General Social Survey

WORKING PAPER #3

1990 GSS: FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Background Paper

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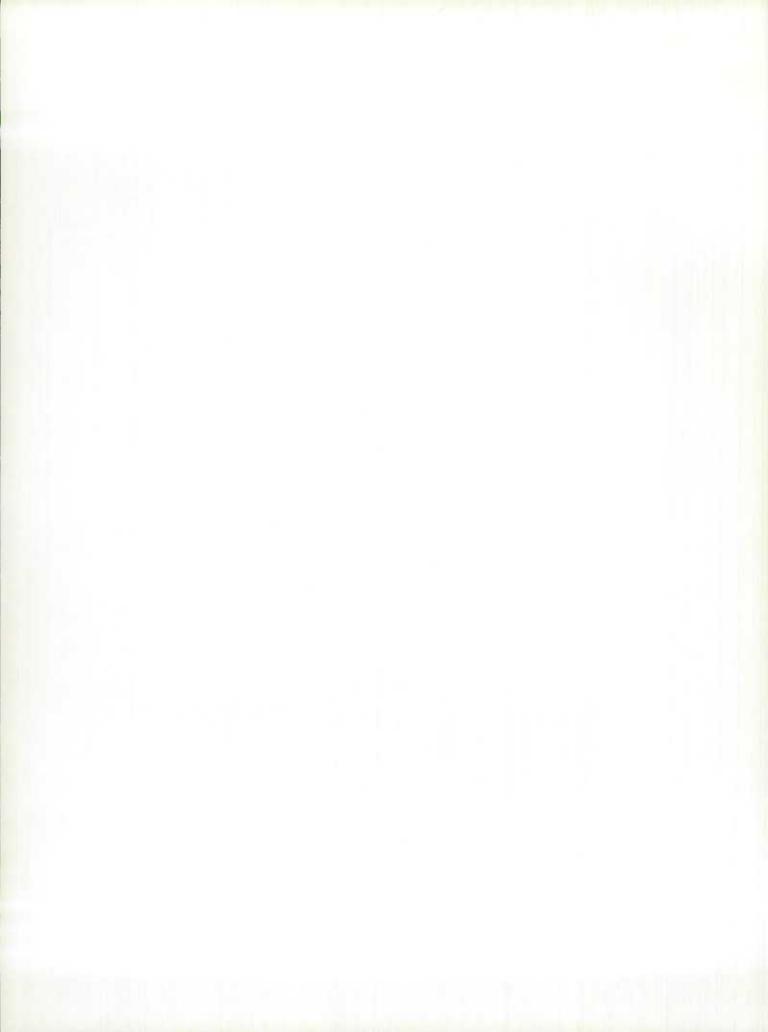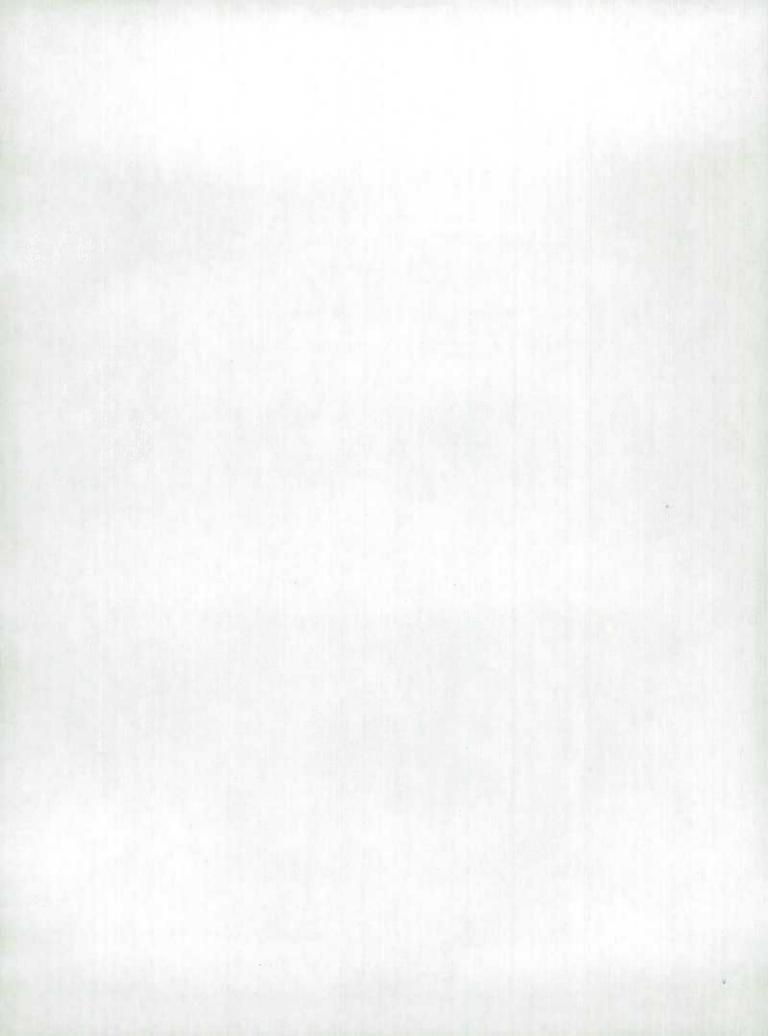
WORKING PAPER #3

FAMILY AND FRIENDS: TOWARD THE YEAR 2000

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE 1990 GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY

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Working Paper #3

Family and Friends: Toward the Year 2000
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1. THE CHANGING CANADIAN FAMILY - A REVIEW OF RECENT RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

Since around 1970, the family in Canada has undergone unusually extensive and rapid change. Central to these developments are several demographic trends, including changes in union formation and dissolution (notably increased rates of divorce and of non-marital cohabitation), childbearing behaviour (below replacement fertility), living arrangement choices (notably living alone), female lone parenthood, female labour force participation and kinship structure.

Clearly, the underlying causes of these changes are economic, cultural and social -- such things as recession, changing definitions of women's roles, or new attitudes toward authority, including parental authority. This note leaves to others the difficult task of describing and explaining these more fundamental changes (see, for example, Beaujot, 1987). The focus here is on the demographic trends themselves, viewed as both part of and causes of family change (from different perspectives, of course), and their interrelations.

Recent statistics on family change are reported, along with summaries of selected items of recent research on the Canadian family.

1.2 Changing Patterns of Nuptiality

Between 1921 and 1971, Canadians were moving toward a pattern of younger and more nearly universal marriage. By the early 1970s, however, there were already signs of a dramatic reversal. More and more individuals were choosing either to delay marriage or in some cases to forgo it altogether. The simplest indicator of

change, the number of marriages, declined from just over 200,000 in 1972 (the largest annual number of marriages in Canadian history) to 184,000 in 1985 (see Canadian Social Trends, Autumn 1987), a decline of approximately 1,200 marriages per year. Marriage rates also declined sharply, with first marriage rates reaching an all-time low. By 1985, the marriage rate for all marriages had fallen to just 7 marriages per 1,000 population. The largest declines were for persons under age 25, both men and women. For women aged 20-24, for example, the marriage rate declined by almost 35% between the periods 1961-65 and 1981-85 (see Trovato, 1988).

One striking change in nuptiality patterns was the rise in age at first marriage. Over a period of just fifteen years, from 1971 to 1986, average ages at first marriage for brides and bridegrooms increased by a full two years (see Statistics Canada, The Family in Canada, 1989). For brides the increase was from 22.6 in 1971 to 24.8 in 1986, for grooms from 24.9 to 27.0.

Along with the postponement of first marriages was a corresponding decline in the proportion married by a certain age or ever-marrying during their lifetimes. At younger ages, the relationship is obvious, but in historical and comparative series, age at marriage and proportion married by say 55 also are highly correlated. One possible reason is that people who continue to postpone marriage eventually lose interest in marrying, having become accustomed to the single lifestyle (see Tepperman and Jones, 1989). Declines in proportions ever-married have been substantial in the younger age groups. For example, of those aged 20-24, the proportion of women ever-married fell from 55.4 in 1966 to just 32.1 in 1986. The decline for men was from 30 to 14.8 per cent. Similarly, at ages 25-29, the proportions ever-married declined from 84.1 to 70.8 for women and from 72.3 to 55.7 for men (see Statistics Canada, Postcensal Annual Estimates, 1987).

The declining proportions ever-married in the younger age groups appear to reflect more a desire or need for delayed marriage rather than a permanent avoidance of marriage. In addition, in many cases legal marriage has been replaced by cohabitation, in common-law unions (see below, and Burch and Madan, 1987).

One reason for delay of marriage has been a sharp rise in the proportion of women obtaining post-secondary education. Results from the 1984 Canadian Fertility Survey confirm the existence of a strong positive relationship between educational attainment and age at first marriage (see Balakrishnan and Grindstaff, 1988). The growth in post-secondary education in turn is related to a shift in women's life focus from nearly exclusive concern with household and family responsibilities to the monetary and psychological rewards of work and career. A higher education is seen as the safest means to these ends.

