1993, p. 11)

Longitudinal studies by Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) and Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) provide the most comprehensive look to date at the impact of divorce on children. It is interesting to note that, as divorce has acquired a somewhat negative connotation, a more "normalizing" term - the "bi-nuclear" family - has recently been coined by Ahrons (1994). This term offers a more positive connotation that acknowledges the reality and complexity that children experience through belonging to a family "that spans two households and yet retains the important emotional bonds of kinship" (The Connection Collection, 1994, p. 2).

Lone parent families

The number of lone-parent families in Canada has also increased dramatically in the last several decades. In 1991, there were 955,000 lone-parent families, more than double the number in 1971. (Statistics Canada, 1993, p. 10).

It is difficult to evaluate studies relating to "lone-parent families" as it is difficult to differentiate completely between divorced and single lone-parent families. There is also disagreement in the literature about what these particular families should be called. The lone parent label is seen as preferable by Eichler (1993) in that the terms "one-parent family" or "single parent family" "provide an inaccurate description of most of the families

under consideration" (p. 139). With the advent of the "bi-nuclear" family concept, hopefully this difficulty may be resolved in future by defining lone-parent families as families with one parent who has no "bi-nuclear" counterpart.

An increase in lone parent families has been seen in France (Lefaucheur & Martin, 1993), Britain (Haskey, 1991), and the United States (McLanahan & Garfinkel, 1993). Canadian statistics for 1986 (Devereaux, 1990) showed lone-parent families representing 13 percent of the total - a 20 percent increase over all since 1981 and encompassing 14 percent of all children under the age of 25 (Moore, 1990). Eight out of ten lone parent families were headed by women. Hudson and Galaway (1993) indicate that "the number of single parent families in Canada now exceeds one million, and is growing three times as fast as husband and wife families" (p. xx).

Regardless of their source, all studies of lone or single parent families are in agreement that lower socio-economic status is a characteristic of these families, and 1986 statistics for Canada show that: "56% of lone parent families headed by women had annual incomes that fell below Statistics Canada's low income cut-off points" (Lero & Brockman, 1993, p. 92). It is often argued in the literature that it is this financial reality of lone-parenthood, as opposed to the familial disruption itself, that causes the greatest difficulties for these families and their children.

Other Family Forms

The two most common "other" family forms are extended families and foster families. It is important to mention them as legitimate family forms so their members are not seen to be marginalized or ignored due to their smaller

numbers. Extended families are often the norm in many cultures, including the North American aboriginal communities.

> Among some ethnic groups in the United States, where the extended family form is strong and viable, formal adoption is rare since children "belong" to the total extended family that shares and replaces parenting when necessary. (Hartman & Laird, 1990, p. 221)

Foster families are another family form shared by children who are not able to live in parental or extended family homes for a variety of reasons. In foster care arrangements, the child lives with an alternate family but parental legal rights "are either retained by the biological parents while the child is in temporary care or are transferred by the courts to a social agency" (Cole & Donley, 1990, p. 273). Such arrangements may be short or long term, depending on the needs of the child.

A Closer Look at the Bi-nuclear Family

Blended families, common-law families, stepfamilies, and never married parents who continue to share joint parenting responsibilities for their children - these families comprise the multiplicity of forms that the bi-nuclear family may take. Here again is raised the question of "legitimacy" previously raised with respect to adoptive births and parenting. Who is the "real" parent in the scenario where a child is born to two unmarried people who have joint access, who lives with mom who is remarried, after divorcing some years ago the "father" this child had known and lived with since toddlerhood? Is the "real parent" the biological father, the father one was raised by, or the current "step-parent" in the home with whom curfews and access to the family car need to be negotiated? Already we recognize that even

the concept of the "bi-nuclear" family is too simplistic to explain some forms of family relationships which can only be described as "multi-nuclear" from this framework.

When we add to the above scenario the multiplicity of potential sibling and extended family relationships, as well as the various locations in which these relationships occur, it becomes apparent that - for a growing number of children - the reality of family relationships can become very complex and likely confusing. In considering what this might be like for the child, the term "bi-nuclear" might provide a clue in its similarity to the word binocular. Perhaps it may be similar to the experience of attempting to focus a pair of binoculars - where each separate "family" to which the child belongs is contained in a separate lens, with the child's ongoing task to be to attempt to "focus" those images in such a way that he or she can see where everyone, including the child him or herself, "fits" into that picture.

In discussing adoption, Kirk (1988a) stated that "attachment is neither a single event, nor does it belong to a single dimension" (p.129). Perhaps this helps us understand how children meet these new relationship challenges.

Differences and Similarities between Family Types

Before looking at specific studies that compare different aspects of family composition, it is important to have an overview of the differences and similarities that exist between these family types. It is important to note that studies which focus solely on "ordinary" families find that there exists a wide range of differences within this normative group (Westley & Epstein, 1969). For example, the Canadian families studied by Westley and Epstein were seen to differ in such areas as the manner in which labor was divided between

members; in the way in which emotional problems were recognized and resolved; and in their systems of authority, discipline, and conflict resolution. Westley and Epstein found that "the way in which a family organized itself and functioned as a unit was both a consequence and a cause of the mental health or illness of family members" (p. 6).

Similar variations in family differences are part of our everyday experience and are mirrored in all family studies. This reality leads me to subscribe to the concept of a "continuum" of family normalcy upon which the various factors of family life can be located, and relocated, over time. This concept is mirrored in a number of family theories, such as the Circumplex Model of Families described by Olsen, McCubbin, Barnes, Larsen, Muxen, and Wilson (1983) which organizes families according to family adaptability, cohesion, and communication factors (p. 50), and the Life Cycle approach to families, a developmental model described by Carter and McGoldrick (1989). This process of "change" in the dynamics of families is seen as a critical factor in the study of adolescents (Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Noller & Patton, 1990).

It is also interesting to note that concepts from the adoption literature are beginning to be seen by many as relevant to the understanding of the dynamics in all family groups. For example, the generalizibility to all families of the concept of "acknowledgment or rejection of differences", originated by Kirk in his 1964 study of adoptive families, can be easily understood from the following brief synopsis:

> (1) acknowledgment of difference begets empathy; (2) empathy begets two-way communication; (3) communication begets trust. The reverse is also implied: (1) rejection of difference inhibits empathy; (2) low

empathy inhibits communication; (3) low communication inhibits the child's trust in the adopters. (Kirk, 1988b, p. 10)

Such attitudes to difference are further related to the concept of "goodness-of-fit" which has also played an important role in the study of adoption. "Goodness-of-fit theories hold that an individual's development is optimized in those situations in which compatibility exists between characteristics of the individual and characteristics or demands of the salient environment" (Grotevant & McRoy, 1990, p. 172). Whereas the relevance of this theory to adoption is obvious, it is also now recognized that, although "compatibility problems can occur with greater frequency in adoptive than in biological families" (p. 172), such problems of "fit" do occur in biological families as well, and that "when major mismatches occur, there is a potential for conflict or for parental disappointment" (p. 172). From a personal perspective as a social worker working with parent-child conflict issues , it would appear that a large number of family disruptions do, in fact, occur as the result of parents encountering, and being unable to reconcile, "major discrepancies between their children's personalities and what was acceptable within the context of their family" (p. 182).

Another issue that is related to "goodness of fit" is the role played by fantasy and the discrepancies that occur between parental fantasy and reality. With regard to adoption, Seglow, Pringle, and Wedge (1972) found that "prospective adopters who did not have very firm ideas regarding the kind of child they wished to adopt were better able to accept the reality and the needs of the child they eventually did adopt" (p. 107). They add that "there were indications that emotional rejection of a child occurred more often where the adopted mother had been persuaded to go ahead with an adoption about which

she herself felt reluctant" (p. 120). With these findings in mind, the authors question whether the same factors might also influence the stability of relationships in non-adoptive homes where the child, or life itself, fails to meet the hopes, fantasies, or expectations of a parent:

> Adoption, like marriage, is at present a question of choice . . . if one has chosen badly, one tends to blame not oneself but the chosen one. Such an 'alibi' is not so readily open to natural parents with their own children . . . . On the other hand, ordinary families have not hitherto come under the microscope to anything like the same critical and detailed degree. When they do, a similar incidence of rejection and maladjustment may also be found among the children of such families. (p. 168)

An opportunity to address this question is found in the findings of a longitudinal study of adopted and non-adopted Swedish children conducted by Bohman and Sigvardsson (1990). Their study indicated "a considerable risk of social maladjustment and school failure among subjects who were registered for adoption but reared by their biological mothers" (p. 105). Although the researchers found that "the various background factors known to us explained very little of the variance" (p. 105), it is interesting to speculate whether these mothers were also "persuaded to go ahead despite reluctance" with equally negative results when the fantasy of the parenting experience did not meet with the reality. I am not aware at present of any studies that examine the relationship of parental expectations to child and family development outcomes, a potentially interesting topic for future study.

A Working Definition of Family

'The term "family" refers to a grouping of individuals who are related by affection, kinship, dependency or trust.'

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Health and Welfare Canada's joint initiative on Family Violence and Violence Against Women

(cited in The Vanier Institute of the Family, 1994, p. 10)

There are a myriad of definitions of family from which to choose. Each definition places parameters around those included and those excluded. Some definitions consider only the "facts" of blood or legal kinship. We have seen in our discussions above that this rigid definition is no longer enough, and in a growing number of families inclusion is based on relationships of dependency and trust rather than legally defined belonging. All these elements may be outside the control of family members - particularly children - which is why the added element of affection plays an important role, as this is the one factor over which all individual family members have control. Even after a death, affection may continue to dictate the role of the deceased person within the family (Sims & Sims, 1994).

An Overview of Family Research

For all forms of pathologies the favorite explanation put forward at one time was the broken home. (Shaffer, 1990, p. 230).

Despite the rising divorce rate, longitudinal American studies conducted by Wallerstein & Kelly (1980) and Wallerstein & Blakeslee (1989) refute this myth and support Shaffer's (1990) finding that "it is the nature of children's interpersonal relationships that are the key influences on psychological development and not family structure as such" (p. 230). Similar findings have been obtained in longitudinal adoption studies. Seglow, Pringle, and Wedge (1972) concluded that "almost all studies of adopted children have shown that the kind of home parents provide and the kind of care they bestow are the most important pre-conditions for a satisfactory outcome for all concerned" (p. 178). This finding was further supported by Hoopes and Stein (1985) who found that the "quality of family relationships was most predictive of positive identity and adjustment across all groups" (p. 63). British studies of lone parent families view "social disadvantage as the main determinant of poorer developmental outcomes of children in such families when compared with their counterparts raised by both natural parents" (Ferri, 1993b, p. 287). Despite this finding, Ferri cited conclusions from the longitudinal British National Child Development Study, which indicated that "many of those who had grown up in lone parent families had done as well, if not better, than their peers who had enjoyed more stable family lives" (p. 289).

Also of particular interest is the growing recognition of the importance of father-child relationships in maintaining children's self-esteem, especially in the wake of a disrupted marriage relationship (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989; Ahrons, 1994).

Canadian Studies

Westley and Epstein (1969) provide an interesting study of normative intact Canadian families in Montreal which can be used as a baseline in providing a perspective and an understanding of the diversity and range of what constitutes "normal" family life. Bibby and Posterski (1985, 1992) provide a similar account with regard to understanding the normative adolescent population in Canada, including issues regarding family relationships. Canadian government studies (Canadian Youth Foundation, 1987; Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1988; Holmes & Silverman, 1992), provide some insight, although their focus on family relationship issues is more limited. Recently Hudson and Galaway (1993) have provided an in-depth look at single parenthood in Canada.

Canadian studies are increasingly concerned with the effects of divorce and single parenthood as they reflect "normal" family life for increasing numbers of Canadians. Gee (1993) explored the impact of divorce on the adult life of respondents aged 15 and over through use of the 1986 Canadian General Social Survey (GSS-2) and found that "non-intactness of the family unit in childhood affects dimensions of adult life regardless of cause (death or divorce/separation), but the effects surrounding divorce/separation appear greater" (pp. 308-309). He went on to add however, that "some of the negative effects, particularly for children from divorced families, may disappear given increased acceptance and decreased stigma of variant family forms and marital arrangements" (pp. 309-310).

McNaughton (1993) looked at the effects of being born into a single parent family, using a longitudinal study of a Nova Scotia population. One

finding of this study that is consistent with others is that single family status is not static and that "as a result of changes in family structure during the ten years since their birth, 82% of all the children in this study were living in two-parent families at the time of the fourth interview" (pp. 312-313). McNaughton concluded that "few differences in the socialization experiences and the development of the children of married and unmarried mothers emerged" (p. 322). She did, however, find that "the child of the younger, unmarried, less educated mother is at a greater risk for difficulties than one would expect to find in the general population" (p. 322). She makes no comment, however, on other possible factors, such as poor pre-natal care, which is a widely recognized issue in the literature.

Adolescence

Parent-Adolescent Relationships

Implicitly or explicitly, parent-adolescent relationships are seen as responses to the conditions of life with which a family has to cope. (Breton & McDonald, 1971, p. 152)

Breton and McDonald went on to conclude that "variables such as social class, family size, and employment status of the mother are seen as important because they relate to the context within which the socialization process occurs. They relate to resources, constraints, and the ensuing life styles" (p. 152).

It is almost impossible to provide a full and comprehensive list of all the inter-related variables that create the context within which parent-adolescent

relationships occur. To name only an few, one would have to consider the impact of social and cultural expectations; life-events and grieving issues; peer relationships; academic factors; extended family relationships; family-of origin issues; and factors affecting marital and personal stability. It quickly becomes clear that it is impossible to obtain a comprehensive understanding of all the possible factors affecting any parent-adolescent relationship, let alone to formulate a universally generalizable explanation for the cause-and-effect understanding of how parents and adolescents relate.

Further complications are created when the internal dynamic relationships that exist within families are taken into consideration. Again to name only a few, these may include the family's patterns of organization or hierarchical structure, the flow of affect and patterns of communication between family members, the sense of family cohesion or instability, and individual characteristics of family members. With specific reference to characteristics of individual family members, it becomes important to recognize that each family member is also going through their own stage of individual development which may complicate the dynamics further. Using Erikson's developmental model as a framework, it is possible to see how conflict may originate as parents, often at middle age, are increasingly dealing with issues of mortality while adolescents are just beginning to discover themselves and their potential in the world. Flake-Hobson, Robinson, and Skeen are credited with recognizing in 1983 that "unfortunately, precisely at the time that adolescents need them most, parents are often having their own physical, emotional, and career crises" (cited in Bibby & Posterski, 1985, p. 180). Olbrich (1990) discusses a psychoanalytic model of development described by Arnold in 1989 in the following quotation which provides an

example of how this conflict may be contributed to, as well as experienced by, the adolescent:

> During adolescence, many of the idealised parental images are attacked for the first time and may even be rejected. . . . Adolescents may flexibly disregard some of the internalised parental demands, accept others and incorporate new ones by identification with idealised persons outside their family. Demands which are acceptable to the adolescent are assigned to his/her own ego. Reinforced by narcissistic tendencies, they lie at the root of his/her attempts to surpass the parents, to believe in his/her own strength and even to fantasise about evincing behaviour which is better than that of the parents. (pp. 38-39)

These examples show that much room exists for conflict in the dynamic interaction between adolescents and their parents, and to sift through the factors underlying that conflict may be very difficult. However, Breton and McDonald have suggested an alternative means of studying parent-adolescent relationships which allows us to set aside - while at the same time acknowledging - the complications of the causal contextual factors mentioned, and allows us to look instead at how parents and adolescents cope with these factors and how this coping affects these relationships. Although specific exploration of the issues surrounding coping theory will be discussed later in this chapter, it is important to recognize that coping is part of an ongoing developmental process that raises specific issues during adolescence.

