

# Family Transitions Project



2001

From the Institute for Social and Behavioral Research

## Message from Dr. Rand Conger, Project Director

I want to thank *all* family members for participation in and support of the Family Transitions Project. In particular, I want to thank Targets for their participation in the telephone interview last year and also their families who participated in an in-home visit for the 2000-2001 wave of data collection.

This edition of the newsletter shares important information about recent interest on the part of national media in research findings about the study. We would like feedback from all participants, past and present, regarding this media interest. Therefore, we hope you will read the newsletter and give us your valuable opinion (see the enclosed "Mini-Survey"). The newsletter also provides specific data related to the education, employment, income and health of Targets as reported in 1999 and 2000.

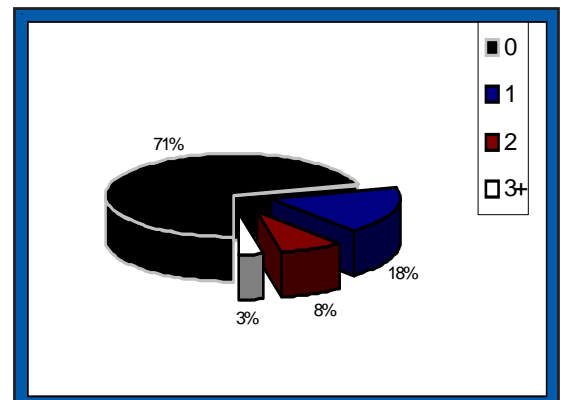
What about 2001-2002? We have made significant changes in the structure of this upcoming wave of data collection. As you know, we previously asked Targets to do two in-person visits every other year, or three visits if he or she had a child eligible to participate in the study. In 2001-2002, for those Targets without an eligible child, we have cut the number of visits from two visits to one visit. For those Targets with an eligible child, we have cut the number of visits from three visits to two. These changes follow from the concerns that participants have expressed about fitting project participation into their busy lives and time schedules. We hope that this reduction in the number of visits will enable Targets and their families to continue participating in the study, or to rejoin us if they have not participated in the past.

We continue to add children to the study as the children reach 18 months of age. This aspect of the research allows us to learn how a Target's experience as an adolescent and young adult affect the development of his or her child as the child transitions from toddler to preschooler, then to school age and, if funding and participant support continue, to the teen years. In effect, Targets' children will have the opportunity to follow in their parents' footsteps to the age where many of the Targets began their involvement with the study, that is, as a teenager.

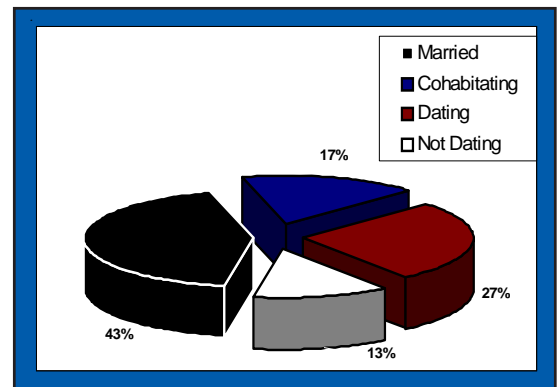
No previous scientific investigation has been able to follow these kinds of linkages across generations to help us understand how human beings change and develop over time. The continuing involvement of Targets and their families in this work plays a major role in creating this fundamental contribution to our understanding of families and children. *We cannot thank you enough for your willingness to be part of this important effort.*

## Emerging Families

The pie graph below illustrates numbers of children as reported by Targets in 2000. Twenty-nine percent of Targets have children, compared to 24% in 1999.



## Relationship Status



The pie graph above illustrates relationship status as reported by Targets in 2000. Reports show that 43% of Targets were married in 2000. Fifty-four percent had never been married at the time of their interview. Also of interest, 3% were divorced or separated.

