



Family Transitions Project

2017 NEWSLETTER

GREETINGS!

Recently the Family Transitions Project was pleased to be in contact with many of the original Parents from the Iowa Youth and Families Project and the Iowa Single Parent Project as part of the 2015 - 2016 Later Adulthood Study. Thank you to those who were willing to visit with us! More information about results from this first wave of data collection are shared on the following pages, as well as our plans for 2017.

We also contacted a limited number of Parents, and study Siblings and Targets about involvement in the Genetics Study. As you may recall, the Genetics Study was funded in 2010 with a grant, titled "A Genetic Study of Personal Traits that Promote or Inhibit Individual Well-Being," from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD). The purpose of the study is to understand more about how changing times and environments affect the development of individuals and families. The funding agency believed that the Family Transitions Project was in a unique position to increase knowledge of how these processes work, due to its rich archive of data from the previous twenty years. The Family Transitions Project actually began collecting genetic data in 2007 with a pilot program and then in 2008 with study Targets, but the Genetics Study grant provided funds to include study Parents and Siblings. We sincerely thank all of you who participated in the Genetics Study. We hope to include study findings on the project website, and perhaps in a future newsletter.

We also want to thank those of you who chose *not* to participate in this aspect of the Family Transitions Project, for your willingness to take our calls and emails about the Genetics Study. We understand that not everyone is willing or able to participate in this area of research, and we respect each person's decision not to do so. Your honesty about the Genetics Study was extremely important and much appreciated.

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Project researchers and staff members are pleased to work with you on this ground-breaking scientific enterprise! Those located in our Ames office are:

- ◇ Dr. Tricia Neppl, Project Director
- ◇ Graduate and Undergraduate Students
- ◇ Telephone and Field Interviewers
- ◇ Quality Control Specialists
- ◇ Debbie Bahr, Project Manager

We hope that if you did not participate in the Genetics Study you will be interested in learning about other opportunities to contribute to science, and in doing so help other individuals and families, here in Iowa, throughout the United States, and around the world.

Researchers are continuing to develop plans for data collection with members of the Family Transitions Project. For example, there is currently a grant under consideration at NIH which would involve study Siblings and Targets, and Parents, that examines sibling relationships. At this time, data would be collected via mail questionnaires after an initial phone call. Another study in the development stages would focus on a process for determining onset of Alzheimer's and other dementia diseases using a non-invasive eye scan. This study would be piloted at some point to be sure the methodology is sound so that the results are scientifically and socially beneficial. Stay tuned for more updates on these and more exciting prospects for improving our lives!

Starting on page 3 of this newsletter, you'll find information about the Later Adulthood Study, including a variety of graphs and tables about different dimensions of life as reported by Parents who participated in wave 1 of the study. We will post additional findings on our website in the coming months.

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The project website has been updated and is ready for you to check out. You can also send us messages and updates through the website. All messages sent through the website are secure, and your confidentiality is maintained. The website link is: www.transitions.hs.iastate.edu.

As always, we greatly appreciate address and phone number updates, as well as knowing of any preferences for being contacted. In addition, we welcome questions and comments about the project and the website.

THE LATER ADULTHOOD STUDY

The Later Adulthood Study was funded in 2015 through the National Institute on Aging, which is located within the National Institutes of Health. The purpose of the study is to improve understanding of continuity and change in couple relationships and individual health as baby boomers transition into retirement. The study will also investigate how the transition into retirement impacts work, marital, parent, and social experiences.

We began contacting Parents in April of 2015 and ended data collection one year later. We are pleased that 500 households agreed to participate, with 383 couples agreeing to be visited in their homes and 117 participants to be sent questionnaires in the mail. THANK YOU to all who took the time to talk with us and participated in some level of the project!

Unfortunately, in some instances we called at a time when Parents were very busy or dealing with health issues or family matters. We greatly appreciate you letting us know when it is not a convenient time, and when it might be possible for us to call back. We know that you are giving us valuable time when you take our calls, participate in visits, and complete questionnaires, and we don't ever take your involvement for granted.

