

CHARACTERISTICS OF STRONG FAMILIES

By

JO ANN KAY WALL

Bachelor of Arts

Tabor College

Hillsboro, Kansas

1973

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
May, 1977

Thesis
1977
W187c
Cop. 2



CHARACTERISTICS OF STRONG FAMILIES

Thesis Approved:

Nick Stinnell

Thesis Adviser

Frances Stromberg

Althea Wright

Norman N. Leubon

Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Appreciation is expressed to Dr. Nick Stinnett, Associate Professor, Family Relations and Child Development, for his guidance and encouragement throughout the continuation and completion of this study.

Gratitude is also expressed to Dr. Althea Wright, Assistant Professor, Family Relations and Child Development, and to Dr. Frances Stromberg, Professor and Head of the Department of Family Relations and Child Development, for their time and comments in the critical reading of this study.

Acknowledgments are also expressed to the Extension Home Economists who helped in the selection of the strong families and to the strong families of Oklahoma who willingly participated in this study.

Special recognition is expressed to my husband, Richard, for his encouragement throughout this study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	1
Need for Research	2
Purpose of the Study	3
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	5
The Family Unit	5
Definition and Utilization of Family Strengths	6
Marital Success	12
Parent-Child Relationships	14
Summary	16
III. PROCEDURE	18
Selection of Subjects	18
The Instrument	19
Analysis of the Data	20
IV. RESULTS	22
Description of Subjects	22
Analyses of Perceptions	22
Examination of Hypotheses	27
V. SUMMARY	57
Discussion and Conclusions	59
Implications and Recommendations	61
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	64
APPENDIX	70

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Characteristics of the Subjects	23
II. Perceptions of Strong Families Concerning Their Most Important Strengths	24
III. Perceptions Concerning Activities Which Contribute to Family Strengths	25
IV. Perceptions Concerning Areas of Family Life Respondents Would Most Like to Improve	26
V. Differences in Perceptions Concerning Most Important Family Strengths According to Race	28
VI. Differences in Perceptions Concerning Most Important Family Strengths According to Socio-Economic Status	31
VII. Differences in Perceptions Concerning Most Important Family Strengths According to Size of Community Respondent Lives In	33
VIII. Differences in Perceptions Concerning Most Important Family Strengths According to Number of Years Married	36
IX. Differences in Perceptions Concerning Most Important Family Strengths According to Employment Status of Wives	37
X. Differences in Perceptions Concerning Most Important Family Strengths According to Number of Children	40
XI. Differences in Perceptions Concerning Most Important Family Strengths According to Religion	42

Table	Page
XII. Differences in Perceptions Concerning What Activities Contribute to Family Strengths According to Race	44
XIII. Differences in Perceptions Concerning What Activities Contribute to Family Strengths According to Socio-Economic Status	46
XIV. Differences in Perceptions Concerning What Activities Contribute to Family Strengths According to Size of Community Respondent Lives In	48
XV. Differences in Perceptions Concerning What Activities Contribute to Family Strengths According to Number of Years Married	51
XVI. Differences in Perceptions Concerning What Activities Contribute to Family Strengths According to Employment Status of Wives	53
XVII. Differences in Perceptions Concerning What Activities Contribute to Family Strengths According to Number of Children	54
XVIII. Differences in Perceptions Concerning What Activities Contribute to Family Strengths According to Religion	56

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

The stability of the family is directly related to the stability of individuals and society. Societies with strong family systems aid and strengthen the society in times of conflict and adversity, and they recover at a faster rate (Zimmerman, 1972). Healthy individuals within families as well as the whole family unit contribute to the strength of society. The prevention of serious emotional problems comes through strengthening family life (Joint Commission on Mental Health of Children, Inc., 1969). Improving interpersonal relationships between family members also improves their ability to cope with stress (Tracey, 1971). There is evidence that a cohesive family life where each member has a place is the most effective barrier against juvenile delinquency (Mauch, 1970).

A majority of people consider a strong, satisfying family as one of their important life goals. Yet, at present few guidelines exist for achieving this goal. The lack of guidelines are primarily due to lack of research on the characteristics of strong families. Research on family strengths helps to better understand the potentials of

family life. This type of research is needed to provide guidelines for strengthening families. Such information is particularly needed since the divorce rate has increased well over 300 percent from 1890 to 1967. The number of American divorces between 1963 and 1969 alone increased 25 percent (Epstein, 1974; U. S. Bureau of Census, 1976).

Need for Research

Lack of instruction of how to have a successful family life is due to lack of research in this area. Much of the current family related literature has focused upon the pathology of the family and the negative aspects associated with family disorganization. Abnormalities and deviations have been emphasized.

Understanding of what makes families strong would aid therapists in developing individual and group potentials, resources, assets, and strengths. All of life is based on the healthy self concept and sense of belonging, both found within the strong family system.

Most people are unaware of their potentials and strengths due to the negative conditioning from the mass media. Family members can be challenged toward fulfillment of their strengths and potentials when these aspects are identified. Past family life literature used the term "family strengths" for a wide variety of characteristics (Gabler & Otto, 1964); and the term has not been specifically defined until recently. For the purpose of this

research strong families were defined as those families whose members have a high degree of happiness in the husband-wife and parent-child relationships and whose members fulfill each others needs to a high degree. The family was also intact with both parents present in the home.

Otto has written more extensively than anyone else in the area of family strengths. Most of his writing is based upon research with 27 families (Otto, 1962) conducted over 15 years ago. Otto's writings have focused heavily upon the concept of family strengths. Professionals, paraprofessionals, teachers, as well as family members could use this research in positive affirmation and practical use of these strengths.

Current research is needed to determine what members of strong families perceive are their major family strengths, what activities serve to make their family strong, and what area of their family life they would most like to improve. It is the purpose of this study to obtain such information.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of husbands and wives reported to be strong families concerning each of the following:

1. What they consider to be the most important strengths of their family.

2. What their family does which they feel serves to make their family strong.
3. What area of their family life they would like to see improved.

A secondary purpose of the study was to examine the following hypothesis:

There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what are the most important strengths of their family according to:

- (a) race
- (b) socio-economic status
- (c) size of community respondent lives in
- (d) number of years married
- (e) employment status of wives
- (f) number of children
- (g) religion

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Family strengths literature is limited, consequently the review of literature covers areas related to family strengths. The review of literature presented here pertains to the family unit, definition and utilization of family strengths, marital success, and parent-child relationships.

The Family Unit

The nuclear family is a small group system organized in parts of husband-father, wife-mother, son-brother, and daughter-sister. The simple husband-wife pair becomes more complex as jobs, church activities, community activities, and sometimes school activities become an intricate part of their lives. As the age composition of the family changes so do the expectations for the members of the family, as does the quality of interaction between family members (Hill, 1970). Many relationships exist in and out of the family structure that have a direct effect on the family members. Hill (1970) stated that in coping with demands of community and family members, families may develop policies helpful in making present

choices and giving future direction and stability.

Mobility and agricultural automation have decreased the extended family to today's relatively isolated nuclear family (Adams, 1971). Extended families were able to care for themselves, everyone contributing to the total success of the whole family. In today's society families are fragmented and relatives usually live miles away. Our nuclear families have the need to belong. Society's means of strengthening the family have been through its institutions, such as, churches and helping professions. How can the family progress and be strengthened?

Definition and Utilization of Family Strengths

From 1942 through 1962 (Gabler & Otto, 1964, p. 221) the concepts of "family strengths" in family life education and other professional literature was reviewed. Fifteen categories of strengths were proposed in family functioning:

(a) family as a strength within itself, (b) strong marriage, (c) strength as parents, (d) parents help children to develop, (e) relationships within the family, (f) family does things together, (g) social and economic status satisfactory, (h) religious beliefs, (i) home environment, (j) activities in community affairs, (k) education, (l) capacity to change, (m) relationships with in-laws, (n) attitudes toward sex, and (o) recognizing the need for and accepting help.

Before the results of this research were published, it was very unclear what family strengths were. Success and satisfaction are often the qualities talked about. Research of

this kind is helpful in defining components of the family.

Strong families are a buttress in the time of crisis. Anthony (1969) stated that strong families respond to difficulties by pooling together resources and working together toward the most constructive solution possible. Solomon (1972) also stated that emotional stability is dependent on the family's attitude toward their surname. A positive correlation existed between emotional stability and a good family identity. A strong family structure is protection against the introduction of drugs (Rosenthal & Mathner, 1972).

The "good" family is selective in its value system and selects friends of the family and for their children based on the similarity of their values (Zimmerman & Cervantes, 1960). Three main objectives for a healthy family are: (a) keeping the parents together, (b) rearing the children properly, and (c) giving the children accepted goals in life (Zimmerman & Cervantes, 1960). Bricklin and Bricklin (1970, p. vii) defined a strong family as organized, not chaotic, where each member knows and respects each other and maintains a feeling of emotional togetherness. It is more than mutual concern; it is an awareness and appreciation for the uniqueness of the family. The family is more than the members total strengths and is a source of strength for all its members.