Iowa State University

Becoming the best

# ARTICLE CORNER

The Article Corner is an annual feature of the [Family Transitions Project Newsletter](#). This edition of the Article Corner reprints a press release issued by Iowa State University in February of 2001. The press release summarized findings related to how children's relationships with their parents when they were growing up influenced their romantic relationships as adults. These findings were published in an article, "Competence in Early Adult Romantic Relationships: A Developmental Perspective on Family Influences," in the [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology](#), 2000, Vol. 79, No. 2, 224-237. The authors are Rand D. Conger, Ming Cui, Chalandra M. Bryant and Glen H. Elder, Jr.

## ROMANTIC CHOICES INFLUENCED BY CHILD-PARENT RELATIONSHIPS

True or False: How you conduct *your* romantic relationship is a reflection of what you learned from watching your parents conduct *their* relationship.

The answer is false, according to researchers at Iowa State University's Institute for Social and Behavioral Research. The institute's findings indicate that your romantic choices and behaviors are influenced by the direct one-to-one relationship you had as a child with your parents, *not* by the way your parents interacted as a couple.

"The results go against the common idea that we learn to relate to our partners by watching our parents relate with each other," said Rand Conger, an ISU sociology professor and research scientist with the institute.

These research findings are based on observational data that has been coded by trained observers. Observers objectively rate family and couple interactions using the Iowa Family Interaction Rating Scales. Observational data has been collected on an on-going basis from families participating in the study since the children in these families were 12 years old. In 1997 researchers observed 193 of these same children, who were in their early twenties in 1997 and involved in steady romantic relationships.

"Adolescents who grew up with parents who were warm and supportive tended to develop similar relationships with their romantic partners," Conger said. "Those adolescents were more likely to form satisfying, committed relationships." The situation was reversed if children grew up in families that were not supportive. Those children tended to have unstable and unhappy relationships as adults. Conger said the research information might help counselors work with families to treat and prevent marital difficulties.

Other research that has been done on this same topic area is typically retrospective, and, therefore, results depend on an individual's memory about relationships. Conger said this study has given researchers a chance to observe family interactions spanning three generations.

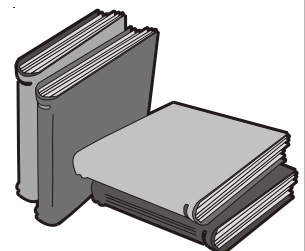
"Our project is pretty rare," Conger said. "We were able to interview adolescents in seventh grade and continue interviewing them into adulthood."

The results suggest that children from single-parent families may do just as well in romantic relationships as those from two-parent families, as long as they have equally supportive parents. Conger said the results indicate that parenting has a major impact on later relationships, independent of the quality of the parents' marriage.

The research is part of the Iowa Youth and Families Project, which began monitoring the emotional health of families during the 1980s farm crisis. The study began in 1989 with 451 two-parent families. In 1991 researchers added 200 single-mother families with similarly aged children (the Single Parent Project).

The institute has received funding from the National Institute of Mental Health to continue the study, now called the Family Transitions Project, until June 2004.

*(The 2001 Family Transitions Project Newsletter gratefully acknowledges Barb McManus for her news release that provided the basis for this article. McManus is with ISU Ag Communications.)*



## E d u c a t i o n

From data reported in 1999 by Targets, 78% were not currently attending school while 22% were in school.

Of Targets in school, twenty-three percent were in their first or second years of vocational or technical training, or earning a 2-year college degree. Fifty-one percent of Targets reported being in their 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year of college pursuing a BA or BS degree. A number of Targets, 26%, were enrolled in master or doctoral programs.

