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TOWARD A GROUNDED THEORY
OF FAMILY STRENGTH IN
HIGH QUALITY HIGH STABILITY MARRIAGE

presented by

Vivian Collins Campbell

has been accepted towards fulfillment
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TOWARD A GROUNDED THEORY
OF FAMILY STRENGTH IN
HIGH QUALITY HIGH STABILITY MARRIAGE

By

Vivian Collins Campbell

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

TOWARD A GROUNDED THEORY OF FAMILY STRENGTH IN HIGH QUALITY HIGH STABILITY MARRIAGE

BY

Vivian Collins Campbell

A grounded theory of marital strength using the methodology of Glaser and Strauss (1967) is presented. The researcher studied one couple whose marriage was characterized by high quality and high stability. Attention was given not only to each individual spouse's perceptions but to their perceptions as a unit. The purpose of this study was to generate theory not to establish verification of hypotheses.

Researchers have devoted considerable research time to marriages of low quality and low stability. More information is needed about positive family models and what strong families are like. Such information may be helpful to others desiring to achieve greater family and marital quality.

Family strength is considered as an overall, global quality. Marital strength is one component of family strength. In order to gain insight into the sources of family strength the nature and patterns of the linkages between the marital couple and its informal support systems were identified.

The family ecological framework was employed for

identifying family strength and examining interrelationships between the marital couple and its informal support systems. Data were collected by the researcher's participant observation and ethnographic interviewing. The observations and interviews were guided by these questions:

1. What are the sources of family strength?
2. What are the evidences of family strength?
3. What is the nature of the linkages between the family and its informal support systems?
4. What are the patterns of the linkages between the family and its informal support systems?

Four types of support were considered. These were social-emotional, physical, economic and informational.

It was discovered that marital strength is an intangible internal resource of the couple as a unit that can be developed. The core concept is commitment to each other. Facets that affect development of commitment are (a) appreciation, (b) communication, (c) acceptance, (d) family esteem and (e) purpose. In high quality high stability marriage couples develop generativity of the couple as a unit. They support other persons and causes in accordance with their greatest perceived responsibility, need and desire to give. When support is received the preferred sources in rank order are (a) adult children, (b) other kin, (c) friends , (d) neighbors and last of all (e) formal support systems.

DEDICATION

To Glen, best friend and spouse

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During the last few months an incredibly large informal support system of family and friends formed to offer me social-emotional, informational, physical and economic help. I will not name them all but wish them to know that they are remembered and appreciated.

I am grateful to my committee members, Dr. Margaret Bubolz, Dr. Linda Nelson, Dr. Dolores Borland and Dr. Joseph Levine who have supported my efforts. Dr. Margaret Bubolz, my major professor and a co-director of research, has provided valuable insight, encouragement and has increased my understanding of theory. Dr. Linda Nelson, co-director of research, has provided valuable assistance with the methodology and has also been generous in giving time and counsel.

Special thanks is extended to the "Congers" family. The names are fictitious but the quality of their lives is real.

I especially want to thank Barbara Lee and Hale Collins for the countless hours they spent word processing and printing.

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Finally, I am thankful for those who prayed for my physical endurance when I needed a source of strength greater than myself.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Throughout recorded history marriage and family have been basic institutions in all societies. Family life meets individual needs for affection and emotional security as well as societal needs of reproduction, socialization, order and stability.

Husbands and wives today are more likely than in the past to evaluate their marriage primarily in terms of how well it satisfies their individual emotional needs. This increases the likelihood of divorce. If present trends continue for the next ten to twenty years, about half of the marriages begun in the mid-1970s will end in divorce. Divorce is typically a traumatic process causing short-term distress for most and longer distress for some. Many adults and children experience a chaotic life style and a period of disorganization especially during the first year after divorce. Although it appears that most children recover from the initial distress of parental divorce within a few years, we know little as yet about the long-term effects on them (Cherlin 1981).

Intense social, emotional and economic difficulties often occur during the first few years after divorce, impacting not only the family but society in general. A satisfying and stable family life is becoming more of a scarce resource. Rapid changes in marriage, divorce and remarriage strain the adaptive capacity not only of the family but other social institutions as well.

Over the years families with pathological problems have received much attention from researchers. Spanier and Lewis (1980) affirm that considerable research time is devoted to marriages of low quality and low stability, that is, those unhappy marriages that end in divorce. Stinnett (1979) states that we need information about the problems, but that we also need a balanced view. More information is needed about positive family models and what strong families are like. Hansen in 1981 said,

We have good descriptions of some of the most dysfunctional families; yet we have few descriptions of what is usual for "healthy" families or what degree of success they can achieve. Such knowledge is vital and perhaps can be a guide toward achieving greater satisfaction in living for all families. (p. 54)

This research focuses on what is going right with families, rather than on what is going wrong. The objectives of this research are:

1. To gain deeper insight into family strength by identifying sources and evidence of family strength, discovering how a marital couple perceives its strength, and by describing the linkages between a family and its informal support systems.

2. To work toward a grounded theory of family strength with particular emphasis on the marital unit.

In this study family strength is considered as an overall, global quality, comprised of several components. One component of a strong family is high quality high stability marriage. There are other components of family strength, for example high quality parent-child

relationships. The focus of this study is the marriage component. In discovering how the marital couple perceives its strength, attention is given not only to each individual spouse's perceptions but to the couple's perceptions as well. Spanier and Lewis (1980) in recommending directions for research related to marital quality and stability state that,

There is still a problem of the assessment of the marriage versus the partner's perceptions of the marriage. Much of today's research implies an analysis of the marriage, when it is really the individuals who reside in the marriage who are being studied. (p. 836)

In order to add insight into the sources of family strength, the nature and patterns of the linkages between the marital couple and its informal support systems are identified. The family ecological framework described by Andrews, Bubolz and Paolucci (1980) is useful in examining these interrelationships. The authors explain that a family ecosystem has three central organizing components: the enviroined unit, environment and the patterning of interactions and transactions between them. For the purpose of this study the first component, the enviroined unit or family, is defined as the marital couple only. The second component, the near environment, includes the adult children, extended kin, friends and neighbors. The third component of this family ecosystem is the interaction and reciprocal relationships between the first and second components, that is, the marital couple and its near

environment. Informal support systems are considered as synonymous with near environment.

Three broad dimensions of family ecosystems are identified by Insel and Moos (1974).

1. Relationship dimensions identify the nature and intensity of personal relationships within the environment. They assess the extent to which individuals are involved in the environment and the extent to which they support and help one another.

2. Personal development dimensions consider the potential or opportunity in the environment for personal growth and the development of self-esteem.

3. Systems maintenance and system change dimensions assess the extent to which the environment is orderly and clear in its expectations, maintains control, and is responsive to change.

While all three dimensions are important, the intent of this study is to focus on the relationship dimensions in assessing the extent to which the marital couple and its informal support systems support and help one another.

Four types of help were mentioned, but not defined by Andrews, Bubolz and Paolucci (1980). For this study they are described as follows:

1. Social-emotional help consists of companionship, pleasant association, affection or empathic support.

2. Economic help consists of merchandise, commodities or financial support.

3. Physical help consists of services.

4. Informational help consists of counsel, advice, instruction, or the sharing of helpful news, ideas or suggestions.

The Andrews, Bubolz and Paolucci (1980) model classifies three support systems within the community as follows:

1. Formal support systems include schools, health agencies, protective agencies and welfare agencies.

2. Nonformal support systems include work groups, recreational groups, community organization, non-school classes and church groups.

3. Informal support systems include friends, neighbors and extended kin.

For this study the researcher has added to informal support systems, adult children of the marital couple. Extended kin are defined as any relatives of the marital couple other than their adult children. Friends are defined as colleagues or associates held in high regard or for whom there are feelings of affection. Neighbors are defined as persons who live in close proximity to the marital couple's home.

This identification of the nature and patterns of the linkages between the marital couple and its informal support systems will be helpful in considering how other families

may be strengthened. According to Andrews, Bubolz and Paolucci (1980),

Informal support from friends, neighbors, and extended family members, and persons who provide goods and services are sometimes overlooked by community systems. They may be among the most significant and essential in helping people deal with their day-to-day needs and problems. (p. 42)

To develop a grounded theory the ethnographic method was used to provide a rich in-depth account with detailed description about how one couple behaves and feels about their life together. The researcher focused on language, behavior and artifacts to discover meanings to the family involved. The role of participant observer was assumed with the researcher's behavior ranging from detached observer to full participant at other times.

A comprehensive ethnography would attempt to document the totality of the family life. No attempt was made to develop a complete ethnography but instead the ethnographic method was used for a topic-oriented focus to study the marital couple. While many topics would be interesting to study in depth, the focus was narrowed from the beginning while still attempting to gain understanding of the family as a whole.

Spradley (1980) explains that ethnography is learning from people with emphasis on understanding rather than predicting behavior. This method proved useful not only for providing information about how the marital couple perceives its strength, but in analyzing informal support systems as well.

The ethnographic method was used for the discovery of grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe four highly interrelated properties that are required for developing grounded theory:

The first requisite property is that the theory must closely fit the substantive area in which it will be used. Second, it must be readily understandable by laymen concerned with this area. Third, it must be sufficiently general to be applicable to a multitude of diverse daily situations within the substantive area, not to just a specific type of situation. Fourth, it must allow the user partial control over the structure and process of daily situations as they change through time. (p. 237)

It is presumptuous to assume that one begins to know what the categories and hypotheses are until the first few field days are over. The researcher goes out and studies an area with a particular focus or a general question in mind, but without preconceived expectations. The approach of allowing substantive concepts and hypotheses to emerge first, on their own, enables the researcher to decide if any theory can be of help in generating substantive theories (Glaser & Strauss 1967).

In working toward a grounded theory then, one does not need to begin totally blank. Observations and interviews were guided by four questions:

1. What are the sources of the family's strength?
2. What are the evidences of the family's strength?
3. What is the nature of the linkages between the family and its informal support systems?
4. What are the patterns of the linkages between the

family and its informal support systems?

Next the researcher made a preliminary review of the literature of marital quality and marital stability. After deciding on criteria, a family was selected for study. Two strategies, participant observation and ethnographic interviewing, were used to study the family. A variety of techniques for data collection were employed. Data were collected and analyzed by using the constant comparative method of Glaser and Strauss (1967). When a theory of family strength began to emerge, the researcher returned to the literature. The emerging theory was then compared to, and integrated with the literature. Finally the emerging theory was restated, after the researcher's further reflection. The emerging theory is presented in this same sequence in order for the reader to see the development of the theory to the present stage.

The family ecological framework has not been widely used for identifying family strength. Although the major emphasis of this research is on the human component, the non-human environment is not ignored. Certain artifacts belonging to the family, and also the home itself, were studied to gain insights into the human relationships. It is expected that this emerging grounded theory will provide insight and understanding by describing the linkages between the family and its informal support systems and how the marital couple perceives its strength.

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Marital Quality and Marital Stability

In developing grounded theory Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that,

An effective strategy is, at first to literally ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study, in order to assure that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated by concepts more suited to different areas. (p.37)

It is false to assume that the researcher does not have some knowledge of the literature of past decades. However, it is important to enter the field without preconceived ideas. The preliminary review of the literature was confined to marital quality and marital stability.

Marital quality and marital stability, the key concepts in this study, are interrelated. Marital stability indicates the status of a marriage as intact or non-intact. A stable marriage is defined as one which is terminated only by the natural death of one spouse. An unstable marriage is defined as one which is willfully terminated by one or both spouses. Marital stability refers not only to the outcome of a marriage but also to a process. It involves dyadic formation, maintenance and dissolution over a period of time (Lewis & Spanier, 1979).

Marital quality focuses on quality of marital relationships while the marriage is intact. The concept is dynamic, not static. Marital quality is frequently defined as a subjective evaluation of a couple's relationship. In the United States quality is the primary determinant of

whether or not a marriage will remain intact. In marital research high marital quality has been associated with good adjustment, adequate communication, and a high degree of satisfaction with the relationship (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). One of the most important developments in the 1970s was the recognition that marital quality involves multidimensional phenomena (Spanier & Lewis, 1980).

Spanier and Lewis (1980) in a review of marital quality research of the 1970s, identify the 10 most significant research trends during the decade. They are summarized as follows:

1. Before 1970, husbands were often omitted in samples. The trend is for joint study of husbands and wives. According to Bernard (1972) there is a body of well-authenticated research to show that there are really two marriages in every union and that they do not necessarily coincide. Most of the related research still focuses on the individual, however there is increasing interest in studying the couple as a unit.

2. Methods for measuring marital quality are improving. More attention is being given to reliability, validity and response sets.

3. Sample sizes were larger in the seventies than in the sixties. There has been increased availability of funds for large scale survey research, better access to national samples and more acceptance of secondary analysis of data.

The trend in the 1980s is likely to be with large sample sizes.

4. The trend for the future may be to focus on dyadic relationships as opposed to marital relationships because of growing interest in studying cohabiting couples.

5. Use of multivariate statistics for data analyses has been increasing. Studies in the 1960s often claimed strong relationships between marital quality and traditional demographic variables. Most recent studies using multivariate analyses have not found these same relationships between marital satisfaction, income and age (Brinkerhoff & White, 1978; Glenn & Weaver, 1978; Albrecht, 1979; Jorgensen, 1979). Socioeconomic variables may not predict quality in intact marriages. The recent trend to terminate unsuccessful marriages may explain this in part. Jorgensen (1979), using multivariate analyses did not find support for the notion that higher levels of socioeconomic rewards lead to more stable or satisfying marriages.

6. There has been more thoughtful consideration given to research design, although there is still need for more care. Most of the marital quality research of the seventies gave little attention to issues involving cross-sectional studies, which implies a high degree of selective survival.

7. Before 1970 there was an inventory approach to synthesis of research findings, in which there were simply listings of correlates. Now there are the beginnings of theory development.

8. In the 1970s researchers were more aware of the traditional biases of male and female roles. This was usually ignored in earlier research.

9. In most research of marital quality, the concept has been studied as the dependent variable. Recently in some research marital quality has been used as the independent variable in predicting outcomes in mental health, self-esteem and alienation.

10. Canada and the United States continue to predominate in related research studies. However there is an increase in cross-cultural research.

It is unfortunately still the trend to relate only one or two variables to a single dimension of marital quality, for example, marital satisfaction (Spanier & Lewis, 1980).

The two topics receiving the most attention during the seventies were the effects of children on marital quality and the relationship between marital quality and the marital career. Hicks and Platt (1970) found that children tended to detract from the parents' marital quality. Other researchers confirmed this negative impact of children (Luckey & Bain, 1970; Feldman, 1971; Ryder, 1973; Russell, 1974; Rollins & Galligan, 1978). Hobbs and Cole (1976) reported that mothers had significantly greater difficulty than fathers in adjusting to infants. Ryder (1973) using longitudinal data, reported that husbands seemed to pay less attention to wives when there was a new child in the family, as compared to a control group of couples without children.

In general, the couples with children did not report more dissatisfaction with their marriages. Russell (1972) was one of the first researchers to investigate nonrespondents. She found that nonrespondents reported more crises than did respondents. According to Spanier and Lewis (1980) this could help explain some of the differences in earlier studies. Luckey & Bain (1970) in a study of couples with low marital satisfaction found that children were the main source of mutual satisfaction. Houseknecht (1979) found that voluntarily childless women reported higher marital adjustment than women with children. In the 1970s, research suggested that child density may not have as strong an effect on quality of marriage as was previously indicated. In summary:

Most of the current evidence is congruent with the notion that the presence of dependent children in the home puts a crunch on the time, energy and economic resources of the parents and results in a decrease in the marital satisfaction of parents. (Rollins & Galligan, 1978, p. 83)

In the seventies research dealing with marital quality over the marital career was mainly cross-sectional. Most studies have found a U-shaped pattern with highest quality at the beginning and later stages of the marital career. Spanier (1978) pointed out that cross-sectional studies are frequently misleading:

Since such methodologies do not adequately account for cohort effects, age-correlated effects, social desirability and other response sets, and the tendency to report as happy those marriages which survive over time. . . . In short, it can be concluded that much of the research on the quality of marriage over the life cycle is flawed. (p. 829)

Marital quality and related concepts have been the most widely studied topic in the field.

One of the most popular typologies of marriage quality has been that of Cuber and Harroff (1965), who categorized American marriages as either conflict-habituated, devitalized, passive congenial, vital, or total. These types were based upon the degree to which couples in their study had a utilitarian marriage as contrasted with an intrinsic marriage, suggested by the vital and total types, where the personal, intimate relationship between the husband and wife has priority over other functions such as child raising. (Lewis & Spanier, 1980, p. 271)

Burr, et al., (1979) defined marital satisfaction as the subjectively experienced reaction to one's marriage, as opposed to marital satisfaction as the amount of congruence between expectations a person has and rewards the person actually receives. Spanier and Lewis (1980) comment that it was unfortunate that Burr chose an intrapersonal conceptualization rather than an interpersonal conceptualization when many researchers are trying to measure a marriage as a unit. Spanier and Cole (1976; Spanier, 1976, 1979) defined marital adjustment as a process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of troublesome marital differences, interspousal tensions and personal anxiety, marital satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and consensus on matters of importance to marital functioning. Lenthall (1977) distinguished between marital satisfaction and marital stability. He defined marital satisfaction as a function of the comparison between one's marital expectations and one's marital outcomes. Marital stability is defined as a function of the comparison between one's

best available marital alternative and one's marital outcome. Lewis and Spanier (1979) came to the same conclusion and used the typology to explain why some marriages of low quality do not terminate and why some of fairly high quality do terminate.

