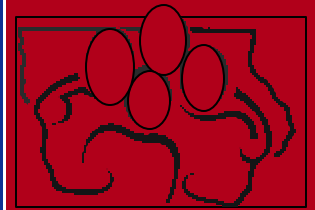


# FAMILY

## Transitions Project



Newsletter

2003

Institute for Social and Behavioral Research

## Message from Dr. Rand Conger, Project Director

### An Amazing Journey

Each year I enjoy having this opportunity to thank all of you for your efforts and contributions over the years. Your participation has made the Family Transitions Project one of the most remarkable studies ever of families and human development. The focus on *transitions* is drawn into sharp focus in this Newsletter, which highlights truly significant life changes.

Back in 1989 and the early 1990s, when the Target youth first began participating in this study, they were still dealing with the difficult passage from childhood to adolescence. For Targets, the primary challenge was to deal successfully with all of the biological, psychological and social changes that occur during that time of life. Most of the Targets were not driving, dating, or working at a regular job, and none of them had entered high school.

As shown in the following pages, the world for these Targets is a far different place today. They now average 26-27 years of age, the majority of them are married, and a small minority has been separated, divorced or suffered the death of a spouse. Close to one-half of Targets have a child, and 20% have two or more children. Most of the Targets are now working full-time or are homemakers.

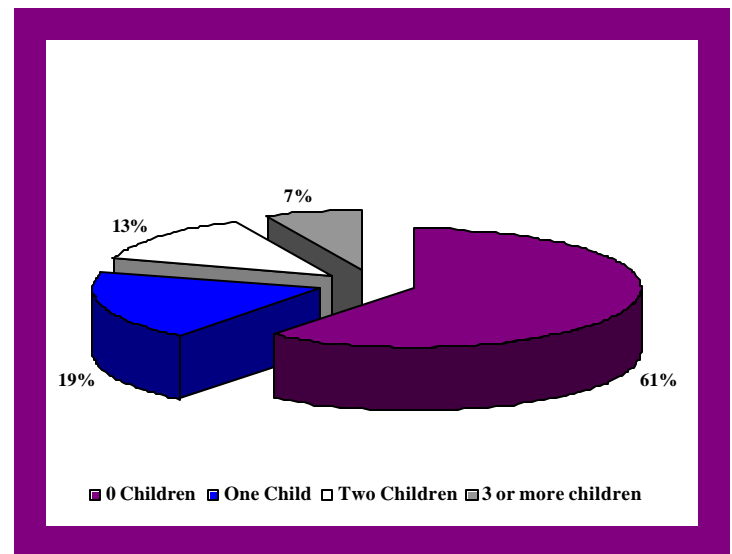
As remarkable as the transitions are to this point in time, we hope during the next five years to take part in the most striking change of all. During the next five years, many of the Targets in the study will reach the same age their parents were when the study began! And many of the Targets' children will be as old as the Targets or their siblings were back in the late 1980s and early 1990s! These children will be going through the same passage from childhood to adolescence that the Targets and Siblings experienced in those early years of the research.

We hope that you will be as excited as we are about taking this next step in this amazing journey called the Family Transitions Project. From this journey we can learn more about how one generation of families influences the development of the next than we have ever known before. The continued participation of Targets and their families will make it possible to achieve a unique understanding of these fundamentally important intergenerational processes. I want to thank everyone who has contributed over these many years for their patience and sacrifices in contributing to the well being of families and children.

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### Emerging Families

The following pie chart illustrates the percentage of Targets who have children, as well as how many children they have.



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## The Intergenerational Transmission of Positive Behavior: A Prospective, Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children across Three Generations

By Dr. Tricia Neppel  
Associate Project Director

Studies that examine the intergenerational transmission of behaviors have found that the relationship between a parent in the first generation (called G1) and an adolescent in the second generation (called G2), often serves as a model for these adolescents when they become old enough to have children. Their children are the third generation (called G3).

To test this idea in the Family Transitions Project, we examined the intergenerational transmission of positive parenting. We found a direct relationship between positive parenting by G1 and positive parenting by G2 (our Targets). It appears, then, that when the parents (G1) of the target adolescents (G2) in our study were helpful and supportive during the adolescent years, the targets tended to behave similarly toward their children (G3).