Educational attainment for those Targets who were not currently attending school in 1999 is as follows:

- Less than High School diploma—2%
- High School diploma or G.E.D.—21%
- 1 year of college or vocational or technical training—9%
- 2-year college degree—18%
- 3 years of college—6%
- 4-year college degree—42%
- Beyond a bachelors degree—2%

## E m p l o y m e n t

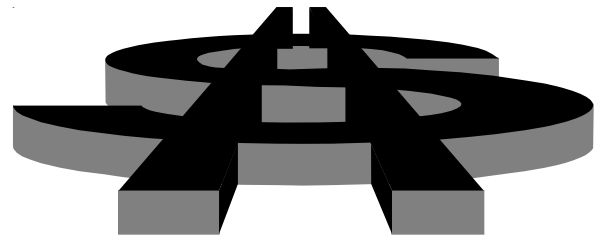
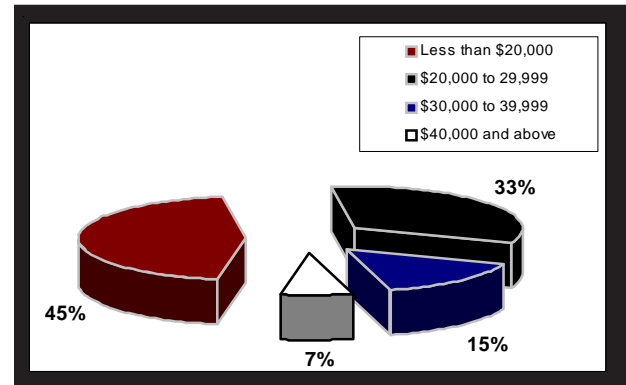
In 2000, Targets reported the following information regarding employment status.

- Employed full-time—80%
- Employed part-time—10%
- Farmer—2%
- Unemployed—6%
- Homemaker—2%

Of those employed, thirty-seven percent of Targets reported that they were very happy with their jobs, while 54% said that they were happy. Nine percent reported being unhappy or very unhappy with their jobs.

## I n c o m e

Targets reported the following income data in 1999. Note that this reflects Target income only and not from other household members, such as a spouse.



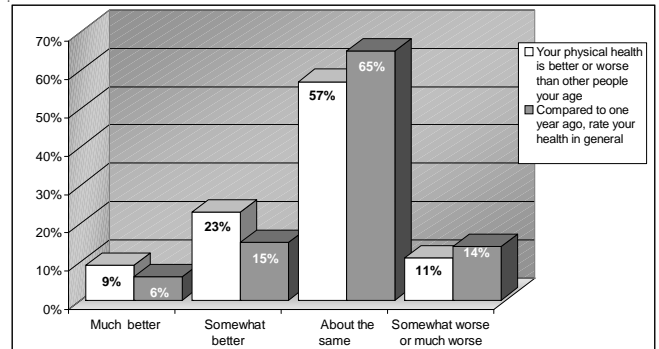
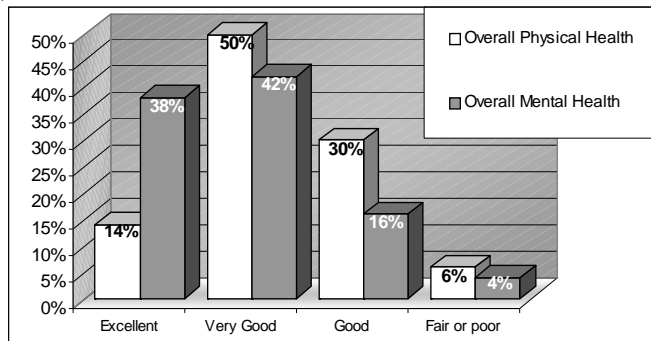
Targets also reported the following information in 1999 regarding their ability to meet various types of basic and life-style needs.