Zimmerman (1972) proposed a suggested outline for a research project dealing with "ideal" or "good" families.

Young (1953) described strong families in relation to society and stated that adaptability is the most important need of the family. Hill (1970) researched the success or failure of families in structuring and controlling the future. Kinter and Otto (1964, p. 363) found family strengths in foster family selection resulting in 16 categories, the top six being: (a) doing things together, (b) understanding and consideration, (c) love, (d) religion, (e) child-rearing practices, and (f) cooperative attitude. Qualities of a successful family, researched by Mudd, Mitchell, and Taubin (1965) were in descending order: (a) feeling and expression of love, (b) understanding and respect, (c) effective communication of thought, feelings, and actions, and (d) to know how to listen to each other considerately.

Otto (1962, p. 78) conducted a research study with 27 families with the Family Strength Questionnaire and asked the open-ended item, "The following are what we consider to be major strengths in our family." Of the 147 total strengths listed categories were established (Otto, 1963, pp. 333-336). This study is the basis for a framework of 12 components of family strengths:

1. The ability to provide for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of a family.
2. The ability to be sensitive in the needs of the family members.
3. The ability to communicate effectively.
4. The ability to provide support, security, and encouragement.

5. The ability to initiate and maintain growth-producing relationships and experiences within and without the family.
6. The capacity to maintain and create constructive and responsible community relationships in the neighborhood, the school, town, etc.
7. The ability to grow with and through children.
8. The ability for self-help, and the ability to accept help when appropriate.
9. An ability to perform family functions and roles flexibly.
10. Mutual respect for the individuality of family members.
11. The ability to use a crisis or a seemingly injurious experience as a means of growth.
12. A concern for family unity, loyalty, and interfamily cooperation.

These components are interacting, related, and when taken as a whole result in family strength. They are constantly changing aspects within the family system.

A strong, healthy family adequately performs these seven functions:

(1) the family has an affectional function, the intimate business of love making and child care that fulfills deep psychological and biological needs, (2) the family has the basic biological function of reproduction, (3) the family transmits our heritage of culture, values, and knowledge to the next generation, (4) the family provides physical security and protection for its members, (5) the family develops socially desirable character traits among its members, (6) the family prepares children for maturity and adult life, and (7) the family develops sound relationships between the members of the family and members of the outside community (Blackburn, 1967, p. 35).

The strength of the family depends on its inner strengths (spiritual, emotional, and mature love relationships), and the strengths and health of surrounding institutions (church, school, value systems, and services for those in crises) (Blackburn, 1967, p. 36).

After many years experience and research in family strength, Otto (1975, p. 16) defined family strengths as:

... these forces, and dynamic factors in the relationship matrix which encourages the development of the personal resources and potential of members of the family and which make family life deeply satisfying and fulfilling to family members.

The average, healthy individual operates at 15 to 20 percent of his potential (Otto, 1964, p. 440). Otto (1964, p. 441) stated that integration and actualization of one's potential comes:

... only when the major and conscious life focus of the individual is directed toward translating his potential into action. This means that every possible conscious (and unconscious) effort is bent in this direction, and that the basic life pattern is one of consistently seeking experiences and deep interpersonal relationships, with the conscious aim of searching out and actualizing potentialities.

The key to working with families and achieving change, according to Otto (1975) is to work with the family's strengths rather than weaknesses. Family therapy helps each member to understand how he works within the family structure, what role he plays, and how he can change it.

Three effective ways to use family strengths are: first, listing the strengths you see in your family (this is a project involving all family members); secondly,

developing action programs where these strengths are put into practice creatively; and third, utilizing "strength bombardment" and the "target person" (Otto, 1967, pp. 6, 40, 41). Reproduction of part of the "Family Strength Inquiry" lists 16 strength areas and includes two possible strength items for developing programs in each area (Otto, 1966, pp. 24-27). It was designed to develop further strengths and help formulate action programs. The Multiple Strength Perception Method (MSPM) is a group strengthening method utilizing the target person and strength bombardment. Three valuable concepts can be drawn from the usage of the MSPM: (1) in a short time the individual is able to develop increased sensitivity of strengths, resources, and potentials in others, (2) this sensitivity increased and improved professional functioning, and (3) results of strengthening and enhancing one's self-image (Otto, 1964, pp. 445-446).

Family growth groups strengthen families in three unique ways: (1) the whole family is involved as a unit together, (2) the group provides a supportive and intimate network of other families, and (3) the group facilitates family change and growth through development of family potentials and resources (Anderson, 1974, pp. 7-8).

Realizing the multitude of growth producing possibilities available to families the Human Potentials Movement was founded. Otto (1969, p. 17) describes the four hypotheses of this movement:

(1) that the average healthy person functions at a fraction of his capacity, (2) that man's most exciting life-long adventure is actualizing his potential, (3) that the group environment is one of the best settings in which to achieve growth, and (4) that personality growth can be achieved by anyone willing to invest himself in this process.

Marital Success

Levinger (1965) developed a theory of marital cohesiveness. He believed affectional rewards, barrier strength, and alternative attractions related to marital stability.

Cuber and Harroff (1963) stated a stable marriage may or may not have happy or satisfying relationships. Unsatisfactory stable marriages are due to lack of acceptable and attractive alternatives. Spouses have settled for permanence over happiness; while instrumental needs were met, intrinsic needs were not. Levinger (1966) studied divorced persons and found middle class spouses concerned with psychological and emotional supports while lower class spouses reported financial matters and unstable physical conduct of their spouse. Here, too, spouses were primarily concerned with instrumental needs being met and then psychological needs.

Research studies (Zimmerman & Cervantes, 1960; Crockett, Babchuk, & Ballweg, 1969; Bowman, 1974) showed marriage happiness and stability significantly higher among families with a high degree of religious orientation.

Luckey (1960a, 1960b, 1960c) and Stuckert (1963) found marital satisfaction related to the husband's self concept and that concept his spouse held of him. And for the wife, it was found to not be important to marital happiness, for her husband to accurately perceive his wife's self concept. Hurvitz (1965) stated there was a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and the degree to which wives conform to their husband's expectations. Men do not conform as much as women do in the marital relationship.

Katz, Goldstein, Cohen, and Stuckert (1963) established a positive relationship between marital happiness and the favorableness of the husband's self-description. The higher the husband's social status, the greater the wife's marital relationship satisfaction. Whitehurst (1968) reported a positive relationship between a high degree of marital adjustment, and conventional life styles and a high degree of involvement in family activities. Persons with low incomes and little education, and black persons are more likely to become unhappy in their marriages (Renee, 1970). Association between marital satisfaction and socio-economic status is greater for blacks than for whites (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Gurin, Veroff, & Feld, 1960; Levinger, 1966).

Researchers found a lesser degree of marital adjustment when the wife worked outside the home (Axelson, 1963; Hicks & Platt, 1970). Orden and Bradburn (1969) reported a lower degree of marital happiness when the wife is not

given a choice and is working out of necessity than when she chose to work. Ridley (1973) indicated when either spouse becomes highly involved in a job, there is an adverse effect on their marriage. A positive significant relationship existed for men between their job satisfaction and marital happiness.

Navran (1967, p. 182) reported happily married couples:

(a) talked more to each other, (b) convey the feelings that they understand what is being said to them, (c) have a wider range of subjects available to them, (d) preserve communication channels and keep them open, (e) show more sensitivity to each other's feelings, (f) personalize their language symbols, and (g) make more use of supplementary nonverbal techniques of communication.

Parent-Child Relationships

Renee (1970) noted parents rearing children were more dissatisfied with their marriages than couples who had never had children or whose children were no longer living in their home. Hurley and Polonen (1967) found the greater the ratio of children per years of marriage, the lower the marital satisfaction of the spouse. Luckey (1966) stated the relationships between the number of children and the degree of marital satisfaction was not significant. Luckey and Bain (1970) found children to be reported as the main and usually the only source of satisfaction for unhappily married couples.

After examining the pattern of role modeling among

teenagers, Elder (1963) stated democratic parents behaviors are more likely to be modeled by their teenagers than authoritarian or permissive parents. Parents supportiveness influenced adolescents' degree of religiosity more than parental control (Wiegert, 1968). Adult-oriented children received greater support from both parents than peer-oriented children (Condry & Siman, 1974). Children who grew to be peer-oriented also conformed to undesirable peer subcultures and had experienced parental rejection and neglect.