Recent changes in nuptiality patterns have a direct bearing on future family growth. Declines in the proportion of ever-married women have been highest in the prime reproductive age groups (i.e., 20-24, 25-29) where traditionally most childbearing has taken place. Moreover, the upward movement in the average age at first marriage has also pushed up the average age at first birth leaving many women with a compressed time frame within which to bear children. These trends have operated forcefully to reduce levels of marital fertility over the past two decades to below replacement levels.

The decline in the proportion of legal first marriages especially in the younger age groups also signalled the growing prevalence of alternative forms of union, what have been termed common-law, consensual or cohabiting unions. Couples in these unions live together as if they are married but without the legal status. Census results for 1981 revealed about 352,000 couples living in common-law marriages, a figure comprising close to 6% of all

couples (see Shin, 1987). Five years later, the numbers had
increased by approximately 37% to 487,000, compared to only a 3%
increase in the number of now-married couples (see Canadian
Social Trends, Autumn 1988). Underscoring the significance of
this phenomenon, the Family History Survey of 1984 found that
16.5% of adult Canadians between the age of 18 and 65 had
experienced in their lifetime a common-law union (see Canadian
Social Trends, Autumn, 1986).

These informal unions, however, tend not to be permanent.
Common-law partnerships typically end rather quickly, with the
couple entering a legal marriage or breaking up (see Canadian
Social Trends, Autumn 1986).

As common-law unions have become more "visible" in Canadian
society, family sociologists and demographers have been pondering
over the question of whether these marriage-like relationships
are posing a threat to traditional legal marriages. Since legal
marriages currently form the foundation of family life, for
example, setting the stage for the initiation of childbearing,
some fear that the growing popularity of common-law unions may
signal the eventual 'death' of the family. However, results from
the 1984 Family History Survey appear to have put some of these
concerns to rest. Using the FHS data, Shin (1987) has concluded
that common-law unions are for the most part temporary and should
be viewed as just an additional stage to more traditional forms
of marriage. Preliminary findings from the FHS by Burch (1985)
suggest that common-law marriages are more likely to be trial
marriages rather than a permanent alternative to legal marriages.
Evidence showed that less than 2% of adult Canadians had ever
entered into two or more such unions and that of all first unions
that had ended prior to the survey date, almost two-thirds (63%)
ended in a legal marriage, 35% through separation and just 2% by
death of one partner.

Despite the growing numbers entering common-law unions, few have made attempts to explain their attraction. Tepperman and Jones (1989) speculate that younger people especially are looking for a "new kind of marriage that is more sensitive to new needs for flexibility and protection against the risk of divorce". They further contend that common-law unions offer some of the advantages of legal marriages for example, the ability to form domestic contracts to settle concerns over property.

1.3 The Rising Tide of Marital Breakdown

Coinciding with declining numbers of individuals entering the married state has been a rise in the numbers leaving. Since the late 1960's, the incidence of marital dissolution among Canadian couples has shown a marked increase. With more liberalized divorce laws introduced in 1968, the number of divorces in Canada rose from about 11,343 in 1968 to 70,436 in 1982, declined to 61,980 in 1985 and then rose again to 78,000 in 1986.[1] The rate followed a similar pattern of rise and decline, reaching 1,129 per 100,000 married women 15 and over in 1982, falling to just 1,004 in 1985 and rising to approximately 1,127 in 1986. Although recent data in the three year period from 1982 to 1985 suggest a possible stabilization in divorce rates (see Balakrishnan, 1986), an analysis of divorce rates by duration (Dumas, 1982) shows period total divorce rates reaching 3,655 per 10,000 marriages by 1982, and extrapolation of cohort rates suggests eventual marriage dissolution rates in excess of 30%.

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[1] This is not to assert that the change in divorce law was solely or even mainly responsible for the rise in marriage breakdown. Clearly it made it easier and quicker to get a divorce. But some of the divorces that occurred earlier would have occurred eventually. And, given the general rise in cohabitation, it is probable that in the face of more stringent divorce laws, more married but separated persons would have become involved in cohabitations.

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Using divorce tables based on period age-specific divorce rates
from registration data, McKie et al. (1985) suggest that the
proportion of Canadian marriages ending in divorce may reach 40%.

Analysis of cohort data from the 1984 Family History Survey by
Burch and Madan (1987) yields results broadly consistent with the
above. Among ever-married men and women who were aged 40-49 in
1984, it was found that nearly one man in seven and one woman in
six had experienced a divorce. But for both males and females
cumulative risks or probabilities of dissolutions (including
separation) were consistently higher for more recent cohorts at
comparable categories of marital duration. The authors conclude
that if current age-specific divorce rates continue, the
proportion of recent marriages ending in divorce could range
anywhere from 30 to 40 percent. Of course, as more Canadians
enter and leave unions informally, statistics relating to legal
marriages and their termination through divorce will describe
only part (although still the largest part) of union formation
behaviour.

The increased risk of divorce characteristic of more recent
marriage cohorts leaves little doubt that divorce will remain "a
central and probably permanent feature of Canadian family life"
(Burch and Madan, 1986:18). This does not mean, of course, that
Canadians are rejecting marriage and family life, since the
majority of divorced persons eventually remarry or enter a
common-law union. For instance, the number of divorced men who
remarried between 1971 and 1985 rose from 15,521 to 34,780.
Remarriages for divorced women over the same period increased
from 14,351 to just over 32,000. In fact, remarriages accounted
for close to one-fifth of all marriages in 1985, compared with
less than 10% of all marriages in 1971 (see Statistics Canada,
The Family in Canada, 1989).

The impact of rising divorce on other demographic trends influencing the family are frequently ignored in discussions of family change and thus deserve some mention here. Declines in marital fertility since the early 1970s may be partly due to the rising numbers of women divorcing in conjunction with their lower rates of remarriage compared with men. It is a well known fact that a large percentage of women experience marital disruption during their prime reproductive years and that many spend a considerable amount of time out of wedlock before remarrying. Dissolution has the potential to reduce fertility if it results in a lengthy period in which women are no longer exposed to the risk of getting pregnant (Davis and Blake, 1956).

On the other hand, it may be that some couples experiencing marital strife or discord make a last desperate attempt to 'save' their marriage by having another child. In a U.S. study, Rindfuss and Bumpass (1977) found that a substantial percentage of 'intermarital births' clustered near the date of dissolution, suggesting that many were conceived within marriage. Although Canadian research in this area is lacking, the U.S. results seem to support the notion that marital strife prior to separation may exert a positive influence on fertility.[2]

The pervasiveness of divorce throughout society has made many women conscious of the increased risk of marital breakdowns, and thus may be leading some to alter their reproductive behaviour by choosing to limit the number of children or to forgo childbearing altogether. This reasoning has been carried over into discussions of changing women's roles in the home and in the

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[2] There are other possible explanations for the empirical finding. For example, marital strife could reduce communication regarding fertility control and thereby its effectiveness. It also is possible that some conceptions involved the prospective rather than the current marital partner.

workplace. Rising female labour force participation is explained
in part by the growing perception among women that marriages are
less stable than in the past (Townson, 1987). Choosing to work
assures them of some financial security and independence in the
event that their marriages fail.

1.4 Changing Patterns of Childbearing

Following the close of the Baby Boom period around 1965, Canada
entered a period of sustained fertility decline commonly known as
the "Baby Bust". In 1965 the total fertility rate (a calendar-
year measure based on age-specific birth rates) averaged 3.1
children per woman. By 1981 the rate had continued its decline
below the level of 2.1 needed for population replacement, and
then declined again in 1985 to just 1.66 births per woman. One
interesting interpretation of these figures, provided by Beaujot
(1987), is that if we assume that 2.1 represents roughly equal
sizes of the generations of parents and children, then "under
1965 conditions, the generation of children would be 48% larger
than that of their parents, in 1985 conditions there would be 20%
fewer children than parents" (see Beaujot, 1987:4). The typical
Canadian family therefore, is now smaller. Since 1961 average
family size (in the sense of a group of related persons living
together) has declined from 3.9 people to 3.1 in 1986 (see
Canadian Demographic Yearbook, 1988).

Women began having fewer children for a number of reasons. As
indicated earlier, the growing trend toward delayed first
marriages also had the effect of delaying first births, thereby
reducing the time women had available for subsequent
childbearing. Between 1965 and 1985, the median age at first
birth rose from 22.9 to 25.4. For women who had low fertility
expectations, later marriage did permit a kind of "catching up"
in their fertility behaviour (Grindstaff, 1984), but not to the

degree that it would surpass levels experienced by those women who married earlier. For most, later ages at first birth meant an overall decline in completed family size.