Developmental Issues

From a developmental perspective, early adolescence is an ideal life phase in which to study the interface between social and biological changes. The pubescent child must incorporate the rapid physical changes and the ultimate attainment of reproductive maturity into his or her self-image, as well as adjust to the social demands made by others as physical maturity progresses. (Brooks-Gunn, 1987, p. 111)

Adolescence is the name given in Western cultures to the developmental period between (approximately) the ages of 12 (roughly the onset of puberty) and 18 (the age defined in the Child Welfare Act of Alberta (1984) as the criterion for adulthood in this province). Adolescence follows the earlier periods of infancy, toddlerhood, and pre-school and school-aged childhood and is preceded by a transitory stage known as pre-puberty. The periods of early, mid, and late adolescence are each considered to have separate developmental tasks. Hence, adolescence can be seen to represent just one of many transitory periods between birth and death.

The term adolescence is not a universal one as some cultures hold that a ritualistic "right of passage" (often coinciding with puberty) is seen to move a person directly from childhood to adulthood, thus making a prolonged period of transition unnecessary. Hence, adolescence is a social, rather than biological, construct.

In Western society, a number of perspectives have been formulated over time in order to "explain" adolescent behavior. Olbrich (1990) provides the following summary:

Recent work in adolescent psychology varies in the features of adolescence upon which it focuses. Some still emphasise the stimulus-side, i.e. it associates adolescence with the strong demands arising from somatic alterations, from new social roles, from changed interactions with adults and peers and from changing feedback about one's identity. In addition, some authors point out that an adolescent is able to use new cognitive (formal) operations and that due to the interplay between external demands and these new cognitive facilities, his or her behaviour and development are highly activated. Such a dynamic conceptualisation leads away from a simple disturbance model.

Another emphasis in present-day work in adolescent psychology is the focus on transactions between the person and the environment. Here, attention is focussed on processes and relationships between situational demands and personal resources, instead of on static factors. Still more important than the process orientation, is the fact that some researchers shift from mechanistic or structural-functionalist paradigms, to interpretative ones. This means that this research does not only analyse interactions between directly observable factors,. . . .

it sets out to investigate subjectively meaningful relationships between cognitively represented environmental demands and cognitions of one's own potentials and how the one relates to the other. Often, the constructive or productive character of transactions is emphasised (e.g. Hurrelmann, 1986). (p. 36)

The above overview refers to one term in particular - identity - that appears frequently in discussions of adolescent development and should be specifically addressed. Erik Erikson's work, in the 1950's, first emphasized the

importance of identity development as critical to the tasks of adolescence. This is not to say that individuals prior to this developmental stage have no sense of identity, but that during this period of adolescence the process of formal operational thought is used in order to move the adolescent from an identity or self-description imposed by others to a self-description that is owned and created by the adolescent in order to describe him or herself. Further exploration of this issue will be found in the following section related to the development of self-esteem.

Erikson's theory grew out of the "simple disturbance model" of adolescence mentioned above. This refers to a long-held belief initiated by G. Stanley Hall in 1904, that adolescence was a time of "storm and stress" characterized by turmoil and rebellion:

> Emphasis was placed on the erratic and unpredictable behaviour, the volability of mood, the uncertainty, indecisiveness and social gaucheness which many (though not all) saw as characteristic of the period. As Olbrich points out, this view of adolescence encouraged the notion that young people are a source of instability and disruption, whose ideas and actions threaten the .future development of society.
>
> (Jackson & Bosma, 1990, p. 203)

However, recent findings in the study of development and coping, also to be addressed later, indicate that the passage of most adolescents through this developmental transition is relatively smooth.

Cultural Context

In most cultures where adolescence is recognized as a defined period, there exists the hope that adolescents will follow (at least somewhat) smoothly

in their parents' footsteps and in this way perpetuate the "status quo". For this reason, adolescence is often seen as a stressful period by adults who fear that these expectations will not be met as they watch adolescents struggle, with varying degrees of success, with the transition process. How much credibility is given to adolescents during this period depends on societal expectations and demands and to what degree adolescents are perceived as meeting these expectations successfully.

Based on research he conducted with Helmke and Richter in 1984, Fend (1990) states that "culture provides adolescents with different avenues to success and different definitions of a worthwhile and attractive person" and "not only provides these self-ideals but also provides opportunities to prove oneself by matching the standards it presents" (p. 90). He goes on to state that:

> The history of success and failure in both the achievement-related and the social areas can be considered as a series of social inductions of "completeness" or "incompleteness". . . . [which] results in a general feeling of low or high self-worth or self-esteem (Harter, 1983; Leahy, 1985). (pp. 90-91)

Self-Esteem

Defining the Self: A Pre-requisite

> An examination of the literature dealing with the self will reveal that generalizations made about the self refer to operationalized self-referent behaviors rather than the self as an objective phenomenon. (Kaplan, 1986, p. 9)

To define the self is to answer the question: Who am I?

In order to even ask the question, one must be able to think - to process information on a cognitive level: " . . .be aware of in the mind, imagine, propose to oneself . . ." (Sykes, 1976, p. 1203). As articulated by Descartes: "I think, therefore I am" - and it is the existence of this thought process, however limited, that is fundamental to the definition of self: to merely exist - like a table or a tree - is not enough, one must have the cognitive capacity to identify oneself as existing within a context and existing as a separate entity within that context.

"The study of the self across time and cultures is an *essential* topic for psychology" (Cushman, 1990, p. 599); and consistent with the search for answers in most fields of study, this leads to the development of numerous (and often overlapping) theories regarding the development of self, leaving it up to each individual to chose the perspective that is most compatible with their experience.

Kelly [1955] proposed that each person evolves an explanatory system through which he or she anticipates, understands, and participates in life experiences. Although he resisted the association of his theory with cognitive psychology, his description of this personal construct system and the construing process is quite similar to models provided by current cognitive constructivists. These theorists also stress the individual's active role in constructing models of the world that both enable and limit perception of and participation in events. Not only do individuals construct personal models of reality, but by acting on the basis of these models, they actively create reality. (Harter, 1988, p. 351)

Elements of this "personal construct psychology" developed by Kelly can be found in the work of social psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan, who had earlier described an interpersonal theory of development which included the creation of a "self-system" which "develops out of cultural, social, and interpersonal experiences; in the process it absorbs cultural values and becomes a 'selective filter' through which experiences are incorporated in or excluded from awareness" (Muuss, 1988, p. 116). According to Sullivan:

> The self-system seeks the kind of information that contributes to self-protection and the maintenance of the equilibrium. Thus, it becomes of paramount importance in understanding the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Not only is the self-system initially formed by the way important others treat us, but the reverse also holds true: our self-system guides our attention and influences how we perceive others . . . . The self-system becomes the filter through which we evaluate our social environment and ourselves. (Muuss, 1988, p. 117)

According to Stone and Lemanek (1990) "a major developmental task of adolescence is the conceptual integration of the self-system" (p. 25). An explanation of how this process is undertaken is provided by Harter (1990) who states that:

> The ability to treat one's own thoughts as objects of reflection, to introspect about one's attributes or personality, is not fully developed until adolescence.

Selman's (1980) analysis of the developmental emergence of self-awareness is consistent with these observations in that only gradually does the child develop the ability to observe and critically evaluate the self. For Selman, the child must first acquire those

perspective-taking skills necessary to appreciate the fact that others are observing and evaluating the self. This realization, in turn, sets the stage for an internalization process whereby one comes to be able to observe, evaluate, and criticize the self, a process that is necessary in order for children to adopt the opinions of significant others, the basis of Cooley's looking-glass self-formulation. (cited in Harter, 1990, pp. 320-321)

In the above theories, individuals are seen to construct a framework through which to view, interpret, and interact with the world around them. Currently this point of view is known as a constructivist perspective. "Constructivists assume that each individual constructs a personal interpretation of reality from a number of potentially useful alternatives" (Harter, 1988, p. 358), and in turn uses this perception of reality as a gauge by which to evaluate self and others. "Self-theories are conceptual structures that individuals formulate about themselves as they cope and adapt in their day-to-day lives. This constructivist view implies that individuals actively plan a role in creating the reality to which they respond" (Berzonsky, 1989, p. 363). As the term "self-theories" indicates, this process of defining the self is dynamic and evolving, rather than static:

A healthy system becomes increasingly complex and flexible as the person or family accommodates to new information and experiences through the elaboration, testing, and revision of new constructs or behavioral alternatives. In contrast, the symptomatic individual or family rigidly clings to familiar assumptions, repeats outmoded patterns of behavior, and disregards or distorts environmental feedback to confirm these entrenched constructions. (Harter, 1988, p. 353)

In choosing to utilize a constructivist framework, it becomes necessary for the purpose of clarity to disclose my "personal interpretation of reality" through which I view issues related to the definition of self, as this framework has a fundamental impact on the way self and related issues will be discussed and evaluated. My personal definition of self is: the sense I have of being me. Each individual possess a unique "personal definition of self", a set of "self-theories" or beliefs that have developed as the result of an environmental-cognitive-behavioral interaction process that has been ongoing since birth. This personal definition of self includes an inner "core self" which is that part of us that changes little over time, that has persisted over time and is part of our history; and consequently, would be the most resistant to or threatened by change. Our "situational self", on the other hand, reflects the way in which our core self is operationalized. It is through the risks taken by the situational self that change can occur. This is the "public self" that we will often allow to accommodate the wishes of others - that allows us to step out of character from time to time without changing our fundamental sense of who we are. This is the "self-in-transition" - the part of us prepared to explore new "self-theories" before choosing whether they will be incorporated into the core self over time. This perspective is consistent with Kelly's theory which contained two similar components: "*Core personal constructs* - those by which a person maintains his identity and existence - and *peripheral constructs* which can be altered without serious modifications of the core structure" (Harter, 1985, p. 59).

Defining Self-Esteem

> By self-esteem we refer to the evaluation which the individual makes
> and customarily maintains with regard to himself: it expresses an
> attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which
> the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful,
> and worthy. In short, self-esteem is a *personal* judgment of worthiness
> that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward himself.
> (Coopersmith, 1967, pp. 4-5)

Rosenberg (1979) maintains that self-esteem "implies self-acceptance, self-respect, feelings of self-worth. A person with high self-esteem is fundamentally satisfied with the type of person he is, yet he may acknowledge his faults while hoping to overcome them" (p. 31).

Any definition of self-esteem needs to be also considered within its relationship to "self-concept" and "self-image", which are frequently used interchangeably with "self-esteem". As stated by Van der Werff (1990), "in the relevant literature the various labels are used to indicate concepts which are practically identical or which are not unanimously distinguished" (p. 33). He further states that "following Wylie (1974, 1979), we can say that 90% of the self-concept literature deals, in fact, with self-esteem" (p. 15), defining self-esteem as "the evaluative aspects of the self-concept" (p. 33).

With reference to the conceptualization of self-concept, Harter (1990) emphasizes the importance of "being clear about the particular framework one wishes to adopt" (p. 292) as this will effect decisions with reference to assessment. She goes on to outline the different models of self-concept,

ranging from unidimensional to multidimensional, to a combination of the two or a global definition of self-esteem such as that presented by Rosenberg above, who "argued that individuals possess a general sense of self-esteem or feelings of worth as a person, in addition to those evaluations of one's adequacy across the specific domains of one's life" (p. 295).

For the purpose of this paper, an attempt is made to distinguish between self-concept or self-image as the view one holds of one's self, and self-esteem as the feelings one has about that conceptualization of the self. In this view, self-esteem, in part, reflects the discrepancy that may exist between the actual and ideal conception of the self. Reviews of the research, however, may included studies where self-concept variables have been used as an indicator of self-esteem. In this sense, the terms will be used interchangeably to some extent.

Development of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is largely derived from the reflected appraisal of others. The gauge of self-evaluation is a mirror image of the criteria employed by the important persons of our social world. As children we internalize these criteria, observe how we are regarded, and value ourselves accordingly. . . . The views of the generalized (significant) others as expressed in their manner of treatment are Mead's key to the formulation of self-esteem. (Coopersmith, 1967, p. 31)

Like the development of self, self-esteem - the way we feel about who we are - is also constructed through interaction with others. As others view us through their own "personal interpretations of reality" they evaluate us

according to their personal standards. We receive these reflected evaluations made by others and interpret them through our own perceptual framework in order to evaluate how well we meet the standards and expectations of others - and hence, of ourselves. Although the reflected appraisals of society (the generalized other) have considerable impact, the more significant the relationship the more weight the reflected appraisal carries. Rosenberg (1965) also credited Mead with recognizing that the self (Mead's "me") is also capable of reflecting on the self (Mead's "I") (p. 10).

In exploring the processes through which these evaluations affect self-esteem, Coopersmith (1967) identified the four sources of self-esteem as: power, significance, virtue (worthiness), and competence. The findings from his study indicated that, for his subjects, "significance and competence are much more important than worthiness and power" (p. 39). This raises the question of how specific interactions will work to facilitate an individual's development of their own unique sense of personal significance and competence within the world.

Impact of Significant Relationships

The ability to minimize or avoid loss of self-esteem is important in maintaining a relatively high, acceptable level of esteem. Although Sullivan does not discuss how this ability develops, he does suggest that early familial experiences play an important role. His focus on the interpersonal bases of self-esteem, the particular importance of parents and siblings, and the importance of procedures to minimize demeaning events are Sullivan's general contributions to the study of the origins of self-esteem. (Coopersmith, 1967, p. 32)

The recognition that family plays a significant role in the development of self and self-esteem is fundamental to a number of developmental theories. The question of how these relationships promote the development of self-esteem is an ongoing one.

> A number of studies have shown positive relationships between parental support or nurturance and self esteem (Buri, Kirshner & Walsh 1987; Gecas & Schwalbe 1986; Holter & Harper 1987). Self-esteem is positively related to the use of support and induction techniques by parents and negatively related to their use of coercion. (Noller & Patton, 1990, p. 58).

Their further statement that "the self-image of adolescents depends on how much criticism and acceptance they received from their parents" (p. 58) is supported by a 1984 study by Harris and Howard, cited by the authors, who found a positive correlation between positive self-image and high parental acceptance combined with low criticism. These findings might be understood within a constructivist framework in that "positive emotions associated with intimate relationships are related to the validation of members' constructs" (Harter, Neimeyer, & Alexander, 1989, p. 124).

In her description of the dynamics of self-in-relation theory, Surrey (1985) emphasizes the importance of mutual empathy between mother and daughter in her description of women's self-esteem development. She states:

> The ability of the mother to listen and respond, empathize or "mirror" the child's feelings has been well described by Winnicott (1971), Kohut (1971) and others, and has been seen as the beginning of the development of the experience of the self. (p. 4)

Similarly, in studying perceptions of preadolescent male children's relationship with their mothers, Coopersmith (1967) found interesting, though non-significant, differences in self-esteem between those children who perceived their mothers to be accepting and those who did not:

> Persons with high self esteem are less likely (17.6 percent) to perceive their parents [mothers] as negative or destructive influences than are persons with medium (41.2 percent) of [sic] low (41.2 percent) self-esteem. . . . Where children with lower self-esteem express more frustration and rejection, those with high self-esteem see less rejection and a greater amount of approval and facilitation. (p. 174)

From these findings, Coopersmith concluded: "That over one-third of the children with low self-esteem do not see their mothers as concerned and interested in their friends suggests that these children perceive their parents as uninvolved or unconcerned in their affairs" (p. 172).

With specific reference to the role played by fathers, it is also important to make reference to the significance of ongoing father-child relationships to the development of positive self-esteem, particularly in families that have been disrupted by divorce (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). These findings perhaps should come as no surprise as Rosenberg (1965) found that "the amount of paternal attention and concern . . . is significantly related to self-esteem. Adolescents who have closer relationships with their fathers are higher in self-esteem than are those with more distant, impersonal relationships" (Coopersmith, 1967, pp. 35-36).