In research of high-achieving and under-achieving high school boys, Morrow and Wilson (1961) discovered that parents of high-achievers shared family recreation, confidences, and ideas, and were more approving, trusting, affectionate, and encouraging to their sons than parents of under-achievers. Extroverted college students, reported by Siegelman (1965), remembered their parents as loving and experienced low levels of anxiety, whereas, introverts recalled rejection and experienced high levels of anxiety.

Juvenile delinquency relates to an ineffective or missing mother and a lack of security for children. Harris (1973) stated delinquency could be predicted with 84 percent accuracy at six years of age. Predictive factors were (a) inconsistent discipline of the child, (b) lack of parental supervision, and (c) lack of family cohesiveness and affection. The quality of parenting, rather than the absence or presence of the parents in the home was reported to be of greater importance for adolescent boys (Ahlstrom &

Havighurst, 1971).

Mote (1967) and Ahlstrom and Havighurst (1971) observed parental satisfaction associated with the child's self concept. Chaikin and Frank (1973) found successful families' self-other perceptions related to good child adjustment. Tracey (1971) also noted improved parent-child relationships influenced abilities to meet and deal with stress from other relationships.

Summary

The review of literature regarding family strengths and relationships suggests the following:

1. The health and success of family units are vital not only to supporting the individual, but also society.
2. While most people consider a satisfying family life as an important life goal, few guidelines are available to reach this goal.
3. Identification of family strengths can further develop good families as well as help those in trouble, and make possible practical application.
4. Marital happiness and stability is higher among families with high degrees of religiosity.
5. Other affective needs such as love, understanding, respect, participation in family activities, and friendships are prominent qualities of a strong family.

6. Marital satisfaction is based on both affective and instrumental needs.
7. Women who work part time, rather than full time, or who remain at home have a higher degree of marital satisfaction.
8. Marital adjustment appears to be adversely affected by a high degree of job involvement.
9. Happily married couples have better communication patterns and show more sensitivity to one another's feelings than do unhappily married couples.
10. Parent-child relationships show a positive correlation between warmth and acceptance by parents and the development of emotional, social, and intellectual growth of their children.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Selection of Subjects

The 123 families of this study were obtained from a master list of 311 strong families. The master list was provided through recommendations of Extension Home Economists in each of Oklahoma's 77 counties and was used in the larger Family Strengths Questionnaire (Sauer, 1976). The cover letter explaining this further research and assuring anonymity was sent to each of the 311 families. One questionnaire was sent to each family. The data were returned during the months of September and October, 1975.

Selection of the strong families was based upon two criteria. One was the recommendation of Extension Home Economists, each of whom recommended two or more families in their county who they considered to be strong families.

Guidelines for selection were:

1. The family members appear to have a high degree of happiness in the husband-wife and parent-child relationship.
2. The family members appear to fulfill each others needs to a high degree.
3. The family is intact with both parents present in the home.

4. The family must have at least one school age child, 21 years or younger living at home.

The second criteria was that the respondents had to rate themselves as having a high degree of satisfaction in the marital and parent-child relationship.

The Instrument

The questionnaire used in the previous larger study was designed by Dr. Nick Stinnett, Associate Professor, Family Relations and Child Development, Oklahoma State University. Previously the respondents had completed the larger Family Strength Questionnaire dealing with specific aspects of the husband-wife and parent-child relationships (Sauer, 1976). The follow up questionnaire used in the present study was designed by the investigator for an in-depth probe into what the strong families considered to be their strengths. The questionnaire used in this study included three open-ended questions:

1. What do you consider to be the most important strengths of your family?
2. What does your family do that you feel serves to make your family strong?
3. What area of your family life would you most like to see improved?

The questionnaire was presented to a panel of four judges (who were familiar with the questionnaire used in the larger family strength research project) all of whom held advanced degrees in the area of family relations. They were asked to evaluate the questions with respect to the

following criteria:

1. Does the question possess sufficient clarity?
2. Is the question sufficiently specific?
3. Is the question significantly related to the concept under investigation?
4. Are there other items that need to be included to measure the concepts under investigation?

The responses of the judges were 100 percent positive.

Analysis of the Data

Frequencies and percentages were used in analyzing the respondent's perceptions of: (1) what they consider to be their most important family strengths, (2) what their family does which serves to make their family strong, and (3) what area of their family life they would like to see improved. The frequencies and percentages were also used to determine if there was a marked difference in each of these first two perceptions listed above according to: (a) race, (b) socio-economic status, (c) size of community respondent lives in, (d) number of years married, (e) employment status of wives, (f) number of children, and (g) religion.

Categories were developed for the open-ended questions by the investigator from the subjects' responses. Two other persons, experienced with family strengths research projects (one a family life specialist and experienced researcher) reviewed the process of categorization. Answers which had common underlying experiences were classified in the same

category. See Appendix for examples of how responses were categorized.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Description of Subjects

The demographic data of the 123 families who responded to this study are detailed in Table I. The sample was predominately Protestant (83.74%) and White (87.81%). Categorized by the modified McGuire-White Index of Social Status (1955), the sample drew from the upper-middle (43.90%) and lower-middle (35.77%) socio-economic classes. Respondents lived primarily in farms or country (57.72%) and small towns under 25,000 population (30.08%).

Subjects were married from five to over 35 years, with a majority being married from 15 to 24 years (53.66%). Most families represented had 2 to 4 children (77.24%).

Analyses of Perceptions

Frequencies and percentages were utilized to determine the perceptions of members of strong families concerning: (1) what they consider to be the most important strengths of their family, (2) what their family does which serves to make their family strong, and (3) what area of their family life they would like to see improved.

TABLE I
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUBJECTS

Variable	Classification	No.	Per Cent
Race	White	108	87.81
	Black	8	6.50
	Indian	6	4.88
	Other (one spouse White; other spouse Mexican)	1	0.81
Religion	Catholic	17	13.82
	Protestant	103	83.74
	No Religion	3	2.44
Wife's Employment	None outside home	79	64.23
	Employed outside home	44	35.77
Socio-Economic Class	Upper	3	2.44
	Upper-middle	54	43.90
	Lower-middle	44	35.77
	Upper-lower	20	16.26
	Lower-lower	2	1.63
Place of Residence	On a farm or in country	71	57.72
	Small town under 25,000	37	30.08
	City 25,000 to 50,000	6	4.88
	City 50,000 to 100,000	5	4.07
	City over 100,000	2	1.63
Years Married	5-9 years	12	9.76
	10-14 years	14	11.38
	15-19 years	30	24.39
	20-24 years	36	29.27
	25-29 years	16	13.01
	30-34 years	6	4.88
	over 35 years	7	5.69
Number of Children	1 child	3	2.44
	2 children	42	34.15
	3-4 children	53	43.09
	5-6 children	16	13.01
	over 6 children	7	5.69

Perceptions of Strong Families Concerning
Their Most Important Strengths

As Table II indicates, the respondents most often reported the major strengths of their family to be those categorized as religious convictions and activities (22.01%), mutual love (13.59%), mutual respect and understanding (11.65%), and communication and problem solving (9.71%). Other responses were categorized as doing things together and being together (8.41%), and family supportiveness and identity (7.44%).

TABLE II
PERCEPTIONS OF STRONG FAMILIES CONCERNING
THEIR MOST IMPORTANT STRENGTHS

Categories of Most Important Strengths	No.	Per Cent
Religious convictions and activities	68	22.01
Mutual love	42	13.59
Mutual respect and understanding	36	11.65
Communication and problem solving	30	9.71
Doing things together and being together	26	8.41
Family supportiveness and identity	23	7.44
Mutual trust and honesty	18	5.83
Children	14	4.53
Similar interests, attitudes, and beliefs	13	4.21
Parent's encouragement and support of child's socially appropriate behavior	12	3.88
Working together	11	3.56
Other	16	5.18

Perceptions Concerning Activities Which
Contribute to Family Strengths

As seen in Table III, the most frequently given response was categorized as the quality of being together and doing things together (16.75%). The next most frequently given responses were participation in athletic activities (13.92%), participation in church activities (13.92%), and involvement in children's activities (12.11%). The least frequently given response was going out as a couple (1.03%).

TABLE III

PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING ACTIVITIES WHICH
CONTRIBUTE TO FAMILY STRENGTHS

Categories of Activities	No.	Per Cent
Being together and doing things together	65	16.75
Participation in athletic activities	54	13.92
Participation in church activities	54	13.92
Involvement in children's activities	47	12.11
Visiting others and going places	39	10.05
Family vacations, trips	32	8.25
Camping, fishing, boating	25	6.44
Working together	25	6.44
Play parlor games	16	4.12
Family nights and projects	11	2.84
Going out as a couple	4	1.03
Other	16	4.12

Perceptions Concerning Areas of Family Life
Respondents Would Most Like to Improve

A majority of responses in Table IV were distributed in four categories. These four most frequently mentioned responses in descending order were to limit activities and set priorities (24.34%), satisfied (unaware of need for improvement) (15.79%), to have more time to spend together (15.16%), and a deeper spiritual life style (9.87%).