It is important to us that you are satisfied with your participation in the project. That is a significant reason why our Interviewers are highly trained and carefully monitored during the data collection process. Please contact our project manager, Debbie Bahr, should you ever have a concern, or a compliment, to share about your participation in the study.

The following pages include some findings from this first wave of data collection which we hope you will find interesting. Don't hesitate to call if you have questions about the information we've shared.

Our next wave of data collection will mirror the first wave, except that we hope to be out of the field in about half the time. As usual, we will send a pre-notification letter, but following is a brief summary:

- Parents who are in a steady, romantic relationship will be asked to complete an in-home visit consisting of one video discussion task and questionnaires. The amount of compensation is \$125 for each participant.
- Parents who are not currently in a steady, romantic relationship will be asked to complete mail questionnaires. The compensation is \$75.
- By the way, there is one less questionnaire and some of the questionnaires have fewer items!
- Each parental household will also be asked to verify and update information such as relationship status, changes to employment, and retirement plans. This will be done on the phone during our initial call.
- We are very flexible in scheduling in-home visits, and can also pick up mail questionnaires if it would be helpful. Don't hesitate to let your Interviewer know of any special needs or concerns you might have regarding your participation.

THANK YOU! WE LOOK FORWARD TO TALKING WITH YOU SOON.

WHERE STUDY PARTICIPANTS LIVE

As expected, the majority of participants live in Iowa—85% of Parents, 64% of Siblings, and 70% of Targets. More Siblings and Targets not living in Iowa reside in Minnesota than any other state, while more Parents not living in Iowa have settled in Missouri than any other state. However, all three groups are mostly concentrated in the central United States, although Targets reside in more states outside of the area.

As you may recall, the Iowa Youth and Families Project began in 8 counties in north central Iowa. Following is a breakdown showing the percent of parent households currently living in these counties:

Butler	9%	Humboldt	6%
Franklin	7%	Marshall	8%
Hamilton	2%	Webster	5%
Hardin	10%	Wright	6%

Participants for the Iowa Single Parent Project were drawn across the state of Iowa, so we don't have a similar focus of counties. SPP Parents still reside across the state, from as far northwest as Sioux City, to Dubuque in the far east, to Ottumwa in the southeast, Bloomfield and Creston in the south, and Council Bluffs on the western border. Interestingly, the town/city with the largest number of SPP households is Dubuque!

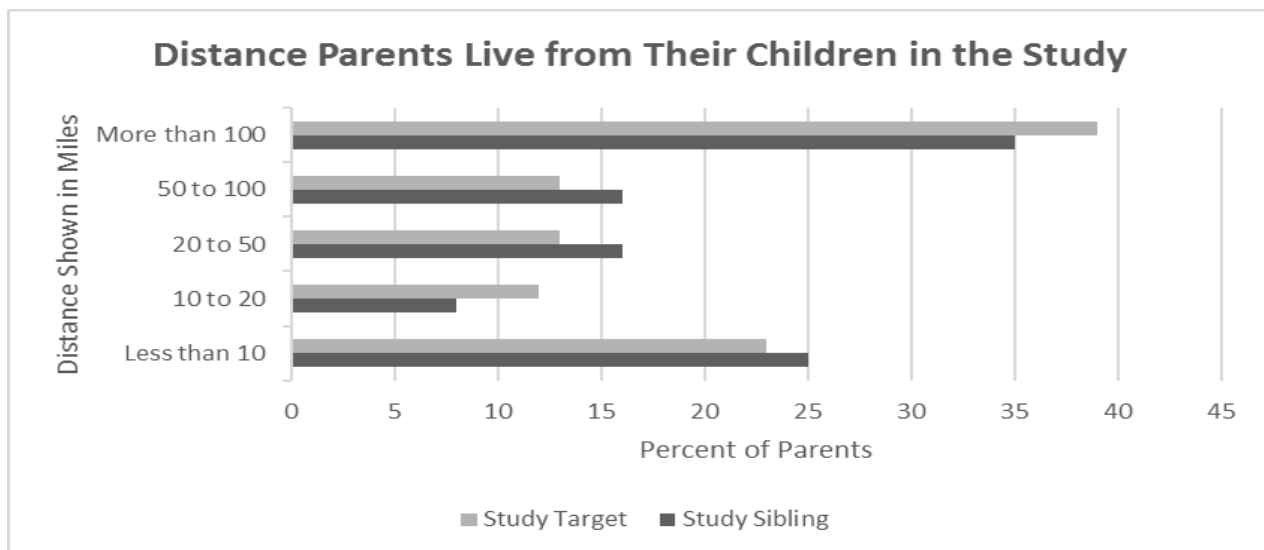
We asked Parents the following familiar question: **Where do you live? On a farm; In a rural area, but not on a farm; or In a town or city?**