Women were not only postponing their first birth to later ages; more of them were also choosing to remain childless. Using census data and data from the 1984 Family History Survey, Rao and Balakrishnan (1988) reported that the proportion of childless ever-married women increased in the last two decades from 13.8 in 1961 to 17.7 in 1981, with most of the increase occurring in the younger age groups 15-24, 25-29 and 30-34. The growth in the proportions childless at ages 30-34 suggested that many women were choosing to remain in that state permanently.

An informative technique of analyzing the recent decline in fertility uses standardized fertility indices that decompose overall fertility into its various subcomponents or "proximate determinants". Balakrishnan (1987) applied these methods to the 1984 Canadian Fertility Survey data. Using Coale's Index, he found that the decline in fertility between 1961 and 1984 was due to declines both in marital fertility and in the proportion married. The Bongaarts model, somewhat more detailed than Coale's, showed that the decrease in the total fertility rate over the period was primarily caused by an increase in the use of contraception and a shift in use towards more effective methods such as female sterilization and the oral pill. Also important was the decrease in the proportion married.

At the behavioural or socio-economic level, many other factors have been identified as determinants of the trend toward lower fertility over the past twenty years. Some of these include increased marital breakdown, greater participation among women in the work force, more and more women opting for higher education, changing age and sex roles and a greater preference for smaller

families. A few of these have already been mentioned. Others will be referred to in later sections.

1.5 More Female Lone-Parents

Concomitant with the recent rise in marital dissolution in Canada since the early 1970's has been a steady increase in the proportion of lone-parent families, most frequently headed by mothers. In 1984, the Family History Survey reported that three quarters of lone-parent families were headed by females. Since 1966 (after a long period of stability), the percentage of female lone-parent families (of all families) has risen from 7.5% in 1971, to 8.1% in 1976, and then to 9.3% by 1981 (see Statistics Canada, Canada's Lone-Parent Families, 1984). Davids (1980) reports that between 1971 and 1976 lone-father families actually decreased by 5.4%, while lone-mother families increased by 23%. In absolute numbers, 1986 census figures indicated a total of 702,000 lone-parent women, more than double the figure in 1961.

Prior to 1966, widowhood was the single most important factor contributing to lone motherhood. However, with changing divorce legislation in 1968 and the ensuing rise in the incidence of marital dissolution, divorce and separation became the primary reason for entering into the female lone-parent state. Evidence of this reversal can be seen in recent figures released by Statistics Canada. In 1951, 32.6% of all female lone-parents were divorced or separated while more than twice as many (66.6%) were widowed. By 1981, only 33.3% were widowed with 55.7% in the divorced or separated category (Statistics Canada, Canada's Lone-Parent Families, 1984).

Several reasons may be offered to explain the steady rise in the proportion of single parent families headed by women. For many, the inception of "no fault" divorce after 1968 made filing for

divorce a speedier and easier process. When children were involved, child custody laws and social custom favoured granting of custody to the mother. Marital dissolution also tended to be selective of younger women, often in their early childbearing years, leaving large numbers of formerly married mothers with dependent children. While remarriage provided a means for women to escape lone parenthood, rates of remarriage tended to be considerably lower than rates for lone-parent fathers (or for previously married men generally), hence prolonging women's lone-parent status.

The increase in the proportion of female lone-parent families has had important implications for family functioning and economic well-being, specifically with respect to the availability and affordability of day care and participation in the labour force.

Between 1971 and 1981, the percentage of children under 18 living with both parents decreased, while the percentage living with lone-parents increased (Statistics Canada, Women in Canada, 1985). For lone mothers, the combination of sole responsibility for the day-to-day care of their children and the relative scarcity of good, affordable daycare presumably has hampered their search for good jobs and adequate income. Many have resorted to social welfare assistance. Between 1970 and 1980, lone mothers experienced the lowest increase in real income compared to other groups (i.e., dual income earner families, male lone-parents. See Statistics Canada, Canada's Lone-Parent Families, 1984). The lowest income group included mothers with children under age 16.

Despite their relatively high child dependency ratio and a relatively poor performance in real income change, lone mothers with children under age 16 still experienced higher labour force participation rates over the period 1975 to 1983 compared to mothers with a husband present in the household, who are not so

greatly motivated to join the labour force out of sheer economic necessity (see Statistics Canada, Women in Canada, 1985). A study of lone mothers in Calgary in 1984 found that 41% had never used formal day care (see Kuiken, 1985). An analysis of national data showed that "female lone parent families did not have the advantage of related or unrelated persons sharing the same dwelling and household expenses, or perhaps just helping out with the care and rearing of children in the dependent ages" (see Statistics Canada, Canada's Lone-Parent Families, 1984). This left mothers with the only remaining option of seeking child care assistance from persons outside of the household, such as close relatives, friends, or neighbours.

1.6 Changing Patterns in Living Arrangements

Recent changes in the family have also occurred as a direct result of changes in living arrangements. It appears that Canadians are moving in the direction of increased privacy and independence at the expense of family membership. There is no longer any necessary connection between family responsibilities and household headship (Alwin et al., 1985).

Between 1956 and 1981 one person households, as a percentage of all households, increased from 7.9% to 20.3% (see Statistics Canada, Living Alone, 1984). The 1971-1981 decade experienced a doubling in the number of one person households from 800,000 to almost 1.7 million (see Statistics Canada, Women in Canada, 1985).

Demographic factors have been offered as partial explanations for the growing numbers living alone. For example, much of the baby boom generation reaching their twenties during the 1970's remained single partly due to an increasing postponement of marriage over the same period. But many of them have left the

parental home to live on their own before marriage. Since the early 1970's, the divorce rate maintained a steady increase leaving a large number of divorced men, usually without custody of children, living in one-person households. Over the same period the number of elderly unmarried women grew, as women were outliving their husbands by a wide margin (see Statistics Canada, Living Alone, 1984).

Recent cohorts of young adults have also been leaving the parental home earlier than previously. Combined with later marriage, this trend has increased the period of independent living for many young people.

Finally, past levels of fertility have played a direct role in affecting living arrangements of today's elderly. In an analysis of 1971 census data, Wister and Burch (1983) found that the number of children ever born to unmarried elderly women was the best single predictor of whether or not they lived alone. As fertility levels have declined still further, the numbers of living children or other close relatives available for co-residence has declined proportionately.

Demographers also attribute the growing proportion living alone to changes in norms and values regarding individual autonomy and privacy. Some have also suggested that an improved economic climate heightened the financial capabilities of many individuals, allowing them to purchase privacy in their own house or apartment. Beaujot (1987) has speculated that there has been a recent shift in values and norms, from family or child-centered orientations toward more self-centered pursuits, a phenomenon he calls "affective individualism". Although he does not specifically link this new individualism with changes in living arrangement choices, it seems plausible that for some, individual self-pursuit of greater independence is winning out over traditional concerns for marriage and childbearing.

1.7   The Rise in Female Labour-Force Participation

The past two decades have also witnessed a dramatic increase in
women's work activity outside the home. In 1972, the labour
force participation rate for women stood at 40% and then
continued a steady upward climb to 53% in 1984 (see Robinson,
1984). In just three years, the rate rose an additional three
percentage points to 56.1% in 1986 (the last year for which
current data are available. Statistics Canada, The Family in
Canada, 1989). The number of women involved in either full-time
or part-time work doubled over the period from 1970 to 1983
increasing by 2.3 million (see Statistics Canada, The Family in
Canada, 1989).

The increase in female labour force involvement occurred across
all age groups except those over age 65. But despite this fairly
uniform increase, some age groups experienced a much more
accelerated rate of change than others. For example, between
1975 and 1983 women in the age group 25-34 increased their
participation a full fifteen percentage points compared to just a
five point percentage change for women 15-19 and 55-64 (see
Statistics Canada, Women in Canada, 1985).

The change did not exempt married women or women with young
children. Over the period 1975-1983, married women with husband
present and with pre-school age children recorded the largest
increase in their involvement with the labour force, 17% compared
to a 14% increase for mothers with children aged 6-15 and about
6% for those with no children under 16. Women with no husband
present increased their rates at a much slower pace, with those
having pre-school age children changing by only 5% (see
Statistics Canada, Women in Canada, 1985).

The rise in female labour force involvement can be attributed to
other recent changes affecting the family. The steady drop in

marital fertility since the early 1970's in addition to the growing proportion of women who have chosen to remain in the childless state, has somewhat diminished and in some cases obviously eliminated the amount of time over the life cycle spent in the home raising a family. These trends in fertility have partly been responsible for a widening departure from traditional patterns in the timing of family and work activities. Before 1965 a majority of women worked prior to marriage and only returned to work, if at all, when their childbearing had been completed and the last child had left home. Today lower fertility has greatly altered the situation. Women increasingly work throughout their reproductive period, balancing demands made on them in the workplace and in the home. Having fewer children, therefore, has freed many women from traditional home-making and child care responsibilities to pursue a career of their own in the labour force.