TABLE IV
 PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING AREAS OF FAMILY LIFE
 RESPONDENTS WOULD MOST LIKE TO IMPROVE

Categories of Areas to Be Improved	No.	Per Cent
To limit activities and set priorities	37	24.34
Satisfied (unaware of need for improvement)	24	15.79
To have more time to spend together	20	15.16
A deeper spiritual life style	15	9.87
Stronger parent-child relationships	13	8.55
Children behave properly	9	5.92
Better financial management	6	3.95
Understanding and consideration	6	3.95
Better communication	5	3.29
Parents to be alone together	3	1.97
Other	14	9.21

Examination of Hypotheses

Hypothesis I. There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what are the most important strengths of their family according to: (a) race, (b) socio-economic status, (c) size of community respondent lives in, (d) number of years married, (e) employment status of wives, (f) number of children, and (g) religion.

Hypothesis I(a): There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what are the most important strengths of their family according to race.

A larger proportion of Indian (27.78%) than White (12.27%) or Black (20.00%) responded with mutual love as observed in Table V. Twice as many White (10.41%) than Indian (5.56%) or Black (5.00%) respondents indicated communication and problem solving as a major strength. Almost twice as many Black (15.00%) as White (8.55%) stated doing things together and being together. Similar responses were given for religious convictions and activities and mutual respect and understanding.

Hypothesis I(b): There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what are the most important strengths of their family according to socio-economic status.

TABLE V

DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING MOST IMPORTANT
FAMILY STRENGTHS ACCORDING TO RACE

Categories of Most Important Strengths	White		Black		Indian	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Doing things together and being together	23	8.55	3	15.00	-	--
Religious convictions and activities	61	22.68	4	20.00	3	16.67
Mutual love	33	12.27	4	20.00	5	27.78
Communication and problem solving	28	10.41	1	5.00	1	5.56
Mutual respect and understanding	31	11.52	2	10.00	3	16.67
Similar interests, attitudes, and beliefs	11	4.09	1	5.00	1	5.56
Family supportiveness and identity	20	7.43	1	5.00	1	5.56
Parent's encouragement and support of child's socially appropriate behavior	11	4.09	1	5.00	-	--

TABLE V (Continued)

Categories of Most Important Strengths	White		Black		Indian	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Mutual trust and honesty	17	6.32	-	--	1	5.56
Children	13	4.83	1	5.00	-	--
Working together	8	2.97	1	5.00	1	5.56
Other	13	4.83	1	5.00	2	11.11

Doing things together and being together was reported almost twice as often by upper-lower class (12.77%) as by lower-middle (6.67%) or upper-middle class respondents (7.64%). Table VI indicates that the lower-middle class responded more often with mutual respect and understanding than upper-lower or upper-middle class respondents. More upper-middle class respondents stated similar interests, attitudes and beliefs (5.56%) were their important strength than either lower-middle (1.90%) or upper-lower (2.13%).

Hypothesis I(c): There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what are the most important strengths of their family according to size of community respondent lives in.

As seen in Table VII a greater proportion of respondents living in cities from 25,000 to 100,000 population (13.79%) and farm or country (10.50%) than those respondents who were living in small towns under 25,000 (3.33%) reported their main family strength as doing things together and being together. More than twice as many respondents from farm or country (24.31%) and small towns (21.11%) than those in cities over 25,000 (10.34%) stated religious convictions and activities were their main strength. Also a much greater proportion of respondents living in small towns (10.00%) than those living in farm or country (2.21%) and cities of 25,000 to 100,000 (0%) reported similar interests, attitudes, and beliefs as their main family strength.

TABLE VI

DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING MOST IMPORTANT FAMILY STRENGTHS ACCORDING TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS*

Categories of Most Important Strengths	Upper-Middle		Lower- Middle		Upper-Lower	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Doing things together and being together	11	7.64	7	6.67	6	12.77
Religious convictions and activities	36	25.00	23	21.90	8	17.02
Mutual love	15	10.42	18	17.14	7	14.89
Communication and problem solving	13	9.03	8	7.62	8	17.02
Mutual respect and understanding	13	9.03	17	16.19	4	8.51
Similar interests, attitudes, and identity	8	5.56	2	1.90	1	2.13
Family supportiveness and identity	15	10.42	5	4.76	2	4.26
Parent's encouragement and support of child's socially appropriate behavior	7	4.86	4	3.81	1	2.13

TABLE VI (Continued)

Categories of Most Important Strengths	Upper-Middle		Lower-Middle		Upper-Lower	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Mutual trust and honesty	6	4.17	7	6.67	4	8.51
Children	4	2.78	7	6.67	2	4.26
Working together	6	4.17	2	1.90	3	6.38
Other	10	6.94	5	4.76	1	2.13

*The upper and lower-lower classes of socio-economic status were deleted due to too few responses.

TABLE VII

DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING MOST IMPORTANT FAMILY STRENGTHS
ACCORDING TO SIZE OF COMMUNITY RESPONDENT LIVES IN*

Categories of Most Important Strengths	Farm or Country		Small Town Under 25,000		25,000 to 100,000 Population	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Doing things together and being together	19	10.50	3	3.33	4	13.79
Religious convictions and activities	44	24.31	19	21.11	3	10.34
Mutual love	23	12.71	12	13.33	6	20.69
Communication and problem solving	16	8.84	9	10.00	4	13.79
Mutual respect and understanding	21	11.60	8	8.89	6	20.69
Similar interests, attitudes, and beliefs	4	2.21	9	10.00	-	--
Family supportiveness and identity	14	7.73	7	7.78	1	3.45

TABLE VII (Continued)

Categories of Most Important Strengths	Farm or Country		Small Town Under 25,000		25,000 to 100,000 Population	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Parent's encouragement and support of child's socially appropriate behavior	7	3.87	4	4.44	-	--
Mutual trust and honesty	12	6.67	6	6.67	-	--
Children	6	3.31	5	5.56	3	10.34
Working together	8	4.42	1	1.11	1	3.45
Other	7	3.87	7	7.78	1	3.45

*The category city over 100,000 population was deleted due to too few responses and cities of 25,000 to 50,000 and 50,000 to 100,000 were collapsed.

Hypothesis I(d): There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what are the most important strengths of their family according to number of years married.

Communication and problem solving was reported more than twice as often in Table VIII by spouses married from 10 to 14 years (22.86%) than by respondents married 15 to 19 years (10.96%) and 20 to 24 years (9.68%); approximately three times more often than by respondents married 30 years and over (6.67%); five times as often as those in the category 25 to 29 years (4.76%); seven times as often as those in the 5 to 9 years category (3.13%). Children was reported by couples married 25 to 29 years (11.90%) at least twice as often as other groups - 10 to 14 years (5.71%), 20 to 24 years (4.30%), 30 years and over (3.33%), and 15 to 19 years (2.74%).

Hypothesis I(e): There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what are the most important strengths of their family according to employment status of wives.

Wives employed outside the home (12.71%) stated over twice as often doing things together and being together as a major strength than did wives at home (5.76%). Table IX also illustrates children were reported as the major strength by employed women (7.63%) almost three times as often as indicated by women at home (2.62%).

TABLE VIII
DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING MOST IMPORTANT FAMILY
STRENGTHS ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF YEARS MARRIED*

Categories of Most Important Strengths	5-9 years		10-14 years		15-19 years		20-24 years		25-29 years		30 years and over	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Doing things together and being together	4	12.50	3	8.57	7	9.59	7	7.53	3	7.14	2	6.67
Religious convictions and activities	5	15.62	5	14.29	22	30.14	17	18.28	12	28.57	6	20.00
Mutual love	6	18.75	4	11.43	7	9.59	14	15.05	4	9.52	7	23.33
Communication and problem solving	1	3.13	8	22.86	8	10.96	9	9.68	2	4.76	2	6.67
Mutual respect and understanding	4	12.50	4	11.43	5	6.85	14	15.05	4	9.52	4	13.33
Similar interests, attitudes, and beliefs	3	9.38	1	2.86	1	1.37	5	5.38	2	4.76	1	3.33
Family supportiveness and identity	3	9.38	3	8.57	6	8.22	7	7.53	2	4.76	2	6.67
Parent's encouragement and support of child's socially appropriate behavior	1	3.13	2	5.71	5	6.85	2	2.15	1	2.38	1	3.33
Mutual trust and honesty	1	3.13	-	--	4	5.48	9	9.68	2	4.76	2	6.67
Children	-	--	2	5.71	2	2.74	4	4.30	5	11.90	1	3.33
Working together	1	3.13	2	5.71	3	4.11	2	2.15	1	2.38	1	3.33
Other	3	9.38	1	2.86	3	4.11	3	3.22	4	9.52	1	3.33

*There were no respondents married less than five years; categories for 30-34 years and over 35 years were collapsed.