With regard to the issue of competence, Coopersmith (1967) also discovered limit-setting in the parent-child relationship to be of significance

in determining self-esteem. Coopersmith's explanation of the role of limit-setting is quoted here in its entirety for purposes of clarification:

> Why well-defined limits are associated with high self-esteem can be explained in several ways. First and foremost we should note that well-defined limits provide the child with a basis for evaluating his present performance as well as facilitating comparisons with prior behavior and attitudes. The limits serve to define the social geography by delineating areas of safety and hazards, by indicating means of attaining goals, and by pointing out the landmarks that others use to judge success and failure. When the map drawn by the parents is a realistic and accurate depiction of the goals accepted by the larger social community and the means used to reach them, it serves as a guide to the expectations, demands, and taboos of that community. As such, the map clarifies the ambiguities and inconsistencies of social behavior and also endows such behavior with a sense of meaning and purpose. If provided early, and accurately enough, and if it is *upheld by behavioral as well as verbal reinforcement* [italics added], limit definition gives the child the conviction that there is indeed a social reality that makes demands, provides rewards, and punishes violations. Imposition of limits is likely to give the child, on a rudimentary nonverbal and unconscious level, the implicit belief that a definition of the social world is possible and that the "real" world does indeed impose restrictions and demand compliance with its norms. On this level limits result in differentiation between one's self and the environment and thus serve to increase self-definition. In sum, imposition of limits serves to define the expectations of others, the norms of the group, and

the point at which deviation from them is likely to evoke positive action; enforcement of limits gives the child a sense that norms are real and significant, contributes to self-definition, and increases the likelihood that the child will believe that a sense of reality is attainable. (pp. 237-238)

With specific reference to the development of adolescent self-esteem, Noller and Callan (in press, cited in Noller and Patton, 1990) have combined the interaction between significance and competence into the following description of the "ideal family situation". Although based on research with adolescents, it could be suggested that the same factors apply to children at all developmental stages:

The ideal family environment for adolescents, then, is one where communication is positive and effective, where the adolescents receive strong support from their parents, feel free to express their feelings and opinions appropriately, and to discuss issues, raise conflicts, negotiate about plans and make decisions with a growing sense of their own competence. (p. 57)

How this type of communication may enhance adolescent development and self-esteem in particular is described in a 1975 study by Connell and colleagues (cited in Peterson, 1990) that looked at how adolescents progress through Piaget's cognitive development stages:

A style of family interaction where parents and adolescents routinely air their differences of opinion, and strive to resolve them rather than avoiding conflict or escalating into violence, may actually contribute to the teenager's acquisition of formal-operational thinking skills. (p. 75)

In reviewing these findings, it is difficult not to reflect back on the theory of "acceptance/rejection of differences" previously discussed with relation to families. It would appear logical to conclude that families inclined to accept differences among members will be more likely to provide the type of family climate conducive to self-esteem building communication, whereas families who tend to reject differences will not find it easy to communicate in this way, with the resulting impact on both self-esteem and cognitive development being obvious. As indicated by Harter (1988) earlier: healthy families are flexible as opposed to symptomatic families who are more rigid.

Perception and Self-esteem

In keeping with the constructivist perspective, there is a growing recognition that an individual's perception of an event ("accurate" or otherwise) plays a significant role in how that individual responds to the world. In attempting to explain the recidivism of female adolescents admitted for psychiatric care, Earl (1991) argued that, in defining post-traumatic stress disorder, "it would be useful to allow for perceptions of abuse or attack on the psychosocial level, where identity or trust is eroded" (p. 98). He goes on to describe the dynamics of perceived trauma as follows:

> These experiences suggest prolonged exposure to a sequence of events, none of which by itself may be life-threatening or traumatic, but in concert are perceived as such . . . . Continual exposure to a "toxic" environment, or one in which the developing individual is devalued over time, can produce symptoms similar to those outlined in the PTSD criterion. (p. 98)

Earl stated that, particularly with respect to adolescents, "perceived trauma, as a concept, contains elements of an unstable and possibly unrealistic belief system as well as unfulfilled expectations which appear to be associated more with age than with cognitive style" (p. 102). Of particular significance is the fact that Earl acknowledged the importance of "unfulfilled expectations" in how these young women perceive and relate to the world. Through this recognition, a vehicle is provided to consider the relationship between expectation and reality and the development of self-esteem .

Just as there exists an ideal self-image to which we aspire and against which we evaluate ourselves, there also exists an ideal "world image" (Watzlawick, 1978, p. 42). It seems evident that, if our expectations of ourselves or our life circumstances fall short of this ideal, this may likely result in a negative influence on how we evaluate ourselves as a result. How self-esteem is affected, in part, depends on whether individuals see themselves or external sources as responsible for this discrepancy between expectation and reality. Lefcourt (1986) refers to the importance of "*perceived control* , the beliefs and perceptions about one's ability to cause the outcomes that one desires" (p. 38), and concludes that:

> The development of a sense of effectiveness can help to undo persistent demoralization and serve to rejuvenate otherwise depressed persons. It would seem, then, that our self-perceptions may be diagnostic of our states of well-being, which in turn may have ramifications for physical and mental health. (p. 48)

Harter (1985) goes on to elaborate further in considering the relationship of one's "affective reaction to the congruence or discrepancy. . . [speculating that] one's general emotional response to the degree to which one

has succeeded in meeting one's aspirations may be a more critical determinant of self-worth" (p. 116).

Gender Differences and Self-Esteem

F. Rosenberg and Simmons (1975) and Simmons and F. Rosenberg (1975), comparing boys' and girls' self-concepts by age, uncovered the following finding: that although the self-*esteem* of boys and girls differed only modestly, at adolescence girls showed considerably higher *instability* of self-concept - their ideas about themselves tended to change more quickly, to vary from day to day. (cited in Rosenberg, 1979, p. 287)

Since Gilligan (1982) identified the unique "voice" of women, much has been written regarding gender differences in psychological development. One recent qualitative study of adolescent American girls conducted by Brown and Gilligan (1992) provides one possible reason for the gender differences noted in self-concept stability. As early as ages 10 or 11, Brown and Gilligan found that girls start to "lose their voice" as they begin to encounter "the social construction of reality" (p. 160), to the extent at times that they are "enacting and narrating dissociation" (p. 216). In confronting "this time in girls' lives when the real and ideal divide" (p. 106), "girls describe a relational impasse - a sense of being unable to move forward in relation with others, a feeling of coming up against a wall" (p. 160). The consequences of this experience are that:

Girls at the edge of adolescence face a central relational crisis: to speak what they know through experience of themselves and of relationships

creates political problems - disagreement with authorities, disrupting relationships - while not to speak leaves a residue of psychological problems: false relationships and confusion as to what they feel and think. (p. 214).

This is interesting to consider in light of a 1984 study of German (FRG) adolescents 12-19 years of age, in which Seiffge-Krenke (1990, p. 53) reports finding significant differences in self-image (using the Offer Questionnaire item "Generally content with one's self and the world"), between males and females at ages 12, 13, and 16, with male self-esteem being higher in all cases. It is interesting to note, however, that at ages 15, 18, and 19 girls' self-esteem was found to be higher than that of boys, although not statistically significant.

Raja, McGee, and Stanton (1991) make reference to Gilligan while drawing conclusions regarding sex differences found in their study. Although these researchers found that "females reported greater anxiety, depression, and more negative life events and associated distress with these events" (p. 481), "items on parent attachment did not show any significant sex differences" (p. 479). They state:

> If, as Gilligan (1982) suggests, female psychosocial development is more likely to be based on intimate relationships, connectedness, and bonding as opposed to the typical male themes of separatedness and detachment, then a sex difference should have been observed for attachment to parents. (p. 483)

Coping

Definition

As one views modern society, one is forcefully struck by the enormous amount of "failure," i.e., the gap between aspirations and achievements, which exists. It is readily apparent that such failure takes an important psychic and emotional toll and that the effect of failure on the self-image is a major mediating mechanism. And yet it seems equally apparent that the psychological effect is considerably less than one would expect. . . . This suggests that the value of success tends to be ambiguous, that society provides certain "cushioning mechanisms" for softening the blow of failure, and that the individual develops certain "coping mechanisms" which interrupt the direct translation of objective failure into a sense of personal inadequacy. Research into these coping mechanisms appears to merit high priority. (Rosenberg, 1965, p. 282)

Bosma and Jackson (1990), attribute the following definition of coping to Lazarus: "coping refers to cognitive processes which are concerned with appraisal of situational demands [primary appraisal], with the adaptability and possible responses of the individual [secondary appraisal] and, finally, with contingent re-appraisals [tertiary appraisal]" (p. 3). As Rosenberg has indicated, somehow this process of cognitive reappraisal provides a cushioning effect between objective reality and the subjective view of self.

In this way, coping experiences become the stepping stones of developmental change. Olbrich (1990) summarizes this interaction in the following way:

> The development of adaptive processes can be understood as an interaction between short-term (current) and long-term (chronic) processes. This way of describing the individual's development recognises the continuous interactions which take place between his/her adaptive resources and situational demands and also person-situation interactions over time. (p. 43)

Olbrich goes on to use the terms "*crystallisation* and *fluidisation*" (coined by Thomae in 1951) in order to describe how this coping process operates on both a situational and developmental level:

> A person who repeatedly encounters a set of specific demands and whose behaviour is effective in meeting these demands will crystallise programmes (and their corresponding manifest processes) which lead to successful adaptation. Crystallisation will not occur where the behaviour is inadequate or the action maladaptive. When new demands must be met, however, one or several of the commonly used programmes have to be rendered fluid. This allows change or even the development of new programmes to occur. (p. 43)

Contrary to the above, however, we have all encountered individuals in real life who do appear to have crystallised maladaptive responses. This would appear to occur when previously crystallised responses from one stage of development fail to become fluid and change as needs arise. Sometimes we refer to individuals who fail to adapt to change as resistant or defensive. Jackson and Bosma (1990) provide the following clarification:

According to Haan (1977), defence and coping are based on the same ego processes but differ with regard to the polarity, productive adaptation versus lack of adaptation. The coping process starts with the perception of a challenge. This perception triggers a cognitive, moral, social and motivational frame of reference which is itself the basis for an adequate response. When a situation occurs in which the individual encounters a new demand for which an existing response is inappropriate, a coping process occurs. When a new demand is too much for the individual, the coping response can take the form of defence. (cited in Bosma & Jackson, 1990, p. 3)

Cognition and Coping

By controlling cognitive processes, people can achieve control over their reactions to problematic and stressful life events.

(Rosenbaum, 1990a, xxvi)

In the above quotation, Rosenbaum paraphrases Meichenbaum's thesis in which he differentiates between the concepts of "learned helplessness", a term coined by Seligman in 1975, and "learned resourcefulness", a term originated by Meichenbaum himself in 1977. I would argue that it is this feeling of helplessness that underlies the defensive reaction described by Haan in the previous section.

Rosenbaum (1990a) goes on to define learned resourcefulness as "an acquired repertoire of behavioral and cognitive skills with which the person is able to regulate internal events such as emotions and cognitions that might otherwise interfere with the smooth execution of a target behavior" (p. xiv)

Rosenbaum (1990b) goes on to describe the role played by "process-regulating cognitions", or PRC's, which he views to be "similar to the cognitive functions of the self-system in Bandura's (1978) social learning theory" (p. 4). He states that "whenever a person monitors his or her actions, assigns meanings to events, attributes causality to what has happened, and develops expectancies for the future, he or she engages his or her PRC" (p. 4). The fact that these cognitive processes undergo a continual process of development and change is reflected in the following quotation from Connell, Stroobant, Sinclair, Connell, & Rogers (1975, p. 139):

> As the person copes with the experience he encounters, a gradual reorganization of the structures of the mind takes place which results in the development of more and more powerful ways of conceiving and operating on the world. (cited in Peterson, 1990, p. 75).

> Overall," individuals who are flexible in their choice of cognitive strategies generally should fare better than those who are inflexible" (Miller, 1990, p. 121)

Coping and Self-Esteem

> The influence of important interaction partners on the development and stability of self-concept, as well as their role as models or barriers for coping behaviour, is at present still unclear.
>
> (Seiffge-Krenke, 1990, p. 67)

As early as the 1940's, Harry Stack Sullivan had identified "the importance of procedures to minimize demeaning events" (Coopersmith, 1967, p. 32) and thereby minimize or avoid loss of self-esteem. It is my belief that

what we now call "coping skills" are the "procedures" of which Sullivan spoke. These coping skills are part of a cognitive framework or belief system within which events are evaluated and their impact on the self-concept, and resulting impact on self-esteem, is determined.

Interesting findings obtained by Seiffge-Krenke, presented in a 1984 study, help to illustrate the relationship between self-esteem and coping as seen in troubled adolescents:

> [She] refers explicitly to low and longitudinally varying self-concepts as characteristic of troubled adolescents. Her results indicate that the youngsters concerned were also inconsistent in their appraisal of situational demands: their reality orientation was weak; they were aware of their own vulnerability and showed inconsistent behaviour. Troubled adolescents more frequently shy away from the recollection of stressful events and how they responded to them. Such adolescents are not only less aware of the continuity between events, they think about events and their own resources in coping with them in a less consistent way. This means that their capacity to make meaningful relationships between their own perceptions and the appropriate action to take is also likely to be impaired. To take this perspective is to suggest that adolescent coping involves more than cognitive processes. Continuity and consistency are important, together with trust in one's ability to maintain such characteristics in a varying and demanding environment. (cited in Olbrich, 1990, p. 47)

Based on these findings, it is interesting to speculate about the dynamic interplay that would appear to occur between self-esteem and the ability to engage in the reappraisal process that Lazarus identified as necessary to the

coping process. If the low self-esteem identified by Seiffge-Krenke in fact makes it difficult for these adolescents, or any individual, to engage in effective reappraisal, then they are missing the "learning" link that facilitates adaptation between old and ineffective responses and new, effective responses. Taken in this context, a step-by step review of the coping process as defined by Lazarus would appear to indicate that these adolescents make inaccurate primary assessments of the situation due to poor reality testing; appraise themselves as having limited resources to address the task at hand, perhaps due to an inability to appraise previous and/or similar situations as having been handled effectively; and finally resist reappraisal of the outcome for fear that it will further damage already vulnerable self-esteem. From this assessment one can easily see where the already troubled adolescent could be caught in a negative "no-win" learning spiral in which it becomes very difficult to acquire the skills and/or the corresponding positive self-esteem needed to reverse this process in the direction of positive adaptive change.

Tyszkowa (1990) has concluded that:

The development of an appropriate cognitive approach to oneself and to life situations, as well as the establishment of a relatively high level of self-esteem are of great importance for the formation of stress-resistance in adolescence. (p. 201)

Coping and Adolescent Development

Recently, Olbrich (1984) has suggested that adolescence can profitably be seen as a period of coping, a period of productive adaptation. The adolescent is confronted with many different changes and faces the task of adapting to them. This process does not necessarily imply crisis and turbulence. On the contrary, Olbrich considers that the normal adolescent is able to adapt to these changes in a constructive fashion, in a way which results in developmental progression.

(cited in Jackson & Bosma, 1990, p. 1)

"A developmental orientation is comparatively rare in investigations of adolescent coping" (Seiffge-Krenke, 1990, p. 56). In 1979 Newman hypothesized that "adolescence may well be a period for the consolidation of a personal coping style" (cited in Jackson & Bosma , 1990, p. 7). Bosma and Jackson (1990) explore this relationship in the belief that "such an analysis offers a conceptual framework which can foster a better understanding of the course of normal development in adolescence" (p. 1). In reviewing the limited literature regarding coping and self-concept in adolescence, they point out the "fruitfulness of bringing the domains of self-concept and coping research into closer relationship" (p. 11).