Another dimension of the work/fertility nexus considers increased labour force activity as a causal factor in reducing levels of fertility. One popular theory holds that younger cohorts of women are consciously limiting their fertility either in anticipation of future labour force involvement or as a means to maintain work continuity once they have started work. It would seem that younger women are being driven by a strong commitment toward work and are gradually changing their orientation away from traditional household roles as "childbearer" and "homemaker" toward involvement in the paid labour force, where they are more or less free to pursue their own careers and achieve a measure of financial independence from their husbands. One possible reason for this shift in orientation away from family life has been the sharp increase in the past decade and a half in the proportion of women obtaining a post-secondary education (see Statistics Canada, Women in Canada, 1985). Economists consider education as a powerful indicator of women's tastes for market work. This is borne out by recent Statistics Canada figures showing that over

the period 1975-1983 women with at least some post-secondary
education (including those who had obtained a degree) had
increased their participation rates by nine to ten percentage
points. Changes in participation for men however, either
remained unchanged or had undergone a slight reversal (see
Statistics Canada, Women in Canada, 1985).

Results from the 1984 Family History Survey support the idea of
increased work attachment among younger cohorts of women. The
survey found that younger women were slightly less likely to cite
family reasons for their first work interruption. Furthermore,
76% of women aged 25-34 who had worked continuously, had their
first child between the time they first started working and the
time of the survey. For women in the age groups 35-44 and 45-54,
the figures were 53% and 34% respectively (Robinson, 1987).
Analyzing data from the 1981 Quality of Life Survey and the 1982
Class Structure Project, Boyd (1985) found that younger women in
their twenties and thirties were also less likely to have left
the labour force than older women and for a shorter duration of
their potential years in the labour force.

Lower fertility and a growing work commitment were probably not
the only reasons for increased female labour force involvement.
Lone-mothers often have been forced to enter the labour-market
out of economic necessity, following a separation or divorce.
Increases in the cost of living and downswings in the economy
(i.e., the recession of 1982-83) probably pushed some other women
into the labour-force out of economic necessity, adding to the
number of dual-earner families, which now have become the norm.
Between 1971 and 1986, dual-earner husband/wife families rose
from 42.6% to 55.3%, while the number of single-earner (husband
only) families fell from 44.4% to 26.5% (McQuillan, 1988).

Whether or not women can continue their "balancing act" of
combining work with family responsibilities will depend on future

developments in sex-role behaviour as well as on the future
provision of adequate and affordable formal day care services for
both pre-school and young school-aged children. Compared with
their husbands, married women still carry the primary burden of
family and home care (Michelson, 1983). With more and more women
working, one response to this inequality in household division of
labour has been an increased demand for child care arrangements.
Unfortunately, demand for child care continues to exceed the
supply. From 1973 to 1982 the number of day care spaces in
Canada actually quadrupled but still only served 11% of children
in non-parental care (see Statistics Canada, Women In Canada,
1985). Many couples rely on alternative sources of care such as
babysitting by a non-resident relative or non-relative or an
older child living in the household (see Kuiken, 1985). If
fertility remains low, however, kinship networks will shrink even
further, lessening the availability of older siblings or other
relatives as sources of support for childcare.

1.8 Changing Kinship Networks

Outside of some fairly descriptive overviews, we know very little
about how family and kin networks have changed in structure and
process in response to recent demographic change. Most research
has focused on kin networks of the elderly (see for example,
Stone, 1988), since they have been targeted as the age group most
in need of support from informal networks and more formal
institutional structures. Consequently, the implications of
network changes for other potentially needy age groups, for
example, divorced single parent mothers, have virtually been
ignored. Studies on intergenerational contact also tend to focus
exclusively on the elderly in terms of patterns of contact with
their adult children. Relationships between middle-aged parents
and young adult children first leaving home have not been
explored.

Despite the scarcity of research, there is little doubt that the recent decline in marital fertility since the end of the Baby Boom period has placed serious constraints on the size of future potentially supportive kin networks for today's younger family members. This problem will seem most acute for the Baby Boom cohorts, expected to enter retirement age around the year 2011. Keyfitz (1985), using 1971 and 1981 Canadian age-specific birth and death rates (i.e., fertility and mortality regimes), investigated what effect the decline in fertility over the period would have on the numbers of children, brothers and sisters and more distant kin members such as uncles, aunts, nieces and cousins. Predictably, he found that recent reductions in levels of fertility below replacement levels not only meant fewer children but also a shrinkage of the kin network comprised of other kin members. These results indicate that Canadian families may soon be presented with a choice of either adopting a more independent lifestyle (i.e., a greater reliance on institutional based services and less reliance on kin) or of expanding the size of their existing kin networks by including close friends as supportive members. An appealing feature of the latter option is that family members will be in the position to choose new network members whom they feel are most capable of fulfilling their emotional and instrumental needs. In contrast, it is not possible to choose one's kin and when support is provided, it may be done out of a sense of obligation rather than a genuine concern for well-being. Expanding support networks to include friends seems increasingly likely for another reason. The shrinkage in kin networks brought on by low fertility has reduced network stability. Smaller family networks consisting of one or two children are much more vulnerable to the risk of being weakened or dissolved in the event that even one adult child dies or decides to move a great distance. Kin networks in times of high fertility are better equipped to withstand loss of members through migration or death.

Recent increases in the proportion of Canadians living alone may also have a direct impact on the structure and functioning of kin networks. The notion that a person's living arrangements define and constrain his or her contact with others in the immediate social environment as well as affecting the nature of contact with others living outside of the household (see Alwin, Converse and Martin, 1985) focuses attention on the question of whether living alone results in reduced social contact and even social isolation. In the absence of Canadian data, a U.S. study has concluded that living alone is a preferred arrangement and that "while lacking the social contact that naturally accompanies living with others, persons living alone appear to be no less attached outside of the household and in some cases have higher levels of contact" (see Alwin et al, 1985:319).

Other recent changes in the Canadian family such as the increase in marital dissolution may have a less conspicuous impact on family network structure and functioning by operating indirectly via intervening factors such as geographic mobility or distance. A Canadian study by Gladstone (1987) examines changes in visitation patterns between grandparents and grandchildren following separation or divorce of the parents. The custodial parent often moved closer to the her/his (mostly her) parents, resulting in more frequent contact between grandchildren and their maternal (less commonly paternal) grandparents, while reducing contact with the other set. There have been similar findings in the U.S. (Asher and Bloom, 1983).

Although marital dissolution has become commonplace in Canadian society, remarriage rates continue to remain high, often greatly expanding family network membership to include step-parents, parents and children from previous marriages. The terms "reconstituted" or "blended" families have been use frequently to describe a husband and wife one or both of whom have come from previous marriages with children and who now reside with those

children in the same household (Messinger, 1976). To what degree
children in these blended families maintain contact with their
non-resident parents is not fully understood. In the U.S. it has
been reported that children from blended families have little
contact with their non-resident parents and when it does occur,
instrumental support is minimal (see Furstenburg and Nord, 1985).
A Canadian study by Hobart (1988) appears to confirm this
finding, concluding that the husband in a blended family reduces
his involvement with his children living with his former wife to
reduce the tensions and contradictions experienced in a
'triangle' consisting of his former wife, his children from the
earlier marriage, and his current wife and her/their children.

2. GSS-5 - CONTENT AND RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

2.1 Introduction

Broadly speaking, GSS-5 focusses on close personal relationships
of Canadians (what sociologists would call 'primary
relationships'), on 'family and friends'. Series of questions
deal with the respondent's relationships with her/his spouse or
other intimate partner, with close relatives (parents, children,
grandchildren, siblings) and with close friends and confidants.
Questions are asked about the existence or number of such
persons, where they live (in or outside the same household as
respondent; if outside, how far away?), frequency of contact,
frequency of help given or received, and respondent's
satisfaction with contacts. Detailed event histories relate to
respondent's experiences with marriage, common-law partnerships,
and fertility/childrearing.

A secondary focus in the questionnaire (over thirty questions) is
on responsibility for and performance of a variety of everyday

household tasks: cooking, cleanup, laundry, snow removal, yardwork, home repair and childcare. The emphasis is on the division of labour within the household, and on whether help is obtained from outside, whether paid or unpaid. The respondent also is asked whether she/he provides unpaid help to others.

In terms of previous major surveys carried out by Statistics Canada, GSS-5 may be seen as a blending of parts of the content areas from the 1984 Family History Survey and the 1985 General Social Survey on 'Health and Social Support.'

2.2 Questionnaire Content

A more detailed characterization of questionnaire content follows, organized under major topical headings.