Using the inductive method of theory development, a classification scheme and sequentially ordered classes of these related variables were developed (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). This provided a basis for propositional inventorying, working toward a theory of marital quality. The three parts of their classification scheme and the three third order propositions they derived are as follows:

Part 1: Propositions concerning the relationship between premarital factors and marital quality.

Third order proposition: The greater the social and personal resources available for adequate marital role functioning, the higher the subsequent marital quality.

Part II: Propositions concerning the relationships between social and economic characteristics and marital quality.

Third order proposition: The greater the spouses' satisfaction with their life style, the greater their marital quality.

Part III: Propositions concerning interpersonal (dyadic) characteristics and marital quality.

Third order proposition: The greater the rewards from the spousal interaction, the greater the marital quality (pp. 275, 276, 279, 282-283).

The third order propositions are compatible with social exchange theory. Their emphases are on rewards and satisfactions. In their classification scheme, where Lewis and Spanier (1979) found empirical evidence that was

contradictory and they were unable to resolve contradictions, they abstained from forming propositions. From this framework they identified seven threshold variables which they speculate are significant in considering the relationship between marital quality and stability. They are:

1. Marital expectations.
2. Commitment to the marriage and its associated obligations.
3. Tolerance for conflict and disharmony.
4. Religious doctrine and commitment.
5. External pressures and amenability to social stigma.
6. Divorce law and the availability of legal aid.
7. Real and perceived alternatives (p. 273).

The single greatest predictor of marital stability is marital quality. In an attempt to demonstrate that an exchange framework is useful for understanding the balance between marital quality and marital stability, Lewis and Spanier (1980) developed an exchange model (Figure 1). They explained that a couple at any point in time would be found somewhere in one of the four quadrants, but could move over time to others. The horizontal axis represents intradyadic factors which affect quality of a marriage, that is, a balance of attractions to the marriage and tensions within the marriage. The vertical axis represents extradyadic factors which affect stability of a marriage.

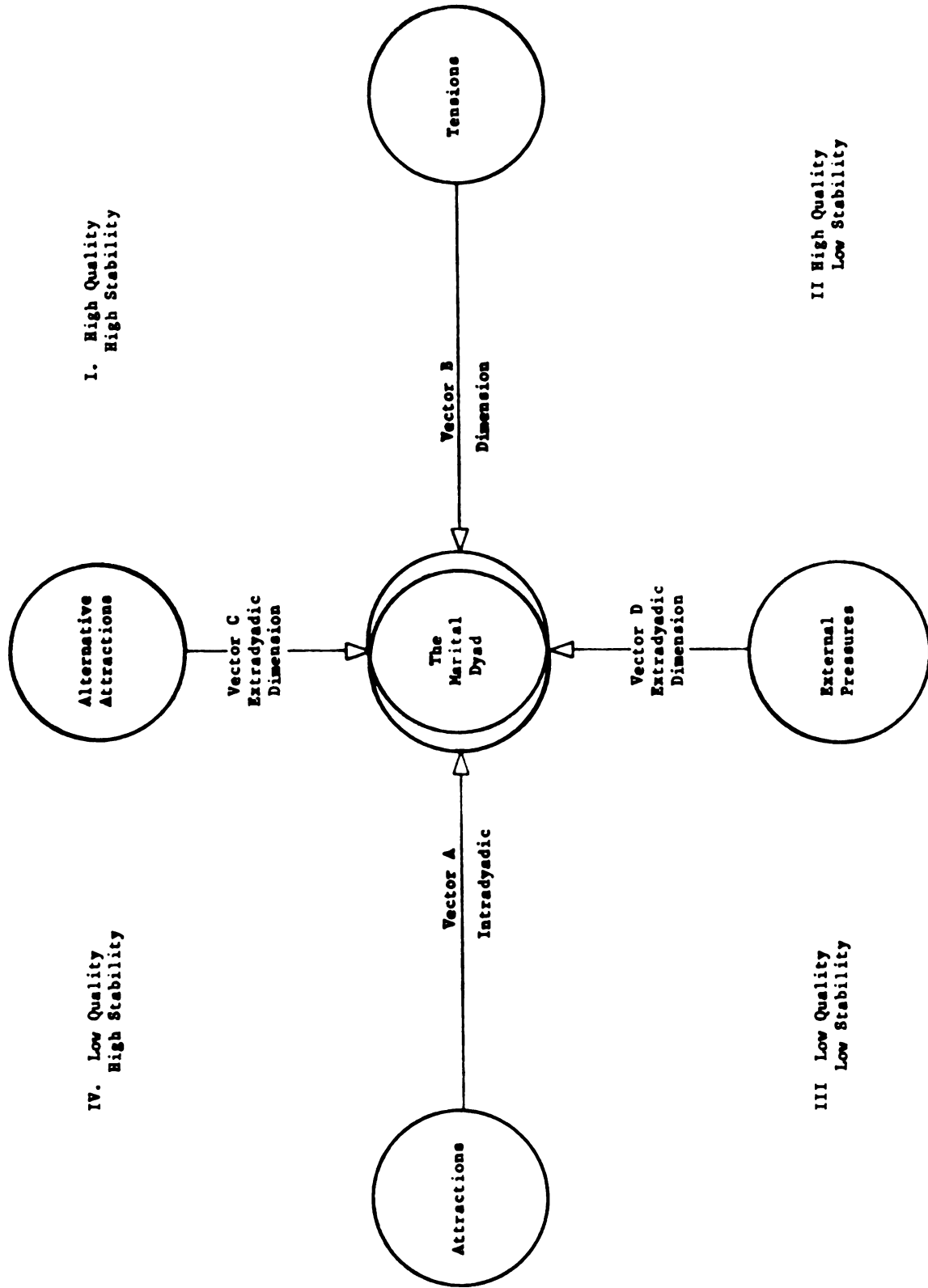


Figure 1. An Exchange Typology of Marital Quality and Marital Stability
 Note. From "Marital Quality: A Review of the Seventies" by G. B. Spanier
 and R. A. Lewis, November 1980, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, p. 825.

They consist of a balance of alternative attractions outside of the marriage and external pressures acting on the marriage. The three assumptions of the typology as stated are:

1. The greater the marital quality the greater the marital stability.

2. Alternative attractions to a marriage negatively influence the strength of the relationship between marital quality and marital stability.

3. External pressures to remain married positively influence the strength of the relationship between marital quality and marital stability (p. 288).

Couples found in quadrant 1 represent the ideal. Although most couples could be found in this quadrant at some time during their marriage (most likely in the early years) only a minority of couples could be found in this quadrant at any point in time (Spanier, 1976; Spanier, Lewis and Cole, 1976; Hicks & Platt, 1970; Spanier, 1971; Rollins & Feldman, 1970).

In sum, these reviews of research have three significant findings. Greater marital quality is associated with greater (a) social and personal resources, (b) spousal satisfaction with their life style and (c) rewards from spousal interaction. The relationship between marital quality and marital stability is a neglected area of

research. This study focuses on marital quality and stability as components of family strength.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

In this study, the ethnographic method was used for discovering a grounded theory of family strength. The family ecosystem framework was used to (a) focus observations and interviews, (b) analyze and describe family strength, and (c) examine interrelatedness between the marital couple and its informal support systems. Data were collected by the researcher's participant observing and ethnographic interviewing. The following sections will explicate the research approach, actual procedures followed and techniques used.

Research Approach

The Ethnographic Method

A comprehensive ethnography tries to document a total way of life. It was decided to use the method to produce a topic-oriented ethnography focusing on linkages between the marital couple and self-perceptions of their strength and its support systems. At the same time an attempt was made to gain understanding of the family as a whole, and through description bring them to life for the reader.

According to LeCompte and Goetz (1982), the ethnographic method produces an "analytic description of an intact cultural scene. It delineates the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge and behavior of a group of people" (p. 54). Before one imposes theories on the

people being studied, it is essential to find out how they define their own situation.

It's not necessarily that ethnographers don't want to test hypotheses, it's just that if they do, the variables and operationalizations and sample specifications must grow from an understanding of the group rather than from being hammered on top of it no matter how poor the fit. (Agar, 1980, p. 70)

This researcher focused on language, behavior and artifacts to discover meanings to the persons involved.

Data collection and analysis are accomplished concurrently. Collection of data begins first by making broad descriptive observations and finally by making increasingly focused observations. One strategy of ethnography is working with informants to discover their perspectives and perceptions. Spradley (1979) clearly identified the major differences in research with subjects and with informants.

Research with Subjects	Research with Informants
1. What do I know about a problem that will allow me to formulate and test a hypothesis?	1. What do my informants know about their culture that I can discover?
2. What concepts can I use to test this hypothesis?	2. What concepts do my informants use to explain their experience?
3. How can I operationally define these concepts?	3. How do my informants define these concepts?
4. What scientific theory can explain the data?	4. What folk theory do my informants use to explain their experience?
5. How can I interpret the results and report them in the language of my colleagues?	5. How can I translate the cultural knowledge of my informants into a cultural description my colleagues will understand?

(Spradley, 1979, p. 30)

In sum, the purpose of research with subjects is to find data to match or verify theory and the purpose of research with informants is to generate theory to explain data. Following is a description of strategies used to help reduce the problems of reliability and validity in ethnographic research.

Reliability and Validity

According to LeCompte and Goetz (1982) ethnographic research may approach rather than attain external reliability. Following their suggestions to approach external reliability it was decided to:

1. Clearly identify the role and status of the researcher within the family observed, that is, the relationship that provides access to some kind of special knowledge.

2. Choose a family to study who would be only minimally affected by her presence, and would continue to talk and act normally.

3. Explain the physical, social and interpersonal contexts of the family for possible replication of the study.

4. Explain the strategies used to collect the data.

For internal reliability the researcher decided to:

1. Use a format for fieldnotes with ample space for low-inference descriptions, phrased in terms as concrete as possible, based on observed data, and verbatim accounts of what people said as well as narratives of behavior and

activity. High-inference interpretive comments were placed in brackets within the text. Fieldnotes were analyzed and presented in excerpts to substantiate inferred categories.

2. Use informants for their interpretations of events and situations, descriptions and conformation.

Although the problems of reliability often threaten the credibility of ethnographic work, validity may be its major strength. Following the suggestions of LeCompte and Goetz (1982), for internal validity the researcher decided to do the following:

1. Live with the family being studied.

2. Record discourse and behavior with richness of detail.

3. Use retrospective tracing by questioning about artifacts, documents and oral histories.

4. Enter into the experience of observing with as little bias as possible.

5. Check with informants as to meaningfulness of categories to them.

In giving consideration to external validity, it was decided to:

1. Keep in contact with the research directors as needed.

2. Continually cross check with informants.

The implementation of these strategies is described in the procedure section of this chapter. In the section that follows is an explanation of the grounded theory method.

Spradley (1980) affirms that the ethnographic method offers an excellent strategy for discovering grounded theory.

The Grounded Theory Method

In describing the climate for family research in the 1980s Hill (1981) said,

I see family scholars turning away from large-scale definitive studies to do more exploratory descriptive research involving small, nonrepresentative samples mapping, for example, the uncharted processes of the family in transaction with its near environment. . . . Much of this work can be undertaken inexpensively with students working with cooperating families. This was how most of our descriptive work was done in the not-too-distant past before public and private funding of family research had become commonplace. We can make a virtue out of poverty, if that is what we face in the 1980s: Exploratory, descriptive work generates more discoveries per hour expended than large scale qualitative verification or experimentally designed studies in laboratories. (p. 256)

To achieve the researcher's purpose of generating theory, the method of Glaser and Strauss (1967) was used. The purpose of grounded theory is generation of theory, not verification of hypotheses. Qualitative research is oriented toward the context of discovery. Questions appropriate for qualitative design are often not easily quantified or may lose meaning in quantification. Quantitative research is concerned with differences in amount or degree while qualitative research focuses on differences in kind. A purpose of quantitative research is to verify or confirm. Qualitative research is of necessity less structured to facilitate discovery.

As indicated in Chapter I, the researcher begins with a particular focus or question in mind, but without

preconceived expectations or theory. Categories and properties are concepts that emerge or are indicated by the data. They are elements of theory and they vary in degree of abstraction. A category stands by itself as a conceptual element of the theory. A property is an element or a conceptual aspect of a category. Lower level concepts tend to emerge early and higher level conceptualizations and the properties that elaborate them come later during the analysis of the data. Concepts may be borrowed from existing data only if they are continually reviewed to make sure that they still fit. Care needs to be taken that creativity is not stifled if concepts are borrowed.

Hypotheses may be pursued and generated simultaneously in the process of joint data collection and analysis. They may be generated by acquiring only enough evidence to establish a suggestion, rather than an excessive piling up of evidence to establish proof. The hypotheses may seem unrelated at first, but as concepts emerge and develop in abstraction, integration increases. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), "For substantive theory, the analyst is very likely to discover an integration scheme within his data, since the data and the interrelations of his theory lie so close together" (p. 41).

Integration of theory is best when it emerges like the concepts, and further collection of data cannot be planned in advance of the emerging theory. Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby

the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyzes the data. The researcher then decides what data to collect next, and where to find them in order to develop the theory as it emerges. The first decisions are not based on a preconceived framework. A discovered, grounded theory tends to combine concepts and hypotheses that have emerged from the data, along with some existing ones that are useful. Saturation of a category means that the researcher starts seeing similar instances over and over again. It is a way of obtaining an adequate sample, comparable to statistical sampling. The researcher arbitrarily decided to consider a category saturated after five similar instances were recorded. The constant comparative method requires only saturation of data, not consideration of all available data, since no proof is involved (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Further explanation of the constant comparative method of grounding theory is in the procedure section of this chapter. In the following section is an explanation of the criteria for selection of a family for this study.

Criteria for Selection of Family

Since the purpose of this study is generation of theory, rather than verification, randomness of selection is not important. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain,

The researcher who generates theory need not combine random sampling with theoretical sampling when setting forth relationships among categories and properties. The relationships are suggested as hypotheses pertinent to directions of relations, not tested as descriptions of direction and magnitude. Conventional theorizing claims generality of scope; that is, one assumes that if the relationship holds for one group, under certain

conditions it will probably hold for other groups under the same conditions. (p. 63)

When examining concepts, a representative population is not required since the research does not need to be generalizable. Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain that rules of comparability are a deterrent to the generation of theory. "Rules of comparability are important when accurate evidence is the goal, but they hinder the generation of theory, in which 'non-comparability' of groups is irrelevant" (p. 51).

It is essential however to choose a group to study that meets essential criteria. For this study it was essential to select a marital couple whose dyadic rewards were greater than their dyadic costs, and whose external costs of breaking up were greater than external rewards. It was decided that essential criteria for selection would be:

1. The marital couple will have at least one living child.
2. The child need not be living at home.
3. The couple will have been married at least twenty-five years as an indicator of high stability.
4. The couple will have a reputation of a marital relationship characterized by high quality. High quality will be evidenced as follows:
 - a. The couple will appear to enjoy time together.
 - b. They will appear to have positive regard for each other.
 - c. They will communicate easily.

d. There will be no overt evidence of continuing discord or unresolved conflict.

5. The family will be English speaking and reside in either the United States or Canada.

6. The family will have enough space in their home to provide respite for the researcher and privacy for themselves, for a two to three week period. It is proposed that the researcher live with the family for two to three weeks, but not continuously.

7. The marital couple will be willing to participate.

8. It will be essential to have two generations of family members available. An attempt will be made to select a family with three generations available.

9. No particular socio-economic variables will be criteria for selection, however they will be described after the selection.

In this section the research approach has been explained. The ethnographic method is used for the discovery of grounded theory. Criteria for selection of a family for study have been explicated. In the following section the research procedure is described.

Research Procedure

The Ethnographic Procedure

Selection of the Family

Since the criteria for selecting the family were explained in the section preceding they will not be restated here. Next, the actual selection process will be described.

Over the past twenty years the researcher has met many families while serving on the staff for church sponsored family related activities such as camps and workshops, and has lived in the homes of many families for a week or more, some on numerous occasions. Since the nature of this study required good rapport with both spouses, the church related group was the population from which the family was selected.