The significance of cognitive activity is adduced by studies of troubled adolescents who subjectively report high stress from events that experts rate as being considerably less stressful (Oerter, 1985). The importance of cognitions can be inferred from the reduced set of coping strategies that are cognitively available to adolescents who

encounter stress in vulnerable areas of interaction. It is this constellation of "objectively" low stress and lower cognitive and behavioural efficiency in the presence of stress which is subjectively experienced as being high, that points to the role of cognitive distortions in responding to difficult situations. (Olbrich, 1990. p. 47)

In adolescence, the development of formal-operational thought processes "equip the adolescent to perceive abstract levels of harmony between opinions [or alternatives] that appear on the surface to be completely incompatible" (Peterson, 1990, p. 75). Perhaps the existence of cognitive distortions points to a failure or delay in the functional establishment of formal thought processes in troubled adolescents.

Coping and Self-Control

The ability to control their behavior frees people, to a great extent, from environmental control. Once people become independent of situational pulls, they acquire the personal resources that keep them healthy.

(Rosenbaum, 1990a, xxviii)

Rosenbaum (1990b) has identified two types of self-control behavior which he refers to as redressive and reformative self-control:

Redressive self-control consists of a set of behaviors by which a person self-regulates internal responses, such as emotions, pain, and cognitions that interfere with the smooth execution of an ongoing behavior. These behaviors are directed at achieving homeostasis and the resumption of activities that were disrupted. On the other hand, reformative self-control consists of a set of behaviors that guide the

person through the process of change. Any change entails a self-initiated interference with the smooth execution of well-established behaviors and the adoption of new kinds of behavior. These responses are directed at achieving heterostasis rather than homeostasis. However, since the process of change may be interfered with internal responses, redressive self-control may function in conjunction with reformative self-control. (p. 13).

Rosenbaum (1990a) believes that development of these self-control skills results in a personality variable called "learned resourcefulness [which] refers to what people do when stressful circumstances call for self-direction" (p. xxix).

Summary

It is impossible to make claims about the direction of effects in adolescent identity formation. One plausible interpretation is that observing and participating in family relationships foster clarity in the adolescent's developing sense of self. It may be that experience in family relationships does indeed give adolescents the confidence and skills necessary to explore away from the family. At the same time, adolescents who have had such opportunities for exploration are likely to gain experience and expectations which may in turn affect their communication with family members. (Grotevant & Cooper, 1985, p. 425)

Overall, study of the interrelationship between coping, self-esteem and family variables has made little headway. Sorensen (1993) expressed this

1980 findings of McCubbin and colleagues that "suggested that individual coping behaviors within a family will (1) decrease vulnerability, (2) strengthen or maintain family resources, [and] (3) reduce the hardships of stressor events, . . . " (p. 43).

Sorensen also commented on the increased interest in studying resiliency or invulnerability in children. She reviewed the literature and credited Garmezy's 1991 work, along with others, in this summary statement:

> He further described characteristic factors of resilience including individual factors, such as temperament, cognitive skills, responsiveness to others, etc; familial factors, such as warmth, cohesion, caring parents, etc; and support factors of meaningful social support outside the family. Resilience has also been related to children's control beliefs (Wannon, 1990) and intelligence (Rutter, 1983). (p. 66)

It is hoped that this study will contribute in some measure toward our understanding of the inter-relationship between these variables.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design

Methodology

Data Collection

The hypotheses were tested through the administration of a questionnaire survey within a normative adolescent population (N = 100). Questionnaires were administered by the researcher over a two-day period in April 1994 to Grade 11 students in one Calgary High School. This was a self-selected sample of students in accordance with Calgary Board of Education policy and ethical considerations requiring the informed consent of respondents. A quantitative approach was seen to be most effective because the type of issues I was addressing required a large sampling, which would make a qualitative study prohibitive. It was felt that questions of a possibly sensitive nature might also be better addressed with the anonymity that a quantitative study provided.

The study conducted by Amato and Ochiltree (1987) comes closest to approximating the design of this study. Amato and Ochiltree considered self-esteem as one measure of competence in the study of a normative sample of Australian adolescents (Grade 10 students) and children (Grade 3 students) within the school population of Victoria. Three "family type" categories were studied: intact families, one-parent (divorced) families, and step-families. Because no mention is made of adoption as a consideration in the establishment of these categories, it is impossible to know how many adopted families are hidden within the categories defined by this study. The reason for this omission is not evident. Possibly it was assumed that adoptive families

comprise such a small percentage of the total population that it was not necessary to factor such families out of the study; however, this would appear to be an unusual consideration as decisions were made to identify, and exclude, never married and widowed single-parent families. In the present study adoption was recognized as a distinct category of family composition in an attempt to determine whether or not adoptive families comprise a significantly unique group as represented by the variables under study.

Population and Sample

As a large, normative, adolescent population was being sought for participation in this study, permission was requested from the Calgary Board of Education to conduct this study within the school setting. Protocols established between the University of Calgary and the Calgary Board of Education were followed to obtain permission and locate respondents. Although a random sampling procedure was conducted to identify schools to be studied, the School Board's preferred approach was to contact schools from this list who were seen to have potentially receptive staff members or had not already been inundated by research requests.

Although a broader sample had been hoped for, only one contacted school expressed interest in participating and they preferred I obtain my sample from Grade 11 students participating that semester in the Career and Life Management (CALM) classes as the study was seen to have greater relevance for, and thus likely to receive more support from, participants in this program. The fact that the program was mandatory for all Grade 11 students helped ascertain the availability of a random sampling of Grade 11 students. Approximately half of the eligible CALM classes had teachers who

were interested in their classes participating. An explanation of the study was then given by the researcher during classtime in these classes and parent/student consents (see Appendix A) were distributed for return to the researcher the following week when the questionnaires were completed, again during class time. Participation in the study was voluntary and one hundred usable questionnaires were obtained.

Although my original intention had been to attempt to minimize the "drop-out" factor (Government of Canada, 1991; Harker, 1991; Young, 1992) by obtaining my sample from the Grade 10 (approximately 15 year old) population, the Grade 11 sample group that became available to me was composed of students who ranged in age from 15 to 20 years (see Table 1), and was largely comprised of female students (63%). Although I was surprised by the number of students in this population (15%) who were legally adults (as defined as having reached the age of 18 in Alberta), I did not feel that this age range jeopardized the integrity of the study as the legal age is arbitrarily set by provinces and in some provinces adult status is not granted until the age of 19 years (Statutes of British Columbia, 1980), resulting in this age range being reflected in federal studies of adolescents. Baker (1988) and Bibby and Posterski (1985, 1992) used an age range of 15 to 19 in their studies of Canadian adolescents. Also, a further "expanded" definition of adolescence (or "youth") is seen in some studies where an age range of up to 24 years has been used (Canadian Youth Foundation, 1987). These researchers felt that this even broader age range was warranted due to the fact that, increasingly, many individuals of adult age are continuing to live in the parental home for educational or financial reasons; and consequently continue to maintain adolescent, as opposed to adult, lifestyles and are viewed accordingly by

parents and community. Some of the older students in this study may also belong to the immigrant population and adjustment delays may be expected as a normal part of the experience of "catching up" developmentally to their North American peer group. Consequently, I would argue that this age distribution does represent the reality of high school life in Canada in 1994 and most Grade 11 students are likely to be dealing with similar environmental and developmental stresses regardless of chronological age.

Table 1

Age Distribution of Respondents

		Age Frequencies			
Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
	15	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
	16	46	46.0	46.0	48.0
	17	37	37.0	37.0	85.0
	18	9	9.0	9.0	94.0
	19	5	5.0	5.0	99.0
	20	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
		------	------	------	
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Valid cases   100   Missing cases   0

Defining Variables

In designing this study, one of the first hurdles to be addressed was to define what constitutes a family. Copeland and White (1991) struggled with this issue during their analysis of the research issues surrounding family studies. Their attempt to address this question lead to a detailed list of questions that the researcher must ask, but ultimately they concluded that they could "not propose to set limits of inclusion or exclusion about what counts as a family for family research. Each investigator's answer should be based on a sound, conceptual reason, for it will have methodological, statistical, and interpretive consequences" (p. 4).

Potentially it was felt that families might fall into any of the categories outlined in Table 2, based on both the composition of the family in its "original" form as well as on its present configuration. These categories were finely delineated initially in the hopes that sufficient sample representation might be found in each category to allow for valid statistical analysis.

With these considerations in mind, a measurement tool called the Family Questionnaire was designed specifically for this study as a means of determining the composition of respondent's families (see Appendix B). A unique measure was required because during my literature review I had not been able to locate a measurement tool of this nature, and none of the studies I encountered drew the fine distinctions regarding family composition categories that I was potentially interested in exploring.

Table 2

Framework For Family Composition Categories

FAMILY COMPOSITION CATEGORIES

Biological Families	Adoptive Families
intact two-parent families	intact two-parent families
single parent families	single parent families
disrupted families	disrupted families
blended families	blended families
stepfamilies	stepfamilies
adoptive stepfamilies	adoptive stepfamilies
extended families	extended families
foster families	foster families

For the purpose of this study, family was broadly defined as including any configuration of parent figures perceived by the adolescents as belonging to their family. Respondents were asked to use a checklist to identify the people they included in their definition of family and to also indicate whether all family members lived in the same household, and if not, who was absent and why. On this basis, families were categorized as follows:

1. two biological parents living in the same home (intact biological family)

2. two original adoptive parents living in the same home (intact adoptive family)

3*. a single parent of either sex living in the home, no other parent figure identified or parent deceased (single parent family)

4*. one parent of either sex living in the home, another parent identified but not living in the home (separated/divorced family)

5*.   one parent of either sex living in the home and a second parent identified as a step-parent (step-family)

6.   one parent of either sex living in the home and married to a new partner who has also adopted the child (step-adoptive family)

7.   a guardian, custodian, foster, or extended family identified (other family)

*Note that items 3-5 could be composed of either biological or adoptive parents.

Measures

The remaining study variables were identified as scores obtained on established scales:

Perception of family relationships was defined as the score obtained on the Hudson Index of Family Relationships (IFR) (Corcoran & Fischer, 1987, pp. 440-442). Although not designed or tested specifically with an adolescent population in mind, at 25 items this scale had the advantage of brevity while "designed to measure the extent, severity, or magnitude of problems that family members have in their relationships with one another" (Corcoran & Fischer, 1987, p. 440). The Family Questionnaire also contained a second indicator of how family relationships were perceived. Respondents were asked to compare, by way of a Guttman scale, how they felt their relationship with their family compared to the family relationships of other people their age.

Cognitive coping style was defined by the score obtained on the Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule (SCS) (Rosenbaum, 1990a, pp. 230-231).

The original version of this scale was published by Rosenbaum (1980) and tested on an Israeli undergraduate population. The schedule has since been translated from the original Hebrew and undergone revision in an attempt to improve its factor structure (Redden, Tucker, & Young, 1983). Psychometric adequacy of the Self-Control Schedule has been determined (Redden, Tucker, & Young, 1983; Rosenbaum, 1980, 1988, 1990a, 1990b).

At the time the Self-Control Schedule was designed there were "no other published scales which assess self-control behavior" (Rosenbaum, 1980, p. 115), and over the past decade, this scale has continued to be used "to assess individual differences in the tendency to employ self-control methods" (p. 119). The abstract of the original publication summarizes the Self-Control Schedule as describing:

> (a) use of cognitions and "self-statements" to control emotional and physiological responses, (b) the application of problem solving strategies, (c) the ability to delay immediate gratification, and (d) perceived self-efficacy. (p. 109)

Rosenbaum has chosen to refer to this combination of factors as "learned resourcefulness" (Rosenbaum, 1990a), a term originally developed by Meichenbaum in 1977.

Dr. Rosenbaum (1993) has recently begun work on an adolescent version of the Self-Control Schedule which he graciously suggested I might wish to use in this study. However, the decision was made not to use the adolescent version as the face validity appeared questionable for a North American adolescent population due to some of the wording and terminology that appear to suffer in the cultural or literal translation from Hebrew to English. I also had some concern regarding the lack of published data due to

the newness of the adolescent version. The format, however, did appear preferable for an adolescent population as it was somewhat simplified and possibly more easily read, and some respondents did indicate they had found the format confusing. The decision to use the original version appeared to be a fortunate one due to the sample population being older than I had originally anticipated.

Self-esteem was defined as the scores obtained on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) (Rosenberg, 1965; Corcoran & Fischer, 1987, pp. 408-409) and Hare Self-Esteem Scale (HSS) (Corcoran & Fischer, 1987, pp. 393-395).

Two measures of self-esteem were used for the following reasons:

1. Although the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale is widely used as a "brief, but psychometrically sound, index of self-esteem, tapped directly" (from Wylie, 1974, cited in Harter, 1990, p. 298), questions have been raised by Crowne and Marlowe regarding the correlation of social desirability with this 10 item scale (Miles, 1986, p. 71). Offer, Ostrov, and Howard (1981) raised similar concerns (p. 91).

2. The Hare Self-esteem Scale has not been widely used, but includes a relevant category related to family - the Home Self-Esteem Scale. This scale also complements the Index of Family Relationships as it provides a more direct gauge of attitude toward parents than does the IFR, which relates more generally to family issues.

With regard to the measures themselves, a number of self-report measures were reviewed prior to the selection of the Rosenberg scale. Although use of the more detailed Offer Self-Image Questionnaire for Adolescents was seriously considered as it is considered by some to be "superior to any other measure currently available" (Adams, 1986, p. 302), it was not the

measure selected as it's length at 130 items was felt to be prohibitive, and it explored areas not directly relevant to the study and perhaps somewhat controversial, such as the area related to the sexual self. The decision was made to use the Rosenberg scale due to its brevity and proven reliability as a global self-esteem measure (Harter, 1990).

The Hare Self-Esteem Scale was chosen for a number of reasons:

1. To provide a reliability check on the first measure, to compensate for its brevity.

2. By its placement at the end of the measurement package, in contrast to the placement of the Rosenberg scale at the beginning, it was hoped to provide some indication as to whether completion of the questionnaire itself had any impact on the subject's report of self-esteem.

3. Although not having the strong record of proven reliability of other measures (Corcoran & Fischer, 1987, p. 393), it provided relative brevity while exploring self-esteem in three critical areas of home, school, and peer relationships. This combined use of measures therefore provided some sense of "compromise " between use the of the Rosenberg and Offer scales. This scale also had the added benefit of being designed for testing on a non-white racial population, although validity has been proven on both white and non-white racial groupings, as has the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The Hare Self-Esteem Scale also offered the potential of an additional perspective as it was designed from a sociological basis as opposed to the psychological orientation of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from both the Faculty of Social Work and the Faculty of Education, the later approval being part of the protocol involved in obtaining permission to conduct research within the Calgary school systems. The minor age group of the subjects under study necessitated these precautions. For similar reasons, it was also necessary for the researcher to meet with a designated official of the Calgary Board of Education who also ensured that the questionnaire content met with their approval from an ethical standpoint. Screening was done to ensure that questions with regard to racial or ethnic origin or socioeconomic status, for example, would not be asked. Specific concern was expressed with regard to the adoption oriented questions in the study as there were concerns regarding whether these questions, or even the more general family questions, might cause distress to some students. For this reason it was made clear to all participants that all participation was voluntary and that withdrawal from the study could occur at any time. It was also required that preliminary information regarding the study subject matter be given to participants and that both parental and subject consents be obtained. prior to participation. As this study was seen to be of a sensitive nature, it was also expected that I would be available to the school and participants if problems were to arise and students required support to deal with emotional issues that might result from completion of the questionnaire. There was also a requirement that subjects be advised of the study outcome - this will be done before the conclusion of the 1994-95 school year.

Limitations

Sampling

As stated previously, situational considerations resulted in a non-random sample being obtained from the study population. The use of availability sampling, as well as the limited age group within the sample, prevent the findings from this study from being generalizable to the adolescent population at large. The numbers are also insufficient to provide for findings that are generalizable to the Grade 11 population in Calgary public schools. Further studies will be needed to provide more generalizable information. This study does, however, provide a small basis for understanding the identified issues based on the experience of the sample population.