Here's what we learned:

- 15% of Parents live on a farm
- 21% reside in a rural area, but not on a farm
- 64% live in a town or city

How far do Parents live from their children in the study?

We asked Parents how many miles they live from their children in the study. The following graph shows how far apart they live according to ranges of More than 100 Miles, 50 to 100 Miles, 20 to 50 Miles, 10 to 20 Miles, and Less than 10 Miles.



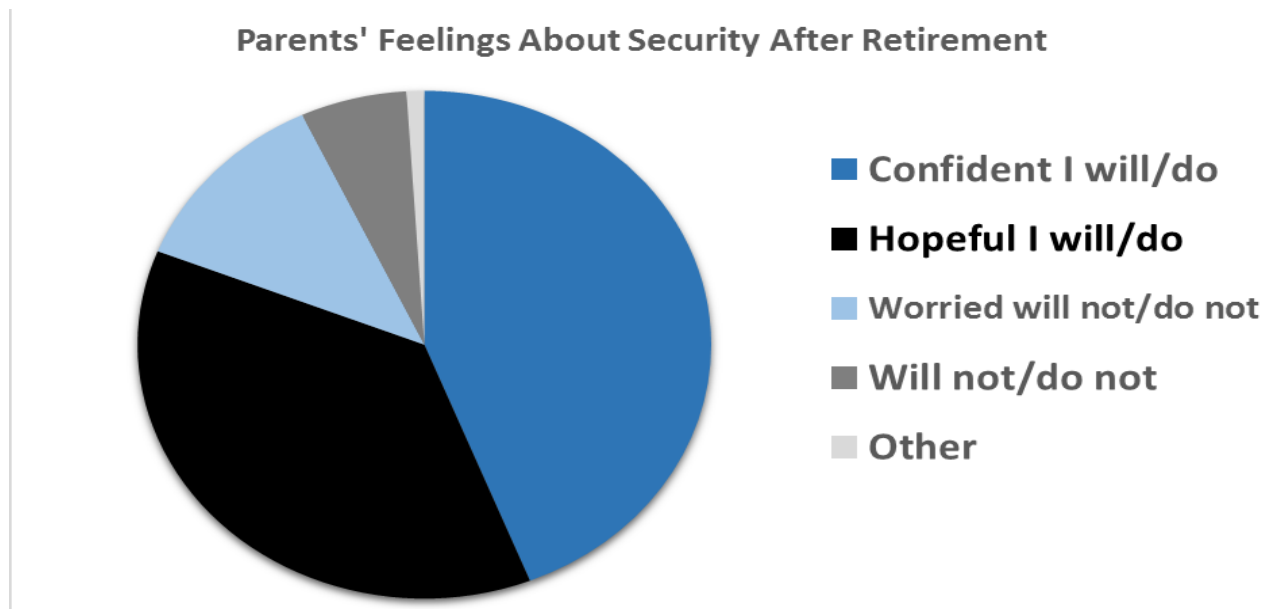
RETIREMENT

We appreciate the patience that Parents showed in answering items related to retirement! Retirement is a complex issue in itself, and because we wanted to allow for the full range of possibilities that Parents might be experiencing in this dimension of life we did not provide a definition of retirement, which we acknowledge created some confusion. We want to assure you that your responses are greatly appreciated and are extremely valuable for furthering understanding of what retirement is and means to people prior to and during retirement. Thanks for your efforts to provide honest and useful answers!