The researcher consulted with two other professionals who also knew the pool of families. Five families were identified as meeting all of the criteria for selection. Of these five, two were eliminated from consideration. In one case the marital couple was moving to another geographic area. In the other case, the young adult children were moving and would be unavailable to participate. It was decided that an additional criterion would need to be added. That was, the family must live within the geographic area. Of the three remaining families the Congers (fictitious name) family was considered first because three generations of the family lived in the same community. For convenience, see the kinship chart of the Congers family (Figure 2). On this chart a date above a symbol indicates year of birth and a date below a symbol indicates year of death; a date between male and female symbols indicates year of marriage; in one case both marriage and divorce dates are indicated. The researcher and her consultants assumed that this family would be only minimally affected by the researcher's presence and would continue to talk and act normally.

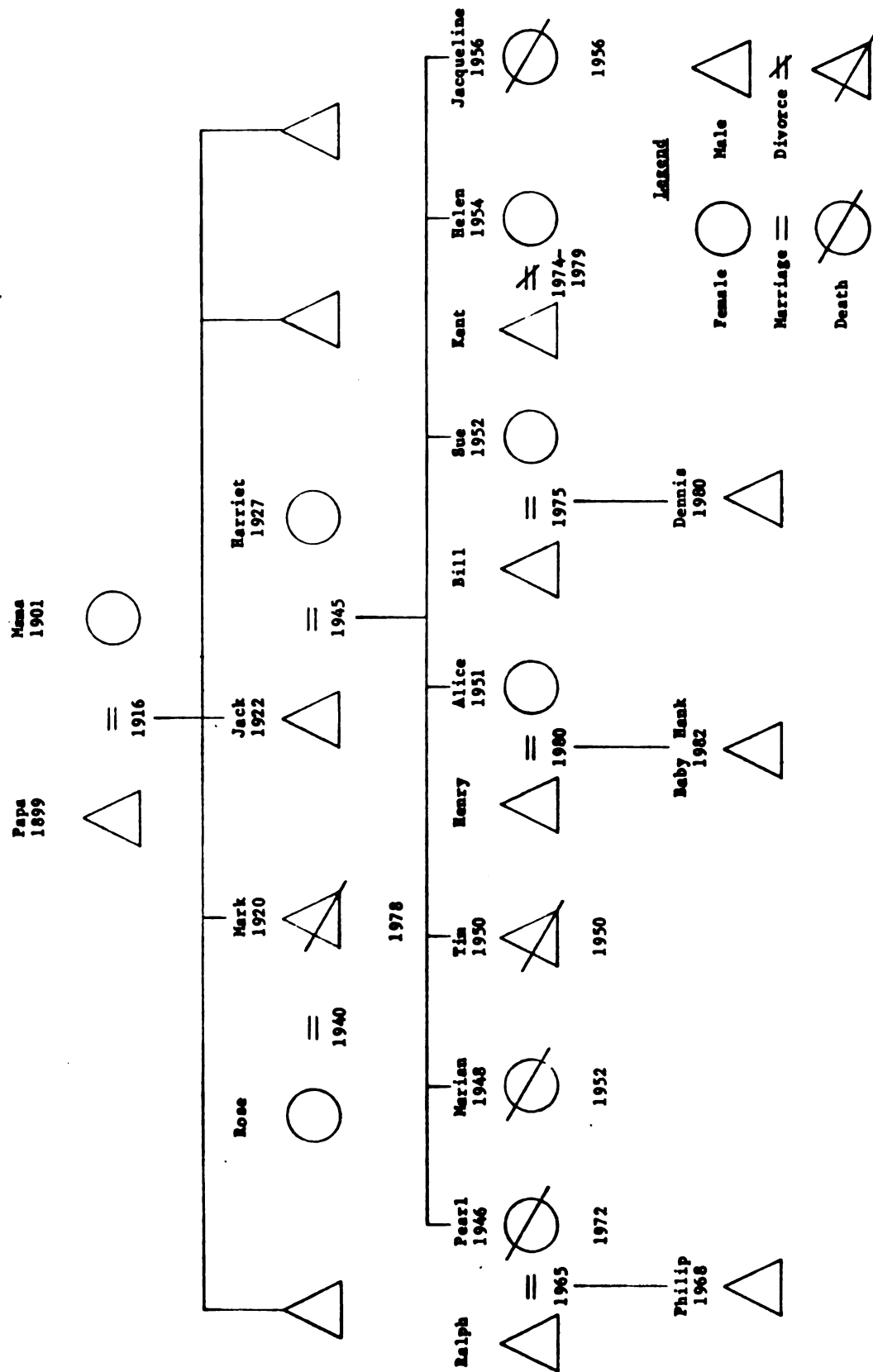


Figure 2. Kinship chart of Congers family.

On November 17, 1982 the researcher sent a letter to Jack and Harriet Congers. A copy of the letter is in Appendix A. She inquired if they would be willing to participate in a study of stable marriages of 25 or more years. No mention was made of marital quality. The researcher explained what would be required of them if they permitted their family to be studied. Harriet Congers contacted the other family members and then responded by telephone to the researcher to express their willingness to participate. The researcher was not aware until then that both Harriet and Jack had retired early. Harriet explained that three generations of the family would not be available until spring. Daughter Sue's family was on the East Coast while her husband was on a temporary work assignment, and the grandparents were south for the winter. Since the researcher had other commitments during the winter months, she decided to accept the Congers' invitation and wait until spring.

Agreements with the Family

After the family agreed to participate in the study, there were certain facets of the consent agreement that needed to be negotiated. A copy of the consent form is in Appendix B. The items involving choices were as follows:

1. The actual days of the researcher's residence with the family.

2. Whether or not the family would keep the tapes of interviews after completion of the research. If they chose not to keep them they would be destroyed.

3. How the researcher's presence would be explained to others in order to assure confidentiality.

4. Whether or not the family would read the researcher's description of their family and make comments or add reflections.

5. Whether or not the family members would choose their own fictitious names for the written report.

The family's responses to these choices were as follows:

1. Actual time of residence was negotiated with the researcher and the family. It was a total of 17 days from Friday, April 22 through Sunday, May 8, 1983.

2. The family chose to keep the tapes as a part of their family's history.

3. It was decided that only family members would know that the family was being studied. Friends were simply informed that the researcher was residing with them while working on a research project. The Congers live within walking distance of a graduate center and some friends simply assumed that the researcher was involved there. Since no one directly asked, this assumption was neither denied or affirmed.

4. The family agreed to read the historical and descriptive material. They read a draft form of Chapter IV

and advised the researcher by mail that they were satisfied with it as written. The researcher promised to send the family a copy of the study.

5. Family members chose fictitious names amid much laughter from the daughters, who chose names for themselves and their families. Jack and Harriet chose fictitious first and last names for themselves and other relatives, and selected names for their children who are dead. The researcher made one input to the selection process of the family. Since the real name of the Congers' last child was derived from her father's name, it was suggested that the child's fictitious name be a derivative of the father's fictitious name. The couple agreed that this naming had significance and chose the fictitious names of Jack and Jacqueline. The researcher chose fictitious names for friends and neighbors.

In order to minimize potential risk to the family of invasion of privacy and inconvenience caused by the presence of the researcher, she chose to observe only in the common living area of the home. It was also explained to the participants that they always had the right to pass if they preferred not to answer questions, and that they might withdraw from the study at any time without recrimination.

Techniques for Collecting and Recording Data

Prior to beginning research, in order to try out the method for recording data, the researcher completed a three day participant observation experience with a family. The

family was known by the researcher and her consultants but was not identified as having met criteria for selection for this research. The family met some but not all of the essential criteria. As a result of this experience the researcher refined her fieldnote format.

Following is a summary of the techniques used for the recording of data:

1. Condensed fieldnotes

A condensed account was written as conversation and behavior occurred or as soon afterward as possible. For speed in recording, key phrases, single words and unconnected phrases were used.

2. Expanded fieldnotes

Wide margins were used for purposes of analysis. A copy of the form developed by the researcher is in Appendix C.

3. Journal

A record of personal reactions and feelings was kept while the researcher was in the field.

4. Memos

Expanded thoughts on categories and relationships that were grounded in the data and not speculative, were recorded on self-carboning paper. The duplicate copies were sorted according to categories before writing the theory. A copy of the form developed by the researcher is in Appendix D.

5. Tape recording

Some interviews and conversations were taped. All interviews were private with the exception of those including both Jack and Harriet. Notes were also made during tapings and verbatim transcriptions were accomplished as soon afterward as possible.

The following techniques were selected as desirable to elicit the kinds of information needed for this study. They were selected after reading about various techniques and experimenting with them with other families.

1. Kinship chart

A kinship chart was developed to help organize historical data and to help orient the reader.

2. Mapping of the family system

A family system map as explained by Wedemeyer and Grotevant (1982) was used as a projective technique by the researcher with the husband and the wife.

3. Mapping the floor plan of the home

A simplified mapping of the common living areas of the home was developed to help orient the reader.

4. Oral histories

Some historical information was recorded to provide context and different perspectives for various events and situations.

5. Recording the events of a "typical" day

Selection of the day in the life of the family was

arbitrary, except that care was taken to ensure that the day was not a special occasion.

In the next section is the description of the implementation of the strategies used for studying the family.

Implementation of Strategies

In this section the researcher's use of the strategies of participant observation and ethnographic interviewing for studying behavior, language and artifacts is described. For the sequencing of the strategies and techniques used, see the Calendar of Daily Activities of Researcher in Appendix E.

Participant observation is a strategy of ethnography in which the researcher is actually a research instrument. It enables a holistic view of the group under study. Types of participation range along a continuum from complete to no involvement. This researcher intended to assume the role of moderate to active participation. However in actuality participation was quite full. In this articulate, verbally oriented family the role of passive observer was difficult to assume. They wanted to include the researcher in daily and leisure time activities. She accompanied them on four shopping trips, three restaurant meals, seven church related activities and three visits to other homes. The researcher quickly discovered that some of the richest data emerged as she observed and spontaneously formulated questions in the context of their daily activities.

In this busy household with frequent guests, the researcher was concerned that her presence would not create an added burden. She assumed the role of guest for the first three days until she was familiarized with their daily routine. During this time the only assistance of any significance accomplished by the researcher for the family was the sewing together of blocks for a "log cabin" quilt. In a response to the question, "What can I do to help?," Harriet suggested that this would be helpful. The quilt was to be a gift for Alice. If the blocks were sewn together, Alice, who was visiting her parents, could see how it looked before returning to her home. Harriet seemed reluctant to allow the researcher to assume any responsibilities. No doubt she was aware that late hours were being kept while fieldnotes were being expanded and analyzed at night. The researcher sensed that Harriet might enjoy a reprieve from preparing the family's main meal each day. This was an easy and enjoyable task for the researcher to assume. Harriet soon relinquished the menu planning also. The open kitchen made an excellent vantage point for observing activities in the family room, living room and the study. These participatory activities had an additional benefit which was the rapid development of rapport. The researcher's high degree of involvement, however, increased the amount of late hours spent clarifying and augmenting many hastily scribbled notes.

Initially the researcher intended to observe the spouses as nearly equally in terms of time as possible. However she soon decided that it would not be appropriate behavior to accompany Jack very often on his frequent errands around town unless Harriet went also. Because of this decision, Harriet was observed more than Jack. Since it was the marital dyad that was of prime interest to the researcher, many of her efforts concentrated on observations of the interactions between them.

During the first few days of residence the researcher mostly observed. Then another strategy, ethnographic interviewing, was employed. Strategies of observing and interviewing supported and confirmed each other. The researcher noted much congruence between the discourse and actions of both Jack and Harriet. No elements of deception were detected.

The researcher was amazed and delighted with the depth in sharing and the openness of family members. They were very articulate. The relationship quickly moved to full cooperation. Probably because informants were so open, the researcher felt extremely responsible to safeguard their rights and sensitivities. Spradley (1979) advises that no matter how unobtrusive the ethnographer tries to be, he or she always pries into the lives of informants. "All informants must have the protection of saying things 'off the record' which never find their way into the ethnographer's fieldnotes" (p. 36). Twice during interviews

with Harriet she asked the researcher to "hold her pencil in the air" while she offered an off the record explanation. Only once was any requested information withheld. That incident is described in its context in the presentation of the grounded theory.

Informants were typically relaxed. There were two exceptions. Sue had misunderstood and thought that her marriage was under scrutiny. She immediately relaxed when she learned that it was only her parents' marriage that was being studied. Sue explained that her family had made a major move recently and their young son was still experiencing some adjustment problems. Jack's father expressed concern that he might not be able to do what the researcher wanted. She explained that she would ask for him mostly to reminisce (historical recall of events) about the family, and that when questions were asked, he could decline to answer anytime he wished.

The informants literally became teachers for the researcher as Spradley (1979) suggests. Much interviewing was carried out casually during friendly conversations while informants were unaware, or scarcely aware that they were even being interviewed. Some of the researcher's most useful data were obtained in this manner. Harriet talked freely on several occasions while she quilted in the basement sewing area. She was more relaxed and less hurried in this setting, giving her time to reflect. Jack initiated visits from time to time with the researcher to add to his

reflections concerning subjects mentioned earlier. At times excessive notetaking seemed inappropriate and the researcher made sketchy notes lest rapport be lessened or lost. Questioning began about specific events of everyday life since they were less personal in nature. Later questioning was more personal and focused. The researcher asked a few retrospective questions that were a historical recall of events. Each family member was asked to recall the events surrounding one daughter's death. It was assumed that this would add insight into the sources of the family's strength.

The researcher quickly learned not to anticipate responses nor to make assumptions concerning language, behavior or artifacts. Three artifacts of the family proved particularly useful as sources of data. On the day following the researcher's arrival, Harriet showed her a series of family photograph albums arranged in chronological order and offered to answer any questions about the contents. The researcher looked through them all and gleaned much historical data about the family. The folder containing the handicapped grandson Philip's medical history was extremely useful as well. Several hours one night were spent studying them. Increased empathy for Philip and his family developed as the researcher became more keenly aware of the painful struggles and frustrations they had experienced. The third artifact that was helpful was a video tape of Harriet's recent retirement party which was held in the school library.

In reflecting about the experience of studying this family the researcher identified with Wolcott (1981) who said,

I feel particularly fortunate when I am treated as a privileged observer, allowed to witness more of the total scene and entrusted with more personal opinions than are shared with the casual visitor because my purposes for inquiry are regarded as legitimate and sincere. (p. 258)

In this section the ethnographic procedure was described. The researcher using the strategies of participant observation and ethnographic interviewing focused on language, behavior and artifacts to discover meanings to the persons involved. One of the challenges of the ethnographic procedure is that the researcher cannot know where it will lead ahead of time. Flexibility and spontaneity are required. The conceptual categories emerge from the data. During analyses the researcher constantly redesigns, while attempting to suspend preconceived expectations and knowledge of existing theories. The researcher should not assume anything. This process will be explained more fully in the following section.

Implementation of Grounded Theory

Many aspects of the Congers family would be interesting to pursue in depth. If one tried to look at everything, it would be an overwhelming task. In order not to lose control the research was held within definite bounds. The four guiding questions stated earlier were central throughout the research, creating a holistic but incomplete view of the family, with specific emphases.

The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was followed by the researcher in the following manner.

1. Comparing incidents applicable in each category.

Incidents were coded in the margins of the fieldnotes. When each incident was coded it was compared to previous ones in the category. This comparison starts to generate properties of the category. After a category was coded three or four times, coding was stopped and a memo written on ideas. For memo writing, an illustration was used only once.

2. Integrating categories and their properties.

Coding continued and gradually comparisons of incidents were made with properties of categories.

3. Delimiting the theory.

Delimiting occurred at the theory level and the category level. By constantly comparing and reducing terminology, the researcher strove for parsimony and applicability of the theory.

4. Writing the theory.

The coded data and memos were processed. The memos provided the content behind the categories. The coded data validated points and provided illustrations.

In following this procedure the researcher attempted to fulfill the four properties that are required for developing

grounded theory, that is, that the theory (a) closely fit the substantive area where it will be used, (b) be easily understandable to laymen, (c) be general enough to apply to many related daily situations, and (d) allow the user partial control over the structure and process of daily situations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In the presentation of the emerging grounded theory examples were used to give specific details about situations, and to demonstrate that categories were meaningful to the marital couple. The examples were analyzed and presented out of sequence in excerpts to substantiate the categories.

Limitations

In an ethnographic study the researcher actually becomes a research instrument. Therefore the research is subject to all the limitations of the researcher. In addition to personal limitations, this researcher studied her own culture which is often considered limiting as well. It is usually considered preferable to study an unfamiliar culture because, according to Spradley (1979), "When ethnographers study unfamiliar cultures, this unfamiliarity keeps them from taking things for granted. It makes them sensitive to things that have become so commonplace to informants that they ignore them" (p. 50).

Wolcott (1981), however, sees importance in studying one's own culture.

I would like to suggest that just as we have in the past held firmly to the belief that the complete

ethnographer ought to do fieldwork in a quite different society from his or her own, we now begin to think of conducting ethnographic research at home as an equally important part of a well-rounded career. (p. 265)

This researcher identified with Wolcott (1981), who stated the advantages of studying in his own culture.