As stated previously, studying a Grade 11 population omits from the sample the number of adolescents who have dropped out of the formal education system by Grade 11. This is further complicated by the fact that, in Alberta, students may legally terminate their schooling at 16 years of age. This was one of drawbacks inherent in switching the study focus from a 15 to 16 year old student population. In the appendix to their study, Bibby and Posterski (1992) addressed this issue by stating that "clearly some of our participants will drop out while, according to Statistics Canada, as many as one in four current students dropped out at some point in their schooling" (p. 321). This position was also taken by the principal of the study school who felt that the 30% drop out statistic presently being quoted regarding the Canadian school system (Government of Canada, 1991) was an exaggeration as these statistics only include the numbers of drop outs without considering the rate

of return, which his personal experience indicated to be quite high. The number of adult students in the present sample may also reflect the validity of this position.

Although Bibby and Posterski (1992) used this argument to support their statement that "the drop-outs have not been omitted" (p. 321) in their study, I feel that an argument could still be made that the dropout factor significantly reduces the overall generalizability of the study; especially as self-esteem and coping mechanisms such as "learned resourcefulness" may be arguably elevated for those still feeling successful and competent enough to still be in school at this point in their lives. This argument is supported by such studies as those by Nunn and Parish (1992) who found that the:

At-risk students' locus of control was more externally oriented, indicating a greater tendency toward believing that behavior had little effect upon outcomes. This is like believing that the "winds of fate" control one's destiny, rather than that one has the ability to bring about change. Self-concept comparisons also revealed a self-perception of competency for at-risk students which was less than positive. (p. 438)

Colten, Gore, and Aseltine (1991), in their study of Boston high school students, also found that both male and female respondents residing in two-parent households were significantly less likely to drop out of school (p. 165). Data from the School Leavers Survey also indicated that "compared to graduates, dropouts were far more likely to have come from non-two parent families" (Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development, 1993, p. C-1).

The issue of "voluntary" participation in the study also affects the generalizability of findings. Although both the consent and questionnaire clearly outlined that this process was voluntary, the counterpoint to this was

that the school, as well as each individual teacher, had their own way of interpreting and operationalizing the voluntary nature of participation. Depending on the "alternate activity" chosen by the teacher for those who did not choose to participate, different classes expressed various degrees of "voluntariness" in their participation. This in itself raises both ethical and validity questions regarding the information obtained, and certainly explains some of the "unusable" questionnaires that were returned.

This reality also created a second issue regarding what constituted a "valid consent" enabling students to participate. A couple of "exceptions" were made for students who did not have the required parental consent form, but who did bring "notes from home" acknowledging a lost consent and permission to participate etc. However, students who had lacked the foresight to arrange to bring a note were excluded. Some excluded students took issue with this decision, moreso because they felt the "alternate activity" to be onerous than because they had a sincere desire to participate in the study.

Data Collection

With regard to the data gathering process itself, it became quite clear that consistent and "uncontaminated" data gathering is more a myth than a reality, because of the many influencing variables that were outside of my control. The presentation of the research explanation and consent forms was variably received based on a number of environmental factors. For example, in one instance the class was anticipating an exam to take place so was preoccupied and anxious to get onto other things. Similarly, in another class I was interrupting an existing speaker, hence the mind-sets of the students were clearly not in tune with what I was attempting to communicate. On the other hand, other classes appeared very interested and vocal - or was this just

avoidance of what they anticipated was too come once I had finished? Classroom topics at the time of presentation varied greatly (bereavement, sexuality, careers) and this may also have influenced receptivity.

Equally, conditions during the completion of the questionnaire also differed from the quiet concentration of a small group of participating respondents to respondents sharing a classroom with a video on racial issues being presented for those who chose not to participate in completing the questionnaire. All in all, these are just a few concrete and observable examples of the myriad of differences in each individual's experience surrounding the process of contributing to this questionnaire, any of which might have influenced outcome to some extent.

Instrumentation

Because the concept of "learned resourcefulness" that is measured by the Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule is only one of a variety of coping skills that may be relevant to the development of adolescent self-esteem, this study will only provide information about one possible coping style. Also, no normative data are available on the use of the Rosenbaum Self-control Schedule with an adolescent population, so this may raise questions regarding the validity and reliability of this measure in assessing adolescent self-control. That an adolescent version of the Rosenbaum Self-Control Scale has been developed was brought to my attention by Dr. Rosenbaum when he wrote to me with permission to use the original scale in my study. After much consideration I decided to stay with the use of the original scale as I felt that, possibly due to subtle differences in translation factors, some of the wording and terminology used in the adolescent version would not be seen to have face validity by teenagers in North American culture and would therefore reduce

the possibility of them responding in a serious fashion (e.g., When I have to go to the bathroom but I have to wait for a while I try to convince myself not to think about it). In light of the older age group who responded, this proved to be a sound decision. This scale, however, would be valuable in obtaining information from an early adolescent age group. The format especially is easier to read and coding instructions clearer.

It should also be noted that the particular format of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale that was used (Appendix C) may have lent itself to response sets, although I do not believe this occurred. As well as the statistical support for this belief previously stated, visual analyses of the completed scales did not appear to indicate response set difficulties. This matter will be further addressed as it relates to the statistical analysis in Chapter Four.

History

One interesting factor that had an historical impact on this study was the 1993 student protests that occurred in Calgary 6 months prior to this study being completed (Dempster & Johnson, 1994; Collins & Pommer, 1994). Barbara Tizard is credited as concluding that

> Being actively engaged in trying to solve a social problem - rather than simply worrying about it - increases young people's self-esteem and sense of their power to change things. Their self-esteem is also bolstered by the support they get from others working with them on the issues. (cited in Holmes & Silverman, 1992, p. 84)

It is impossible for the impact of this historical factor to be known, as whether or how individual students were involved in this process is unknown. On the one hand, the self-esteem of some respondents may have been increased by involvement in this protest process, while the self-esteem of others may have

been negatively impacted by feelings of helplessness or worthlessness that may have been generated by the threats of educational cuts themselves, or by parents' negative reaction to their involvement in the protest. It is also important to note that the way in which individual schools have handled this matter, in terms of supporting or consequencing their students for these activities, may also have had an impact on overall self-esteem ratings. Concern regarding pending cutbacks to the Alberta education system and how this affects teacher morale is another unknown variable in its possible impact on the self-esteem of respondents.

Other variables that impact on self-esteem and coping that have not been controlled for are: birth order (Parish, 1991); socio-economic status; health factors; victimization experiences such as neglect and abuse (Widom, 1991) or childhood trauma (Terre, 1990); finer differences in reading and comprehension levels within the parameters of "Grade 11" students; language difficulties; academic stream, academic standing and parental expectations of same, and issues related to work and finances, (Mates & Allison, 1992); motivation levels; recent life events (Palazzi, Vito, Luzzati, Guerrini, & Torre, 1990); and racial origin. Bibby and Posterski (1992) found racial differences in adolescent self-esteem in that "blacks and whites both score fairly high, natives come out somewhat more moderately, and Asians even lower" (p. 156). This particular factor is not accounted for as a variable in this study so the overall impact of racial differences on these findings is unknown. This is certainly relevant due to the high number of participants of different races included in this study and attending the study school as a whole.

Methods of Analysis

Data was analyzed using multiple linear regression analysis as outlined in the SPSS Base Systems User's Guide (SPSS 4.0) (Norusis, 1990). This method of analysis was chosen as the hypotheses required inferences to be drawn about the relationships between numerous study variables. Stepwise selection was the specific procedure chosen as it is the most commonly used procedure for variable selection. On occasion the PIN of 0.10 was used, instead of the 0.05 default value, as a means of illustrating that differing conclusions could be drawn if the probability of F-to-enter criteria were changed (a PIN of 0.10 provides the same outcome as when a backward selection procedure is used).

Linear regression procedures were also used on occasion when the analysis of variance between two given variables was of interest.

A Chi Square analysis was also on one occasion to illustrate the relationship between self-esteem scale scores.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Statistical Analyses

As many of the measures chosen have similar identifiers, Table 3 provides a list for easy reference to help provide clarity in reviewing the statistical analyses. Table 4 illustrates the frequency distribution of family types found in this study, while Table 5 provides descriptive statistics for all measures.

Table 3

Reference List Of Variables

REFERENCE LIST OF VARIABLES	
RSE	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
IFR	Hudson Index of Family Relations
SCS	Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule
HSS	Hare Self-Esteem Scale
PSE	Peer Self-Esteem Subscale on HSS
HSE	Home Self-Esteem Subscale on HSS
SSE	School Self-Esteem Subscale on HSS
COMPARE	Perceived Comparison of Family Relationships
TRADFAM	Belonging to a Biological, Two-Parent Family
SEPFAM	Belonging to a Separated /Divorced Family
STEPFAM	Belonging to a Stepfamily
SINGLFAM	Belonging to a Single Parent Family
OTHERFAM	Belonging to Another Family Form

Table 4

Distribution of Family Types

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│            DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY TYPES                       │
│                                                              │
│                                        Valid        Cum      │
│   Value Label     Frequency   Percent  Percent      Percent  │
│                                                              │
│   TRADFAM            55        55.0     55.0         55.0    │
│   SEPFAM             19        19.0     19.0         74.0    │
│   STEPFAM            14        14.0     14.0         88.0    │
│   SINGLFAM           10        10.0     10.0         98.0    │
│   OTHERFAM            2         2.0      2.0        100.0    │
│                    ------     ------    ------               │
│      Total          100       100.0    100.0                │
│                                                              │
│   Valid  cases   100        Missing  cases      0           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

As anticipated, the study sample did not contain sufficient numbers of adopted subjects to allow for valid statistical analysis. As predicted by a 2%-4% distribution of adoptees in the general population (Brodzinsky, Schechter, and Henig, 1992), only two respondents identified themselves as having been adopted, but only one respondent's questionnaire was usable. This respondent had been adopted by a step parent and thus was placed in the stepfamily category for purposes of analysis.

With respect to scores on Hudson's Index of Family Relations (see Table 6), one-third of respondents scored above 30 - indicating a clinically significant problem with respect to family relations.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS					
Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Minimum	Maximum	Valid N
AGE	16.72	.92	15	20	100
RSE	1.59	1.43	0	6	100
HSS	89.74	11.52	45	117	100
HSE	31.57	5.82	14	40	100
PSE	30.02	4.40	15	40	100
SSE	28.15	4.59	13	40	100
IFR	28.97	21.87	0	84	100
SCS	15.14	21.67	-44	92	100
COMPARE	4.67	1.68	1	7	100

Table 6

Distribution of Scores on the Index of Family Relations (IFR)

DISTRIBUTION OF IFR SCORES				
Value Label	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
LOW	67	67.0	67.0	67.0
HIGH	33	33.0	33.0	33.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	
Valid cases 100		Missing cases	0	

Scores on the Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule differed from other published findings. Rosenbaum (1990a) indicates that "for normal populations the score is usually +25 with a standard deviation of 20" (p. 229), whereas the mean in this study was +15 with a standard deviation of 21.6 and a mean age of 16.7 years. Most published studies using the Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule have used older adult samples (Rosenbaum, 1980; Lewinsohn & Alexander, 1990; Biran, 1990). Redden, Tucker, and Young (1983) had a sample population of American university students with a mean age of 18.75 years, and although mean scores were not published, Rosenbaum (1988) indicated that "similar means and standard deviations were found" (p. 493). Although it is somewhat surprising that a two year age difference would show this discrepancy, I would argue that the present findings are valid, despite these differences. This argument is based on the assumption that, if self-control is in fact "learned" resourcefulness, it would be anticipated that respondents .with a mean age of 16.7 years would possess less self-control on the average than older respondents with more learning experiences behind them. Although this difference in findings may point to the reason behind Rosenbaum's design of a measurement tool specific to adolescents, it is interesting to question at what point in that two year period individuals transition from adolescent to adult scores and how this relates to Rosenbaum's (1988) statement that "SCS scores are quite stable over time" (p. 493). This statement is based on test-retest results over an 11 month period in studies conducted by Leon and Rosenthal in 1984 (Rosenbaum, 1988, p. 493). In light of Rosenbaum's further assertion that "an increase in SCS scores is expected following cognitive-behavior therapy" (p. 493) it could also be assumed that any learning experience, intentional or otherwise, that affects one's self-control abilities will result in an increase in

SCS scores. Perhaps the learning inherent in the transition from high school (16) to the adult world (18) has a sufficiently significant impact to account for a significant increase in mean SCS scores over this period of time. It is interesting to note in this regard that mean scores for university samples appear consistent regardless of whether mean ages are 18.75 (Redden, Tucker, & Young, 1983) or 23.65 (Rosenbaum, 1980).

Further related to this argument it is also interesting to note that, although not consistent with other findings, Rosenbaum (1980) found a similar score anomaly in a study of 150 Israeli men (mean age 50.5 years) whose mean scores were 31.3 with a standard deviation of 23.2 (p. 115). Although these findings could be used to support the argument that SCS scores could be expected to increase over time as individuals do not stop being exposed to learning experiences in adulthood, it is also possible that these findings were influenced by the motivation level of these respondents who "were required by law (for health reasons) to pass physical and psychological examinations before their driving licenses would be renewed" (p. 114).

The findings of this study were also similar to those of other studies using the Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule in that "the fairly high standard deviations obtained in all the samples reflect the existence of large individual differences in self-control behaviors as assessed by the SCS" (p. 115) and were not significantly different from those of other studies. Although Redden *et al* . (1983) indicated that "the test clearly differentiated males and females; females reported higher levels of self-control" (p. 84), this study's findings would appear more consistent with Rosenbaum's (1980) findings that "although there was a slight tendency for females to score higher than males, t tests performed on the data for each sample revealed no significant differences

between the means across the sexes" (p. 115). Further validation of this position is presented in Rosenbaum (1988): "in most studies there were no sex differences on the SCS scores" (p. 493).

Scores on the Hare Self-Esteem Scale for this study were slightly lower than stated norms: 89.7 compared to 91.1. (Corcoran & Fischer, p. 393). This again may be explained by the fact that this study had an older population (Grade 11) as opposed to the fifth and eighth graders on whom the norms were based. Seiffge-Krenke (1990) also found, using a revised form of the Offer Self-Image Questionnaire to study 12 to 19 year olds, that "positive self-descriptions . . . can be seen to decrease with age" (p. 53) and, furthermore, that "this pattern could be a reflection of an increasingly self-critical attitude amongst the older age-group as compared to the rather 'over-optimistic' assessments of the younger subjects" (p. 53).

Potential questions could be raised regarding the validity of scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale as I inadvertently used an altered format (see Appendix C) that potentially lent itself to response bias because items were "presented in order from the strongest to the weakest responses" (Rosenberg, 1965, p. 305) rather than in a more balanced distribution, and positive and negative statements were not "presented alternately in order to reduce the danger of respondent set" (p. 305). In particular, the last three items are all negative responses which might result in a patterning of responses on these items that might not be obtained if they were more randomly distributed. As well, items that are grouped to obtain a combined score were grouped together rather than randomly distributed, which again could potentially affect response patterns and scores. As stated by Grinnell (1988): "Ideally, every measurement situation should be examined for such sources of error, and

appropriate steps should be taken to minimize their impact" (p. 131). The more appropriate format, therefore, would have been that suggested by Rosenberg in which these issues have been taken into consideration (see Appendix D).

However, in analyzing the data obtained on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale I do not feel that the altered format has posed a significant problem for the following reasons.

1. Results obtained appear consistent with other studies using this measure, or are even more balanced in their distribution. For example, Gilchrist (1985) found in her volunteer sample of middle aged adults that "the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale rated all subjects as having moderate to high global self-esteem" (p.46), whereas in this study 6 respondents scored in the lower self-esteem level (see Table 7). This more even distribution of scores is consistent with Rosenberg's (1965) data on high school students which always showed some respondents scoring in the low self-esteem category.

2. Results obtained appear consistent with other self-esteem measures. In this case, there is considerable consistency between scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Hare Self-Esteem Scale. The Chi-Square analysis in Table 8 shows a moderate to strong correlation between the scores on these two self-esteem variables, which would indicate that the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale in this form continues to provide an accurate gauge of self-esteem.