	Strongly Agree or Agree	Neutral	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
I have enough money to afford the kind of..			
Food I should have.	90%	9%	1%
Medical care I should have.	77%	14%	9%
Clothing I should have.	74%	16%	10%
Car I need.	66%	17%	17%
Place to live in that I should have.	65%	19%	16%
Furniture or household equipment I should have.	63%	21%	16%



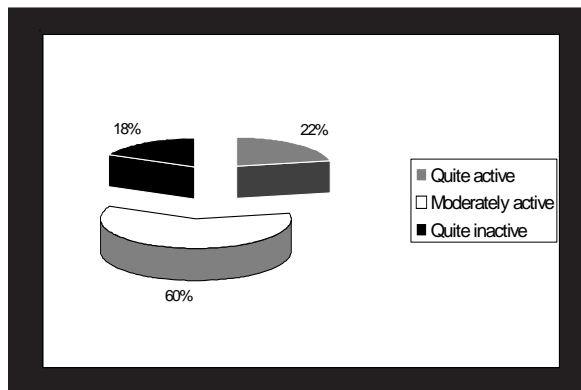
# H E A L T H

In 2000, Targets reported the following information regarding their physical and mental health.

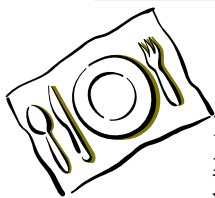
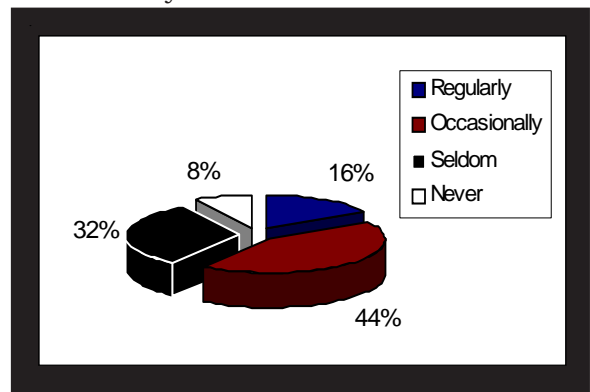


The following data regarding exercise and other health habits were reported by Targets in 1999.

In your usual day, aside from recreation, are you physically...



How often do you get physical exercise in a recreational activity?



Eleven percent of Targets said they never eat three balanced meals per day, while 33% said they rarely do so. Twenty-seven percent reported they sometimes do and 22% do most of the time. Seven percent of Targets always eat three balanced meals per day.

Five percent of Targets reported that they typically sleep less than 6 hours in a 24 hour period, while 11% said they slept more than 8 hours in a 24 hour period. The remaining Targets reported the following sleeping patterns in a typical 24 hour period:

- 6 hours      14%
- 7 hours      36%
- 8 hours      34%



# Message from Debbie Bahr, Project Manager

Local Number: 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! Over ninety-two percent of Targets participated in the project in 2000! For this last round of in-home interviews, we visited with nearly 100 families with children ranging in age from 18 months through 8 years old.

**What's coming up in 2001?** Beginning in June, we will be contacting Targets to ask for their participation, and that of their Spouse, Partner, or Boyfriend or Girlfriend, for the 2001 wave of data collection. We will not be including other adults in the study this year. This year we will conduct one in-home visit with the majority of Targets; we will ask other Targets to complete questionnaires that we mail to them. This year during the in-home visit, we are not administering the Health Interview and there is just one video task discussion. As you can see, the interview this year will be very different from previous in-home visits. We anticipate that it will take considerably less time than in 1999 since we've eliminated one visit and one video task discussion.

We will continue our in-home visits with eligible children. The visit this year will be very similar to those conducted in previous years, although the interview itself is modified to reflect the age and developmental stage of the children.

## **Reimbursements**

Our reimbursement schedule is as follows:

- Targets and their Spouse, Partner, or Boyfriend or Girlfriend who participate in the in-home visit and complete the questionnaires will each receive \$110, for a total of \$220 per couple.
- Those who complete mail questionnaires will receive \$60.
- Families who participate in the child visit will receive a \$110 check for that visit.

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. Any time you have a question or problem with a reimbursement, I hope you'll call me. It's extremely important to all of us here at the Institute, that you receive the reimbursement you were promised in a timely manner and for the correct amount.