TABLE IX

DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING MOST IMPORTANT FAMILY STRENGTHS ACCORDING TO EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF WIVES

Categories of Most Important Strengths	Unemployed Wives		Employed Wives	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Doing things together and being together	11	5.76	15	12.71
Religious convictions and activities	42	21.99	26	22.03
Mutual love	28	14.66	14	11.86
Communication and problem solving	21	10.99	9	7.63
Mutual respect and understanding	25	13.09	11	9.32
Similar interests, attitudes and beliefs	9	4.71	4	3.39
Family supportiveness and identity	14	7.33	9	7.63
Parent's encouragement and support of child's socially appropriate behavior	7	3.66	5	4.24
Mutual trust and honesty	12	6.28	6	5.08
Children	5	2.62	9	7.63
Working together	7	3.66	4	3.39
Other	10	5.24	6	5.08

Hypothesis I(f): There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what are the most important strengths of their family according to number of children.

Examination of this hypothesis in Table X revealed some interesting differences existed. Approximately twice as many of those respondents who had 5 or more children reported family supportiveness and identity as their major family strength. Also a greater proportion of those with 1 to 2 children (6.42%) than those with 3 to 4 children (3.63%) and 5 or more children (1.72%) indicated similar interests, attitudes, and beliefs as their major family strength. Those with 5 or more children reported communication and problem solving as their major family strength only half as often as did those respondents with 1 to 2 children and those with 3 to 4 children.

Hypothesis I(g): There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what are the most important strengths of their family according to their religion.

The greatest differences which were found to exist in Table XI were in mutual love and working together. Over three times as many Protestants (14.62%) as Catholics (4.88%) stated mutual love as their major family strength. Over twice as many of the responses by Catholics than those by Protestants indicated working together as their major

strength. Another interesting difference was that approximately twice as many responses by Catholics as by Protestants reported family supportiveness and identity as their major strength.

TABLE X

DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING MOST IMPORTANT
FAMILY STRENGTHS ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF CHILDREN

Categories of Most Important Strengths	1-2 children		3-4 children		5 or more children	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Doing things together and being together	9	8.26	12	8.70	5	8.62
Religious convictions and activities	23	21.10	31	22.46	13	22.41
Mutual love	15	13.76	20	14.49	7	12.07
Communication and problem solving	11	10.09	16	11.59	3	5.17
Mutual respect and understanding	8	7.34	19	13.77	8	13.79
Similar interests, attitudes, and beliefs	7	6.42	5	3.62	1	1.72
Family supportiveness and identity	8	7.34	8	5.80	7	12.07
Parent's encouragement and support of child's socially appropriate behavior	5	4.59	5	3.62	2	3.45

TABLE X (Continued)

Categories of Most Important Strengths	1-2 children		3-4 children		5 or more children	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Mutual trust and honesty	7	6.42	8	5.80	3	5.17
Children	6	5.50	4	2.90	4	6.90
Working together	3	2.75	4	2.90	3	5.17
Other	7	6.42	6	4.35	2	3.45

TABLE XI

DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING MOST IMPORTANT
FAMILY STRENGTHS ACCORDING TO RELIGION*

Categories of Most Important Strengths	Catholic		Protestant	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Doing things together and being together	4	9.76	22	8.46
Religious convictions and activities	12	29.27	56	21.54
Mutual love	2	4.88	38	14.62
Communication and problem solving	4	9.76	25	9.62
Mutual respect and understanding	4	9.76	30	11.54
Similar interests, attitudes, and beliefs	1	2.44	12	4.62
Family supportiveness and identity	5	12.20	18	6.92
Parent's encouragement and support of child's socially appropriate behavior	1	2.44	11	4.23
Mutual trust and honesty	2	4.88	14	5.38
Children	1	2.44	12	4.62
Working together	3	7.32	8	3.08
Other	2	4.88	14	5.38

*The category no religion was deleted due to too few respondents.

Hypothesis II. There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what their family does which serves to make them strong according to: (a) race, (b) socio-economic status, (c) size of community respondent lives in, (d) number of years married, (e) employment status of wives, (f) number of children, and (g) religion.

Hypothesis II(a): There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what their family does which serves to make them strong according to race.

A markedly higher proportion of Blacks (21.05%) than Indians (10.53%) or Whites (13.79%) responded with participation in church activities. As indicated in Table XII more Indian (10.53%) than Black (5.26%) or White respondents (3.74%) stated they play parlor games. More Whites (10.34%) and Indians (10.53%) than Blacks (5.26%) reported visiting others and going places.

TABLE XII

DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING WHAT ACTIVITIES
CONTRIBUTE TO FAMILY STRENGTHS ACCORDING TO RACE

Categories of Activities	White		Black		Indian	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Involvement in children's activities	44	12.64	-	--	3	15.79
Participation in athletic activities	48	13.79	4	21.05	2	10.53
Camping, fishing, boating	23	6.61	1	5.26	1	5.26
Participation in church activities	48	13.79	4	21.05	2	10.53
Family vacations, trips	31	8.91	-	--	1	5.26
Being together and doing things together	56	16.09	5	26.32	4	21.05
Play parlor games	13	3.74	1	5.26	2	10.53
Visiting others and going places	36	10.34	1	5.26	2	10.53
Working together	23	6.61	-	--	1	5.26
Going out as a couple	4	1.15	-	--	-	--
Family nights and projects	9	2.59	2	10.53	-	--
Other	13	3.74	1	5.26	1	5.26

Hypothesis II(b): There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what their family does which serves to make them strong according to socio-economic status.

Involvement in children's activities was reported about half as often by upper-lower class (6.78%) as compared to upper-middle class (12.36%) and lower-middle class (12.50%). Upper-middle class respondents (9.55%) responded that working together strengthened their families about three times as often as did lower-middle (3.68%) and upper-lower (3.39%) respondents.

Hypothesis II(c): There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what their family does which serves to make them strong according to size of community respondent lives in.

As seen in Table XIV similarities in responses existed for respondents in farm and country, small towns under 25,000 population, and cities of 25,000 to 100,000 population. Farm and country respondents indicated markedly more often (8.62%) that working together was their main family strength as compared to respondents in small towns (3.60%) and cities of 25,000 to 100,000 populations (0%).

TABLE XIII

DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING WHAT ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTE
TO FAMILY STRENGTHS ACCORDING TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS*

Categories of Activities	Upper-Middle		Lower-Middle		Upper-Lower	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Involvement in children's activities	22	12.36	17	12.50	4	6.78
Participation in athletic activities	21	11.80	21	15.44	9	15.25
Camping, fishing, boating	9	5.06	9	6.62	6	10.17
Participation in church activities	25	14.04	19	13.97	6	10.17
Family vacations, trips	14	7.87	13	9.56	5	8.47
Being together and doing things together	30	16.85	21	15.44	13	22.03
Play parlor games	6	3.37	7	5.15	3	5.08
Visiting others and going places	19	10.67	14	10.29	5	8.47
Working together	17	9.55	5	3.68	2	3.39

TABLE XIII (Continued)

Categories of Activities	Upper-Middle		Lower-Middle		Upper-Lower	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Going out as a couple	1	0.56	1	0.74	2	3.39
Family nights and projects	6	3.37	4	2.94	1	1.69
Other	8	4.49	5	3.68	3	5.08

*The upper and lower-lower classes of socio-economic status were deleted due to too few responses.

TABLE XIV

DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING WHAT ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTE TO FAMILY STRENGTHS ACCORDING TO SIZE OF COMMUNITY RESPONDENT LIVES IN*

Categories of Activities	Farm or Country		Small Town Under 25,000		25,000 to 100,000 Population	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Involvement in children's activities	31	13.36	11	9.91	3	8.82
Participation in athletic activities	32	13.79	17	15.32	4	11.76
Camping, fishing, boating	20	8.62	3	2.70	2	5.88
Participation in church activities	29	12.50	19	17.12	5	14.71
Family vacations, trips	18	7.76	11	9.91	3	8.82
Being together and doing things together	33	14.22	23	20.72	7	20.58
Play parlor games	8	3.45	6	5.41	1	2.94
Visiting others and going places	23	9.91	10	9.01	5	14.71
Working together	20	8.62	4	3.60	-	--

TABLE XIV (Continued)

Categories of Activities	Farm or Country		Small Town Under 25,000		25,000 to 100,000 Population	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Going out as a couple	3	1.29	1	0.90	-	--
Family nights and projects	7	3.02	1	0.90	2	5.88
Other	8	3.45	5	4.50	2	5.88

*City over 100,000 population was deleted due to too few responses; and cities over 25,000 to 50,000 and 50,000 to 100,000 were collapsed.