Also important, we found that when the G2 target parents engaged in positive parenting practices (such as effective communication and responsiveness), this style of parenting tended to promote the prosocial behavior of their young child. We found that when G2 parents engaged in positive parenting practices, their young children were less hostile and negative.

Therefore, we have learned that parents who engage in assertive communication and who are responsive listeners may promote social competence in their children and reduce the risk of hostile and disruptive behavior by their children.

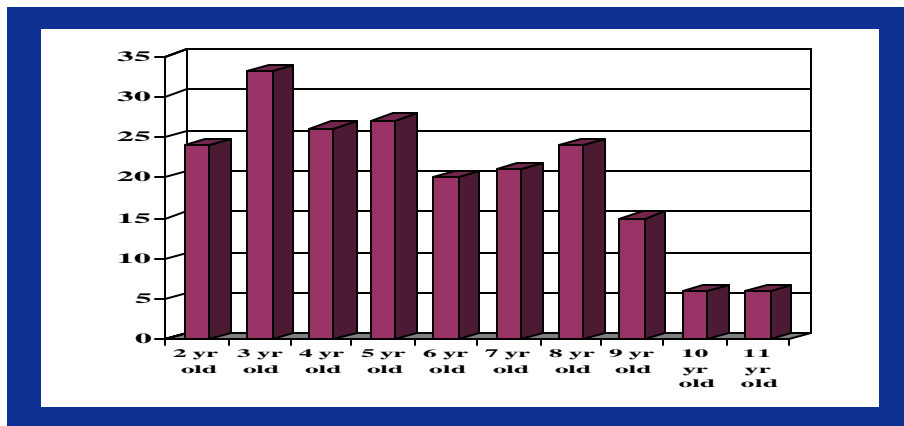
We are excited about these results because they show that positive parenting in one generation can be associated with positive behavior in a second and third generation. This finding lends support for the long-term consequences that positive parenting can have on the social development of young children.

*Note: The above article is a summary of research findings that will be submitted to a developmental journal for publication. These research findings are based upon information learned during interviews with Targets, their romantic partners and their children.*



### Number of Children by Age

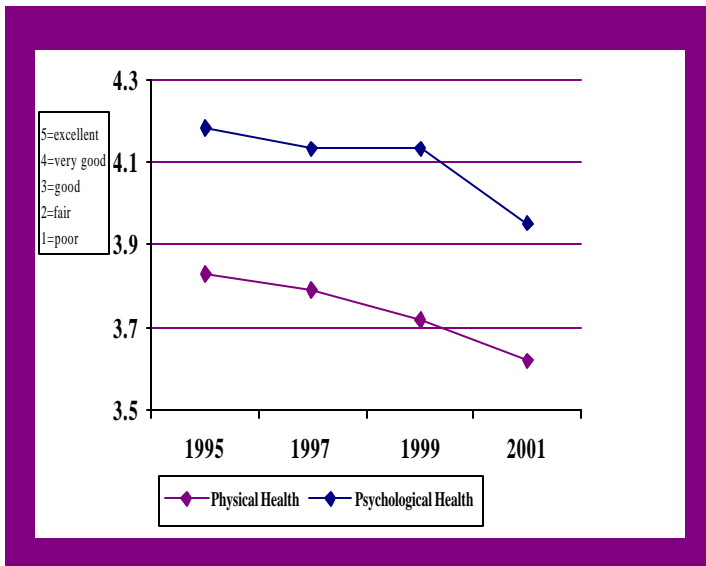
The following graph demonstrates by age the number of children we will visit in 2003.



# PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH COMPARED TO LIFE SATISFACTION

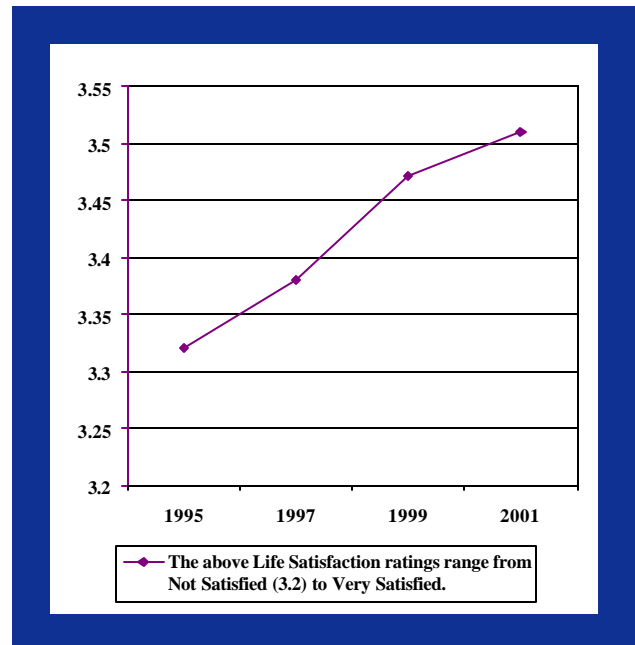
By Dr. Becky Burzette  
Associate Project Director

Since 1995, we have asked Targets to rate their overall physical and psychological health. The following graph illustrates the change in physical and psychological health ratings, as reported by Targets, from 1995 to 2001:



Consistent with the aging process, these ratings of physical and psychological health decreased from 1995 to 2001. It is interesting to note that the ratings of physical health decreased at about the same rate over this time period. However, the *psychological* health ratings appeared to decrease sharply from 1999 to 2001, about the time many Targets were graduating from college and starting their careers and families. This trend may be related to the stresses of making the transition to adulthood and independence.

But the news isn't all bad! Over the same period of time, ratings of life satisfaction increased steadily and significantly. The graph below illustrates life satisfaction, as reported by Targets, from 1995 to 2001:



So, in spite of decreasing physical and psychological health, Targets continued to be more satisfied with their lives than ever. We wondered if we would find the same result if we compared reports by female Targets to those of male Targets - would there be differences in reports for physical and psychological health ratings and life satisfaction? Or, would both genders report similar responses for these issues over this time period? What we found was that, in general, men reported better physical and psychological health than women reported. Men also described themselves as being more satisfied with their lives than women described themselves.

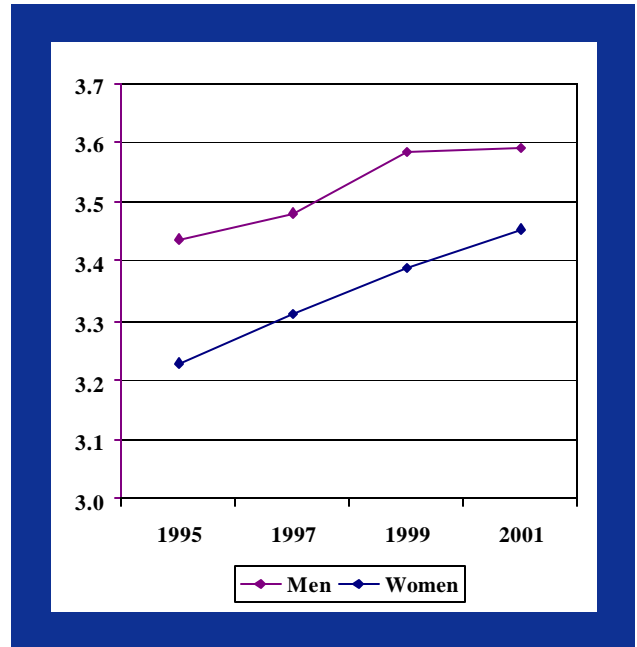
(See the other side for additional charts that demonstrate these differences between men and women.)