## **Confidentiality Protection**

Periodically, we have questions from participants about the confidentiality of study data. Here at the Institute we follow rigorous procedures to ensure your confidentiality. A unique identification number is utilized on questionnaires and videotapes, and this ID number is what is entered with the data. The data do not include any other information that could identify you or other study participants in any way. All data and other materials associated with interviews are kept in locked rooms that are accessible to a limited number of authorized personnel. As you may know, study results are reported in summary form, never in such a way that an individual person could be identified. Again, if you have questions or concerns about confidentiality please call me. It's so important for you to be comfortable with our procedures in this regard.

## **Study Results**

If you are interested in learning more about results from the study, feel free to contact me for a copy of *The Iowa Youth and Family Research Record*. This publication is issued annually and contains a bibliography of publications and presentations related to research findings from the Iowa Youth and Families Project, the Single Parent Project and the Family Transitions Project. By the way, research findings are often cited in sociology and psychology textbooks, sometimes referring to the "Iowa study."

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

## WHERE ARE STUDY PARTICIPANTS LIVING NOW?

The majority of family members in the Family Transitions Project have remained in Iowa, 81% overall. Ten percent of Parents have moved out of Iowa, with 90% remaining in the state.

Seventy-eight percent of Siblings still live in Iowa. Twenty-two percent live in 27 other states or territories within the United States, are in the military, or live outside the U.S.

Seventy-three percent of Targets still live in Iowa. The 27% who have moved away from Iowa are living in 32 other states, Washington D.C., U.S. territories, have military addresses, or are living in other countries.

Currently, study participants live in at least 40 states within the United States. We're less represented in the northeastern states than anywhere else in the country. As might be expected, we're very well represented in states that border Iowa, such as Nebraska, Minnesota, Missouri and Illinois.

### **Notice of Change**

Enclosed is a Notice of Change postcard for your use in updating 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 and phone calls.

### **Electronic Communication**

As more people have access to the Internet and e-mail services, it's become a relatively quick way for people to communicate. However, because privacy is not always ensured with e-mail we hesitate to contact you via that method unless you give us permission. We don't want to unknowingly betray your confidentiality as a project participant. On the other hand, if you prefer that we contact you via e-mail we are very willing to do so. Our server here at ISBR is secure and protected. Please let Debbie Bahr know that you would like to be contacted via e-mail at [dcbahr@iastate.edu](mailto:dcbahr@iastate.edu).

## YOUR OPINION, PLEASE



### Media Coverage

Recently ABC's *Primetime Thursday* approached Dr. Conger about producing a program about the project! This possibility arose because of an article regarding romantic relationships that was published by Dr. Conger and other researchers (see the Article Corner of this newsletter for a news release about the article).

Of course, our commitment to your confidentiality prohibits us from becoming involved in a production such as *Primetime Thursday* without the express consent of individual participants. But it is rather exciting to have a national news program show an interest in the project! Dr. Conger anticipates that we'll have other invitations to share research findings with a television audience. With that in mind, we've included a one-page survey for you to tell us your opinion about this type of media coverage and if you are interested in being involved.

Again, we stress that we would not do anything without your approval and consent. First, you would tell us if you wanted to participate in the TV program. Then, if you decided to participate, you would have the right to refuse to be included in the program if you didn't approve of the final product. Dr. Conger would also retain the right to refuse to have the program aired if he felt it did not properly represent study participants or the aims of the project.

This newsletter and survey will be mailed to Parent, Sibling and Target households for whom we have current addresses. If you know of others who would like their own survey, please call Debbie Bahr. We want everyone to have the opportunity to give their opinion.

### Participant Gathering

A number of participants have expressed an interest in having a get-together of study "alumni". We here in Ames would be very willing to organize such an event. The enclosed survey also asks if you're interested in attending a get-together and, if so, what kind of gathering you'd like and where you'd like it to be held. Again, no one is under any obligation to be involved. This would be only for those who are interested.