Here, I feel, I observe, participate and write under conditions in which I am most likely to understand most of what is going on, with humor, nuance, double entendre, conflicting explanations, and so forth all apt to go noticed rather than unnoticed. (p. 265)

The study is also limited in that data from one case certainly are not generalizable to an entire population. One family selected from a particular culture and a socio-economic group within that culture, cannot be representative. It is hoped, however, that the researcher and her consultants selected a couple representative of high quality high stability marriage.

Another limitation of this study is that all of the observing was accomplished during one intensive 17 day period. The study might have benefited by a somewhat longer time or perhaps additional time in another season of the year. The researcher did benefit from additional time spent in reflection after leaving the field.

In this methodology chapter the research approach and research procedure have been explained. Following in Chapter IV is a history of the family and description of the family members. As Spradley (1979) suggested, "In order for the reader to see the people we study, we must show them through particulars, not merely talk about them in generalities" (p. 207).

CHAPTER IV HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF FAMILY

The Congers live in Riverview (a fictitious name), a town of 30,000, with a surrounding area population of 100,000, in the northwestern region of the United States. Two-thirds of the people depend upon one industry for their livelihood and there has been a history of good employment until recently. The town has excellent schools, opportunities for recreation and, in general, is a pleasant place to live. It is hoped that the history and descriptions that follow in this chapter will help bring the Congers family to life, and make more meaningful the presentation of the emerging theory that follows in Chapter V.

History of Family

Jack Congers was born in Texas, but moved with his family to Oklahoma when he was two years old. The family had many relatives nearby. He especially remembers going to visit his grandparents. Jack, who was third of five sons, at an early age had many responsibilities on their farm. He attended college one year at a church sponsored institution in the Midwest, then he joined his brother, Mark, on the West Coast where they both worked in a defense plant (Fieldnotes, April 29).

Harriet was born in eastern Colorado. Because the area became a dust bowl the family moved to western Colorado when she was nine. During World War II they moved to the West

Coast for her father to work in a defense plant. In December 1942, Harriet met Jack while attending church with her family. There was a five year age difference between them and friendship did not develop right away. After two years, when Harriet graduated from high school and Jack went into the Navy, parting was difficult. That fall Harriet went to the same midwestern college which Jack had attended. When Jack was granted a leave to attend his grandmother's funeral, he arranged to visit Harriet and they became engaged (Fieldnotes, April 29).

The following June of 1945 Jack and Harriet were married in the church where they had met, then moved to be near the base where Jack was stationed. Since housing was difficult to find, they first lived in one bedroom of a woman's house. She kept insisting on telling Harriet about the terrible reputation of sailors. They were relieved when they found a garage apartment available to rent just two blocks from the church where Jack was youth leader. Much of their lives centered around church activities (Fieldnotes, April 29).

One month before Pearl was born in 1946, Jack was discharged, and the family moved to another West Coast city. For several months they lived with Jack's brother, Mark, and his wife, Rose. Harriet and Rose worked out cooking arrangements and most of the time living together was enjoyable, except that at times, according to Harriet, Jack's and Mark's teasing got out of hand. They yearned for

cookies like their mother made. Finally Harriet and Rose wrote to her and requested the recipe. Mama Congers did not send the recipe, but in essence told Jack and Mark to stop "bugging" their wives and eat their cookies (Fieldnotes, April 27).

Soon Harriet and Jack purchased a duplex, moved into one half and rented the other half. This was their home until Pearl was eighteen months old. Then Jack got a better job in Riverview, the community where they are still living. At first they lived with Papa and Mama Congers who had preceded them there. Another brother of Jack's and his wife were temporarily living with them also, until they could arrange separate housing.

Before long Jack and Harriet moved to a small farm that they had purchased near town. Here Harriet's parents lived for awhile in a trailer in the back yard. Not long after the second child, Marian, was born (in 1948), there was a reduction in the work force necessitating another move.

Next, Jack took a job with the Bureau of Reclamation and moved the family to be near his work site, where they lived in a small trailer. Pearl's and Marian's only play area outside was nothing but dirt. Harriet was hospitalized twice while living here because of hemorrhaging during her third pregnancy. Their first and only son, Tim, was born placenta praevia in 1950, and died soon after.

When Jack was able to get employment again in Riverview they returned, this time purchasing a house in a nearby

community. Meanwhile, their name was on a list for housing in Riverview. Finally they were able to move into a duplex there, where they enjoyed living close to the church. The move did not make Jack close to work, however. Travel still added an extra two to three hours to his day.

Their fourth child, Alice, was born in 1951. In 1952, Marian died during what was expected to be a routine tonsillectomy. As Harriet described the events of that year, "Alice was born one year before we lost Marian, and we had lost Tim in the interim [so] we double treasured her" (Fieldnotes, April 26). Next Sue, their fifth child, was born in 1952, seventeen months after Alice. Helen was born in 1954. Their last child, Jacqueline, was born in 1956, but died soon after birth.

After several years, the Congers purchased a ranch style house that served their family's needs well. This was their home for the remainder of the children's school years.

When the children were all in school, Harriet completed her bachelor's and later her master's degrees. She was a K-12 school librarian until she retired early, in 1982. Jack worked in a local industry until 1969, when he returned to college to complete his bachelor's degree. He completed his master's degree while continuing to teach middle school science. Jack retired early because of a severe back injury in 1978 (Fieldnotes, April 28).

Pearl married Ralph in 1965, after attending for one year the same church sponsored college that her parents had

attended before marriage. By 1972, Alice and Sue were attending the same institution and Helen was a senior in high school.

On January 18, 1972, Pearl and her three-year-old son, Philip, were severely injured in a car-train accident. Philip suffered multiple fractures of his legs, compound depressed skull fracture in the right temporal region and multiple lacerations on his face (Hospital report, January 1972).

As Jack described,

With Tim and Jacqueline, we never had a chance to know them. Marian we knew as a happy, vivacious, cute little girl. But it was much more severe, more tragic with Pearl and the possibility of losing Philip and the damage to him. We were very much aware of this . . . the pressure of the situation. We were in the hospital, waiting, hoping, praying. Probably the hardest thing for us to face in that situation was after probably two and a half days of waiting, Ralph, Harriet and I were sitting there with the doctor, and discussing the situation and realizing that there was no possible hope of recovery for her. She was on all life support facilities. So we thought it best to take her off those facilities in order to [let her] die, which we did. First we asked to see her once again.

Jack wept.

And within ten minutes, she was gone. . . . I'm inclined to be a little emotional and I'm sorry, but to relive this, it's kind of hard. (Interview, May 2)

Philip was not expected to live. For eight months he was hospitalized. Every weekend for three months his grandparents, Jack and Harriet, traveled four hours each way over a mountain pass to be with him. As Harriet explained, "We would hold Philip, sing to him, talk to him and try to remind him of things. But he showed no sign, not even a

flicker. And then I would cry half the way home" (Fieldnotes, April 27). They continued to visit him frequently.

After Philip was released to go home he received inconsistent care from his father. The medical report stated that Philip,

was living with his father who, although he showed obvious care and love for Philip, was unable to provide adequate caretaking for a boy with Philip's disabilities. During that period of time it should be noted that his father was holding down two jobs. (Hospital Discharge Report, January 31, 1975)

One weekend when Harriet and Jack went to visit Philip there was no response to their knocks at the door. The door was open so they decided to go in. They found Philip tied into his highchair in front of the television set. He was soaking wet. Ralph was working nights. He had sub-let a room to a young man who was supposed to tend to Philip's needs. However he was asleep. Harriet's reaction was, "We've got to get Philip out of here." Jack said they had to "hang tough" for awhile; that the suggestion had to come from Ralph. Finally, one day about a month later Ralph appeared at the Congers' home with a couple of boxes of clothing and Philip. He said he couldn't handle it any more and left. They did not hear from him for about a year. There was no contact. Even now, there is no contact unless Ralph is coming to see Philip. He occasionally brings Philip gifts (Fieldnotes, April 27).

In the ranch style home caring for Philip was almost impossible; especially in the bathroom. One time as they

were trying to lift Philip onto the toilet they accidentally broke his leg. Harriet had been saying that they could manage, but finally came to the conclusion that another house was needed (Fieldnotes, April 27).

After a long, involved lawsuit, it was determined in an out-of-court settlement that the railroad was liable for the accident. Philip and his father received a sizeable settlement. A barrier-free home was especially designed and built for Philip with some of the money received for settlement. At the time of this study, Philip, almost fifteen years old, is in the custody of his grandparents who report annually to the court. The three live together in Philip's house. As Helen, the youngest daughter, jokingly described their location, "It's on pill and drill hill."--meaning where many of the town's doctors and dentists live (Fieldnotes, April 27).

Sue, married to Bill, lives near her parents, with their son, Dennis. Alice, Henry and Baby Hank live across the state. Jack described his sons-in-law, Bill and Henry, as "good fellows." Helen has just completed law school and is at home preparing to take the state bar exam (Fieldnotes, May 27).

In the following sub-section is a description of family members. Occasionally, in quotations from fieldnotes a word is underlined. This is to indicate emphasis on the part of the speaker.

Description of Family Members

Harriet Congers, 56, is typically cheerful. There is a pleasant timbre in her voice and conversations are frequently punctuated with easy laughter. She is large boned and overweight, but carries her weight well. Harriet's hair is worn in a softly curled style and is mostly gray with hints of the golden red color of earlier years. Jack refers to her as a "bleached out redhead" (Tape, May 2). He said that she has been very loving and he could always trust her. One of his reasons for marrying her was because she was able to do a lot of things he liked. Jack explained,

She is a musician. She can do many things well. I won't say she is the best, I'm not that crazy, but she can do pretty well at nearly anything she puts a hand to. She's hard working. Not so much as once, but the will is still there. (Interview, May 2)

Papa Congers described Harriet as "more a daughter than a daughter-in-law. She's been very true to Jack in trying conditions and hard times" (Interview, May 4).

Jack explained that,

Some of our difficult times have been through her, in a way, because of health I guess, although she has had pretty good health.

He recalled past years.

But carrying children, she had some trouble with that: leg problems, arthritic problems, surgery a few times. She has had more of those problems than maybe the average, I don't know. When that happens and you've got a bunch of small children and trying to do a lot of things, you feel kind of depressed. I never did take too much to housework. Truthfully, I think she liked things better than housework. (Interview, May 2)

Harriet's three daughters added to the description, each on separate occasions.

Alice:

I think that Dad has always admired Mom, you know, she has always kept her mind going, and has always been busy. She may not have always been the most attractive thing in the world, you know, like a fox at all ages,

Alice laughed.

But she always keeps her mind going. (Interview, April 25)

Sue:

I like it that she is intelligent. . . . She is pretty progressive, too. She knows what's goin' on and never gets too shocked by it. She doesn't drag her feet a lot either. (Interview, April 28)

Helen:

She is on the growing edge. She's, . . . my best friend. When she used to help out at summer camp everybody would say, "I wish your Mom was my Mom," and I never heard that said about other people. She doesn't like herself as much as I'd like her to. She doesn't take time out to appreciate herself. I have seen her at her lowest times and usually that has to do with feelings of inadequacy. (Interview, May 5)

Jack Congers, 61, is tall, and has a large bone structure. His dark hair is turning gray. He has a very hearty laugh that Alice's baby, Hank, tries to imitate. As Harriet described his relationship with this tiny boy to a friend, "Baby Hank holds up his arms and Jack just melts" (Fieldnotes, April 26). According to Harriet, Jack is a super man who has overcome a lot of upbringing, that is growing up in a home with a "chauvinistic" father who was "tight fisted" with money (Fieldnotes, April 27).

Harriet called Jack, to the researcher, a "kind of super-jock" and commented aside that she has nothing but contempt for super-jocks. "He was extremely athletic, but is more of a spectator now, so has a weight problem" (Fieldnotes, April 27).

Jack's spectating is not by choice but because of a severe back injury a few years ago that necessitated a laminectomy and an early retirement. His health is generally good, with two exceptions. His back is still a source of great pain, and he has hypertension.

Sue gave her account of the situation surrounding his back injury.

I know that Daddy's [early retirement] was related to Philip. You know, it was his back, but if Philip hadn't been around, he probably would have stuck with it [teaching]. That's my impression. That was the first summer we [Sue and Bill] were in Europe and they decided they were coming over for six weeks and they would do all the care of Philip. And Daddy would push him all over heck and gone on those cobblestone streets. I'm sure that did a lot, and up to that point they were doing a lot of the lifting. But you know, I always wondered, too, if there was anything emotional related to it. Because they flew home and I think that very weekend was when Uncle Mark died. And I think that I have read that emotional strain can also add to all that. So I think it's a combination. (Interview, April 28)

Jack described his relationship to Mark as closer than with any of his other brothers. All of their lives they had defended and supported each other. Mark and his wife, Rose, lived in the same community with Jack and Harriet for many years. Mark collapsed suddenly while jogging near his home and was discovered by a neighbor. He died several hours later (Interview, May 2).

Harriet is especially appreciative that Jack was willing to be both financially and emotionally supportive of her continuing education. She recalled,

When times got tough, he would encourage me to hang in there. I saw a lot of potential in him. I dinged away at him, nagged. I wanted him to find out. I think his going back to school has been a very good thing. He understands the academic world much better now. (Fieldnotes, April 27)

She states that he was a good teacher, but is content now "puttering" and "tending to Philip's finances" (Fieldnotes, April 27). In continuing her description, Harriet reflected that he used to like to hunt and he killed a deer once. The experience was a bit traumatic and he doesn't hunt any more.

Sue described her father as "very loving in a very firm way. It's real hard to get out from underneath that power at times" (Fieldnotes, April 28).

On another occasion, Sue explained, "He has a strong sense of responsibility. I would think perhaps too strong. I think even now he would support me fully if I came home. He would do it for anybody, really" (Fieldnotes, April 28).

Helen recalled that her father,

was a very strict disciplinarian. Couldn't handle emotions in us. That was his weakness. He was never around when I was growing up. That part always bothered me because when he wasn't working at work, he was at home sleeping when he worked shift work, or else he was in the study working. [He was] a very strong spiritual head [of the family]. I admired him. He did special things all the time. He was always giving. . . . My Dad's very disciplined, very organized. (Interview, May 5)

Harriet concluded, "They [the daughters] have hurt him, disappointed him. But he still loves them. He is a very

forgiving person." Harriet's voice sounded choked with a few tears. "He is super critical at times and super loving at times" (Fieldnotes, April 27).

Alice, 32, is Jack's and Harriet's oldest living child. She is a beautiful woman, with black hair sprinkled with a lot of gray which she will not let anyone touch. According to her mother she was a difficult child, a tease, and rebellious as a teenager. She was in accelerated classes in school, but grades were not particularly vital to her. In college, she did everything to flaunt the rules. Alice did try to conform to her parents' educational wishes for her, but dropped out of college in her second year. Harriet feels that Alice typically sells herself short and works at tasks "beneath her" (Fieldnotes, April 26). Alice is very outgoing and talented. In school she played piano and violin and also sang. She is a creative writer, probably capable of writing for publication; loves drama and is a first-rate "ham." Gardening is one of her pleasures and she is proud of her flowers. Harriet said she keeps a very clean and fairly neat home (Fieldnotes, April 26).

For Alice, the sun rose and set in Pearl, but she hates Ralph and says she would not let him in the house. Alice was a product of the 1960s and tested the values of her parents before clarifying her own. She is married to Henry who is an ex-Marine and a policeman (Fieldnotes, April 27). He is not openly affectionate, however his deep caring for his family is clearly evident. Baby Hank is a warm, cuddly,

affectionate child with a contagious smile (Fieldnotes, April 20).

Alice, Henry and Baby Hank live four hours away by car and visit Harriet and Jack infrequently, that is a few times a year. They came for a short visit while the researcher was residing in the parental home.

Her parents wish she did not smoke and that she was interested in church. Harriet said of her, "I think Alice went into marriage with her eyes wide open. She is very congruent. What you see is what you get. . . . All in all, Alice is a pretty neat kid" (Fieldnotes, April 26).

Sue, 31, is energetic, fun-loving, considerate of others and an easy person with whom to talk. She has the dark coloring of her father and larger than average bone structure. Sue wants to lose some weight. Her husband, Bill, is supportive and tries to help her but does not nag. Sue, Bill and their son, Dennis, live nearby and Sue and Dennis especially, are frequent visitors in Jack's and Harriet's home.

Harriet explained that Sue had the most difficult spot in the family. "She got the short end of the deal," her mother commented (Fieldnotes, April 26). School was not as easy for Sue as for her sisters, and she saw herself as a fat, ugly child. Alice "picked" on her and delighted in making her cry. While Alice was popular in high school, Sue would pass the time telling "dirty" jokes with some of the boys in a music practice room (Fieldnotes, April 26). When

Sue was in elementary school, her parents decided she needed something that would be just her "area." She chose the cello. She has become very professional and has a bachelor's degree in music (Fieldnotes, April 26).