2.2.1 Union Formation and Dissolution (QQ. H1-H34, J1-J18)

For each respondent age fifteen and over, there is a more or less complete history of marriages and common-law unions. Provision is made for as many as three of each type of union. A few respondents will have experienced more than that, but the proportion is small. In the 1984 Family History Survey, for example, less than one percent of the respondents reported three or more marriages or three or more common-law unions. Incomplete histories for this small sub-sample should pose no great analytic problems.

An important innovation in the series of questions dealing with marriages and common-law unions is the collection of key information on spouses or partners. In particular, it establishes the age and marital status of each spouse/partner at the time the marriage/common-law union began. These data are

important for analyses of the survival prospects of marriages
(e.g., divorce rates tend to be higher if both parties have
previously been divorced) or the remarriage prospects of women
(see below).

2.2.2 Marriage and Fertility Intentions (QQ. H37-H39, D4-D7)

While intentions do not predict behaviour, they can give some
indications of what is likely. This series of questions asks
unmarried respondents about whether they intend to marry (or
remarry) and if so when. Secondly, for respondents in their mid-
forties or younger they ask whether respondent and his/her
partner (if any) have the capacity for future reproduction, that
is, whether they are sterilized or otherwise infecund. Finally,
they ask whether the respondent intends to have a child in the
future, and the total eventual number intended.

Such data, especially when analyzed for younger cohorts, can
yield some estimates of fertility rates over the near-term
future, and thus provide a firmer basis for the fertility
component of national population projections. They also can help
clarify the nature of common-law unions: to what extent do
persons in such unions intend eventually to marry, or to have
children, regardless of marriage intentions?

2.2.3 Kinship: Parents, Grandparents and Siblings (QQ. A1-B11)

This series of questions establishes whether parents and
grandparents are still living, along with the number of brothers
and sisters (separately) still living. For living parents,
additional questions ask about living arrangements (in same
household as respondent, or, in other private household, or, in
institution; alone, or, with spouse/partner, or, with other

child, or, with other persons), physical distance from respondent's residence, frequency and location of face-to-face contact, satisfaction with contact, contact by phone or mail, mutual help with day-to-day tasks, and parent's province or country of birth.

For grandparents and siblings, the supplementary questions apply to the whole category (it would be impractical to ask detailed questions regarding every grandparent and sibling), and are limited to questions regarding frequency of contact (face-to-face, phone, mail) and help given or received.

2.2.4 Kinship: Children and Grandchildren (QQ. C1-C39)

A single question on grandchildren establishes their existence and number. The series of questions on children, by contrast, is extensive and is designed to deal with the situations of respondents at different points in their life-cycle.

The series starts with a nearly complete history of children who have come under respondent's care through birth, adoption, or remarriage (step-children). This history allows for as many as twenty-two children (starting with the oldest). The number of respondents involved with more than that is apt to be quite small, so that the data loss should be trivial. For each child, the questionnaire asks: date of birth; sex, type (natural, adopted, step); whether alive or dead; whether living in the respondent's household or not, and age-at home-leaving, if this has occurred. These items will yield information on: fertility and child-spacing; childbearing in relation to the sex composition of previous children; home-leaving of children; overall number of living children at time of survey.

The next sets of questions seek different information about children of different ages and of different residential statuses. For children under fifteen and living in the respondent's household, there is a short series of questions about daycare, whether provided within the household (by whom?) or outside (in what type of setting?). For children under fifteen not living in the same household as respondent (typically children in custody of an ex-spouse), the respondent is asked about the child's location (physical distance from respondent), frequency of face-to-face visits and satisfaction with this frequency, and barriers to more frequent visitation, if any.

The respondent then is asked a series of questions about one of his/her children over fifteen years old living outside the parental household (many of these will be 'children' only in terms of relationship to respondent, that is, they will range in age up to sixty or more). Respondent is asked to identify the children with whom he or she has the 'most contact', and the oldest of these is selected for further attention. For this person, further questions ask: with whom the child lives; physical distance or travel time from respondent to child; frequency and acceptability of frequency of face-to-face contact with child; factors impeding more frequent contact; site of face-to-face contact; contact by telephone or letter; help given or received during past twelve months.

By focussing on the respondent's grown-up children with whom the respondent has the most contact, this series of questions may be expected to yield a maximum measure of parent-child contact or solidarity. By definition, the contact with excluded children

would tend to be less.[3] In any case, the respondent is given the opportunity to designate and provide information on the child who seems the most significant in his/her day-to-day life.

2.2.5 Friends and Confidants (QQ. E1-E7, G1-G3)

The respondent is asked to indicate how many people she/he considers 'close friends'. Schedule instructions are to exclude spouse, parents, brothers, sisters and children and to include '... friends, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, in-laws, etc. ...'.

This is followed by a series of six questions about 'your closest friend', establishing: the friend's gender; where the friendship started (at school, work, etc.); physical distance from friend; frequency of contact, both face-to-face and by letter/phone.

Additional questions ask whom the respondent would turn to for help in case he/she felt 'a bit down or depressed', or, if she/he were 'very upset' about a problem with spouse or partner and hadn't been able to work it out. The response options include relatives and friends, but add neighbours, co-workers, and the 'helping professions' -- clergy, doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist or counsellor.

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[3] It is conceivable that the combined contact with excluded children could exceed in importance that of the one chosen. To collect information on this would require asking all questions of every living child of the respondent. The costs of this in terms of respondent burden and interviewing time would be prohibitive.

2.2.6 The Division of Household Labour (QQ. F3-F32)

Since the household is, among other things, an institution for the provision of various domestic services, family structure and change can be thought of in terms of the division of household labour among its members. GSS-5 asks the extent to which each household member has helped with meal preparation and cleanup, house cleaning and laundry, household maintenance and outside work, and who is primarily responsible for each of these tasks. Then questions are asked whether regular help is provided from outside the household, who provides it, and whether it is paid or unpaid.

Taken together these items should provide a good picture of how daily household chores are accomplished. In particular, they will provide some indication of how widely those chores are shared, especially by younger members of the household and by males (a regular research finding in Canada and elsewhere is that housework still is the primary responsibility of the wife/mother, even in cases where she works full-time).

2.2.7 Happiness and Health (QQ. K1-K4)

Since previous studies have shown a connection between family relationships/household status and happiness or general satisfaction with life, GSS-5 asks the respondent to indicate his/her degree of happiness, and to give a subjective rating of overall health. Then a series of eight questions asks about satisfaction or dissatisfaction with: relationship with partner or single status; relationships with immediate family; sharing of housework; job or other main activity; balance between job and family life; availability of time for leisure pursuits; relationships with friends; housing arrangements. Persons who report dissatisfaction with housing are further asked about

reasons for their dissatisfaction. Later questions (L6 and L7) ask the type of dwelling respondent lives in, and whether or not it is owned by a member of the household.

2.2.8 Characteristics of Mother, Father, Spouse/Partner (QQ. A15-21, A38-44, L38-L45)

An innovation of GSS-5 is to ask about activities of the respondent's mother and father, in cases where respondent still lives with one or both, and of the respondent's spouse or partner. Questions are asked about the extent of the relevant individual's work, school attendance, housework, childcare, volunteer work, etc., and what that individual's primary activity was in the past twelve months. If the individual has worked at a job, questions are asked about the amount of work, whether full-time or part-time, and whether work was done on evening or night shifts, and on weekends. Finally, information is sought on the individual's level of educational attainment.

The advantage of data such as just described is that it enables the analyst to relate activities or behaviours of the respondent to those of other persons in his/her household. For example, a husband's participation in housework might depend on whether or not his wife is working full-time and on her level of education (and thus likely level of income).

2.2.9 Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondent (QQ. L2-L35, L46-L50)

GSS-5 asks an extensive set of questions regarding background characteristics of respondent. Items are included on: place of birth/national origin; immigration; migration in the last ten years, including distance of and reason for the most recent move;

religion and frequency of church attendance; language (mother tongue and in the home); educational attainment and status; labour-force status, including hours, business and occupation; individual and household income.

2.3 Research Opportunities

It would be impossible to anticipate and describe all the research opportunities afforded by a rich data set such as GSS-5. What follows is an illustrative set of research sketches, with emphasis on topics for which GSS-5 provides unique or innovative data.

2.3.1 Reproductive Intentions and Population Projections

The future of Canadian population depends in large measure on future levels of net immigration and fertility. Immigration is not easy to forecast, but at least annual numbers are largely determined by government policy, which in turn can be anticipated to some extent. Fertility is by far the most volatile and least predictable component of future population change.

The standard procedure in making population projections is to calculate different population scenarios with different assumptions regarding the future path of period fertility -- constant at current rates, lower, higher, etc.   In a different context, the analyst may try to estimate eventual completed fertility of young cohorts still in the early years of childbearing. Typically, this is done using some sort of extrapolation formula (see for example, Romaniuc (1984), p. 123).