Hypothesis II(d): There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what their family does which serves to make their family strong according to how long they have been married.

Similar responses existed for the respondents married from 5 to over 30 years as stated in Table XV. Among the more outstanding differences were the responses in the category, play parlor games, where respondents who had been married 5 to 9 years (10.26%) reported this activity as strengthening their family at least approximately twice as often as did respondents who had been married for longer periods of time. Another difference observed was a greater proportion of respondents who had been married 15 to 19 years (5.10%) and 30 years and over (5.41%) reported family nights and projects as an activity which strengthened their families. A logical difference was observed in the category participation in athletic activities, where those respondents who had been married 30 years and over (5.41%) indicated this activity as strengthening their family life only about one-third as often as most of the other respondents who had been married for less number of years.

TABLE XV

DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING WHAT ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTE TO
FAMILY STRENGTHS ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF YEARS MARRIED*

Categories of Activities	5-9 years		10-14 years		15-19 years		20-24 years		25-29 years		30 years and over	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Involvement in children's activities	3	7.69	5	12.50	14	14.29	16	14.68	6	9.84	2	5.41
Participation in athletic activities	4	10.26	6	15.00	15	15.31	18	16.51	9	14.75	2	5.41
Camping, fishing, boating	2	5.13	3	7.50	6	6.12	10	9.17	3	4.92	1	2.70
Participation in church activities	7	17.95	7	17.50	9	9.18	17	15.60	9	14.75	5	13.51
Family vacation, trips	2	5.13	4	10.00	8	8.16	6	5.50	9	14.75	3	8.11
Being together and doing things together	7	17.95	4	10.00	17	17.35	19	17.43	8	13.11	9	24.32
Play parlor games	4	10.26	2	5.00	4	4.08	2	1.83	2	3.28	2	5.41
Visiting others and going places	5	12.82	3	7.50	12	12.24	9	8.26	5	8.20	5	13.51
Working together	1	2.56	3	7.50	5	5.10	5	4.59	6	9.84	4	10.81
Going out as a couple	2	5.13	1	2.50	1	1.02	-	--	-	--	-	--
Family nights and projects	1	2.56	-	--	5	5.10	2	1.83	1	1.64	2	5.41
Other	1	2.56	5	12.50	2	2.04	5	4.59	3	4.92	2	5.41

*There were no respondents married less than 5 years; categories for 30-34 years and over 35 years were collapsed.

Hypothesis II(e): There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what their family does which serves to make them strong according to employment status of wives.

Table XVI illustrates that when this hypothesis was examined it was found that very little differences existed in perceptions of respondents concerning what their family does which serves to make them strong according to employment status of wives.

Hypothesis II(f): There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what their family does which serves to make them strong according to number of children.

Very few differences existed in perceptions of respondents concerning what their family does which serves to make them strong according to how many children they have. The biggest difference in Table XVII was found in visiting others and going places, which was reported by a larger proportion of families with 1 to 2 children (14.58%) than 3 to 4 children (7.27%) and 5 or more children (8.00%).

TABLE XVI

DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING WHAT ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTE TO
FAMILY STRENGTHS ACCORDING TO EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF WIVES

Categories of Activities	Unemployed Wives		Employed Wives	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Involvement in children's activities	30	12.10	17	12.14
Participation in athletic activities	30	12.10	24	17.14
Camping, fishing, boating	15	6.05	10	7.14
Participation in church activities	35	14.11	19	13.57
Family vacations, trips	20	8.06	12	8.57
Being together and doing things together	42	16.94	23	16.43
Play parlor games	11	4.44	5	3.57
Visiting others and going places	23	9.27	16	11.43
Working together	19	7.66	6	4.29
Going out as a couple	3	1.21	1	0.71
Family nights and projects	8	3.23	3	2.14
Other	12	4.84	4	2.86

TABLE XVII

DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING WHAT ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTE
TO FAMILY STRENGTHS ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF CHILDREN

Categories of Activities	1-2 children		3-4 children		5 or more children	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Involvement in children's activities	15	10.42	21	12.73	10	13.33
Participation in athletic activities	21	14.58	22	13.33	11	14.67
Camping, fishing, boating	10	6.94	12	7.27	3	4.00
Participation in church activities	16	11.11	26	15.76	12	16.00
Family vacations, trips	13	9.03	12	7.27	7	9.33
Being together and doing things together	24	16.67	27	16.36	13	17.33
Play parlor games	8	5.56	6	3.64	2	2.67
Visiting others and going places	21	14.58	12	7.27	6	8.00
Working together	8	5.56	12	7.27	4	5.33
Going out as a couple	2	1.39	1	0.61	1	1.33
Family nights and projects	2	1.39	6	3.64	3	4.00
Other	4	2.78	8	4.84	3	4.00

Hypothesis II(g): There is no marked difference in perceptions of husbands and wives of strong families concerning what their family does which serves to make them strong according to religion.

As illustrated in Table XVIII Catholics and Protestants were similar in the frequency they reported involvement in children's activities, participation in athletic activities, and family vacations, trips. A greater proportion of Protestants (7.32%) reported camping, fishing, boating than Catholics (1.61%). Over twice as many Protestants (15.92%) than Catholics (6.45%) indicated participation in church activities contributing to their family strength.

TABLE XVIII

DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING WHAT ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTE
TO FAMILY STRENGTHS ACCORDING TO RELIGION

Categories of Activities	Catholic		Protestant	
	No.	Per Cent	No.	Per Cent
Involvement in children's activities	11	17.74	36	11.46
Participation in athletic activities	8	12.90	44	14.01
Camping, fishing, boating	1	1.61	23	7.32
Participation in church activities	4	6.45	50	15.92
Family vacations, trips	4	6.45	26	8.28
Being together and doing things together	11	17.74	52	16.56
Play parlor games	2	3.23	13	4.14
Visiting others and going places	6	9.68	31	9.87
Working together	6	9.68	18	5.73
Going out as a couple	2	3.23	2	0.64
Family nights and projects	3	4.84	7	2.23
Other	4	6.45	12	3.82

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of strong families concerning what they considered their major strengths to be. This study included 123 responding strong families from a master list of 311 who were representative of Oklahoma's 77 counties. These families were selected by their Extension Home Economist, met the qualifications of a strong family, and rated themselves high on marital happiness and satisfaction. They were predominately White, Protestant, middle class, lived in rural areas or small towns, had been married 15 to 24 years, and had 2 to 4 children. The data were collected during the months of September and October, 1975.

Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the perceptions of these strong families concerning what they considered their most important family strengths to be, what activities serve to make them strong, and what areas of family life they would like to improve. Frequencies and percentages were also used to analyze the hypotheses.

Results of this study were as follows:

1. The five most frequently given responses concerning the most important family strengths were: religious

convictions and activities, mutual love, mutual respect and understanding, communication and problem solving, and doing things together and being together. When analyzed according to the category, size of community respondent lives in, those respondents from farm or country and small towns most frequently reported religious convictions and activities. Respondents from cities of 25,000 to 100,000 population most often reported doing things together and being together, mutual love, communication and problem solving, and mutual respect and understanding. When analyzed according to number of years married communication and problem solving was reported most frequently by respondents married 10 to 14 years and children was reported most frequently by respondents married 25 to 29 years. Women employed outside the home reported doing things together and being together and children as being major family strengths two to three times as often as women at home. Families with 5 or more children reported family supportiveness and identity most frequently, while least mentioned was communication and problem solving.

2. The five most frequently given responses concerning what activities strengthen the family yielded these responses: being together and doing things together, participation in athletic activities, participation in church activities, involvement in children's activities, and visiting others and going places. Responses were similar when analyzed according to socio-economic status, number of

years married, and employment status of wives. One difference was reported when analyzed according to size of community respondent lives in. Farm or country most frequently indicated working together was a major strength.

Analysis by number of children revealed a difference in visiting others and going places which was most frequent for the least number children and least frequent for the larger number of children. Religious differences between Catholics and Protestants revealed a larger proportion of Protestants more frequently reported their family strength activities as camping, fishing, boating, and participation in church activities than Catholics.

Discussion and Conclusion

The strong families in this study identified their major strengths as: religious convictions and activities, mutual love, mutual respect and understanding, communication and problem solving, and doing things together and being together. The high degree of religious orientation is in agreement with other research studies (Bowman, 1974) that have shown positive association between marriage happiness and religion. Religion has been the fundamental basis for promoting the family unit. Qualities of love, respect, and responsibility for others are stressed in religion and help contribute to positive interpersonal relationships. Religious activities included church attendance as well as a way of life, these activities involve

the family members in sharing of themselves and their life goals. Activities which are shared and are pleasant help to strengthen the family (Blood, 1969).