## COMPARING MEN AND WOMEN'S REPORTS OF HEALTH AND LIFE SATISFACTION

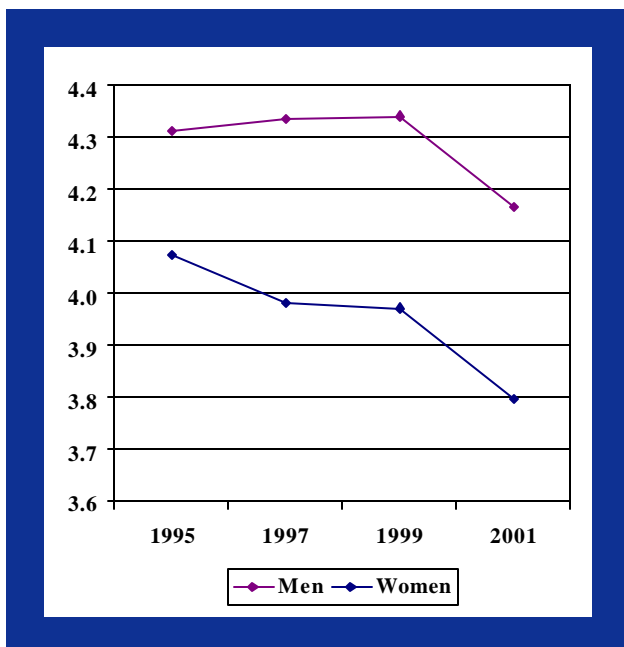
The following graph shows the difference between men and women's physical health ratings, as reported by Targets, from 1995 to 2001:



The following graph shows the difference between men and women's life satisfaction, as reported by Targets, from 1995 to 2001:



The graph below shows the difference between men and women's psychological health ratings, as reported by Targets, from 1995 to 2001:



Interestingly, men and women do not differ on the rate at which these ratings changed. That is, the ratings for men and women for physical and psychological health decreased at the same rate from 1995 to 2001, and the ratings for life satisfaction increased at the same rate. So although men reported being healthier and more satisfied than women reported, the rate of change was not different.

**A Message from  
Lavonna Meyer,  
Field Interviewer**

When I received a phone call asking me if I would like to submit an article for the *2003 Family Transitions Project Newsletter*, I was tempted to say 'no' because my days are very busy. Besides my work as a Field Interviewer at the Institute for Social and Behavioral Research, I have a full-time job with the Farmers Cooperative Company in Latimer, Iowa. My husband, four married daughters, and twelve grandchildren keep my life full of wonderful things to do. But after thinking about the newsletter, I decided I didn't want to pass up the opportunity to say a heartfelt and sincere 'Thank You' to all the wonderful families who have welcomed me into their homes.

I began my job as a Field Interviewer in 1990, the second year of data collection for the Iowa Youth and Families Project. "Targets" were 14 years old in 1990 – soon some of them will have children that age! This longevity is one reason the Family Transitions Project is so unique and important. Over the course of these twelve years and hundreds of in-home visits, I've had the privilege of visiting with many of the families in the project, and have visited some of the same families year after year. Family pets have escorted me to my car; Grandparents have served me homemade cookies and tea; Parents have showed me baby pictures and special awards; Siblings have told me jokes; Targets have made my job enjoyable in so many ways; and fourth generation Children have called me Grandma (*Lavonna is a difficult name to remember!*).

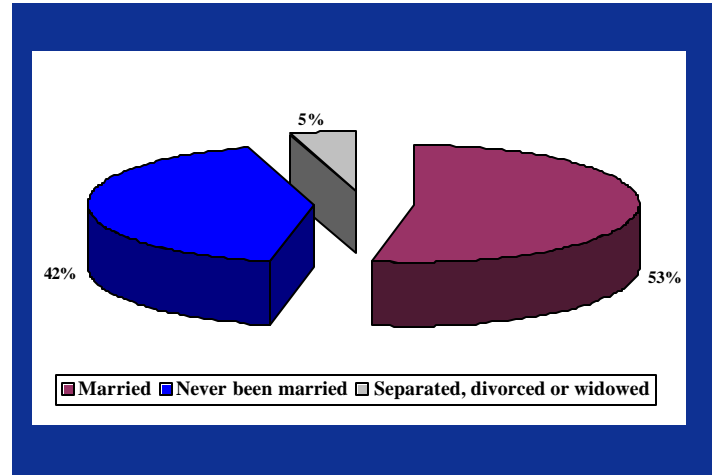
This year I visited families with two-year-old children and those with 6 and 7 year old children. I've been doing the two-year-old visit since 1997 when we began our visits with this fourth generation, and since then over 100 children have completed their play tasks with me. I started doing visits with the older children in 2000. Each visit is different and each child is a delight.

All Field Interviewers realize that your lives are just as busy as ours are. We appreciate the effort you make in scheduling and keeping appointments. As has been said before, you are not just part of the Family Transitions Project - you ARE the Family Transitions Project! I hope you are proud of the fact that you are making a real and positive difference in the lives of children and families.