GSS-5 will provide a firmer basis for such fertility forecasts in the form of questions on marriage and fertility intentions (QQ.

H37-H39 and D1-D7 respectively). In the former series, persons
who have never been legally married are asked whether they think
they will ever marry; those who formerly were legally married are
asked whether they think they will marry again. Given a 'yes'
response, they are asked at what age they would like to get
married or remarried. These items can provide an improved
behavioural basis for forecast of marriage patterns in the near
future, whether on a period or cohort basis. Since the bulk of
reproduction still takes place within legal marriage, these in
turn can underpin fertility forecasts.

Questions D4 and D5 establish whether respondent and his/her
partner are unable to have children in the future, whether
because of a sterilization operation or some other cause.
Respondents able to have children are asked if they intend to
have a child (or another child, if they already have one or more)
sometime in the future, and the eventual total number of children
expected (counting those they already have).

These data could be compared with similar data on fertility
intentions from the 1984 Canadian Fertility Survey, at least for
women of reproductive ages (defined as 18 to 50 in the CFS).
GSS-5 data will provide an update for younger cohorts, will
provide data for even younger women (lower age limit of 15 rather
than 18), and will provide the first Canadian data on marriage
and fertility intentions and desires of men.

2.3.2 Kin Numbers

GSS-1 collected the first national data on the reported number of
living kin of various types or categories. GSS-5 expands on or
refines items from the earlier round of GSS. A small set of
questions on grandparents is added. For siblings, a distinction
is made between brothers and sisters and between older and

younger siblings. There is also a question on numbers of
grandchildren. But as in GSS-1, the greatest amount of
information is sought on the immediate family of respondent
(whether family of origin or of orientation), that is, parents,
siblings and children.[4]

Since the family network still is seen as a major source of care
and support for Canadians, despite the increasing involvement of
government and other formal organizations, it is important to
know the pool of kin on whom respondent may rely or who may rely
on her/him. Over recent decades, this pool has tended to
increase due to higher survival rates and to divorce and
remarriage (for example, a child may gain a step-parent, step-
grandparents, or step-siblings). It has tended to decrease due
to sharply lower fertility levels (see Keyfitz, 1986; Goodman,
Keyfitz and Pullum, 1974). The data from GSS-5, especially when
used in conjunction with that from GSS-1, can provide a fairly
accurate picture of how these influences have 'netted out' to
yield profiles of living kin of Canadians of various ages,
marital statuses, regions, ethnic groups and so forth.

2.3.3 Migration, Distance and the Family Network

The previous section dealt only with the number of living kin,
without regard to their location with respect to respondent
(within or outside of respondent's household, and if outside how
far away?), or to the amount of contact respondent has with them.

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[4]   The data on kinship numbers will not be complete insofar as
      categories such as uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, cousin, etc.
      are not included. A complete inventory of respondent's kin,
      including all the necessary distinctions (for example, between
      siblings, step-siblings, half-siblings, siblings-in-law) would
      require a separate survey, and is not feasible in a multi-
      purpose survey such as GSS-5.

In terms of day-to-day life, however, the location of one's kin may be almost as important as their mere existence. Dewit et al. (1988) for example use local survey data from London, Ontario to show that physical distance is by far the best single predictor of the frequency of face-to-face contact between an older person and his/her children. Similarly, Burch (1989) showed, using data from GSS-1, that residence in one's province of birth substantially increased the frequency of face-to-face contact with one's father.

Since a major feature of the Canadian kinship system is the widespread geographical dispersal of kin, further research on these relationships is needed to clarify the functioning of the Canadian family. GSS-5 provides major opportunities for such analysis. First, for several categories of kin (mother, father, children living outside the household), information is sought on their physical distance and travel time from respondent. Second, QQ. L2-L5 and L14-L15 provide substantial information on the migration status of the respondent: province or country of birth; date of immigration; number of moves in previous ten years; date of most recent move; distance of most recent move; reason for most recent move (including, 'to be closer to family'). In short there are opportunities to analyze the role of distance as a determinant of frequency of kin contact or mutual help, but also the role of respondent's migration as a determinant of distances to various kin.

2.3.4 Union Formation and Dissolution: Marriage and Cohabitation

The last two decades have witnessed several major changes in Canadian marriage patterns. One is the sharp rise in the divorce rate to unprecedented high levels (McKie, Prentice and Reed, 1983; Burch and Madan, 1986). Closely related to this is an increase in the number of relatively young Canadians who are

candidates for a new marriage or other union, but also an increase in the number of lone-parent families, especially those headed by females (Moore, 1989).

Another major change involves the spread to an appreciable minority of Canadians of non-legal cohabitation, in common-law unions. These unions represent a partial alternative to marriage at various points in the individual life-cycle, leading to postponement of first marriage among younger adults, cohabitation following separation but prior to divorce, and cohabitation rather than remarriage among middle-aged Canadians. The overall system of union formation and dissolution has become considerably more complicated than formerly, but still seems in a state of flux. More data and more research are necessary to begin to understand what's happening.

GSS-5 will provide a number of research opportunities:

2.3.4.1 Update of 1984 Data. The Family History Survey and the Canadian Fertility survey, both carried out in 1984, were the first national studies in which detailed event histories were collected on marriage, cohabitation, and divorce. More recent data from GSS-5 will allow for an updating of results from these earlier surveys and a clarification of current trends. The longer-term outcomes of common-law unions will be better assessed, now that the cohorts that first experienced this form of behaviour in large numbers will have registered twenty or more years of experience.[5] The overall numbers reporting common-law unions will be larger, with more reliable statistical results as a consequence.

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[5] The vast majority, over ninety percent, of common-law unions recorded in the 1984 Family History Survey had occurred after 1970.

The data should help clarify some changes in marital status between the 1981 and 1986 censuses: rates of cohabitation among very young women (15-19) declined, while rising slightly for older women; proportions single (i.e., never married but also not cohabiting) rose substantially for women up to age thirty (see Burch, 1989).

GSS-5 data also should help clarify whether the rate of marital breakdown through divorce has levelled off or even declined slightly, as hinted at in recent period measures of divorce. Such clarification requires more than a detailed analysis of legal marriage and divorce, since as noted above, the spread of common-law unions substantially complicates the matter. It may be, for example, that the divorce rate is declining somewhat due to a tendency of 'divorce-prone' persons to cohabit rather than to enter legal marriage.

2.3.4.2 Male/Female Comparisons. The marital experiences of men and women have diverged in recent years in a number of important respects. At older ages, women are much more apt to lose a spouse through death, due to the large gap between male and female life expectancy. After divorce, women are more apt to receive custody of children and thus become lone-parents, at least for a time. And, due to a tendency of men to marry younger women, especially in second marriages, women's chances of remarriage following divorce or widowhood are appreciably lower than those of men.

GSS-5 will provide ample scope for the investigation of these and related issues. Male/female comparisons based on 1984 Family History Survey data can be updated. But GSS-5 offers additional opportunities, since for the first time it collects data on characteristics of respondent's spouse at time of marriage or other union formation. The outcome of respondent's marriage, for example, can be related to whether it was a first or second

marriage for respondent, but also for partner (the highest rates of divorce tend to occur in marriages where both partners have experienced divorce from a former marriage). GSS-5 also will allow for detailed studies of the relative ages of spouses in various unions, especially remarriages or cohabitations following breakdown of a first marriage.

2.3.4.3 Analysis of Covariates. In GSS-5, all of the above issues can be explored in the context of a rich set of background characteristics of respondent, such as ethnicity, religion/religiosity and educational attainment. The 1984 Family History Survey collected data on relatively few such characteristics; the 1984 Canadian Fertility Survey collected a great deal of such information, but was incomplete in regard to the event histories, and sampled only women of reproductive ages (18-50). GSS-5 combines the strong points of these two previous surveys.

2.3.5 Family Experience of Young Adults

Among other things, the household is an institution for the provision of domestic services for its occupants (Burch and Matthews, 1987). In the typical case in the past, it was the wife-mother who played the housekeeping role, performing the bulk of tasks associated with purchase and preparation of food, laundry, and housecleaning. With the entry of a majority of women into the full-time labour force, the situation has changed somewhat, although a typical research finding is that employed women continued to do or be responsible for a disproportionate share of housework.

GSS-5 provides substantial data on the performance of routine housekeeping tasks, whether by persons in the household or from outside. It also gives respondent's perception of who is

primarily responsible for various tasks. These data will repeat
in a somewhat different form those from the daily activity logs
of GSS-2.

Unique to GSS-5 is the collection of additional information on
the activities of other persons in respondent's household. For
younger respondents still living with father or mother, questions
are asked about mother's or father's main activities (including
details on schooling, educational attainment and labour-force
participation). In other words, it will be possible to relate
the extent and kind of respondent's participation in housekeeping
activities to the activities of his/her mother or father.[6]

Similar questions are asked of respondent's living with spouse or
partner, who of course will be spread more widely across various
age groups. These data would support an examination of possible
differences in the household division of labour among persons
with different fertility and marital histories, and in different
types of unions -- first or second marriages, common-law unions.