Table 7

Frequencies on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)

		RSE FREQUENCIES			
Value Label RSE	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
	0	22	22.0	22.0	22.0
	1	35	35.0	35.0	57.0
	2	24	24.0	24.0	81.0
	3	8	8.0	8.0	89.0
	4	5	5.0	5.0	94.0
	5	4	4.0	4.0	98.0
	6	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
		-------	-------	-------	
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Further analysis of data as shown in Tables 7 and 8, appears to substantiate concerns regarding social desirability factors related to the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Miles, 1986: Offer, Ostrov, and Howard, 1981) as responses tend to be loaded at the positive end of the scale. For comparison purposes, scores on the Hare Self-Esteem Scale were recoded into a 7 point scale using 12 point increments from lowest (30) to highest (120) potential scores. Scores on both scales were then recoded into Hi (0,1), Mid (2,, 3, 4), and Low (5, 6) categories for Chi-Square comparison. Comparison of these scores either substantiates the concern that the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is prone to reflect social desirability factors or reflects the possibility that the process of completing the questionnaire has had impact on the self-esteem of some individuals. The latter is unlikely, however, as the Hare Self-Esteem Scale also shows fewer respondents scoring in the low end of the range.

Table 8

Chi-Square Analysis of Recoded Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSE) and Hare

Self-Esteem (HSS) Scores

RSE BY HSS

		HSS high SE		low SE	
	Count Exp Val Residual				Row
RSE		1	2	3	Total
high SE	1	27 21.7 5.3	30 34.8 -4.8	0 .6 -.6	57 57.0%
	2	11 14.1 -3.1	26 22.6 3.4	0 .4 -.4	37 37.0%
low SE	3	0 2.3 -2.3	5 3.7 1.3	1 .1 -.9	6 6.0% 1.4
	Column Total	38 38.0%	61 61.0%	1 1.0%	100 100.0%

Statistic		Value	Approximate Significance	
Phi		.46471	.00024	*1
Cramer's V		.32860	.00024	*1
Contingency Coefficient		.42143	.00024	*1

*1   Pearson chi-square probability

Number of missing observations: 0

<u>Hypothesis #1</u>

No significant relationship can be shown to exist between an adolescent's family composition and self-esteem.

The first hypothesis was upheld, as family composition was not found to be significantly related to self-esteem in the study sample as it accounted for less than 1% of the variance on both the Hare and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scales. However, stepwise regression of scores on Hare's Home Self-Esteem subscale (see Table 9) did show TRADFAM (belonging to a traditional, two-parent, biological family) to be the second of three variables left in the equation. The combination of scores on the Hudson's Index of Family Relations, TRADFAM, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale accounted for 58% of the variance in Hare's Home Self-Esteem variable, although TRADFAM itself accounted for only 1% of the total variance, and was negatively correlated.

Further analysis provides some insight into why conflicting findings may be obtained and cited in studies of this nature, as a stepwise regression of all family composition variables, using the Home Self-Esteem Scale as the dependent variable, shows belonging to an "other" family form (OTHERFAM) to be negatively correlated with scores on Hare's Home Self-Esteem Subscale and accounting for 5% of the total variance. However, the same stepwise regression procedure using the full scores of the Hare Self-Esteem Scale as the dependent variable shows no difference to exist between family composition variables (no variables remaining in the equation), unless a 0.10 PIN is used, at which time OTHERFAM is again negatively correlated. Further

inconsistency is added when scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale are used as the dependent variable as SINGLFAM (belonging to a single parent family) becomes the only variable remaining in the equation. This inconsistency in findings thus supports the conclusion that no significant relationship is seen to exist between family composition and self-esteem.

Table 9

Stepwise Regression of the Hare Home Self-Esteem Subscale (HSE)

DEPENDENT VARIABLE HSE

Multiple R	.76991
R Square	.59276
Adjusted R Square	.58003
Standard Error	3.77230

F = 46.57686   Signif F = .0000

---------------------- Variables in the Equation ----------------------

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	F	Sig F
IFR	-.188614	.019843	-.708637	90.347	.0000
TRADFAM	-1.619594	.775568	-.139117	4.361	.0394
RSE	-.597440	.298140	-.146676	4.016	.0479
(Constant)	38.874861	.851939		2082.192	.0000

End Block Number   1   PIN =   .050 Limits reached.

Note: Negative values are related to differences in scoring procedures. Low numerical values on the RSE and IFR equate with positive scores and reflect high self-esteem and positive family relations.

It is perhaps important to recognize, however, that the findings outlined in Table 9 point to the existence of an interaction effect between family composition, perception of family relationships, and self-esteem variables. Stepwise regression of the family composition variables using scores on the Hudson Index of Family Relations and COMPARE variables as dependent variables, indicate that TRADFAM (belonging to a traditional two-parent family) accounts for 3% of the variance in both cases. Thus, family composition may be seen to have some bearing on self-esteem in as much as it has a minor effect on how family relationships may be perceived.

Hypothesis #2

A significant relationship can be shown to exist between an adolescent's perception of family relationships and self-esteem.

The second hypothesis was also upheld as perception of family relationships as measured by Hudson's Index of Family Relations (IFR) was significantly related to self-esteem, accounting for 30% of the variance on the Hare Self-Esteem Scale and 20% on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Using a stepwise regression procedure on all variables, the Index of Family Relations was the only variable left in the equation when scores on the Hare Self-Esteem Scale were identified as the dependent variable. However, when a 0.10 PIN was used, the Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule also remained in the equation (see Table 10).

Table 10

Stepwise Regression of the Hare Self-Esteem Scale (HSS)

```
+-----------------------------------------------------------------+
|                    DEPENDENT VARIABLE HSS                       |
|                                                                 |
| Multiple  R          .57922                                     |
| R  Square            .33550                                     |
| Adjusted  R  Square  .32180                                     |
| Standard  Error      9.48810                                    |
|                                                                 |
| F=    24.48734       Signif F =  .0000                          |
|                                                                 |
| -------------------- Variables  in  the  Equation ------------- |
|                                                                 |
| Variable         B          SE B       Beta       F      Sig F  |
|                                                                 |
| IFR            -.269593    .045298    -.511746    35.421   .0000 |
| SCS             .088264    .045708     .166038     3.729   .0564 |
| (Constant)    96.213789   1.895613              2576.176   .0000 |
|                                                                 |
| End Block Number  1   PIN =    .100 Limits  reached.            |
+-----------------------------------------------------------------+
```

This finding is consistent with the findings obtained when scores on
the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale were used as the dependent variable in
stepwise regression: the Index of Family Relations was the first of three
variables remaining in the equation and, along with scores on the Rosenbaum
Self-Control Schedule and gender, accounted for 28% of the total variance (see
Table 11).

Differences between findings are perhaps explained by the fact that
Rosenberg's scale assesses global self-esteem whereas the Hare Self-Esteem
Scale is more specifically designed to consider the impact of family on
self-esteem, a family related self-esteem subscale (Home Self-Esteem)
accounting for one third of the total score (Corcoran & Fischer, p. 394).

Table 11

Stepwise Regression of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    DEPENDENT VARIABLE RSE                         │
│                                                                   │
│  Multiple R            .54955                                     │
│  R Square              .30201                                     │
│  Adjusted R Square     .28020                                     │
│  Standard Error        1.21246                                    │
│                                                                   │
│  F=    13.84586         Signif F =  .0000                        │
│                                                                   │
│  ----------------- Variables in the Equation ------------------  │
│                                                                   │
│  Variable       B        SE B       Beta      F       Sig F      │
│                                                                   │
│  IFR          .025272   .005794    .386743   19.023   .0000      │
│  SCS         -.016249   .005883   -.246424    7.628   .0069      │
│  GENDER      -.660318   .252958   -.224205    6.814   .0105      │
│  (Constant)  1.348196   .266744               25.546  .0000      │
│                                                                   │
│  End Block Number   1   PIN =     .050 Limits reached.           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

More specific analysis shows that perception of family relationships, as measured by the Hudson Index of Family Relations (IFR), accounted for the following variances on the specific Hare Self-Esteem subscales: 55% on Home Self-Esteem, 3% on Peer Self-Esteem, and 5% on School Self-Esteem. This relationship was significant with regard to home self-esteem , but varied with regard to peer and school self-esteem depending on which variables were entered into the equation. When global self-esteem (RSE) was one of the variables in the equation (see Table 12), there was seen to be no significant relationship between the perception of family relationships and peer self-esteem. Similar findings were obtained regarding school self-esteem. However, if RSE scores were removed from the equation (see Table 13),

relationships were seen to be significant for peer self-esteem, with IFR being the only variable left in the equation. Relationships were significant only at the for school self-esteem. when a 0.10 PIN was used. Thus, different conclusions may be drawn depending on how the analysis is conducted.

Table 12

Variation 1

Stepwise Regression of the Hare Peer Self-Esteem Subscale (PSE)

```
          DEPENDENT VARIABLE PSE

Multiple  R          .42401
R  Square            .17978
Adjusted R Square    .17141
Standard  Error     4.00864

F=      21.48054    Signif F =  .0000

---------------------- Variables  in  the  Equation  ----------------------

Variable         B          SE B        Beta        F          Sig F

RSE           -1.306593    .281915    -.424008     21.481      .0000
(Constant)    32.097483    .601345                 2849.018    .0000

End Block Number   1   PIN =      .050 Limits reached.
```

The second indicator of perception of family relationships , the COMPARE variable (which accounts for 64% of the variance in the Index of Family Relations), accounted for 15% and 16% of the variance respectively on linear regression of the Hare and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scales. Inconsistent with findings for the Index of Family Relations, COMPARE had no significant relationship to peer self-esteem or home self-esteem, although accounting for

34% of the variance on Hare's Home Self-Esteem subscale when linear regression was used. COMPARE was the third of three variables left in the equation (along with SCS and IFR) when Hare's School Self-Esteem subscale was used as the dependent variable and a 0.10 PIN was used.

Further clarification of how perceptions of family relations are related to self-esteem is found in Tables 14 and 15 which outline the results of a comprehensive analysis of the relationships between individual items on the Hudson's Index of Family Relations and the self-esteem variables.

It is perhaps also important to note that family composition was not found to have any significant relationship to perception of family relationships, with TRADFAM accounting for only 3% of the variance in scores on both the Index of Family Relations and COMPARE scales when linear regression was used.

Finally, with reference to Table 11, it should be noted that as stepwise regression of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was the only analysis which resulted in gender remaining in the equation. It may be interesting to note that, in comparing mean scores, females scored slightly above the mean on both the Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule and Hare's School Self-Esteem subscale, while males scored over the mean on all other variables. All differences were non-significant, however.

Table 13

<u>Variation 2</u>

<u>Stepwise Regression of the Hare Peer Self-Esteem Subscale (PSE)</u>

<u>DEPENDENT VARIABLE PSE</u>

Multiple R   .20126
R Square   .04050
Adjusted R Square   .03071
Standard Error   4.33565

F = 4.13700   Signif F = .0447

-------------------- Variables in the Equation --------------------

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	F	Sig F
IFR	-.040526	.019925	-.201257	4.137	.0447
(Constant)	31.194036	.721913		1867.127	.0000

End Block Number 1   PIN = .050 Limits reached.

Table 14

Stepwise Regression Of Self-Esteem and Index of Family Relations (IFR) Factors

Dependent Variable HSS

------------------- Variables in the Equation ----------------------

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	F	Sig F
IFR1	3.366500	.757925	.430916	19.729	.0000
IFR24	-1.728571	.67708	-.247675	6.518	.0122
(Constant)	74.109932	5.587022		175.951	.0000

Dependent Variable RSE

------------------- Variables in the Equation ----------------------

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	F	Sig F
IFR8	-.390096	.090237	-.410083	18.688	.0000
IFR9	.165952	.074366	.211687	4.980	.0279
(Constant)	3.020405	.635559		22.585	.0000

Note: see Appendix E for further discussion.

Table 15

Significant Index of Family Relations (IFR) Factors Related To Self-Esteem

SIGNIFICANT IFR FACTORS RELATED TO SELF-ESTEEM

IFR 1   The members of my family really care about each other
IFR 8   I get along well with my family
IFR 9   Members of my family argue too much
IFR 24   I feel left out of my family

Hypothesis #3

A significant relationship can be shown to exist between an adolescent's cognitive coping style and self-esteem.

As noted in Tables 10 and 11, the hypothesis that there exists a significant relationship between self-control and self-esteem was also upheld. Stepwise regression using Rosenbaum's Self-Control Schedule as the dependent variable shows self-esteem as measured by the Rosenberg Scale to account for 9% of the variance, with the COMPARE variable and gender accounting for an additional 6%, for a total of 15% of the variance thus accounted for (see Table 16).

Using linear regression, scores on the Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule (SCS) accounted for 8 % of the variance in scores on the Hare Self-Esteem Scale and 9 % on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Stepwise regression using scores on the Hare Self-Esteem Scale as the dependent variable only left SCS in the equation when a 0.10 PIN was used. A stepwise regression of specific subscales was interesting however, as scores on the Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule were significantly related (F=.0001) to School self-esteem (see Table 17) accounting for a total of 16% of the variance in combination with Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (which accounted for the initial 13%), and 8% of the variance when linear regression was used. Scores on the Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule also accounted for 6% of the variance on Hare's Home Self-Esteem subscale, while contributing less than 1% to the variance on Hare's Peer Self-Esteem subscale.