Mutual love, mutual respect and understanding, communication and problem solving, and doing things together and being together involve attitudes of consideration and sharing which are characteristic of strong families. These qualities have been found to exist in other research of successful family relationships (Otto, 1962, 1964; Mudd, Mitchell, and Taubin, 1965; Navran, 1967).

The finding that the families in this study reported mutual respect and understanding as a major family strength coincides with the research of Sauer (1976) and also agrees with Otto's report (1962) that mutual respect and understanding are major sources of family strength. This finding is also consistent with research indicating that respect was the characteristic of a successful marriage most frequently reported by older husbands and wives (Stinnett, Carter, and Montgomery, 1972). The present results also coincide with other research indicating that unhappily married persons feel their self-respect is attacked and depreciated by their spouse (Mathews and Milhanovich, 1963; Hicks and Platt, 1970).

One conclusion of this study is that the families included in this sample engage in a pattern of activities such as being together and doing things together, participation in church activities, and involvement in children's

activities which according to Kanter (1972) and Stevenson (1975) serve to increase a sense of family identity and family commitment. It is logical that these qualities would be a strengthening force as they encourage the family members' actual involvement and communication with each other. The present findings are also consistent with reports that families experiencing serious problems and conflict tend to do very little together and that designing activities involving the entire family and identifying and participating in more family projects which every family member enjoys, serves to strengthen the family and increase the satisfaction with family interaction (Bowman, 1976).

Implications and Recommendations

The families in this study which were identified as being strong families were characterized by having qualities of religious convictions and a religious way of life, mutually expressing love, respect, and understanding, ability to communicate and solve problems, and enjoy being together and doing things together. Activities these families participate in include athletics, church, their children's groups and activities, visiting other people and places, and in general being together and doing things together.

In a society where each is encouraged to do his/her own thing there is evidence among these strong families of sharing in activities and projects which brings the family

together. Support and appreciation for one another brings about a strengthening effect. More description of this quality of being together and doing things together would be desirable due to the variance of individual, joint, or parallel activities involved (Orthner, 1975).

While this research drew information from the husbands and wives of strong families it would also be desirable to interview their children and include responses of older children in the questionnaire. Also personal interviews might provide opportunities for acquiring indepth knowledge of interpersonal relationships in strong families.

Current research studying strong families on a nation wide basis is now under way (Stinnett, 1976). Throughout the United States various groups of people will be studied for further knowledge of high strength families. A more heterogeneous sample will be obtained involving race, socio-economic classes, and urban areas as well as different geographic sections in the United States.

Family life educators, social workers, clergymen, and other helping professionals will value greatly from the knowledge of positive growth producing characteristics found in strong families. This information can be utilized to produce positive changes in relationships. The Multiple Strengths Perceptions Method (Otto, 1975) illustrates one way groups individually verbalize the strengths they see in each other. This method is ego supportive and produces positive influences that strengthen one another. Develop-

ment and utilization of such methods would enhance individual and family interpersonal relationships. Methods like these also have a positive and inspiring effect on those who lead such activities.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, B. N. Isolation, function, and beyond: American kinship in the 1960's. In C. B. Broderick (ed.). A Decade of Family Research and Action 1960-1969. National Council of Family Relations, 1971.
- Ahlstrom, W. M., & Havighurst, R. J. Family life in mid-adolescence. In W. Ahlstrom. 400 Losers. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1971.
- Anderson, D. A. The family growth group: guidelines for an emerging means of strengthening families. The Family Coordinator, 1974, 23, 7-13.
- Anthony, E. J. The mutative impact on family life of serious mental and physical illness in a parent. Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal, 1969, 14, 433-453.
- Axelson, L. Marital adjustment and marital role definitions of husbands of working and non-working wives. Marriage and Family Living, 1963, 25, 189-195.
- Blackburn, C. W. What is a strong family. International Journal of Religious Education, 1967, 43(9), 3, 35-36.
- Blood, R. O. Marriage. New York: The Free Press, 1969.
- Blood, R. O., & Wolfe, D. M. Husbands and Wives: The Dynamics of Married Living. Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1960.
- Bowman, H. A. Marriage for Moderns. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974.
- Bowman, T. Developing strengths in families. The Family Coordinator, 1976, 25, 169-174.
- Bricklin, B., & Bricklin, P. M. Strong Child Strong Family. New York: Delacorte, 1970.
- Chailkin, H., & Frank, C. L. Separation, service delivery, and family functioning. Public Welfare, 1973, 31(1), 2-7.

- Condry, J., & Siman, M. L. Characteristics of peer and adult oriented children. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1974, 36, 543-554.
- Crockett, H. J., Babchuk, N., & Ballweg, J. A. Change in religious affiliation and family stability: a second study. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1969, 31, 464-468.
- Cuber, J. F., & Harroff, P. B. The more total view: relationships among men and women of the upper middle class. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1963, 25, 140-145.
- Elder, G. H. Parental power legitimation and its effects on the adolescent. Sociometry, 1963, 26, 50-65.
- Epstein, J. Divorced in America: Marriage in an Age of Possibility. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974.
- Gabler, J., & Otto, H. A. Conceptualization of 'family strengths' in family life and other professional literature. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1964, 26, 221-223.
- Gurin, G., Veroff, J., & Feld, S. Americans View Their Mental Health. New York: Basic Books, 1960.
- Harris, T. O. Alternates available in solving the juvenile problem. The Police Chief, 1973, 40(9), 42-43.
- Hicks, M. W., & Platt, M. Marital happiness and stability: a review of the research in the sixties. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1970, 33, 553-573.
- Hill, R. Family Development in Three Generations. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman, 1970.
- Hurley, J. R., & Polonen, D. Marital satisfaction and child density among university student parents. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1967, 29, 483-484.
- Hurvitz, N. Control roles, marital strain, role deviation, and marital adjustment. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1965, 27, 29-31.
- Joint Commission on Mental Health of Children, Inc., Contemporary American Society: its impact on family life. In: Report of the Joint Commission on Mental Health of Children, Inc. New York: Harper and Row, 1969.

- Kanter, R. M. Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972.
- Katz, I., Goldstein, J., Cohen, M., & Stuckert, S. Need satisfaction, perception, and cooperative interactions in married couples. Marriage and Family Living, 1963, 25, 209-213.
- Kinter, R., & Otto, H. A. The family-strength concept and foster family selection. Child Welfare, 1964, 48, 359-364.
- Levinger, G. Marital cohesiveness and dissolution: an integrative review. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1965, 27, 19-28.
- Levinger, G. Sources of marital dissatisfaction among applicants for divorce. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1966, 36, 803-807.
- Luckey, E. B. Marital satisfaction and its association with congruence of perception. Marriage and Family Living, 1960, 22, 49-54. (a)
- Luckey, E. B. Marital satisfaction and parent concepts. Journal of Consulting Psychology, 1960, 24, 195-204. (b)
- Luckey, E. B. Marital satisfaction and congruent self-spouse concepts. Social Forum, 1960, 39, 153-157. (c)
- Luckey, E. B. Number of years married as related to personality perception and marital satisfaction. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1966, 28, 44-48.
- Luckey, E. B., & Bain, J. K. Children: a factor in marital satisfaction. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1970, 32, 43-44.
- Mathews, V. C., & Milhanovich, C. S. New orientations on marital maladjustment. Marriage and Family Living, 1963, 25, 300-304.
- Mauch, G. Antisocial behavior: when and how does a person become antisocial. In: Horl Reinfried, Die Zukunft Unserer Kinder, (2nd ed.), Olten, Switzerland: Walter, 1970.
- McGuire, C., & White, G. D. The measurement of social status. Research Paper in Human Development, No. 3 (revised), University of Texas at Austin, 1955.

- Morrow, W. R., & Wilson, R. C. Family relations of bright achievers and underachieving boys. Child Development, 1961, 32, 501-510.
- Mote, F. B. The relationship between child self concept in school and parental attitudes and behavior in child rearing. Dissertation Abstracts, 1967, 27, 3319.
- Mudd, E. H., Mitchell, H. E., & Taubin, S. B. Success In Family Living. New York: Association Press, 1965.
- Navran, L. Communication and adjustment in marriage. Family Process, 1967, 6(2), 173-184.
- Orden, S. R., & Bradburn, N. M. Working wives and marriage happiness. American Journal of Sociology, 1969, 74, 392-407.
- Orthner, D. K. Leisure activity patterns and marital satisfaction over the marital career. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1975, 37, 91-102.
- Otto, H. A. What is a strong family. Marriage and Family Living, 1962, 24(1), 77-81.
- Otto, H. A. The family resource development program: the production of criteria for assessing family strengths. Family Process, 1963, 2, 329-338.
- Otto, H. A. The personal and family strength research projects: some implications for the therapist. Mental Hygiene, 1964, 48, 439-450.
- Otto, H. A. The minister and family strengths. Pastoral Psychology, 1966, 17(163), 21-28.
- Otto, H. A. Plan to build family strengths. International Journal of Religious Education, 1967, 43(9), 6-7, 40-41.
- Otto, H. A. New light on the human potential. Saturday Review, 1969, (Dec. 10), 14-17.
- Otto, H. A. The Use of Family Strengths Concepts and Methods In Family Life Education. Beverly Hills, California: Holistic Press, 1975.
- Renee, K. S. Correlates of dissatisfaction in marriage. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1970, 32, 54-66.