2.3.6 Child Visitation: Patterns and Satisfaction

For children of respondent who are under fifteen years old and
living outside respondent's household, questions are asked about
whom the child lives with, where (i.e., physical distance/travel
time), frequency of contact, satisfaction with frequency, and
reasons why there is not more face-to-face contact. In the
typical case, these data will relate to male respondents one or
more of whose children from a previous marriage are living with

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[6] It would be useful to add to GSS-5 some questions on
respondent's satisfaction with the amount and kind of work
performed in the household, as well as some information on
home-leaving -- intentions, plans, etc.

an ex-spouse. In other words, these data will provide information on the experience of non-custodial parents following divorce.

2.3.7 Parental Contact with Emancipated Children

GSS-5 asks respondent parents about contact and mutual help involving a child age fifteen and over and living outside respondent's household. The series of questions is asked of the child with whom respondent says s/he has the most contact. For parents of young adult children, these data will provide substantial information about parent-child contact soon after the child has left the parental home. For older respondents, say those over age sixty, they will provide information on the extent of help received from middle-aged sons and daughters, especially when they are analyzed in conjunction with the series of questions on help received for domestic tasks. Various questionnaire items will allow for the specification of the age, sex and marital status of this child, his/her distance from respondent, and respondent's general satisfaction with the frequency of contacts.

3. GSS-5 AND THE LARGER DATA SYSTEM ON HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES

3.1 Introduction

No one database can provide all the information that one might wish on Canadian families and households. There are both substantive and methodological reasons for this. Substantively, the topical area of household and family is too broad, encompassing union formation and dissolution, childbearing and home-leaving, kinship systems (numbers, location, contact, help patterns), age-sex roles within the family, to mention only a few

of the major areas.   Methodologically, no one data-collection
strategy can collect detailed information on all of the above
areas.   But in any case, the different strategies have different
advantages and disadvantages in attempts to collect different
kinds of information.

The population census and vital registration (of births, deaths,
marriages, divorces), for example, have the virtue of near-
completeness and comprehensiveness.   Legal compulsions to
complete census forms or to register vital events assure high
levels of coverage.   The target of a complete count yields large
numbers, and thus high levels of statistical reliability in
results.   Only census and registration data can yield meaningful
information on relatively small geographic areas, such as census
tracts.

On the other hand, neither the census or the registration system
lends itself to the collection of detailed information on any one
topic (e.g., complete marital histories) or the asking of highly
sensitive questions.   These are better dealt with in sample
surveys, where respondent is encouraged but not legally required
to participate or to answer all questions.

Different data collection systems also differ in the amount of
information they can or do supply on 'co-variates' -- socio-
economic or other background information on a respondent or other
members of his/her household.[7]   Such co-variate data is of

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[7]   A distinction must be made here between what is collected and
    what is published or otherwise available to various analysts.
    The census, for example, collects considerable information on
    every individual in every household in Canada, but not all of
    these data are available to the ordinary researcher, partly
    for reasons of confidentiality (e.g., individual data at the
    census tract level).   Public use sample tapes provide
    substantial analytic flexibility, but involve a loss in terms
    of sample size that limits certain kinds of research (e.g., on

interest for descriptive purposes, but is even more essential in scientific attempts to unravel patterns of cause and consequence.

3.2 Registration Data on Marriage and Divorce

A major difference between registration data on marriage and divorce and union histories from GSS-5 (or the 1984 Family History Survey and the 1984 Canadian Fertility Survey) is that the former relates only to legal unions and their legal dissolution through divorce or annulment. The registration data are the product of a social/legal control process that is unlikely to extend routinely to cohabitation or common-law unions.[8] Increasingly, therefore, registration data give an incomplete picture of the actual patterns of cohabitation of Canadian heterosexual couples. To complete the picture, showing the interrelationships among marriage and divorce and common-law union and dissolution, detailed event histories such as contained in GSS-5 are necessary.

For legal unions, however, registration data will still have advantages in terms of providing a statistically reliable picture of current patterns of behaviour (Nagnur and Adams, 1987) and of cohort changes (Dumas, 1985). Apart from that, registration data

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ethnic differences in family patterns). The typical national sample survey, such as GSS-5, have even smaller N's. The typical registration form (for births, marriages, divorces) contains relatively little information on co-variates.

[8] In legal theory, if a couple cohabit continuously for three years, or are in a relationship of some permanence and have a natural or adopted child, they can be held to have the same legal rights and obligations as a married couple. But they are not technically married in many Canadian legal jurisdictions. In general, the law and the practice surrounding these issues is complicated and unclear (Kronby, 1986).

have the disadvantage of including relatively little information
on co-variates (see above Sect. 3.1).

The two different data sources also differ slightly in coverage.
A sample survey such as GSS-5 by definition only collects
information on persons surviving at the time of the survey. This
fact may tend to underestimate slightly the extent of divorce,
for example, since divorced persons generally are thought to have
higher mortality rates than non-divorced persons. Probably, the
resulting bias is small, and countered to the extent that
divorced persons remarry. The registration system, by contrast,
captures all divorces, but encounters problems in the calculation
of rates.[9]

3.3 Census Data on Marital Status

For the most part, the census provides a snapshot or cross-
sectional view of Canadians. In the case of marital or union
status, information is provided on the status of each individual
on the day of the census -- whether they are single or never-
married, married, separated, divorced, or living common-law (this
last information is provided not by the question on marital
status but that on relationship to reference person in the
household; Statistics Canada does not consider 'cohabiting' a
'marital status'). The traditional marital status categories
were never entirely satisfactory, since they confounded legal
status and de facto residential status (for example, separated

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[9] In Dumas' excellent analysis of cohort divorce experience by
     duration since marriage, for example, he is forced to relate
     divorces by duration x to marriages registered x years
     earlier, even though some of the divorces occurring in a given
     year may have involved marriages that occurred outside Canada.

but not yet divorced persons are still legally married), and is
becoming less so in the face of the spread of cohabitation or
common-law unions. The count of currently divorced persons,
while of some interest in its own right, is totally inadequate as
an index of the extent of divorce due to the fact that a majority
of divorced persons remarry, i.e., re-enter the category
'married'.

The competition for space in the decennial or mid-decade census
has sharply limited the collection of additional information on
marriage, an exception being a question on age at first marriage.
For detailed marital histories one must turn to sample surveys
such as GSS-5, FHS and CFS.

3.4   Lone-Parent Families

Census data provides a count of lone-parent families as of census
date, but only an event history can describe the process of entry
into and exit from lone-parent status. The most thorough study
of this problem to date is by Moore (1989), based on the 1984
FHS. GSS-5 will allow for a replication and update of Moore's
study, but in addition will allow for a fuller depiction of the
lone-parent experience. It will be possible to make comparisons
among specific sub-groups of the population, defined by
education, income, labour-force participation, religion,
language, and so forth. It also will be possible to contrast
patterns of household labour among lone-parent households
(including a contrast of female and male lone-parent households)
and those containing a couple. Do children of lone-parents, for
example, carry a heavier burden of housework than others? And
how is this affected by the character of the lone-parent's
labour-force participation? What is the role of daycare in these
relationships?

3.5 Household Data Versus Data on Extra-Household Relationships

The standard unit of enumeration in a typical population census
is the household, the occupants of a well-defined dwelling
(housing) unit. Data are collected on all household members, but
with few exceptions no information is collected on persons in
other households, regardless of their physical or socio-economic
proximity. There is continuing justification for this practice,
apart from operational convenience in censuses, in the fact that
the household is a well-defined and separate economic and socio-
psychological unit.

At the same time, it is well-recognized that the picture given by
census data is incomplete, insofar as it fails to capture
important inter-household relationships. To cite an extreme
example, two neighbouring households might contain close
relatives (e.g., two brothers and their families) and maintain
constant patterns of visiting, mutual help, etc., and yet there
would be no hint of this fact in standard census data.

GSS-5 provides a substantial remedy for this information gap,
with information on the location of relatives and on patterns of
contact and mutual help. As noted above, it repeats information
collected in GSS-1, but with considerable elaboration and
refinement.[10]

Not all the advantage lies with GSS-5 or similar surveys. As
noted above, only the census can provide large enough N's to
yield meaningful data for small geographic areas. And only the
census provides standard information on all household members.
In GSS-5, most of the data pertain to the respondent, with only

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[10] For an prime example of the kinds of analysis supported by
such data, see Stone (1988).

selected items of information on selected other household members.