Table 16

Stepwise Regression of the Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule (SCS)

```
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                     DEPENDENT VARIABLE SCS                         │
│                                                                    │
│  Multiple  R            .42345                                     │
│  R  Square              .17931                                     │
│  Adjusted  R  Square    .15366                                     │
│  Standard  Error      19.93883                                     │
│                                                                    │
│  F=     6.99150          Signif F = .0003                          │
│                                                                    │
│  --------------------- Variables  in  the  Equation  ------------- │
│                                                                    │
│  Variable        B          SE B        Beta       F      Sig F    │
│                                                                    │
│  RSE          -4.118717   1.569318    -.271579    6.888   .0101    │
│  COMPARE       2.854702   1.317516     .220762    4.695   .0327    │
│  GENDER       -8.433245   4.217044    -.188808    3.999   .0483    │
│  (Constant)   11.477604   8.004025                2.056   .1548    │
│                                                                    │
│  End Block Number   1   PIN =      .050 Limits reached.            │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Hypothesis #4

A significant relationship can be shown to exist between an adolescent's cognitive coping style and perception of family relationships.

This hypothesis was also upheld in that how respondents perceived their family relationships to compare with the family relationships of others their age (COMPARE) was a significant factor (F=.0014) accounting for 9% of the variance in scores on the Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule when linear regression was used. When a stepwise regression process was used, COMPARE was the first of two variables left in the equation, accounting for 11% of the total variance in combination with scores on the Hare Self-Esteem Scale.

Scores on the Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule also accounted for 6% of the variance on Hare's Home Self-Esteem subscale when linear regression was used, but showed no significant relationship to scores on Hudson's Index of Family Relations.

Table 17

Stepwise Regression of the Hare School Self-Esteem Subscale (SSE)

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                      DEPENDENT VARIABLE SSE                               │
│                                                                           │
│  Multiple R            .42970                                             │
│  R Square              .18464                                             │
│  Adjusted R Square     .16783                                            │
│  Standard Error        4.19018                                            │
│                                                                           │
│  F =     10.98283      Signif F = .0001                                  │
│                                                                           │
│  -------------------- Variables in the Equation --------------------      │
│                                                                           │
│  Variable          B          SE B       Beta        F        Sig F      │
│                                                                           │
│  RSE           -1.022877    .311733     -.318244    10.767    .0014      │
│  SCS             .043023    .020555      .203005     4.381    .0390      │
│  (Constant)    29.125002    .786594                1370.977   .0000      │
│                                                                           │
│  End Block Number  1   PIN =      .050 Limits reached.                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

Discussion

Comparison with Related Studies

Hypothesis #1

No significant relationship can be shown to exist between an adolescent's family composition and self-esteem.

Garber (1991) used the Rosenberg scale to measure self-esteem in his study of 324 college students from four New England universities who came from intact and divorced families. He found that:

With respect to general self-esteem and again for social self-esteem, there were no significant main effects for family structure and no significant interactions between family structure and interparental conflict. However, there were significant main effects for interparental conflict with those from the high conflict group demonstrating lower general and social self-esteem than those from the low conflict group, regardless of family structure. (p. 134)

Although using the Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale as their measure of self-esteem, Amato and Ochiltree (1987) found in their Australian study of the children of intact, one-parent, and step-families that "the family type variable only accounted for small proportions of the variance in each measure . . . 1.0% [for] self-esteem" (p. 94), which is consistent with the results of this study. They also found that "no sex of child by family type interactions were observed for any measure" (p. 93), which is also consistent.

In contrast Rosenthal, Peng and McMillan (1980), used the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale and the Parent-Child Relations Questionnaire, respectively, to measure the self-concept and family perception variables in their study of New York junior high students in single and two-parent families. They found:

Significantly higher self concept (SC) scores among two-parent (Group II) children than single-parent (Group III) children (t = 2.14, p < 0.04). Females (Group IV) were similarly found to demonstrate higher self concepts than males (Group V) (t = 2.09, p < 0.04). Among the four subgroups (Groups VI to IX) defined by family structure and sex, males from single-parent homes showed the lowest self-concept, females from similar homes the second lowest, and females from two-parent homes the highest (overall F = 3.78, p < 0.01). This finding was alternatively supported by a regression analysis of the interaction effect between sex, family structure, and ten parental variables. A significant contribution was found. (p. 445)

Some interesting theories have been raised to explain these studies in which a relationship does appear to occur between disrupted families and self-esteem. For example, Bibby and Posterski (1985) found that "the situation that is most disruptive for relationships is the separated, 'non-established' setting" (p. 108). In an attempt to place this finding in a cultural context they surmised the following:

To the extent that teens from homes with one parent do feel less happy and confident than other young people, the culprit in large part seems to be society. Ironically, by treating such adolescents as if they are different, by stigmatizing them, society in some instances tragically "succeeds" in making them feel different from others their age. (p. 113)

It is interesting to note that the elements of self-fulfilling prophesy, previously discussed with regard to adoption, also appear to play a role for these teens from single parent homes. While looking at social factors, it is also important to note that many studies show a significant relationship between socio-economic factors and self-esteem. Amato & Ochiltree (1987) stated that, "as in Britain and the United States, Australian statistics indicate that most one-parent families suffer considerable economic disadvantage" (p. 92). Putting the social stigmatization aside, however, Bibby and Posterski (1985) concluded:

> That teenagers from established settings - that is, where a family arrangement is fairly permanently fixed, with two adults or one adult present - differ little from each other in their outlook on the family and the gratification they report receiving from family members. (p. 108)

These findings are supported by the conclusions of Lutz (1983), who suggested that the discrepancies found are related primarily to transition and that "perhaps after the initial period of adjustment, the stepfamily milieu is not decidedly different from other family systems in relation to stress" (p. 375).

As noted earlier and described above, study results are inconsistent where the relationship between family composition and self-esteem are concerned. In essence, this study supported those studies where no relationship is found to exist between these variables. If family composition is not a significant factor related to self-esteem, this then leads us to explore the question of whether there are other family variables that might have a significant relationship. As indicated above, variables affecting the perception of family relationships may be one such factor.

Hypothesis #2

A significant relationship was shown to exist between an
adolescent's perception of family relationships and self-esteem.

As noted previously, the study by Rosenthal, Peng and McMillan (1980)
concluded that "self concept was consistently found to be positively related to
perceptions of parental love and negatively related to perceptions of parent's
rejection" (p. 451). Tables 10 and 11 support the findings of Rosenthal et al. in
that both analyses show two significant factors: one positive factor accounting
for two-thirds of the variance and one negative factor accounting for
one-third. It also appears that responses on the Hare Self-Esteem Scale are
more oriented toward feelings, while the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale seems to
reflect the factual, behavioral, and relational components that could be seen to
contribute to these feelings. It is interesting to compare these findings to
those of Papini, Sebby, and Clark (1989) who found that:

> Both satisfaction and dissatisfaction with select areas of family
> functioning were found to enhance the extent to which early
> adolescents explore the self. Interestingly, the adolescent's exploration
> of identity was strongest in families where the adolescent was satisfied
> with the decision-making process. (p. 463)

Offer, Ostrov, and Howard (1981) also found that, in a normative sample,
"seven out of ten adolescents believe that they have a say in family decisions"
(p. 67) and "at least seven out of ten normal adolescents indicate that they
experience good feelings toward their parents and toward their own role in
their families" (p. 67). A corresponding distribution was found in this study

where 33% of respondents perceived some level of difficulty in their family relationships, whereas 67% perceived their family relationships positively. Although specific data regarding decision-making was not obtained, it is interesting to note the parallels and question whether family decision-making processes are reflected in these scores.

Hypothesis #3

A significant relationship was shown to exist between an adolescent's cognitive coping style and self-esteem.

That a relationship exists between the cognitive coping style under study, self-control, and self-esteem was originally reported by Rosenbaum (1990a), whose literature search revealed that scores on the Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule had been found to correlate with scores on both the Fitz Self-Esteem Scale and the Bachman and O'Malley Self-Esteem Inventory.

It was interesting to note that, in comparing mean scores, females in this study, scored over the mean on both the Rosenbaum Self-Control Schedule and Hare's School Self-Esteem subscale. This is an interesting finding in light of the belief that males are given preferential classroom treatment (Project on the Status and Education of Women, 1982). Males scored over the mean on all other variables, even though differences were slight.

With respect to gender and self-esteem, in a 1984 study of German (FRG) adolescents 12-19 years of age, Seiffge-Krenke (1990, p. 53) reports finding significant differences in positive self-descriptions (using the Offer

Self-Concept Questionnaire item "Generally content with oneself and the world"), between males and females at ages 12, 13, and 16, with male self-descriptions being more positive in all cases. It is interesting to note however, that at ages 15, 18, and 19 girls' self-esteem was found to be higher than that of boys, although not statistically significant.

The same study resulted in Seiffge-Krenke concluding the following:

Correlations between dimensions of self-concept and coping for non-clinical samples were between -.17 and .23: results which indicate that for these samples the two constructs are practically independent of one another. In clinical samples, however, the relationship was closer. (p. 60)

She goes on to state, however, that "although the relationship between self-concept and coping is at first glance apparently minimal for non-clinical adolescents, it is striking that certain coping styles and self-concept types do co-vary" (p. 60). Specifically, she concluded that:

Active copers have high self-esteem and report excellent relationships with their parents, whereas defenders [withdrawers] give very depressed self-descriptions. This shows that certain self-concept dimensions are more closely related to general styles of coping in adolescence than to specific coping behaviours. (p. 60)

<u>Hypothesis #4</u>

A significant relationship was shown to exist between an adolescent's cognitive coping style and perception of family relationships.

As stated above, Seiffge-Krenke (1990) found correlations between active coping and perception of family relationships. Bell, Avery, Jenkins, Feld, and Schoenrock (1985) in their study of American University students found that "those who report greater closeness to the family also report . . . greater social self-esteem and social competence (p. 113), competence often being a variable used in the evaluation of coping.

<u>Comparison with Canadian Studies</u>

Bibby and Posterski (1985, 1992), the Canadian experts in adolescent studies, have systematically studied this field over the past ten years. With regard to the distribution of various family types in Canada, Bibby and Posterski (1985) found that:

> 82% of the teenagers in our sample come from homes where their parents (including step-parents) are married. Another 8% report that their parents are divorced, and 4% indicate that they are separated. The remainder are from homes where one parent (5%) or both parents (under1%) are not alive, or where their parents are not married (1%). (pp. 105-106)

More recently, another Canadian study by Holmes and Silverman (1992) found similar distributions of family type in a study of young women registered in grades 8 to 10 in Canadian schools: "the number of

parents/guardians living with the respondents were: none, 0.8%; one, 16.6%; two, 80.4%; other, 2.0%; data missing, 0.2%" (p. 95). However, that some change may be occurring in this distribution may be indicated by the Bibby and Posterski (1992) findings that:

> Approximately one in four teenagers say their natural parents are either divorced or separated. Indicative of the pervasiveness of this phenomenon is the finding that the proportion of teens from Roman Catholic homes where divorce or separation has occurred (18 per cent) is now about the same as that of Protestants (19 per cent) and people of other faiths (19 per cent); the level for teens from homes where a parent claims no religious affiliation is higher (34%). (p. 30).

As with most studies, it is difficult to make direct comparisons between findings because the means by which data was collected, the questions asked, and how they were interpreted differ. This study showed that 55% of respondents came from homes with an intact two-parent family, while of the remainder, 14% lived in step-parent families, while 29% resided with single parents and 2% resided with neither parent. In comparison with the findings of Holmes and Silverman (1992), a possible increase in the number of single parent families may be indicated as 69% (intact plus step-families) could be seen as living "with two parents/guardians" (p. 98), as opposed to Holmes and Silverman's 80.4%, while 29% could be seen to be living "with one parent/guardian" (p. 98) as compared to Holmes and Silverman's 16.6%. In comparison with Bibby and Posterski's most recent findings, respondents who indicated that their natural parents were either divorced or separated represented 33% as opposed to the 25% quoted above.

Bibby and Posterski (1992) also measured the self-esteem of Canadian high school students (ages 15-19) in four areas: "feeling competent, having confidence, being pleased with their looks, and being liked" (p. 155). Their conclusion, consistent with their 1985 findings, was that "self-esteem among teens who have come from homes where parents are divorced or separated is not, over all, any lower than other young people" (p. 156). They did however find a gender difference in that "twice as many females as males (22 per cent versus 12 per cent) give evidence of having low opinions of themselves" (p. 156), and that "approximately one in 10 young people are severely down on themselves, and see themselves as failures" (p. 313). These reported findings are consistent with the findings of this study where no significant relationship was found to exist between self-esteem and family composition and males showed higher, although not significantly higher, self esteem than females in all areas except school self-esteem. Respondents who showed significantly low self-esteem, who could be seen to be "severely down on themselves", were less than 1 in 10 - at most 6% when the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used (see Table 4). This may be seen as an interesting result considering the increase in divorced, separated and single parent families reported and provides further substantiation for the finding that family composition is not found to be a significant factor with regard to self-esteem.

Both studies conducted by Bibby and Posterski showed that "what young people value more than anything else are relationships" (1992, p. 9) and that "more than 50% acknowledge that their lives have been influenced by 'the way we were brought up' " (1985, p. 102). A Canadian study of grade 10 students, conducted in the Toronto area by Mates and Allison (1992), found that

"one of the greatest sources of stress for high school students may be the conflictual relationships with parents" (p. 462). Holmes and Silverman (1992) found that "young women value their families, they hope for intimacy with them" (p. 89) and that "young women call out for ties with people who will listen to them with respect and offer them support" (p. 90). It is perhaps of concern, however, that Bibby and Posterski (1992) have noted a gradual reduction in the importance of these relationships in that:

> The numbers who say relationships are supreme are down somewhat from a decade ago. Between 1984 and 1992, the proportion of teens who view friendship as "very important" has dropped from 91 per cent to 84 per cent, while those who place a similar level of importance on being loved has slid from 87 per cent to 80 per cent. (p. 10)

The authors attribute this change to "an increasing emphasis on the individual over the group in Canadian society" (p. 10).

Also relevant to the present study was the Bibby and Posterski (1985) finding that "along with one's upbringing and friends, the two other factors perceived as critical are one's own will power and biologically-acquired characteristics" (p. 102). In this study, the significance of this "will power" is measured in terms of "learned resourcefulness", which has been seen to have a relationship to self-esteem.

Practical   Application

The most relevant aspect of this undertaking is addressing the question: What have I learned? This needs to be addressed on two fronts: 1) what have I learned through the process of accumulating my data, and 2) what have I learned regarding the hypotheses and issues in question and how does this related to my practice?

With regard to addressing the issue of process, a number of interesting factors come to mind.:

1) It was interesting for me to note how issues regarding family were reacted to in an often very protective way by the school board officials I encountered in this process. Some concern was specific to the area of adoption and how people might find questions of this nature difficult. Other concerns were expressed regarding how addressing any issues regarding family might be potentially traumatic to the study subjects. This came as somewhat a surprise to me based on my day-to-day social work experience in Child Welfare where adolescents are often required to discuss intimate details of their lives with relative strangers (social workers). The sensitivity that I encountered to these issues made me very aware of the expectations we often have of clients and made me begin to question the reasonableness of these expectations, as often social workers respond negatively to clients who are seen to be "resistant" to discussing issues in as complete a manner as may be required in the social worker's perspective. Based on the "community perspective" I encountered through this process, it would appear that this "resistance" may be more clearly the norm, especially in non-voluntary situations, and we are perhaps fortunate to have individuals share as much of their lives with us as

they do. This realization has practice implications regarding increased sensitivity around the issue of discussing sensitive information with clients.

This concern was somewhat born out in the data gathering process, where a number of potential respondents responded quite quickly with an attitude of refusal regarding participation in this process; and in fact some teachers recognized the legitimacy of some students' refusal based on knowledge of their family situations.

2) With regard to the issue of consents, the question was raised by one student, who was not being allowed to participate for lack of consent and regretting that he hadn't forged a parental consent signature, as to how I knew whether the consents of the other students weren't forged. This clearly is a legitimate issue to be questioned as there is, in fact, no clear way of knowing whether parental consents were in fact valid as there was no built in check-up system, i.e., phone numbers, on the consent forms.

3) The consent process itself suffered somewhat from being originally designed for a Grade 10, 15 year old population. I had not recognized the number of adult participants that would exist in the Grade 11 population, and also, I did not effectively address the issue of the "emancipated minor". The adult issues were at least easy to address (verification of 18 year status through teacher/school records), but I missed out on at least one potential respondent as I had not addressed the emancipated minor issue (and alienated him in the process). In future, dealing with this population I would revise the consent form to include statements that would both identify respondents as legal adults and not in need of parental consent or as emancipated minors who were living on their own, working, and self-supporting and therefore entitled to proceed without parental consent. (This might however then raise the issue of what

family category they might be placed into. I recognize that I hadn't addressed the "no guardian" scenario in conceptualizing my categories.)