Please feel free to ask questions and give your opinions about the project to the Field Interviewer who visits your home. Field Interviewers are the eyes and ears of the research team because we have personal contact with you who are the participants. Thank you for welcoming us into your homes. Your friendliness and warmth are greatly appreciated!

**Marital Status**

The following pie chart illustrates Targets' marital status as of 2002.

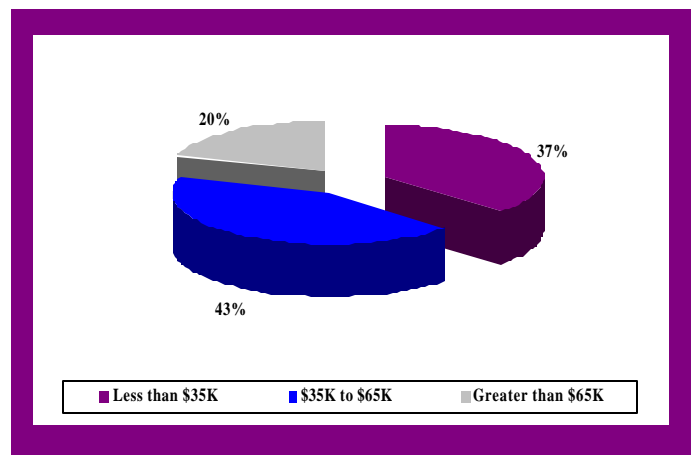


**Relationship Status**

The table below breaks out the romantic relationship status of Targets who are not married; as reported by Targets in 2002.

Living with someone in a steady, marriage-like relationship	31%
In a steady, romantic relationship with one person; live together a lot of the time but maintain separate residences	6%
In a steady, romantic relationship with one person, but not living together	19%
Dating, but do not have a steady, romantic relationship with one person	18%
Not dating or seeing anyone right now	26%

**Income**



The pie chart above demonstrates the range of incomes that are represented by Target households; as reported by Targets in 2002.

## Message from Debbie Bahr, Project Manager

Local ...515-294-2802  
Toll-free ...1-800-455-4250  
E-mail ...dcbahr@iastate.edu

Thank you once again for your participation in the Family Transitions Project! Ninety-four percent of Targets completed the telephone survey in 2002-2003, and nearly 90% participated in an in-home visit with us! For this last round of in-home interviews, we visited with nearly 140 families with children ranging from 18 months through 7 years old.

### **What's coming up?**

We will be contacting Targets, beginning in late June, to ask for their participation, and that of their Spouse, Partner, Boyfriend or Girlfriend, for the 2003 wave of data collection. We will conduct one in-home visit with the majority of Targets that involves one video discussion task; we will ask other Targets to complete questionnaires that we mail to them. This is very similar to what we did for the 2001 wave of data collection.

We will continue our in-home visits with Targets with eligible children. The visit this year will be similar to those conducted in previous years, although the interview itself is modified to reflect the age and developmental stage of the child. We will be visiting with children ranging in age from 18 months to eleven years old.

### **Reimbursements**

Our reimbursement schedule is as follows:

- ◆ Targets and their Spouse, Partner or Boyfriend or Girlfriend who participate in the in-home visit by completing questionnaires and the video discussion task will each receive \$110.
- ◆ Those who complete mail questionnaires will receive \$60.
- ◆ Families who participate in the child visit will receive a \$110 check.

Within two to three weeks after completion of an in-home visit or receipt of completed questionnaires, we will send participants their checks as reimbursement for their time and effort. If you do not receive your check as promised, please call me right away. Anytime you have a question or problem with a reimbursement, I hope you'll call me. It's extremely important to us that you receive the reimbursement you were promised and that you have earned, in a timely manner and for the correct amount.

### **Family Members in the Military**

All of us here in Ames want you to know that we are thinking of those of you who are serving in the military or who have loved ones doing so. We are praying for the safe return of all military personnel, so that they may reunite with their families and friends.

### **Notice of Change**

Enclosed is a Notice of Change postcard for your use in notifying us when you have name, address or phone number changes. Thanks for taking the time and effort to keep us updated through these postcards, as well as with your letters, phone calls and e-mails.

I am truly grateful for your support of the Family Transitions Project and for your participation, past and future!

**THANK YOU.**