3.6 Childbearing and Fertility

Census and vital registration data on fertility provide for standard demographic measures of Canada's reproductive performance year by year (e.g., crude birth rate, total fertility rate) and across birth cohorts of women (children ever born by age, cohort total fertility), but tell little about the process underlying aggregate performance. Event histories such as GSS-5 provide a more or less comprehensive picture of an individual's reproductive career (for men as well as women!) in relation to their background characteristics (e.g., education, labour-force participation, religion) and other parts of their life-cycle -- union formation and dissolution, labour-force, education, and so forth. It also will provide information on the association between fertility and the household division of labour, as well as the differing role of daycare for families with different numbers and ages of children.

GSS-5 complements other recent surveys on related issues. It provides less information on the reproductive process than does the CFS, which asked relatively sensitive questions on contraception and abortion, but treats both men and women across a wider age range, and has more complete information on common-law unions. It provides less information on the details of daycare than does the 1988 National Childcare Survey, but can put childcare in a much broader demographic and familial perspective.

4. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The fifth round of the Canadian General Social Survey promises to be one of the richest single data sources on the Canadian family that has yet been available to researchers. The presence in one data set of material on childbearing, marital and other unions histories, migration, and kinship interaction -- along with a rich set of socio/cultural and economic variables -- allows for possibilities of analysis not previously found in census, registration data, or sample surveys.

The availability of such data hold out the promise of substantially better understanding of recent family change and what it may portend for the future.

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QUESTION	CONCEPT(S)	POSSIBLE COMPARISONS[*]
A. PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS		
A2,A22	Where parents born	
A3,A23	Living/non-living status of parents	NSFH,GSS(1)
A4,A24	Age of parents	NSFH,GSS(1)
A5,A27,A28	Where parents live	NSFH,GSS(1)
A6,A7,A29,A30	With whom parents live	NSFH
A8,A31	Distance of parents' residence	NSFH
A9,A13,A32,A36	Frequency of contact with parents - physically, by letter or telephone	GSS(1)
A10,A33	Where contact occurred	
A11,A34	Was contact as frequent as desired	
A12,A35	Reasons for seeing parents less than desired	
A15-A18,A38-A41	Parents' main activities in past year	
A19-A21,A42-A44	Work demands, work schedule and work characteristics of parents	
A46,A50	Age respondent last lived with parent	FHS,NSFH
A47,A51	Reason for moving out	NSFH
A49	Always lived with parent	FHS

A52	Year moved in with parent again	
A53	Living/non-living status of grandparents	
A54	Do grandparents live with respondents	
A56,A57	Frequency of contact with grandparents – physically, by letter or telephone	

B. BROTHERS AND SISTERS

B2,B3,B5	Number of brothers and sisters	NSFH,GSS(1)
B4,B6	Number of brothers and sisters older than respondent	NSFH
B8	Do siblings live with respondent	GSS(1)
B10,B11	Frequency of contact with siblings – physically, by letter or telephone	NSFH,GSS(1)

C. CHILDREN

C2,C3,C4	Number of children – natural, step and adopted	FHS
C6	Number of grandchildren	GSS(1)
C7	Identification of up to 22 children by age; birthdate; sex; natural step, adopted; living living in household or deceased; age child last left home	FHS
C10	Number of children receiving childcare	
C11	Reason childcare required	
C12	Childcare received outside household	
C13	Type of childcare receive outside household	

C14	Childcare received inside household	
C15	Who provided childcare inside household	
C18	With whom does non-custody child living	
C19	Distance of child's residence	
C20,C23	Frequency of contact - physical, by letter or telephone	NSFH,GSS
C21	Was contact as frequent as desired	
C22	Reasons for seeing child less than desired	
C25	Number of children living within 100km	NSFH
C26	Child that respondent has most frequent contact	
C31,C32	Who do they live with	NSFH
C33	Distance from respondent	
C34	Child's main activity in past year	
C35,C39	Frequency of contact	NSFH
C36	Where does contact occur	
C37	Was contact as frequent as desired	
C38	Reasons for seeing child less than desired	

D. FERTILITY INTENTIONS

D4,D5	Is having another child possible	NSFH,CFS
D6	Intention to have another child	NSFH,CFS
D7	Number of children desired	NSFH,CFS

E. FRIENDS

E1	Number of friends respondent has	GSS(NORC)
E3	Sex of closest friend	GSS(NORC)
E4	Where friendship started	GSS(NORC)
E5	Distance of friend's residence	GSS(NORC)
E6,E7	Frequency of contact with friend	GSS(NORC)

F. HOUSEHOLD HELP

F3-F6	Household tasks carried out by household members - meal preparation, meal cleanup, house cleaning and laundry, house maintenance	NSFH,GSS(2)
F8,F9,F12,F13,F16 F17,F20,F21,F22 F23,F24,F25	Unpaid work, done by respondent, outside household and to whom - cooking, sewing, cleaning; house maintenance; driving; childcare; personal care; financial support	GSS(1)
F10,F11,F14,F15 F18,F19,F26,F27	Unpaid work, done by someone outside household and by whom - cooking, sewing, cleaning; house maintenance; transportation; financial support	GSS(1)
F28	Paid help from outside household and frequency	
F29	Unpaid volunteer work done by respondent	
F30	Limitations of work due to health	GSS(4)
F31,F32	Was personel care required and who provided it	GSS(1)

G. SUPPORT

G2,G3	Hypothetical questions of whom respondent turns to for emotional support	GSS(NORC)

H. MARRIAGES

H2	Ever lived common-law	FHS,CPS
H3	Legally married now	
H4	Ever been legally married	FHS,CPS
H5	Living with spouse now	
H6	Separated now	
H7	Date of separation	
H8	Date of current marrigage	FHS
H9	Spouse's status before marriage	FHS
H10	Spouse's date of birth	FHS
H12	Did respondent live common-law before marriage	
H13	Date of common-law beginning	
H14,H26	Is this first (second) marriage	FHS
H16,H27	Date of first (second) marriage	FHS
H17,H28	First (second) spouse's status before marriage	
H18,H29	First (second) spouse's date of birth	FHS
H20,H31	Did respondent live common-law before first (second) marriage	
H21,H32	Date first (second) common-law beginning	
H22,H33	How did first (second) marriage end	FHS,NSFH
H34	Number of times married	
H37,H38	Would respondent like to marry/ remarry	NSFH
H39	At what age would respondent like to marry/remarry	NSFH

J. COMMON-LAW PARTNERSHIPS

J2	Living common-law now	
J4,J8,J13	Ever lived common-law and not married	FHS
J5,J9,J14	When did partnership begin	FHS
J6,J10,J15	Partner's status before union	
J7,J11,J16	Partner's date of birth	
J12,J17	How did partnership end	FHS
J18	Number of common-law relationships	NSFH

K. SATISFACTION

K2	Happiness with life now	GSS
K3	State of health	NSFH,GSS(1)(4)
K4	Statisfaction with specfic life-areas	GSS(4)

L. CLASSIFICATION

L2	Number of moves in the last 10 years	NSFH
L3	Date of last move	
L4	Distance moved	NSFH
L5	Reason for move	
L6	Dwelling type	GSS
L7	Home ownership	GSS
L8	Postal code	GSS
L9-L13	Telephones	GSS
L14	Country of birth	GSS
L15	Year of immigration	GSS
L16	Respondent's date of birth	GSS

L17	Language spoken in childhood	GSS
L18	Current language spoken at home	GSS
L19-L22	Respondent's education level	GSS
L23	Religious affiliation	GSS
L24	Frequency of church attendance	GSS
L25	Ethnic origins	GSS
L26-L28	Main activity in past year	GSS
L29-L32	Labour force status	GSS
L33-L35	Employer, Industry, Occupation	GSS
L38-L40	Spouse's main activity in past year	GSS
L41-L44	Labour force status	GSS
L45	Spouse's level of education	GSS(4)
L46	Respondent's source of income	GSS
L47	Respondent's income	GSS
L48	Number in household that received income	
L50	Total household income	GSS

M. CONTACTS FOR FOLLOW-UP

M1	Refusal to provide information	LMAS
M2	Name of respondent	LMAS
M3	Address of respondent	LMAS
M4	Refusal to provide contact	LMAS
M5	Name of contact	LMAS
M6	Address of contact	LMAS
M7	Telephone of contact	LMAS
M9	Sex of respondent	GSS

CCS - Child Care Survey

CFS - Canadian Fertility Survey, Université de Montréal
      Centre de Sondage, 1986

CPS - Current Population Survey, June 1980 Supplemental
      Questionnaire

GSS - General Social Survey

GSS(1) - General Social Survey, Cycle 1
GSS(2) - General Social Survey, Cycle 2
GSS(4) - General Social Survey, Cycle 4

GSS(NORC) - National Opinion Research Center, 1986

FHS - Family History Survey (1984), Statistics Canada

LMAS - Labour Market Activity Survey, Statistics Canada

NSFH - National Survey of Families and Household (1987), Institute
       for Survey Research, Temple University (U.S.A.)