4) With regard to practice issues, the literature search regarding self-control issues had a significant impact in helping me understand the significance of self-control and "perceived control" issues as they effect help-seeking behaviors and the consequent use of therapeutic or "support" services. It was significant to become conscious of the fact that "one likely and unfortunate consequence of being helped, is the potential loss of control" (Nadler, 1990, p. 146). This perspective is again helpful in understanding the possible concerns of the "resistant" client. Based on the data of this study that indicates a relationship between self-control factors and self-esteem, it is important to ensure that we maximize clients' feelings of both self-control and self-esteem as part of the helping process.

Theoretical Implications

In his most recent book, The Unread Mind, Rosenberg (1992) provides an interesting perspective through his belief that role-taking failure is the basis for the development of mental disorders. He argues that when we are unable to place ourselves "in the actor's shoes, cannot understand the actor's internal world . . . . an insuperable barrier is erected between human beings" (p. 51). He then goes on to argue that:

> When these things happen, the most fundamental rupture in human relations occurs. The human bond is snapped. The inability to take the role of the other thus produces a profound separation of people from one another, a separation more complete than that imposed by physical distance, personal enmity, or even death. (p. 51)

Based on this premise then, if we were to take the position that the development of a mental disorder is the ultimate self-esteem failure (barring the apparent, yet false, "self-esteem' of the manic or the individual suffering from delusions of grandeur), and that this role-taking failure occurs in varying degrees along a continuum, we might determine that it is the feeling of not being understood by others (not having one's role taken by the other), and most especially significant others, that is at the root of self-esteem difficulties. Once again, the individual's perception of how they are perceived by others is seen to be a critical element in the development of self-esteem. Rosenberg illustrates that the development of this perception dynamic is a highly complex process by using a quotation from Piaget: "it is not enough for [the child] to enter into the point of view of others, he must also look at himself from the point of view of others, which is twice as difficult" (cited in Rosenberg, 1992, p. 88).

In order to explore further the relevance of this point of view, it is interesting to contrast Rosenberg's statements with Bandura's findings, as discussed by Rosenbaum in the self-control literature:

> Bandura (1977) suggested that individuals appraise their abilities to self-control their own behavior according to the feedback they obtain on their own performance and/or on the performance of similar others under similar situations. When feedback is negative or noncontingent, individuals may either abandon any attempt to obtain their original goal or may search for new and potentially more rewarding goals. (cited in Rosenbaum, 1990, p. 7)

That self-esteem plays a role in how individuals differ in their ability to choose whether to "abandon" or "search" for goals was recognized by Coopersmith (1967) who stated that:

> Differences in styles of responding to oneself, to other persons, and to impersonal objects reveal that persons with high, medium, and low self-esteem adapt to events in markedly different ways. They experience the same or similar events differently; they have different expectations of the future and markedly different affective reactions. (p. 46)

Returning once again to Rosenbaum's discussion of Bandura and his theories regarding self-efficacy:

> Bandura (1977, 1982) proposed two basic expectancies that are important in guiding human behavior: outcome and self-efficacy expectancies. Outcome expectancies refer to the belief that the desired goal will be obtained if the person follows a specified course of action. Self-efficacy expectancies, on the other hand, refer to the person's evaluation that he or she is fully capable of performing the acts needed to attain the desired goal. (cited in Rosenbaum, 1990, pp. 6-7)

Hence, attempting to integrate self-esteem and self-control factors with Rosenberg's theory, it would appear that those individuals who display the symptoms of mental illness would be those who abandon their goal for understanding (fail to cope) when their role has not been taken by others, out of a lack of outcome and self-efficacy expectancies. Those who chose to search for new goals, or new ways for their goals to be reached (those who cope), as the result of positive outcome and self-efficacy expectancies, would not display symptoms of mental illness as they would be able to "search" until the goal of

being understood (having one's role taken) had been reached. It would appear then that the higher one's self-esteem the greater would be one's ability to persist in this "search", whereas the lower one's self-esteem the more easily one might be inclined to "abandon" the goal of being understood. It might further be argued that, with regard to role-taking failure being the responsibility of the receiver, the lower the self-esteem of the receiver the less persistent the receiver will be regarding striving to take the role of the other, thus enhancing the likelihood that the role will not be taken; and conversely, the higher the self-esteem of the receiver, the greater might be the likelihood that they would persist in the effort to take the role of the other, to understand. Applying this dynamic to the interaction of parent and child, for example, a high self-esteem parent is more likely to persist in taking the child's role, thus fostering understanding with the resulting outcome and self-efficacy expectancies (ability to self-control) being developed in the child, whereas conversely, a low self-esteem parent might be more likely to foster low self-esteem in the child through the inability to persist and the greater likelihood of role-taking failure.

A similar dynamic, that of the development of mutual empathy, was previously discussed in the literature review (p. 62, this text). With respect to self-esteem development and self-in-relation theory, Surrey (1985) illustrated how "the mutual sharing process fosters a sense of mutual understanding and connection" (p. 5). How this ability to place one's self in the role of the other may have gender implications is also illustrated:

The mother's easier emotional openness with the daughter than with the son, and her sense of identification with this style of personal learning and exploration probably leave the daughter feeling more emotionally connected, understood and recognized.   (p. 5)

Kaye's (1990) acknowledgment or rejection of difference phenomenon would also seem to have bearing in this regard, as the more willing one may be to tolerate differences, the more willing and persistent one may be in taking the role of the other.

One can also see how emphasis on the process of reframing, and searching for areas of agreement and mutuality, as proposed in the communication and mediation literature, may also have a very positive impact in relationship and self-esteem development.

Implications for Future Research

Knowledge of what enables families to rear children successfully despite the pain, stress, and disadvantage that accompanies family dissolution would be of considerable value , not only to those who face this challenging task, but also to the policy-makers and practitioners who seek to provide sufficient and appropriate support for their efforts. (Ferri, 1993b, p. 289)

Hudson & Galaway (1993) conclude that "national longitudinal survey data is sorely needed to provide information on the changing status of families in Canada" (p. 344), and have compiled an extensive list of areas to be explored. Of particular significance to the issues addressed in this study, are the following:

The perspectives of children and their parents as they move through a series of transitions

- Views about family experiences, particularly the range and impact of different sources of stress;

- Views about the effects of social policies and programs;

- Views about household roles as a result of family transitions;

- Views about events preceding and following from family transitions;

- Views about adjustments that occur when new partnerships are formed and old one's dissolved; . . . (p. 345)

Conclusion

A strong sense of self is inseparable from a sense of belonging.

(Kaye, 1990, p. 142)

In the process of compiling the results of this study, my thoughts have been drawn time and again to a young adolescent client with whom I worked recently. This young lady and her acting out behaviors presented a considerable challenge that far exceeded any apparent "justification" for her behavior. Her out-of-control behavior in contrast to her more stable background up until that time just didn't "fit". Numerous assessments revealed a variety of theories in explanation of her behavior: theories ranging from unsubstantiated suspicion of sexual abuse to an identity disorder. Her explanation, which from an adult perspective appeared too simplistic to be causing all of this dysfunctional behavior, was minimized. In light of these findings, however, I begin to have second thoughts. Her explanation was that she was attempting to punish her family because she no longer felt that she

belonged. Her family was committed to her and the precipitating incident was a minor one that to most of us would not warrant this kind of behavior; but for her it had been significant, causing serious implications for her perception of family relationships and self-esteem. Had her coping skills been greater, she may have been able to find another form of resolution, but her solution to this dilemma of "belonging" was to shift her focus to her "street family" where her behavior was deemed acceptable.

In light of this study's findings, it is interesting to consider the use of the term "street-family" by adolescents who have chosen the street life and what the use of this term says about the importance placed by adolescents on the concepts of "belonging" and "family" to one's sense of worth or self-esteem.

While working on this thesis, the greatest interest was expressed by parents of adolescents who were anxious to know "what I found out", as they hoped this might be useful in understanding their own adolescents and the struggles they faced. Based on the findings of this study I would provide the following as a summary of what I believe adolescents require from adults as we attempt to enhance self-esteem development in the adolescent:

1) <u>Belonging</u>

It is of primary importance for adolescents to experience a sense of belonging within their family, whatever form that family may take. This need for belonging is particularly illustrated in the dilemma of adolescents who are not able to reside with their families of origin for some reason. Salahu-Din and Bollman (1994) in their study of adolescents in foster care concluded that:

> Helping placed adolescents understand that they are a part of more than
> one family and that it is appropriate to establish and maintain positive

relationships with each family may facilitate development of a positive identification with the family, a healthy self-identity and subsequently the development of positive self-esteem. (p. 134)

Similarly, this concept that an individual can "belong" to more than one significant group, without interfering with or threatening the quality of the relationships within these groups, may be helpful for parents in their struggle to share their adolescent with peers and other "outside" relationships.

2) Acceptance

Adults need to be sensitive to the fact that "rejection of differences" by significant others, compounded by the conflict this may engender, may be perceived by the adolescent as "rejection of me". Rosenberg (1992) has emphasized the importance of understanding and "taking the role of the other" in fostering mental health. Flexibility in accepting differences is a valuable skill in relating to adolescents; however, when ideas or values conflict, as they inevitably will during this time of growth and exploration, it is important to communicate those differences of opinion in a way that validates the sense of belonging and provides reassurance that the relationship will remain intact despite the differences. These conclusions find support in the recent American research of Tubman and Lerner (1994) whose data obtained while studying the voluntary, normative, predominantly Jewish population that comprised the New York Longitudinal Study "supported a balanced account of the renegotiation of relationships between parents and children in which the individuality of children and the connections between parents and children were maintained simultaneously" (p. 93).

3) <u>Coping Skills</u>:

Most adolescents, despite their eagerness to appear so, do not possess the same level of coping skills that they will as adults. Because coping is a learned process they will need support and guidance (role-models) in assisting the development of these skills. This support, however, needs to be provided in a manner that recognizes the "emergent" nature of adolescence and the resultant need for adolescents to exercise independent decision-making and learn from their own mistakes.

Adolescents value participation in the decision-making that affects their lives and should be encouraged to learn from, and take responsibility for, their decisions. Herein lies the importance of self-control as one of many coping skills that need to be encouraged and developed. Such self-control skills can be developed through the adolescent being allowed to experience challenges that will result in the development of a personal belief that they are able to have an effective impact on matters relating to their own lives. It is through this process that successful adults will be born.

In conclusion, I believe verification for these findings was recently obtained when I attended a sexual abuse conference at the University of Calgary given by Texas professor/clinician Wayne Duehn. Duehn (1995) presented his practice framework which he called a Trauma Resolution Model (with credit to the Chesapeake Institute). Based on studies of survivors of sexual assault, it was Duehn's contention that the two elements required for successful trauma resolution were:

1.   a support system (which I believe would incorporate the concepts of
       belonging and acceptance described above), and

2.   a cognitive explanatory system that enabled one to answer the question: Why me? (which I believe reflects the use of a cognitive coping style that enhances the maintenance and/or development of self-esteem).

For me, these findings reinforced the conclusion that adolescents who are able to develop and maintain a strong sense of self-esteem are those adolescents who have a strong support system in which they have a sense of belonging and acceptance, and where assistance is provided in developing a cognitive framework that enhances the development of coping skills.

In helping to find an explanation for the young people whose acting-out behavior is problematic in the adolescent years, it may then be hypothesized that those adolescents who cannot find acceptance and belonging in an environment that fosters positive coping skills, will likely seek acceptance and belonging elsewhere (in a substitute family or peer group) and learn to base their self-esteem around use of the more "negative" cognitive frameworks and coping skills, if valued in these groups.

In the form of summary, I would like the final word to go to Reginald Bibby, professor at the University of Lethbridge, a man whose 20 years of studying Canadian adolescents allows him to speak authoritatively on this subject. Bibby was interviewed March 8, 1995 on the CBC morning radio program The Calgary Eyeopener, as one of many experts who participated in a month-long series that explored how, as a society, we treat our children. Bibby focused on the fact that teenagers value relationships, and, in particular, relationships in which there exists a balance of direction and emergence (which he calls "room"). From a developmental perspective he looked at the fact that, as adults, we grow into a more conservative outlook on issues than we ourselves had as adolescents. My experience allows me to share

in Bibby's belief that this dynamic is often at the basis of much of the conflict between parents and teens; with adults, from their newer more conservative perspective, feeling that what they believed was good for them as teenagers is not good now for their own teens. I've worked with many parents who feel that because they have "been through it", and in retrospect realize that their decisions were problematic, want to protect their own teens by preventing them from making the same mistakes and suffering the same consequences. From the adolescent perspective, this position is often viewed as hypocritical rather than recognized as a desire to protect, and it is from this difference of opinion that conflict often springs. Parents want their children to "learn from my mistakes" and reap the rewards of parental hindsight, rather than have the right to their own developmental process, which entitles them to "learn from their own mistakes". Bibby concluded by saying that "a lot of the problems with teenagers don't lie with them, they lie with us, and we have to go back to the drawing board and look at ourselves". This is not to imply that parents are solely responsible for the behavior of their adolescents, but that their contribution to a successful adolescence is significant.

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Appendix A

Explanation of Research Project

Dear parent/student:

I am a Master's student in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary. I am requesting your assistance in completing a research project related to adolescents and family relationships. Your school has agreed to allow the participation of Grade 11 students enrolled in CALM classes during this spring semester. Students who choose to participate will be requested to complete a questionnaire during their scheduled class time on April 28 or 29, 1994, respectively. On this questionnaire, your child will be asked to answer a variety of questions, including questions regarding family composition issues such as adoption, divorce, or death of a parent. All questionnaires will be completed anonymously, and I, as researcher, will have no identifying knowledge of the participants in this study. The attached consent forms, and the identifying information contained, will be kept by the school for their records.

Please be advised that there is no requirement for your child to participate in this study, and participation will have no bearing on school grades etc.

Participation in this research project is voluntary.

Should you have questions or concerns regarding the nature of this study, please contact me at 282-0632. For your information, a summary of significant research findings will be made available through the school sometime during the 1994-95 school year.

The consent form must be brought to your CALM class on April 28 or 29, 1994 i you wish to participate in this study.

Your consideration of this request has been appreciated.

Laurie Milthorp

Research Consent Form

To be completed by parent/guardian:

I/We_____

parent/guardian of _____,

who attends _____ school, have read the

explanation attached, and consent to my son/daughter participating in this research project by

completing a questionnaire regarding adolescents and family relationships for Laurie Milthorp,

graduate student, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary.

I understand that this questionnaire is to be administered during class time on

April 28 or 29, 1994, and that my son/daughter may choose **not** to participate

at this time if he/she wishes, regardless of this consent.

_____   _____

_____   _____

Signature of parent/guardian   Date

==

To be completed by student:

I, _____ of _____ school,

have read the attached explanation and I do / I do not wish to participate in

this research project by completing a questionnaire regarding adolescents and family

relationships during my CALM class on April 28 or 29, 1994.

I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time prior to or during

completion of the questionnaire.

_____   _____

Signature of student   Date

Appendix B

FAMILY QUESTIONNAIRE

The remaining questions are about you and your family relationships. Because all families are unique, it is helpful to know something about you and the members of your family, so that the answers to the following questions can best be understood.

1. When you talk about your family, who does that include?

sister/s   mother   father   other

brother/s   step-mother   step-father   _____
                                                                          (explain)

2. Do all family members live in the same house as you?   YES   NO

     If no, who does not live with you?   _____

     Is this because of: separation   death

                                      divorce   other   _____
                                                                                    (explain)

3. Are you adopted?   YES   NO

     If yes, by which parent/s were you adopted?   (check as many as needed)

                mother   step-mother   other

                father   step-father   _____
                                                                                    (explain)

4. How does your relationship with your family compare with the family relationships of other people your age?   (circle one number only)

----
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
Worse   Same   Better

Appendix C

ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

For each of the statements below, please show whether it applies to you by circling the number that comes closest to your own feelings.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	1	2	3	4
2.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4
3.	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	1	2	3	4
4.	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4
5.	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4
6.	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1	2	3	4
7.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4
8.	I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1	2	3	4
9.	I certainly feel useless at times.	1	2	3	4
10.	At times I think I am no good at all.	1	2	3	4

Appendix D
ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

For each of the statements below, please show whether it applies to you by circling the number that comes closest to your own feelings.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4
2.	At times I think I am no good at all.	1	2	3	4
3.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4
4.	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4
5.	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4
6.	I certainly feel useless at times.	1	2	3	4
7	I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	1	2	3	4
8.	I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1	2	3	4
9.	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	1	2	3	4
10.	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1	2	3	4

Appendix E

Stepwise Regression of Self-Esteem and IFR Factors

It should be noted that the parallel findings in analysing the variance

accounted for by IFR in HSS and RSE scores were obtained by eliminating

IFR 18 from the factors in the equation. With IFR 18 in the equation, the RSE

findings remained the same but the HSS analysis showed IFR 1 and IFR 18 as

the only factors left in the equation. The decision to remove IFR 18 from the

equation was made based on multiple linear regression analyses that showed

IFR accounting for 58 % of IFR 1 and 59% of IFR 8, while IFR 1 and IFR 8

accounted for only 48% of the variance in each other. It was therefore felt

that IFR 18 was essentially measuring the same qualities as IFR 1 and IFR 8 and

could be removed from the equation on this basis.