Sue met Bill in college. When Bill spent his senior year in Europe he sent Sue money to come and see him. Her mother explained that Sue was of age, but she always confessed, even when she wouldn't have had to. No one would have known about the trip. During her college years Sue looked with disdain upon a cousin who "slept around," calling her "Freda the Frog" because she would "leap from one bed to another." Kent, Helen's ex-husband, was Bill's college roommate. Sue was very close to him. He was a good, supportive person and like a brother to her. (Fieldnotes, April 26).

Harriet said, "I'm not sure that Sue ever really knew I loved her" (Fieldnotes, April 26). Five or six years after Sue and Bill were married he convinced her that she might be a happier person if she had some counseling and he accompanied her for it.

Sue is recognized as an excellent homemaker, an expert cook who also manages to watch a lot of television. She takes her parenting responsibilities very seriously. While she was pregnant she abstained not only from wine but even from carbonated beverages. Her son, Dennis, who has beautiful red hair is a friendly, vivacious child. His

animated speech is full of inflection (Fieldnotes, April 26).

Sue does not want to be strapped into a regular church routine, however she is very willing to play her cello for services whenever asked (Fieldnotes, April 13). Of the three daughters, the researcher had the most interaction with Sue.

Helen, 28, was a large, lethargic baby who was content to observe. The other Congers babies had all been active (Fieldnotes, May 5). As an adult she is tall, large boned, has the dark hair of her father and is concerned with physical fitness. According to her mother she eats "weird" food (Fieldnotes, May 5).

Her school years were spent in accelerated classes. By the time she entered high school she was excelling in vocal music and today often sings solos for church services, responding whenever requested. When Helen was a senior in high school she was chosen as the student representative to the school board. Her presence was appreciated by the board because she was not afraid to ask questions or make suggestions. Harriet felt that during high school Helen developed both a facade and a lot of stage presence and that in a way it was good for her, because she had had a poor self-image (Fieldnotes, May 5).

Helen dated very little during her high school years. Harriet explained, "Life had been kind of a fairy tale for Helen. She had not really observed us [parents] as people

and didn't have realistic ideas about marriage" (Fieldnotes, May 5). The first couple of years of her marriage to Kent were tolerable but then Helen started getting "liberated" and verbally abusive with Kent. They each frustrated the other. Finally, Kent got physically abusive. After their divorce, Helen worked in Riverview for awhile and then went to law school on the East Coast. While the researcher was residing in the home, Helen completed her exams and returned home to study for her state bar exam (Fieldnotes, May 4).

Helen is considered to have a rather "prickly" personality. She is a determined, hard worker. One evidence of this is she entered law school with a liberal arts background. Right now, Helen may be almost consumed with her own concerns, but she also evidenced genuine caring for others. In thinking about Helen's needs, Harriet said, "She is a long ways from being out of the woods. I don't know what I can do for her, I guess just be there" (Fieldnotes, May 5). Helen considered her mother as her best friend and teasingly calls her "Mommie Dearest," referring to the book about Joan Crawford, no doubt (Fieldnotes, May 7).

Philip, almost 15, is an attractive boy with golden red hair, blue eyes and a fair complexion. He has a sturdy build and is seldom sick. The car-train accident that occurred when Philip was three, left him severely damaged and his mother dead. It has been a long difficult struggle, but Philip's condition is very slowly improving. Today he

is still brain damaged and cannot walk. Philip is waiting for leg braces that are being especially made for him. It is hoped they will help him to stand. He is now able, without braces, to transfer himself from his wheelchair to another chair. His teeth on the side where he was hit are slowly straightening. Philip's speech is deliberate, but quite intelligible. However, patience and concentrated attention are required by the listener. His favorite activities are playing with his computer, table games and visiting with whomever will take time to listen. Harriet and Jack are very adept in understanding his speech. For the most part, Philip's behavior is very socially acceptable, and he "gets along well with people" (Fieldnotes, April 30).

According to Helen,

Philip tends to be a little spoiled. It can't go without saying, they [Jack and Harriet] do have some attitudes that well, he shouldn't really even have to be in this position so we don't mind giving him a little extra, because he's had to go through more than a normal little boy would have to go through." (Interview, May 5)

Sue explained,

Alice thinks that Philip should not be coddled in any sense of the word. I think he maybe needs a little more structure and discipline about what he needs to learn to do, as far as walking or whatever. And I see my Mom and Dad struggling, my Mother especially. This is their grandson and this is what happened as a result of a horrible tragedy. It's hard not to want to just hold him. They want to make it easier for him. But then, too, you know, there is the frustration, because he is a frustrating person. I think at times Mother wishes she had more patience for all of that. And it's related to how she feels about what's happened to him and Pearl. . . . I think she may feel like she should have unlimited patience and affection for him, because

he has been through such a horrible thing.
(Fieldnotes, April 27)

Philip attends special classes in public school near his home and is transported by bus. Harriet and Jack are not pleased with the quality of instruction he is receiving. They supplement by having him tutored at home and also are well equipped with books, games and toys that are stimulating intellectually and help with developing motor control.

Philip's responsibilities are mostly related to self care, however he assists the family some. He was glad to see it rain one day because it meant he would not have to water the strawberries (Fieldnotes, April 31).

Jack wished that he could teach Philip about the value of money. At this time Philip has little comprehension concerning numbers and concepts of more or less. He understands that money is used to pay for things, but that is all. Jack continued, "He's got the normal [sexual] desires, I think--which pleases me. It's not always easy to live with, but that's life" (Fieldnotes, May 5).

Harriet said that, "Jack is very firm with him but also very fair. The mere mention of a spanking is usually enough." Jack keeps a stick on top of the bookshelves in the study. It is a piece of wood molding. He says it's for molding character. "When we first got him, he was really hard to handle." Philip was growing rapidly and they were concerned that they might soon have a huge tyrant on their

hands (Fieldnotes, May 1). Jack would almost cry, but would give him a few swats.

Harriet is very patient with Philip and tries in every way possible to treat him as a normal boy. Philip feeds himself, however it is a painfully slow, halting process. He can accomplish it all except for getting the last few bits from his plate.

One Saturday morning, Harriet, Jack, Philip and the researcher were eating breakfast. The researcher commented to Harriet that Philip was a good eater. Harriet responded, "He will eat anything that isn't moving." Then Philip with a twinkle in his eye, stabbed a bit of food with his fork and held it up with his trembling hand. He said, "Quit moving so I can eat you!"

For the study, Harriet chose the fictitious name Philip for him "because at this stage in his life he is difficult to fill up" (Fieldnotes, May 6).

Papa and Mama Congers are the parents of Jack. Papa is 84 and Mama 82. They are called Papa and Mama by each other, by family members and also by members of their local church community. They were married 67 years ago on Mama's 15th birthday. When Papa told the researcher this, she remarked, "Those teenage marriages never last, do they?" He chuckled (Fieldnotes, April 24). Papa had an eighth grade and Mama a third grade formal education; however, both of them have schooled themselves well beyond those few years (Fieldnotes, May 5).

Harriet described Papa as being very chauvinistic. She was appalled when she read the book, The Total Woman, but declared that Papa read it also and thought it was wonderful. She said, "He practically thinks that it is the salvation of the world" (Fieldnotes, May 2). Papa also has the reputation, which is affirmed by both Harriet and Jack, of being "very close with the penny" (Fieldnotes, May 2). Harriet recalled an incident when they were living with them for the first few months after they moved to Riverview. Mama said one day, "I need some new underwear, but Papa doesn't think so." In order to have some measure of financial control she would hide money. Harriet explained that she made a point to tell Jack about this and that he has really tried to be much more reasonable than Papa (Fieldnotes, May 2).

Mama is disoriented most of the time. Some days she doesn't even know Papa. One day she said, "The children were ready for breakfast before we were this morning." Moments later Jack asked her to offer a prayer of blessing before the noon meal. Her prayer was beautifully expressed and apparently very meaningful to all who were present. When she finished, the researcher said she wished she had that recorded on tape. "That's what I was thinking," agreed Harriet (Fieldnotes, April 24).

Mama is restless and often wanders at night, making it difficult for Papa to keep track of her. Recently he made the decision to put their house up for sale; in April 1983

they moved into their motor home. Papa insisted that it is much easier to care for her in the more confined area. The move has been confusing to Mama, however. After Sunday dinner with the Congers, she said, "We must be getting back to the wagon yard." In view of Papa's life-long chauvinism, his family thinks it is quite commendable that he is now doing all of the housekeeping chores and the complete care of Mama. Jack stated to the researcher that Papa is physically strong and able to do this (Fieldnotes, April 24).

When the researcher interviewed Papa he looked strained and tired. He also shed a few tears when recalling about Pearl. Because of this, probing was discontinued and the taping was not prolonged (Fieldnotes, May 4).

Description of the Home

Philip's house (Figure 3) was built with part of his settlement money. The set of keys loaned the researcher were labeled, "Philip's House" (Fieldnotes, May 2). During the first few days until Alice's family left, the researcher resided in "Helen's corner" of the basement (Fieldnotes, April 28). Since Helen is single and has been away at school, she has a storage and bedroom area there. When she arrived home, the researcher moved into the basement television room and shared a bath with Helen.

The main floor of Philip's house has a large open area. The kitchen is an excellent vantage point for observing activities in the family room and to some extent the living

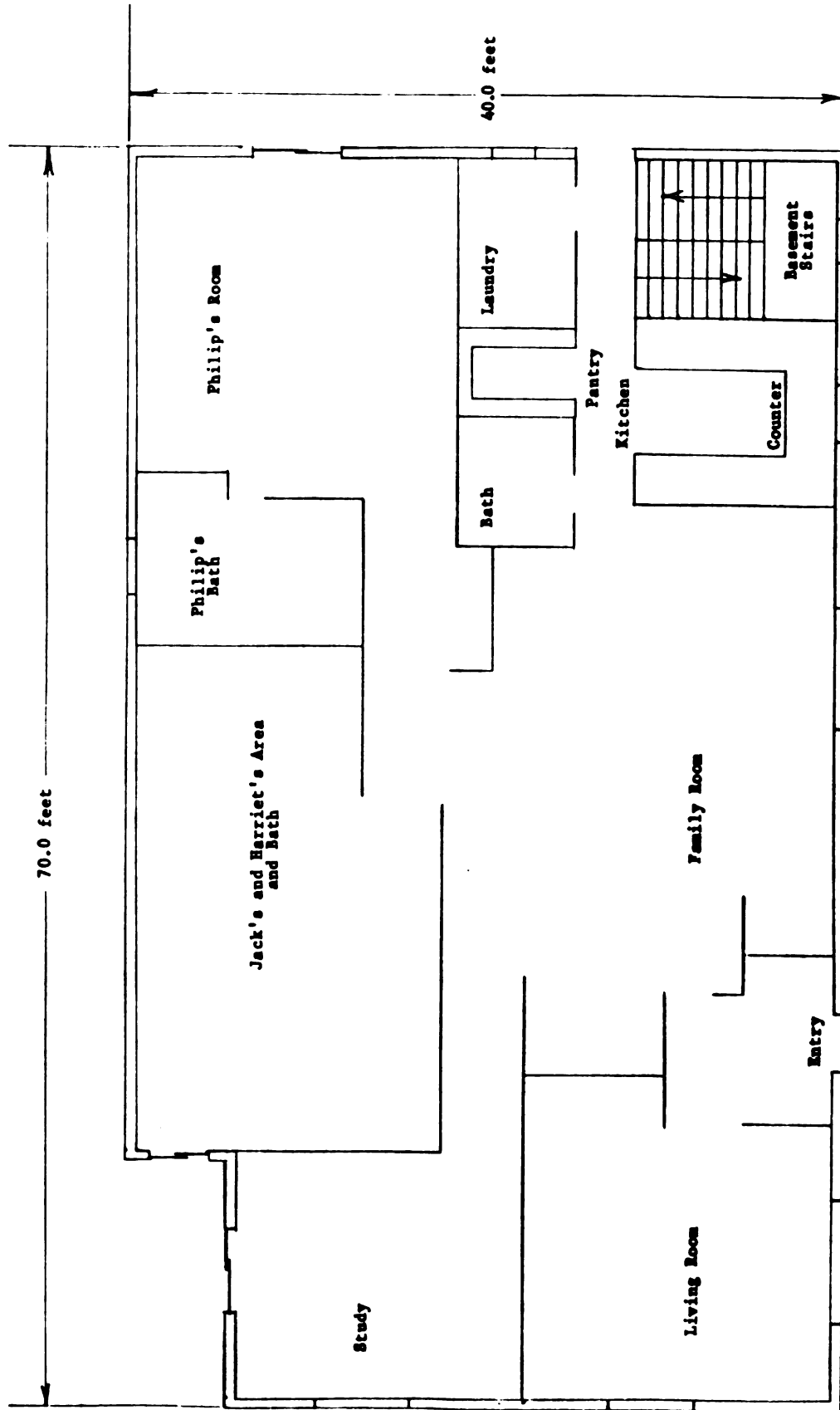


Figure 3. Floor plan of Philip's House

room and the study. Part of the front yard can be viewed from the kitchen window. Jack and Philip have desks placed back to back in the study. Philip's computer is on his desk. Harriet has a small desk in the kitchen. Jack and Harriet have a large bedroom area and private bath. This is omitted from the plans because the researcher never entered the area. Philip's bedroom and bath are across the hall from his grandparents. In the hall is a large storage area, well equipped with educational toys and games. In the corner of the family room closest to this storage area is the game table where Philip enjoys playing with whomever will join him. The central area for most family activities is the kitchen and family room. The living room houses a piano and organ and is used more for producing music than for formal visiting.

In general, Philip's house is attractive and emits a feeling of friendliness and warmth. It is clean and orderly, but not excessively. The floor plans have been altered because Jack expressed concern about the legality of copying them.

According to Spradley (1979), a good ethnographic translation shows; a poor one only tells. It is hoped that from the descriptions in this chapter the reader was able to see the lives of the family studied. In the following chapter is the initial description of the emerging theory.

First, sources of family strength are identified and described. Secondly, in order to gain deeper insight into

the sources of family strength, the researcher will identify and describe the linkages between the marital couple and its informal support systems.

CHAPTER V EMERGING THEORY I

The emerging theory is presented in two parts. First, sources of family strength will be identified and described. Secondly, in order to gain deeper insight into the sources of family strength, the researcher will identify and describe the linkages between the marital couple and its informal support systems.

Part I Sources and Evidence of Family Strength

Six sources of family strength emerged and saturated from the analyses of the data. First, all six are summarized. Supporting evidence excerpted from fieldnotes and interviews follows.

According to Spradley (1979)

Most cultural themes remain at the tacit level of knowledge. People do not express them easily, even though they know the cultural principle and use it to organize their behavior and interpret experience. Themes come to be taken for granted; they slip into that area of knowledge where people are not quite aware or seldom find the need to express what they know. This means the ethnographer will have to make inferences about principles that exist. (p. 188)

The first five sources of strength identified by the researcher were also recognized by the marital couple. In the Congers family the sixth source, continuing commitment to a purpose beyond themselves, remained at the tacit level. The sources of strength identified contribute to high quality high stability in marriage.

Sources of Family Strength

Shared Enjoyment of Each Other and Humor

In high quality high stability marriage the marital couple and also other family members frequently enjoy each other's company and the humor generated through their interaction. They are usually contented with life and have an optimistic outlook. The marital couple has a buoyancy derived from daily living, spiked with spontaneous humor and relaxing laughter.

Continuing Constructive Communication and Tolerance of Some Differences

In high quality high stability marriage conflicts are dealt with verbally and not with physical violence. Although developing mutually satisfying communication skills takes time and effort, there is continuing improvement. The atmosphere of the home allows for open expression and most communicating is direct and clear. Some differences of opinion and personal idiosyncrasies are accepted or tolerated by each of the spouses.

A Strong Positive Family Feeling

In high quality high stability marriage the marital couple feels a continuity through the generations of their families. Family identity is extremely important and is considered to be a source of strength. The marital couple feels positive influence from living family members and also from some who are dead.

Shared Values and Ideals

In high quality high stability marriage common interests are helpful to the relationship, but mutual values and ideals are more important. Belief or faith in a source of strength beyond or greater than themselves is of supreme importance. This source of strength gives meaning and direction to their lives.

Continuing Commitment to Each Other

In high quality high stability marriage the spouses expect some strong negative emotions from time to time and do not allow these feelings to derail them from their marriage commitment. They recognize that their relationship is never static, but ever changing, and needs their continuing attention. Although the marital commitment is strong, the relationship is much more meaningful than an endurance contest.

Continuing Commitment to a Purpose Beyond Themselves

In high quality high stability marriage the marital couple is not consumed by personal concerns. The couple is continually reaching out to others outside the family. The persons and causes they assist vary from time to time. Response to others is in accordance with whichever acquaintances they see as currently having the greatest need. Each spouse has individual commitments; other commitments are mutually fulfilled. Reaching out to others is an integral part of their lives. They transcend their

own circumstances to share encouragement and strength with others.