- Ridley, C. A. Exploring the impact of work satisfaction and involvement on marital interaction when both partners are employed. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1973, 35, 229-237.
- Rosenthal, M. S., & Mathner, I. Drugs, Parents, and Children. Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin, 1972.
- Sauer, K. H. Relationship patterns of strong families. Unpublished masters thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1976.
- Siegelman, M. College students personality correlates of early parent-child relationships. Journal of Consulting Psychology, 1965, 29, 558-564.
- Solomon, J. C. Family identity. Adolescence, 1972, 7, 511-518.
- Stevenson, P. Family commitment: application of a theoretical framework. Unpublished masters thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1975.
- Stinnett, N. Social and psychological factors associated with family strengths: a national study (Family Strengths Research Project). Unpublished research report, Oklahoma State University, 1976.
- Stinnett, N., Carter, L. M., & Montgomery, J. E. Older persons' perceptions of their marriages. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1972, 34, 665-670.
- Stinnett, N., Collins, J., & Montgomery, J. E. Marital need satisfaction of older husbands and wives. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1970, 32, 428-434.
- Stuckert, R. P. Role perception and marital satisfaction--a configuration approach. Marriage and Family Living, 1963, 25, 415-419.
- Tracey, J. F. Analysis of parent guidance groups. Journal of Psychiatric Nursing and Mental Health Services, 1971, 9(2), 18-23.
- U. S. Bureau of Census. Statistical abstracts of the United States, 1975. 96th ed. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1976.
- Whitehurst, R. N. Premarital preference group orientations and marriage adjustment. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1968, 30, 397-401.

- Wiegert, A. J. Parent-child interaction patterns and adolescent religiosity: a cross-nation study. Dissertation Abstracts, 1968, 29, 3691.
- Young, K. What strong family life means to our society. Social Casework, 1953, 34, 323-329.
- Zimmerman, C. C. The future of the family in America. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1972, 34, 323-333.
- Zimmerman, C. C., & Cervantes, L. F. Successful American Families. New York: Pageant, 1960.

APPENDIX

**OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY • STILLWATER**Department of Family Relations & Child Development
(405) 372-6211, Ext. 6084

74074

September 15, 1975

Dear Oklahoma Family,

A few months ago you were recommended to me as one of Oklahoma's particularly strong families. You agreed to assist us in a state wide research project on Family Strengths. We appreciate your time and contributions very much. Because of your help and other families like you, we are learning much about what makes families strong. This is very important since so much of what we hear and read about family life today is concerned with the high divorce rate and "what's wrong" with families. The information from this research can provide guidelines concerning how families can strengthen their relationships.

As this research comes to a close, we see the need to ask persons in strong families, such as you, three additional questions. They will not take long to answer, but are very important. Would you and your spouse consult with each other and answer these questions as a couple? We think you will enjoy this activity and find it interesting. After completing the questions would you please return the questionnaire to us in the self-addressed, pre-paid envelope by September 30.

Your answers are anonymous and confidential since you are asked not to put your name on the questionnaire. Please answer each question as honestly as you can. We are not interested in how you think you should answer the questions, but we are interested in what you actually feel and do in your family situation.

We appreciate your participation in this research. It is only through the contribution of persons such as you that we can gain greater understanding of family strengths.

Sincerely yours,

Nick Stinnett, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

NS/jg

Enclosures

Oklahoma State University
Division of Home Economics

Dept. of Family Relations
and Child Development

Your cooperation in answering these questions is greatly appreciated. Your assistance will give us greater understanding of family relationships.

We need to ask a few background questions again since your names were not on the first questionnaire and it is not possible to match that questionnaire with this one. Please check or fill in answers as appropriate to each question. Your answers are confidential and anonymous since you do not have to put your name on this questionnaire. Please be as honest in your answers as possible. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. Race: 1. White _____
 2. Black _____
 3. Indian _____
 4. Oriental _____
 5. Other _____
2. What church do you attend? _____
3. What is the educational attainment of the husband?
4. What is the educational attainment of the wife?
5. Husband's Occupation: _____
6. Wife's Occupation: _____

7. Major source of income for the family:
1. Inherited savings and investments _____
 2. Earned wealth, transferable investment _____
 3. Profits, royalties, fees _____
 4. Salary, Commissions (regular, monthly, or yearly) _____
 5. Hourly wages, weekly checks _____
 6. Odd jobs, seasonal work, private charity _____
 7. Public relief or charity _____

8. Residence:

1. On farm or in country _____
2. Small town under 25,000 _____
3. City of 25,000 to 50,000 _____
4. City of 50,000 to 100,000 _____
5. City of over 100,000 _____

9. How long have you been married to your present spouse?

10. How many children do you have? _____

As this research comes to a close, we see the need to ask persons in strong families, such as you, three additional questions. They will not take long to answer, but are very important. The questions are:

1. What do you consider to be the most important strengths of your family?

2. What does your family do (such as activities, recreation, family nights, etc.) that you feel serves to make your family strong?

3. What area of your family life would you most like to see improved?

EXAMPLES OF CATEGORIZATION

Examples of how responses were categorized concerning perceptions of most important family strengths. (Samples of responses representative of the three most frequent categories are presented):

religious convictions and activities

"faith in God and regular church attendance"

"our spiritual strength"

"put God first"

"reverence for God"

"worship together"

"the Bible as a standard for living"

mutual love

"the love we have for each other"

"love"

"our love for one another"

"we do not hesitate to show our children how much we love them"

"love is very important in our home"

"genuine love"

mutual respect and understanding

"concern and respect for one another"

"mutual consideration"

"we care deeply for one another"

"understanding each others' differences and opinions"

Examples of how responses were categorized concerning perceptions of activities that contribute to family strengths. (Samples of responses representative of the three most frequent categories are presented):

being together and doing things together

"being with the ones you love and doing the things you enjoy"

"doing things as a family"

"when we're all at home together"

"eating meals together"

"being at home together and talking"

"play together"

"reading together"

participation in athletic activities

"athletic events"

"tennis"

"football, basketball"

"golf, ball games"

"bowling"

"wrestling, football, basketball"

participation in church activities

"we attend church regularly"

"Sunday School and church"

"we attend church functions together"

"we worship together, attend church, have family devotions"

Examples of how responses were categorized concerning perceptions of what areas of family life strong families would like to improve. (Samples of responses representative of the three most frequent categories are presented):

to limit activities and set priorities

"too busy a schedule"

"too many outside activities"

"more organization of free time"

"too many business commitments"

"better scheduling so we're not so rushed"

"too little time for my family"

satisfied (unaware of need for improvement)

"at this point in time--nothing"

"we have a good family life"

"we are content and would do it much the same again"

"we are unaware of a need"

"it's okay"

"things are pretty good"

to have more time to spend together

"more time to share with each other"

"more time with my family"

"more time to enjoy each other"

"more time together as a family unit"

"have more free time"

VITA

Jo Ann Kay Wall

Candidate for the Degree of
Master of Science

Thesis: CHARACTERISTICS OF STRONG FAMILIES

Major Field: Family Relations and Child Development

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, September 27, 1951, the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Ray F. Hein; married to Richard Gene Wall, May 26, 1973, in Hillsboro, Kansas.

Education: Graduated from Seaholm High School, Birmingham, Michigan in June, 1969; Attended Fort Wayne Bible College, Fort Wayne, Indiana majoring in Elementary Education from 1969 to 1971; Graduated from Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas with a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work, May, 1973; Completed requirements for a Master of Science degree at Oklahoma State University in May, 1977.

Professional Experience: Social Work Aide, Protestant Youth Organization, Inc., Southfield, Michigan, Summers 1969 and 1970; Social Worker, Kansas Children's Service League, Inc., Wichita, Kansas, January to May 1973; Graduate Research Assistant, Oklahoma State University, Family Relations and Child Development Department, 1975 to 1977.

Professional Organizations: Omicron Nu, National Council on Family Relations, National Association for the Education of Young Children, and Oklahoma Association for Children Under Six.