We asked Parents for their retirement status—Not Retired, Fully Retired, or Partially Retired.

- ◆ 41% of Parents reported they are Not Retired
- ◆ 43% reported they are Fully Retired
- ◆ 16% reported they are Partially Retired

All Parents, whether retired or not, were asked the following question: **What about financial security after retirement? Do you (or will you) have adequate security? The responses were—Confident will/do have adequate security; Hopeful will/do have adequate security; Worried that will not/do not have adequate security; Will not/do not likely have enough to retire on; Other.** The chart shown below summarizes Parents' responses.



FINANCES

One of the strengths of the Family Transitions Project has been its work regarding the impact of financial stress on individual health and family relationships. In order to continue our study of the importance of this kind of strain, we asked the following standard question as part of a series of items about finances: **Compared to 12 months ago, would you say your standard of living today is Much higher, Somewhat higher, About the same, Somewhat lower, or Much lower?**

- * The majority of Parents, 72%, responded that their current standard of living is About the same as 12 months ago.
- * Thirteen percent of Parents reported that their current standard of living is Much higher or Somewhat higher than 12 months ago.
- * And 15% reported that their current standard of living is Somewhat lower or Much lower than 12 months ago.

PARENTS' MARITAL & RELATIONSHIP STATUS

The following information was reported by Parents regarding marital status.

Married	74%
Living together in a marriage-like relationship	2%
Divorced or Separated **	16%
Widowed **	8%
** Not remarried or living with anyone	

Parents who were not Married or Living together in a marriage-like relationship, were asked their relationship status. Here's what we learned:

- ◇ Fifteen percent of Parents reported they are in a steady, romantic relationship with one person.
- ◇ Five percent reported they are dating, but do not have a steady, romantic relationship with one person.
- ◇ And, by far the majority, 80%, reported they are not currently dating.

PARENTS' FEELINGS ABOUT THEIR HEALTH

One of the goals of the Later Adulthood Study is to understand the status of physical health of those in the baby-boomer generation.

This helps with understanding health changes over time, because you have provided similar information in the past.

It also provides an idea of the health of a large portion of the population in the United States, because participants in the Family Transitions Project have been shown to be representative of the overall population.

One of the questions we asked Parents about their health is: **Would you say your overall physical health is better or worse than other people your age? The responses were Much better, A little better, About the same, A little worse, or Much worse.**

Here is what Parents reported:

Response	Mother Percent	Father Percent
Much better	18%	15%
A little better	32%	35%
About the same	34%	34%
A little worse	12%	14%
Much worse	4%	2%

PARENTS' CHILDREN

We asked Parents how many children they have:

2 Children	29%
3 Children	34%
4 Children	20%
5 or more Children	17%

HOW OLD DO PARENTS FEEL?

Parents, including step-parents and romantic partners, range in age from 40 years to the upper 80s. We asked Parents the following question: **Many people feel older or younger than they actually are. What age do you feel most of the time?**

MOTHERS reported the following, which we've summarized by decade for the purposes of the newsletter:

Less than 40 years old	2%
In their 40s	10%
In their 50s	43%
In their 60s	35%
In their 70s	7%
In their 80s and older	3%

The age reported by more Mothers than any other was age 50.

FATHERS reported the following, also summarized by decade:

Less than 40 years old	1%
In their 40s	8%
In their 50s	32%
In their 60s	43%
In their 70s	14%
In their 80s and older	2%

The top 2 answers for Fathers were age 50 and age 60.