Evidence of Family Strength

The researcher is aware that in Part I there are more responses from Alice and Helen than from Sue. An attempt was made to elicit an equal amount of responses from each daughter. However, during interviews, respondents tended to speak about many other related concerns since they were not aware of the full intent of the research. Ethnographic interviewing does not screen questions as does a closed questionnaire. The researcher collected much more data than was used for this study. Alice and Helen provided more responses that related to Part I than did Sue. More richness of detail was in Helen's responses than in her sisters' responses. This was probably because she arrived home during the last few days when questioning was more focused.

Shared Enjoyment of Each Other and Humor

On the day before the researcher concluded her observations she explained the purpose of the study and asked the marital couple to respond to the question, "What do you see as your strength together?" Before seriously considering the question, they bantered.

Harriet: It's very fortunate that we both don't want to kill each other at the same time.

Harriet and Jack laughed.

Jack: And it's great that I am so mild mannered.

He laughed so heartily that he finally coughed and choked.

Harriet: You should choke on that one.

Both continued to laugh heartily until finally Jack had tears running down his cheeks. He suddenly remembered, "Oh, that was being recorded, wasn't it!" (Interview, May 6).

Later the same day Jack and then Harriet came to the researcher separately to comment about perceptions of their strength as a couple. Jack responded, "I think humor is one. We were both able to see the funny side of things and that has really helped us through" (Fieldnotes, May 6).

Harriet's perceptions were more explicit. Humor has been for them, not an escape from reality, but a relief to enable them to endure the unendurable. She illustrated,

You know about the negative effects of negative emotions. We believe that there are also positive effects of positive emotions, [as] of laughter. You know I told you about when Pearl was dying, we went to look at the new babies in the hospital and Alice said one of them looked like Doris Dobson [a rather sour looking middle-aged lady from church]. We all laughed hysterically and I wondered what other people thought.

Daughter Helen added,

And we'd see one of our friends asleep on one of the couches in a funny position and we'd all laugh at that. (Fieldnotes, May 6)

In general, humor makes life more bearable. Traumatic events are made more tolerable by it. Daily tasks are made less burdensome; they are lightened by humor.

On a Saturday morning Harriet made phone calls to previous blood donors for the American Red Cross. She explained to a prospective donor, "We need 135 pints this

time, but not all from you!" Aside she commented to Helen, "I've been getting all kinds of cute responses to the 135 pints. One man said, 'But I only have six!'" (Fieldnotes, May 7).

Jack and Harriet both affirmed that enjoyment is an essential ingredient for daily living. In speaking about the continuing responsibility for Philip, Jack explained, "I don't feel particularly sorry for myself about it. We'll do what we have to do, I feel, and enjoy it" (Fieldnotes, May 6). A few days earlier Harriet and Jack were discussing the possibility of Alice and Sue sharing future responsibility for Philip. Harriet emphasized, "If they can't live joyfully and take care of him, then they better not do it" (Fieldnotes, April 24).

Jack and Harriet do not see their life circumstances or responsibilities as being either unusual or more difficult than most. Harriet explained that many grandparents are raising grandchildren. She feels that many situations would be much more difficult than theirs. "What about trying to raise an autistic child, for example?" (Fieldnotes, May 6).

On separate occasions, Alice and Helen reflected on their parents' attitude and response to living. Alice explained, "I'm sure they appreciate what they have. When you have been through so much, I think you appreciate the moment. I think you appreciate your loved ones a lot more" (Interview, April 25).

While interviewing Helen the researcher asked, "What do you see as the effects of these losses [of children] on your parents?" She responded, "It could have very easily made them withdrawn, or more careful and cautious. . . . It just seems to make their eyes crinkle up more and shine more, because it makes them love more genuinely and more deeply" (Interview, May 5).

Jack acknowledged that mutuality in enjoyment is essential to a strong marital relationship. In describing couple strength, at the close of this study, he said, "I think you really have to love that person. But more than that, you've got to be able to enjoy each other, be friends" (Interview, May 6).

Continuing Constructive Communication
and Tolerance of Some Differences.

Developing mutually satisfying communication skills has been a gradual process. Jack and Harriet have much mutuality, especially as compared to Papa's and Mama's home, where Papa simply decided who was wrong and then meted out the punishment. As Harriet described Papa's method of punishment, "Jack was raised with a strap" (Fieldnotes, April 27). Violent action in Jack's and Harriet's home has been rare. Harriet acknowledged that Jack had never hit her except for once, but that she had hit him first. She added that it happened a long time ago (Fieldnotes, April 27).

Verbal bickering and fighting has been a long term part of their relationship. Spousal conflict was dealt with so

openly that it sometimes frightened the children. As Helen reflected:

They really get into it sometimes. One time I remember when I was barely a teenager and they had been fighting more than usual. And one day Dad came in . . . I think it was when Sue had wrecked the car and I don't remember what else had happened. But it seemed like a big wad of negatives had been hitting our family, and as Dad came in something else came down on him. . . . He had the paper in his hand, and he walked through the dining room and somebody said something to him to tell him the news. He just took the newspaper and he just threw it on the floor! And he said, "Nothing can go right around this place!" I had never seen my Dad do that and I have yet to see him do it again. But it scared me and I ran to my bedroom crying.

Helen chuckled as she recalled.

I cried and cried. Mother came in and she said, "Are you all right?" and I told her, "yeah." But I was afraid that things were going to fall apart and that Dad was going to get really mad or something really bad was going to happen, or they were going to get a divorce or something. And she said, "Wouldn't you rather know what is going on rather than for us to fight behind closed doors, and try to keep the peace looking good around this place?" And at the time, I wanted to say no,

Helen said laughingly.

But I knew I had to say yes. But I don't know. The more I thought about it, it demonstrated how to face realities, and I genuinely respect that. (Interview, May 5)

Alice also recalled that her parents have had their "ups and downs." "You know I've heard 'em battle awful." Alice laughed as she remembered. "I remember a couple [of] times being terrified that divorce was coming and asking Mom, 'Are you?' and she'd say, No!" (Interview, April 25).

The atmosphere in the home allows for an open and straightforward expression of feelings. When tempers flare, often after a short "cooling off period," good

relationships are quickly restored. Helen illustrated by recalling from her high school years, settling antagonisms with her mother.

I'd come home and if one of us had had a bad day, like if I had had a bad day and Mother would be cooking or something, I'd antagonize her until finally both of us were bickering. And I'd say, "Forget this," and I'd go off in my room. Then sometimes I'd come in and she had had a bad day and she'd bicker at me until we were both mad. . . . Whoever made the error knew it and within a half hour's time it was settled. (Fieldnotes, May 5)

Learning to communicate effectively has been a gradual process. Harriet has been more verbal than Jack. She also wanted to deal with differences quickly and then forget them. Jack apparently considered that self-control was very important and that expression of emotion was a sign of weakness (Fieldnotes, April 27).

Harriet said,

He [Jack] still is not very good at discussing problems. Maybe he figures if something is said it is more harmful than if something is implied. If I mention something I'd like to change, he'd say, "There are plenty of things I'd like to change!" I'd say, O.K. What are they? He would say, "Oh, never mind." (Fieldnotes, April 27)

Changes are occurring in both of them. Jack is more tolerant and understanding of the emotional side of human nature. He is getting more in touch with his own feelings.

Harriet stated, "He is a little more verbal than he was, I want to get things out, deal with them and then let them blow away. It used to be that he would clam up and not speak" (Fieldnotes, April 27).

Helen described an incident when Kent left for the last time.

I called up here to talk to Mom, and Dad answered. I tried not to put it on him. He said, "Well, she's not here right now." I said, "Would you please have her call when she gets home?" And I was kind of shaky about the whole thing. And Dad says, "It sounds like something's wrong," And he wouldn't have done that before. He would have realized that something was wrong and told Mother to call me when she got home. He just didn't like the emotional side in us. And I said, "Yeah, there is [something wrong]." He said, "Well, do you want to tell me about it?" And I said, "Well, Kent just left again, for good!" And I got a little teary, and he was so supportive. He tolerated the whole emotional bit.

Helen was very proud of her father . . .

for the growth he has made, not only in education, but I think he realizes that emotions are an important part and he's willing to let other people have them, and he's developing [becoming more aware of] his own. (Interview, May 5)

The changes that are occurring in Harriet are also twofold. She seems to feel less need to discuss everything and just to accept some differences as not being especially important. She said, "Isn't it funny that after all these years I'm the one beginning to clam up? I think, "Oh, well" (Fieldnotes, April 27).

Harriet used to mediate between the daughters and Jack. As she has lessened this mediation, it has given Jack opportunity to develop more closeness with his daughters. Harriet said, "I love to see how he interacts with the girls. I used to mediate. The other day when Helen called to say she needed money and hated to talk with Dad, I said, 'Just a minute, I'll let you talk with him'" (Fieldnotes, April 27).

Helen accounted for the closer relationship she is developing with her father by saying, "I want my Dad to be

as close . . . as good a friend, as my mother is. And I think it is paying off. We talk about things a lot more. I've taken the effort to try and talk about things that interest him and, in turn, he talks about things that interest me" (Fieldnotes, May 5).

Harriet and Jack resolved differences that they consider critical to their relationship. Less important differences are tolerated, overlooked, or simply ignored. When they were asked to reflect upon and comment about their strength as a couple, Jack responded, "I think one of them must be tolerance, tolerance for idiosyncrasies" (Interview, May 7). A week earlier as Harriet visited with the researcher while quilting, she commented, "We are both willing to put up with the other's likes and dislikes that we don't share" (Fieldnotes, April 27). Harriet's tolerance was also confirmed by Helen who recalled an experience that took place during her high school years. She said,

There were times when there were just the three of us [left at home] and Dad would do something that would just gnaw on my nerves and I would say something to Mother about it. I couldn't really talk to Dad comfortably at that time. And finally after doing that a few times, Mother said, "Look! I love the man and I don't appreciate your degrading him in front of me because I want to continue to love him. So just keep those wretched thoughts to yourself!" (Interview, May 5)

Helen especially enjoyed this recollection.

A Strong Positive Family Feeling

"We have strong family feelings for relatives that are gone [dead], for his [Jack's] parents, as well as for kids and grandkids" (Fieldnotes, April 27). This statement was

spontaneous from Harriet as she quilted in the basement sewing area and visited with the researcher before any interviewing had taken place.

Evidences of strong positive family feelings were portrayed graphically when Harriet and Jack mapped their family systems. The researcher, adapting the Mapping of the Family System of Wedemeyer and Grotevant (1982), asked each of them to make a family paper sculpture.

Harriet and Jack apparently thought about their assignment for several days and discussed it somewhat together. Finally, Harriet approached the researcher and asked if it would be appropriate to include family members who were no longer living. Both Harriet and Jack had decided that family members who were dead still had a significant effect on their family. The following example is from Harriet's description of her family system.

"We used white ones [circles], at least I used white ones for the dead." She included her parents and Pearl, the daughter who died after reaching maturity. "I still feel Pearl's influence some so I put her there by Philip." When Harriet was finished with her description, the researcher probed--"You mentioned that you still feel Pearl's influence. . . . Do you care to say any more about that?"

Harriet replied, "I'm not sure I can." There was a long pause. It became apparent that this was an emotional issue for her. Then she concluded, "I really can't right now." The researcher did not pursue this any farther. This

was the only occasion when additional information was not freely given by any of the family members (Interview, May 6).

Jack also used white circles to represent family members who were dead. Those he included were Harriet's parents, his brother, Mark, and Pearl. Several days earlier Jack was describing to the researcher the events surrounding the trauma and tragedy of Pearl's death. "And again, any thought that four of our children could be taken from us. Maybe not taken, but, that's a feeling that develops. I'm very close to my family" (Interview, May 2). He was fighting back tears as he spoke.

Jack's father, Papa, assumed that a strong family feeling is only natural. In an interview with Papa the question was asked, "For a long time you and Mark's and Jack's families lived really close together. What do you see as the benefits of living close together?" The immediate response Papa made was, "We were all tied together in love. Why naturally they wanted to be close to Mama and I. And we wanted to be close to them. We had the natural tie of family that held us together, of parents to children and children to parents" (Interview, May 4).

Strong positive family feeling extends to include in-law relationships as well. Harriet said that, "Alice has a lot of family feeling. She really likes Henry's parents" (Fieldnotes, April 26). If relationships are not positive it is considered desirable to work for improvement. Harriet

said that Sue received some antipathy from her mother-in-law in the past, but is accepted now (Fieldnotes, April 26).

Strong positive feelings were also evidenced by the daughters of the marital couple. Their responses were spontaneous and also independent of each other.

In speaking about her parents, Alice explained to the researcher about their care of Philip. "It's their mind-set that this is my family forever. No matter what happens, this is for better or worse. And . . . this is just my family. And we will work it out and you know I would assume that that's it" (Interview, April 25).

In an interview Sue colorfully described her own family.

It's such an important thing . . . even if there are times when everybody hates each other's guts you don't get rid of the family! Even if you are out of your mind with grief you count on your family. I mean I think for me, it's always been even if I hated one of them, I still never felt that I didn't want them to be my family. They were always my family. And I think that is,--I'm not saying that I do it all the time, but that is what I am trying for in my family right now. (Interview, April 28)

Shared Values and Ideals

The Congers agree that some common interests are helpful to their relationship. For example, listening to music, watching western movies on television and playing word games are mutually enjoyable activities. (Fieldnotes, April 27). However, common ideals are essential for the much stronger bond between them. The researcher taped a conversation between them near the close of the study.

Jack: I'm not a very strong believer in just the quick realization by two people that the chemistry is right, and they've had a lot of good times romantically and so forth,--that if they make a go of it, this is all it takes. But the romantic side of things--it's going to diminish.

Harriet: Or fluctuate.

Jack: So there had better be something else to bind and hold. Common interests.

Harriet: Common ideals.

Jack: That's a very strong thing to hold together. (Interview, May 6)

The thoughtful management of their resources is of great significance to them both. Early in the study Harriet stated, "We both feel strongly about stewardship; of money, time, talents, everything" (Fieldnotes, April 27). In the days following, this was evidenced many times in their decision making and choices of activities.

Jack felt that their ideas may not represent the younger generation. "I'm sure we are of the old school in expressing ideals and philosophy. A lot of people wouldn't agree with [us] now, a younger and more liberated society" (Interview, May 6). A little later on during the same discussion Harriet asked a very significant question and then clearly expressed her own view on what some of the basics are:

Do you think there are such things as eternal verities?"

Researcher: Explain.

Harriet: That some things are always right? That some things are always wrong? Manipulating another person is unfair. Being dishonest with another person is unfair. It doesn't matter where you go in what society

or in what relationship, these things are eternal. They are basic. . . . I think there should be some rights and wrongs. (Interview, May 6)

When Jack and Harriet were each asked to create a map of their family system, they talked about it together first, but then each worked independently. Each of them cut a heart shaped piece to place underneath the names of the various family members. In describing her map of her family system, Harriet explained the symbolism. "The heart shaped piece which is labeled 'God' is to indicate that God's love is underlying the whole situation" (Interview, May 6).

Jack expressed a similar view earlier when he was reflecting on the losses of their children. "I feel that even in the midst of all this I am still blessed. That he [God] is still by me and will help me" (Interview, May 6).

The following incident took place at church. Since Jack was asked to respond without forethought it seemed to the researcher that he spoke out of the depths of his convictions. He affirmed his strong belief in God's love as an ever present source of help, sufficient to meet human needs.

It was Sunday morning. The congregation waited expectantly for things to get started. The person who was to be responsible for the family worship before church school classes was not there. Jack was asked to take charge. He gave a completely extemporaneous little talk, with only seconds to prepare. He spoke convincingly about teaching children regarding honor, love and concern and said

that even though we have dark times in our lives, God continues to love us. We sang a hymn he selected about faithfulness. In his closing prayer, Jack affirmed, "Your [God's] blessings have been abundant and have met our needs" (Interview, May 1).

Her parents' belief in an underlying love of God is not comprehensible to Sue, although she is still considering it. It is not a closed issue with her.

She said, "As the result of all of it . . . [all the losses of children that her parents have suffered] I have agnostic leanings, and I have a hard time understanding their faith, as a result. Then this is one I'm still working through and have begun to think about in the last few years" (Interview, April 28).

The next day Harriet and the researcher were waiting in the car for Jack who was seeing his lawyer. Harriet, who was well aware of Sue's agnostic leanings, spoke, "Sue doesn't see the other point of view. Without the knowledge of a loving heavenly Father, we couldn't have stood it" (Fieldnotes, April 29).

Helen apparently appreciated and understood her parents' belief in God's love as a source of strength.

I've always enjoyed the statement that says something to the effect that when people are ridden with so much strife in their lives, they either turn to rot or to as good as gold. I think my parents went [to] the latter [gold]. I saw them lean very heavily upon their faith, . . . not religion, but their faith has always been alive. They had had that, I'd like to say a first priority, it's not always been a first priority, because people get distracted, but they've always tried to make it a first priority. God is very much alive in

them because they live it. They have always raised me, you either live it or you don't. (Interview, May 5)

Continuing Commitment to Each Other

The researcher visited with Harriet in the sewing room while she worked. The question that was asked was, "How would you describe Jack?" From her description, she continued reflecting about their marriage; on the relationship between love and hate, strong negative emotions, and commitment.

I feel that the opposite of love is not hate but indifference. Love and hate can be opposite sides of the same coin. I think if you care strongly about somebody, you can be equally angry at them, and even hate them at times. And if you don't have the background and the upbringing to feel very strongly that this is a commitment you have made, that will get better,--so you fall out of love. So what! Hang in there and you will fall right back in. I really think that is true. I think a lot of people, kids especially now days, the first time they fall out of love, if you want to put it that way, or have a strong emotion that's negative, there's maybe two or three times of that and they are ready to call it quits. (Fieldnotes, April 27)

Both Jack and Harriet are convinced that their early childhood training has been powerful in reinforcing their commitment to each other. Harriet mentioned that her sister, Jane, had a very bad marriage. When Harriet saw Jane's hurt, she was even more determined to make a careful choice of a husband.

To help you understand why we put up with each other for so many years, I was taught that divorce was wrong, that things could be worked out. I prayed about the decision to marry and later when I felt like bagging it all, I remembered that. (Fieldnotes, April 27)

Jack, in explaining his feelings about divorce, said, "This would have gone contrary to everything I ever believed and been taught and been a part of" (Interview, May 6).

Both Jack and Harriet have a reputation with each other and other family members of being tenacious. A reoccurring theme is, "We are not quitters." As Jack described himself, "I guess it would go against the way I was raised, . . . to be a quitter" (Interview, May 2). At another point, he said, "She [Harriet] wasn't a quitter either" (Interview, May 2). When Harriet was relating their family history and reflecting on the losses of four of their children, she exclaimed, "By George, you know, life is not going to get you down! I guess I read Job [from the Bible] when I was pretty young" (Interview, May 6).

In summary, Jack stated, "We've been through some hard and tough times and I think we can stand some more if we need to."

Harriet: Oh, please!
she implored, as she laughed.

Jack: If need be (Interview, May 6).

The strength of commitment is especially evident in their relationship to Philip. As Jack described some of his personal goals and responsibilities, he emphasized, "Probably the biggest one [responsibility] right now is Philip. I'll take it as far as I can." As Jack spoke he was close to tears. "I'm not going to quit Philip. He

needs me. . . . I definitely want to keep hold of this thing as long as my health is good" (Interview, May 2).

Alice and Helen have differing views about their parents' commitment to Philip. Alice explained how Jack and Harriet are literally giving their lives for Philip. She sees this total commitment as martyrdom. She says, "There is a lot of martyr in both of them. There is just something in them" (Interview, April 27).

When Helen explained about her parents' sacrifice in caring for Philip she was unaware of Alice's comments. She said, "Another thing I keep expecting but never find [is] an element of 'martyrism'" (Interview, May 7).

Even though the Congers' marriage commitment is strong, they recognized that the marital relationship is not static, but constantly changing. There is need to give the relationship continuing attention.

Jack, Harriet and the researcher were sitting in the study visiting. It was near the completion of this study. Harriet talked about a wedding shower she attended recently. One of the guests gave the bride a card that read, "Marriage is an edifice that needs to be rebuilt daily." Then the guest there who had probably been married longer than anyone else said, "Or sometimes twice a day!" The shared laughter that followed Harriet's account seemed to affirm their belief in the truth of that statement (Interview, May 6).

Even though the Congers' marriage commitment is strong it is not just an endurance contest. There is much more to the relationship than that.

As Jack explained, "We have had our bad moments, too, but underneath, why, we never failed to love each other, I think. We are devoted to each other" (Interview, May 6).

At the conclusion of the study Jack reflected, "You really have to love that person . . . but more than that, you've got to be able to enjoy each other, be friends, happy together" (Interview, May 6).

Continuing Commitment to a Purpose Beyond Themselves

The Congers are pledged not only to their marriage commitment but honor commitments in general. They are known as reliable people. Harriet and Jack expend much time and effort helping others. Each of them separately assists persons and fulfills volunteer responsibilities. Other causes they assume and accomplish as cooperative endeavors. Specific examples are included in the discussion of informal support systems.

Harriet's helpful nature is recognized by Sue in the following incident. Before Sue left to return to her home the researcher told Harriet and Sue that she had been recording events of a typical day that day. The researcher said to Harriet, "Do you realize that you have spent the whole day helping other people?" Harriet responded, "Why didn't you choose a typical day?", probably in an attempt to

undervalue what she had done. Then Sue affirmed, "I think you did [choose a typical day]!" (Interview, May 5).

Helen also recognized Harriet's helpful nature. She explained, "Things that she [Harriet] does, like sewing and things that she thinks are her joys, are really things geared toward what she can do for other people" (Interview, May 5).

Harriet is known as a helpful person by others outside the family. One day Harriet and the researcher walked to the graduate center to do some photocopying. She introduced the researcher to a librarian who was a former co-worker. The librarian expressed a genuine desire to see Harriet more. Harriet explained that she had been busy. The researcher commented to the librarian that Harriet does a lot for others. The librarian responded, "She [Harriet] is a soft touch. I know she is" (Fieldnotes, May 3).

Both of the Congers have the reputation with members of their church as persons upon whom they can rely. One couple at church was aware that the researcher was residing with them, but unaware of her purpose, and also that the Congers were expecting Alice's family to visit. They invited the researcher to stay with them, assuring her that they had plenty of room. The researcher thanked them and said she would contact them if she felt that the Congers needed more space or if her presence were becoming an imposition. The husband responded, "They do so much for others. If you

weren't there, there would just be someone else" (Fieldnotes, May 1).

Alice affirmed that helping others is a characteristic of both parents and that giving of themselves is an integral part of their lives. "They will forego what they want to do to help others. That's how they are" (Interview, April 25).

In this section the researcher has identified and described the sources of family strength. In the next section the nature and patterns of their informal support systems are identified and described.

Part II. The Nature and Patterns of the Linkages Between the Family and Its Informal Support Systems

The researcher assumed that an understanding of the nature and patterns of the linkages between the family and its informal support systems would be helpful in understanding sources of family strength.

Andrews, Bubolz and Paolucci (1980) identified four types of support. They are social-emotional, physical, economic and informational help. The informal support systems considered are spousal, adult children, extended kin, friends and neighbors. These informal support systems are rank ordered in terms of their observed importance as sources of support to the marital couple. The types of help given and received by the marital couple are discussed. Statements are made concerning reciprocity between the marital couple and each of its informal support systems. For purposes of analyses, help given Philip was considered

as help for adult children, because, as it was inferred several times, Jack and Harriet would care for him for Pearl's sake. Help given Philip by adult children was considered as help to Jack and Harriet, because they experienced direct relief from these supports. Spouses were considered as a unit because help was frequently identified as being for or from both of them. Frequently an example of help could be categorized as more than one type. When this occurred the researcher decided which type of help was primary. Each example of help was categorized only once.

First the nature of the linkages between the marital couple and its informal support systems is summarized. This is followed by supporting evidences from fieldnotes and interviews. The last section describes the patterns of the linkages between the family and its informal support systems in high quality high stability marriage.

Nature of the Linkages Between the Family
and Its Informal Support Systems
Supports Between the Spouses of the Marital Couple

Spousal support ranks first in terms of frequency of incidents recorded and also in importance to the marital couple. It is additional evidence for the source of family strength of continuing commitment to each other. Spousal help of all four types emerged and saturated early in the study. While there was evidence to indicate that reciprocity had been unequal during times of stress, it appeared to be quite equal at this point in time.

Supports Between the Marital Couple and the Adult Children

The marital couple gives much more of all four types of help than the adult children. The adult children desired more reciprocity. Their offers of help were frequently blocked or thwarted by the parents. The adult children experienced some frustration because of this. The marital couple was more willing to accept social-emotional, physical and informational help than economic help, and did not wish to burden their adult children.

Supports Between the Marital Couple and Extended Kin

The reciprocity between the marital couple and extended kin was decidedly unequal at this point in time. The marital couple gave much more of all four types of help than they received. There was some evidence to support the notion that reciprocity had been more equal over time.

Supports Between the Marital Couple and Friends

All four types of help were given by the marital couple to friends. However, least given was economic help. At this point in time very little help was given to the marital couple by friends. During times of emergencies and special occasions friends have offered much social-emotional help.

Supports Between the Marital Couple and Neighbors

Help between the marital couple and neighbors appeared to be equal and almost exclusively social-emotional. The marital couple hired some physical help from neighbors. No economic help was observed. In times of great stress, in

the past, neighbors have offered short term emergency assistance.

Evidence of Support Between the Marital Couple

and Its Informal Support Systems

Supports Between the Spouses of the Marital Couple

Support of the spouses for each other was not specified in the Andrews, Bubolz and Paolucci model (1980). Neither was it suggested in the researcher's proposal. Spousal support is included in this study because it emerged and saturated first. Therefore it cannot be ignored. In the ordering of their informal supports, spousal support ranked first in terms of frequency of incidents recorded and also in importance to the marital couple.

Spousal supports of all four types of help were abundantly evident. While describing Jack during the first week of the study, Harriet commented, "I really appreciate that Jack was willing to be supportive emotionally and financially [of] my education. When times got tough, he would encourage me to hang in there" (Fieldnotes, April 27).

Jack's description of Harriet included the following observation:

She [Harriet] supports me in everything and I try to [support] her. . . . Every endeavor I've engaged in, it seems like she is right there by me, helping me, encouraging me. That makes a difference, to have someone standing right by you. (Fieldnotes, May 2)

Spousal reciprocity of help appeared to be quite equal at this point in time. There was evidence to indicate that at times of stress during the marriage, reciprocity had been

unequal, but it is possible that the reciprocity has been more equalized over time.

Supports Between the Marital Couple and the Adult Children

Adult children received all four types of help from their parents and the parents received all four types of help from the adult children. There were differences, however, in the amounts of help given. From children to parents, social-emotional, physical and informational help was given but very little economic help. All four types of help were abundantly given by parents to the adult children. Parents gave much more of all types of help than did the adult children.

Alice affirmed to the researcher, "To us the kids, they are just so generous" (Fieldnotes, April 25). Helen also agreed about her parents' generosity. She assumed that once her undergraduate degree was finished and she was fully an adult, her parents' economic responsibility to her was complete. She described what happened when she told her parents that she was going East to law school after her divorce.

When I went to law school I sold my home. I was worried about finances and moving and everything else. He [Jack] took me aside one day, and we sat down and he said, "You know I'll put you through all this financially." It floored me! I said, "You've got to be kidding." Then he said, "I thought it was just taken for granted." He's been a great support. . . . I've supported myself until [last] October and then I didn't have any money left. . . . There would be times when I would call and he would always be there to cheer me up. (Fieldnotes, May 5)

Harriet described to the researcher Bill's and Sue's reluctance to receive economic help. Jack and Harriet decided to have Sue's cello repaired as a gift to her. She explained that the repair bill would probably be about \$1000. Harriet commented that Bill and Sue were sensitive about their paying for the repair, and insisted that they could afford it themselves if it had been a high enough priority. The researcher replied, "It sounds as if Bill and Sue have a proper amount of young adult independence." Harriet responded, "Maybe just a mite too much" (Fieldnotes, April 26).

Alice's feelings were ambivalent about her parents' generosity in giving economic help. She appreciated the help given but also desired more equal reciprocity.

There were some evidences of equal reciprocity in trading of economic help between parents and adult children although the concept of trading did not saturate. For example, Harriet explained that she had traded with Bill and Sue, her flute for their extra computer. She was unsure who got the better deal, but emphasized that they were all satisfied (Fieldnotes, April 23).

All of the adult children are sources of social-emotional help to their parents. One poignant example emerged from Helen's recollection of the events following Pearl's death. "It was my last semester in high school and I had plans to go to [the same college that her sisters were attending in the Midwest]. I was accepted and was going.

[After Pearl's death] I decided to stay [home] because I think they needed me" (Interview, May 5).

Later the researcher asked Helen, "Did your parents know that your decision to stay home another year after high school was for their benefit?" Helen answered, "Not until after I'd decided" (Interview, May 5).

The parents, particularly Jack, but also Harriet, tend to block offers of the adult children's economic help and also to some extent social-emotional and physical help. The adult children experienced some frustration and bewilderment because of this.

Alice and Henry wanted to offer social-emotional, physical and some economic help to Jack and Harriet. They were planning to build a new home and wanted to include a barrier-free area with an extra bathroom for Philip. This area could be used to give Jack and Harriet reprieves but Alice and Henry were also thinking about the future care of Philip, after Jack and Harriet were no longer able to care for him. Alice explained,

You know we are talking about building and putting in an area for Philip. I'm not sure Dad wants us to.

Alice was perplexed.

Isn't it crazy? It's much less than whatever he has done. He has given up how many years of his life now, caring for Philip? Everything they do revolves around Philip, their whole lives.

According to Alice, Henry shared her desire to offer this help.

Henry said he thought it would be fine to have [Philip] around. You know, someone who loves him.

The researcher then responded,

You have a good guy there, don't you?

Alice affirmed,

Um, huh, I really do. (Interview, April 25)

The researcher later discussed with Jack, Alice's and Henry's plan to build a special area for Philip in their new home. Jack clarified the reason for his reluctance. He had already checked, since Philip was a ward of the court. He was not free to use any of the settlement money for these extra housing costs. Jack explained that he was well aware of the financial costs of raising a family and he wanted to make sure that Alice and Henry weren't "out any money" if they built this area. Jack inferred that if this were done he would insist upon paying for the building costs himself.

Sue also desired to be of more help to her parents. She felt that her offers were often thwarted. Her offers of help were mainly social-emotional and physical help. Sue emphasized to the researcher on several occasions that she wished her parents would accept her offers to care for Philip so that they could "get out more." "I have almost given up," she added (Fieldnotes, April 26).

The parents have difficulty "letting go" of responsibilities and accepting physical help from their adult daughters as illustrated in the following conversation between Sue and the researcher.

Sue: I think they really need some help now. It's a big job to keep up this house and to care for him [Philip]. I'm not saying that they are old. I don't

think they are old, but they certainly don't have as much energy as they used to. . . . I feel like they want to get away, but they don't feel they can. I think they feel like they need to be getting back. They haven't gotten to the point where they can forget about him when they are gone. They worry that he is going to be too much for the person he is with.

Researcher: Do they get away very much?

Sue: They went to Portland for three days when I first got home [from Europe]. That was the first that I know of since a year ago October. That's when they went down to a family reunion at Aunt Virginia's and I stayed with him. I try to encourage them to go more often. . . . I think it's really hard for them to just let go, and go.

Researcher: Well, there is a lot more involved than there is with leaving a normal child.

Sue: I always feel that they ought to be able to see that I haven't gotten into any trouble with him. If I volunteer, I mean it and I know what is involved in the situation. . . . I know if it was me, I'd be tickled to death,

she said laughingly,

and take off in a second. They feel that it is their responsibility, so I guess I just don't understand completely. (Interview, April 28)

Cooperation between the adult children was clearly evident in their desires to be helpful to their parents. Sue and Helen cooperated in assisting with the Special Olympics to give their parents a reprieve. Also, their planning for the future care of Philip was particularly insightful and potentially involved all four types of help. To elicit the following responses, the researcher asked each daughter separately, "What do you see for Philip's future?" The daughters' commitment to Philip was strong, but not as strong as that of their parents.

Alice: We all talked about it a year ago, Sue and Bill, and Helen and me. Henry wasn't here. Sue and Helen and I will help but none of us want him all the time; to be tied down all the time.

Researcher: Would you work out a schedule or something?

Alice: Yeah, we will just kind of play it by ear, I'm sure, and see how it works out.

Alice affirmed that Henry was in agreement.

But he doesn't want to have the lack of freedom that my folks have had. So everybody's pretty realistic about it, I think. And I think it will work out O.K. We'll see how it is when it's living it instead of talking about it. (Interview, April 25)

In responding to the same question Sue said,

I used to worry about it a lot,--that somebody had to definitely say that they would take care of him,--be willing to give up their life for him.

But it's kind of all mellowed out now. Alice and Henry are making plans to have him, and Bill and I sort of feel like, you know, that we will take him part of the time. I think it's probably going to be a sharing thing, where there won't be one person totally immersed in it. I think we have a little more distance from it. We both realize that if we had him all the time it would get on our nerves. (Interview, April 28)

Helen also evidenced that she had given the future care of Philip considerable thought.

I'm not worried about it because. . . . Alice and Sue and I have talked about it and we have no qualms. In fact, we might probably fight over who gets him. I have to seriously say,--I have not told my parents this, but in the position I am in [single] if something were to happen to one of them, I definitely hope that they would allow me to come and take over. I don't know if I will ever get involved with somebody and get married. . . . If I ever do that, how that would affect it [the care of Philip], or if it even would. I know that Sue was very willing to take on that responsibility also, as much as possible. I don't know how they [Jack and Harriet] would view it, but I could handle Mother's position, I know. I have done that. And Dad has such an intricate work on a responsibility for finances. I'm trying to be aware of that. I

worked with juveniles with special needs in my first law clinic and know many of the rights, and having taught disabled kids also for four years, I feel I could, if they [parents] want it. I wouldn't force myself on my folks, but I think this [plan] would be a real strong possibility. So I'm not real concerned about it. (Interview, May 5)

Jack and Harriet expressed some misgivings about the possibility of Helen accepting full responsibility for Philip. They felt reluctant to relinquish him to Helen's care because they were unsure that she really understood what was involved in this kind of parenting (Fieldnotes, May 7). In general, they felt that at present, Philip was their responsibility and they did not wish to burden their adult children. Both Harriet and Jack were more willing to accept physical, social-emotional and informational help than economic help.

The day before the researcher left she mentioned to Jack and Harriet her observations concerning the thwarted efforts of their adult children to help them. The following day two behaviors were noted. Jack allowed Sue and Bill to pay for their share of the restaurant meal to celebrate Mother's Day. Harriet accepted Sue's offer to care for Philip while Harriet and Jack attended a rehearsal at church.

The flow of help which begins from parents to children, gradually changes direction and flows from adult children to parents. In the Congers family this transition has just begun. Near the close of the study the researcher asked Helen, "Whom do you see as your parents' support group right

now? Helen responded, "I think us [meaning the adult children]." Then after further reflection she said, "I hope us" (Fieldnotes, May 5).

Supports Between the Marital Couple and Extended Kin

Again, the marital couple gave much more help than they received. Examples of all four types of help given were saturated early in the study. Examples of help received by the marital couple were few. The reciprocity was decidedly unequal.

It could be that there has been more equal reciprocity over time. Papa remembered the assistance given to his adult children in years past. He was able to recall only the times of economic help and again, assumed that this assistance on the part of the parents was "only natural." "I helped them in financial assistance in different ways, and Mama did, too--in purchasing some of their needs, their places and their cars. Just different ways that all parents want to assist their children" (Interview, May 4). The researcher then asked Papa if he could recall about times they had helped each other, not so much with money, but with other kinds of help. Even though Papa could not recall help other than financial, there were many evidences of the other three types of help. In conversing with him on several occasions, the other three types emerged and saturated. For example, an evidence of social-emotional help emerged while Papa recalled the events surrounding the deaths of Marian and Pearl. Papa emphasized, "I felt a degree of

responsibility as a parent to try and sustain them [Jack and Harriet] as much as I could, of the shock" (Interview, May 4).

Much of Jack's and Harriet's time was spent helping his parents. They prepared Papa's and Mama's house to be put up for sale and had a yard sale for them just before the researcher arrived. This project took most of a week to complete. Jack used two days trying to locate mobile home parks that would accept motor homes and then another day taking Papa on a tour to make the final selection of a site. Jack cared for all of his father's financial affairs. Harriet typed a letter for Papa, provided numerous meals, transportation, and mended some clothes for them. She also spent a considerable amount of time caring for Mama, when she was in their home, and in visiting with Papa. Papa told the researcher that Jack helped him with financial matters and that he valued his counsel highly (Interview, May 4).

The only other support observed between the marital couple and extended kin involved their interactions with Rose, Mark's wife. It should be noted that no other extended kin live nearby. Rose's three children live over one thousand miles away. All four types of help emerged, but economic help did not saturate. Rose, however, is not in need of economic help. Jack's and Harriet's gifts to her were mainly social-emotional help. Harriet prepared a family birthday dinner in Rose's honor and involved her in other social occasions. Rose especially appreciated Jack

providing the physical help of working on her car and the informational help when he answered her questions about the servicing of it. The reciprocity was unequal, with little help coming from Rose to Jack and Harriet, although Rose's help to Papa and Mama indirectly helped them. Rose gave much physical help to Papa and Mama. She helped with the yard sale and the preparation for it as well. She also cleaned for them and shampooed and set Mama's hair once each week (Fieldnotes, April 24).

Supports Between the Marital Couple and Friends

The help given from the couple to friends was of all four types; however, economic help was least.

Harriet's gifts to friends were mainly social-emotional and physical help. Frequently she baby-sat the children of a friend of Helen's. She spent a great deal of time in sewing and music related activities for the benefit of friends. Jack's gifts to friends were mainly informational and some physical help. He was very available by telephone to offer advice and counsel to friends.

The reciprocity between the marital couple and friends was decidedly unequal. Very little help was given from friends to the marital couple, although in the past, during times of emergencies and great stress, friends had rallied around the family. Helen described how friends were a great

source of social-emotional support at the time of Pearl's death.

We lived mostly in the hospital. In fact, we did live in the hospital. There were so many people there. They would come in [and were] so supportive of Mom and Dad and Ralph. . . . My Dad was pretty much a pillar of strength. I'd seen him upset and I'd seen him sick and all that, but he looked pretty destroyed. (Interview, May 5)

Jack affirmed this social-emotional support from friends also.

All of that waiting period [until Pearl's death] I imagine we had about an average of thirty people waiting there with us. They were there almost continuously, sitting up nights with us, too. (Interview, May 2)

Friends are still a source of social-emotional help on special occasions. On the night that Helen arrived from law school there was a congratulations and welcome home party in her honor at the church. It was very well attended. The next day, Helen was reflecting about this large attendance and commented to the researcher, "They didn't come just for me. They came for the family" (Interview, May 5).

In describing their maps of their family system few friends were mentioned. Harriet named a librarian with whom she had maintained a casual but also fairly close relationship since retirement. Others that Harriet named were those with whom she worked most closely in church related music activities. Alice felt that because of their responsibilities to Philip her parents had little time and energy for interaction with friends. "They just don't do

much with friends anymore," she explained (Interview, April 25).

Supports Between the Marital Couple and Neighbors

Help between the neighbors and the marital couple was almost exclusively social-emotional. Economic support was not observed at all, possibly because in a relatively affluent neighborhood borrowing and exchanging are not particularly needed. In retrospect, mention was made of short term emergency assistance at the time of Tim's and Marian's deaths. No current observations occurred involving neighbors and physical help. Jack hired teenagers from the neighborhood to wash windows and mow the lawn. This might be termed hired physical help. Interactions that were observed were cordial, warm and friendly, leading the researcher to believe that economic and physical help could develop if they were needed.

Interchanges with neighbors were infrequent. In terms of reciprocity they appeared to be about equal although none of the types of help even saturated. Jack, while explaining his map of the family system, expressed affection for two neighborhood families.

"These [circles] represent neighbors that I am very fond of. We visit regularly with them. Especially the men, and the children some" (Interview, May 6).

The following example indicated social-emotional help from neighbors to Philip and vicariously for Jack and Harriet.

Today, Friday, Sue and Helen helped with the Special Olympics and cheered Philip on. It was windy and cold today. Jack and Harriet seemed pleased to be able to stay home. Jack is still very tired from preparing Papa's house for sale. Philip came home triumphantly displaying two ribbons to add to his collection. He especially enjoyed watching himself on television [6 o'clock news]. We all were amused to hear Helen yell, "Come on, Philip!" Harriet videotaped the segment for future enjoyment (Fieldnotes, May 6). The next morning a neighbor, Mr. Cothern, came in to view the videotape. He said to Philip, "I'll have to send Matt and Mark over to see it, too." Philip excitedly responded, "When?" Mr. Cothern smiled understandingly and said, "I'll go see if they can come over right now, and I'll come back and tell you if they can't come." This offer to return either way was especially helpful since Philip would no doubt have continued persistently to inquire all day long about when they were coming. In a few minutes the boys appeared with their father to see the re-run. Philip obviously enjoyed the positive reinforcement from the neighbors. He looked very pleased! (Fieldnotes, May 7)

This section has included descriptions of the linkages between the family and its informal support systems. These were rank ordered in terms of their observed importance as sources of support to the marital couple. Next, three patterns that affect support given by the marital couple will be identified and explained.

Patterns Affecting Support Given by the Marital Couple

Since observations were mostly of the marital dyad, the focus was on what they gave, not on what others gave to them. Three patterns emerged from analyses of data that affect who was helped and what kinds of help were given by the marital couple. First, each of the three patterns are summarized briefly.

Support Was Given According to Where Perceived
Responsibility Was Greatest

There was continuity in feelings of mutual responsibility among the generations of the family. Geographic proximity of family members affected their amount of perceived responsibility. There was some evidence to support the notion that the closer the kin relationship the greater the perceived responsibility, and conversely, feelings of responsibility lessened with distance in the kin relationship. Primary responsibility was to be supportive to kin, but others were also supported.

Support Was Given According to Where Perceived
Need Was Greatest

Help was given not only to kin, but where the greatest need, among their associates, arose. Because need changes, persons who received help also changed from time to time. The kinds of help given also varied according to the perceived need.

Support Was Given According to Where Desire
to Give Was Greatest

Giving by the marital couple was much more than duty. Enjoyment was derived from being helpful and wanting to be helpful was characteristic of them. This desire to be helpful extended to many beyond the kin relationship.

Evidences of SupportSupport Was Given According to Where Perceived
Responsibility Was Greatest

There was a continuity in feelings of mutual responsibility among the generations of the family. Papa affirmed that helping was "a common purpose in the family. [We] tried to be concerned with each other's interests" (Interview, May 4). When referring to Jack's and Harriet's care of Philip, he stated, "He [Philip] wasn't their child, he was their daughter's child. It was the job of the family to take care of [him] (Interview, May 4). Papa also felt responsibility toward his daughter-in-law, Rose. "Especially since Mark passed away. We try to be mindful of her needs. . . . Her parents are gone and Mark is gone and naturally we want to help her as much as possible, helping her with anything she needs" (Interview, May 4). In accounting for her help to Papa and Mama, Rose explained, "I felt like that was something I could do for Mark" (Interview, May 2).

Geographic proximity affected the amount of perceived responsibility family members assumed for one another. Whoever of the relatives were available, seemed ready to assist. Papa acknowledged,

In a way, he [Jack] means more to me [with Mark gone]. We have other children, but I don't know. I try not to show any difference, but from the standpoint that he is here and helps me in business matters and knows my particular situation and needs,--why, naturally he means more to me than the others in that sense. Not that he means more to me than the others, but he is here with us. (Interview, May 4)

Papa's and Mama's other children offered physical help from time to time. Papa explained that their son, Orval, and his wife, Maxine, "did a lot of painting for us when they were here, and other things" (Interview, May 4).

Although the concept did not saturate, there was some evidence to support the notion that the closer the kin relationship the greater the perceived responsibility. Evidences of closeness of the kin relationship and degree of perceived responsibility emerged during discussions about the present and future care of Philip. Harriet and Jack assumed responsibility that their daughter Pearl could not assume. Rose emphasized, "But overall he [Philip] is a lucky, lucky kid. They [Harriet and Jack] would do it for Pearl's sake, because he was getting nil care from Ralph, and I mean nil! There are a lot of handicapped children who don't have the advantages that child has. His mother wouldn't be any better to him" (Interview, May 2). In reflecting about her parents' near total commitment to Philip, Alice questioned "Your grandchild I would think you would love one removed from your child, but I don't know. Maybe not" (Interview, April 25). Another evidence to support the notion that strength in feelings of responsibility may lessen with distance in the kin relationship is that all three daughters feel commitment to Philip, but not totally, as Jack and Harriet do.

The following excerpt from fieldnotes describing a little family emergency illustrates the importance of

geographic proximity and possibly the closeness of the kin relationship.

Rose, Jack and the researcher sit in the living room and visit on a Sunday afternoon. It is Rose's birthday and we have just celebrated with a Sunday dinner in her honor. Mama is sitting with us also. She smiles pleasantly, but looks vacantly at us from time to time as she plays with a small decorative pillow. Occasionally she makes comments but they are not in context with the conversation. Jack and Rose fill the researcher in on Mama's mental condition. Jack said one time after Mama had her bath, she refused to put on any clothes. Papa first called Jack and Harriet but no one was home. Next he called Sue who came to help. (Fieldnotes, April 23)

Examples of the importance of geographic proximity to amount of perceived responsibility were much clearer than was the importance of closeness of the kin relationship. Responsibility to family was first with responsibility to friends a very close second in terms of priorities.

Support Was Given According to Where Perceived
Need Was Greatest

Harriet and Jack were very aware of and sensitive to the needs of others. Helen attributed this heightened sensitivity as a result of the stresses and pain her parents have endured. "They have been able to empathize with other people. I think they have been more careful about how [things] affect people. I see them being more thoughtful" (Interview, May 5).

Assistance was given according to where perceived need was greatest. Jack explained, "I guess somewhere along the line it [being helpful] was inbred in me. Not only toward those who I feel so close, but where the greatest need

arises" (Interview, May 2). Persons who were assisted by Jack and Harriet both, varied from time to time. Jack, in explaining the map of his family system, first described the relative closeness to family members and then continued, "These are some of the people in the church I feel have a greater influence in my life at this time. That changes at times" (Interview, May 6).

Harriet was spending quite a bit of time with Jackie, a good friend of Helen's. Jackie, who had three small children, was still suffering from the death of her mother last year. One of Jackie's daughters, Elizabeth, might be termed as a very active and rather difficult child who reminded Harriet of her own daughter, Sue, when she was a little girl. Harriet tried to help Jackie to understand and appreciate Elizabeth more, and also baby-sat for Jackie frequently to give her some "blessed relief" (Fieldnotes, May 5).

Jack explained his interaction with Mary, a woman he knows at church. "My close association with her is because of the need there, and the need of her children." He said that she had asked him to help her, consequently he had drawn closer to her (Interview, May 6).

Rose also tried to offer help where perceived need was greatest. In explaining the physical help she offered Mama she said, "I try to do things for her that Papa can't do" (Fieldnotes, April 24).

Support Was Given According to Where Desire
to Give Was Greatest

Supporting kin was more than duty. As Jack explained, "We enjoy being near our families; helping each other" (Interview, May 2). Rose affirmed that enjoyment was an explanation for the life-long relationship between Mark and Jack.

They just seemed to enjoy each other. They tore down buildings in North Riverview together to get lumber and then helped each other build garages. They got half of the lumber in exchange for the work of tearing them down. They just did a lot of things together. They shared their tools. It was almost "What's mine is thine," you know.

Rose explained her continuing relationship with her brother-in-law and his family after Mark's death.

They are beautiful people. Of course, I'm probably prejudiced a little bit. They have been so good to me. Jack has been so good about the car and things like that.

The researcher then commented,

It's probably nothing that Mark wouldn't have done for Harriet, should circumstances have been reversed.

Rose: That's exactly what he [Jack] said. He said, "But that's not why I'm doing it." He just wants to do it. He wants to do whatever he can. (Interview, May 2)

Jack affirmed that he wanted to help Rose.

There were marital problems [with one of Mark's children], other problems with one of the boys that I tried to give some added attention to. Then, of course, Rose's needs became greater, I felt. I'm not trying to imply that I'm such a benevolent person, but nevertheless, a--I want to do all I can for them. (Interview, May 2)

This desire to help extended to others, not just kin.

Helen explained that when she was a child her father wanted

them to be thoughtful of others. "He wanted us to put others first. When we were at [church family camp] and somebody needed something, he would want us to leave our friends and go do that for some other person" (Interview, May 5).

Although Harriet did not verbalize her enjoyment in helping others, her actions would support this. The researcher noted many times when Harriet responded to the needs of others, thoughtfully and with extra care. The following example from fieldnotes occurred on May third.

Mama Congers is restless today. Harriet speaks to her kindly, even though Mama's constantly following her could try anyone's patience. She gently guides Mama into the living room to listen to Sue play the cello. A little later Harriet takes Mama for a walk around the garden to see the flowers. (Fieldnotes May 3)

In this chapter the emerging theory has been presented in two parts. First were the sources and evidences of family strength. Second were the nature and patterns of the linkages between the marital couple and its informal support systems. In Chapter VI the researcher compares the emerging theory with existing literature.

CHAPTER VI INTEGRATION OF EMERGING THEORY WITH LITERATURE

In following the method of Glaser (1979) perfection is of no concern when first writing the ideas. "Reworking first draft material in the writing stage straightens out initial writing efforts while leading to more discovery of integration and densification" (p. 22). In writing the emerging theory the researcher is encouraged to write as if no one had ever written on the subject before. Then during the reworking the researcher is encouraged to explore the literature to look for connections and carefully weave the emerging theory into its place in the literature. The researcher,

Knows his own categories quite well and can be shaken from them or sharpen them only by better ideas, not merely by catchy ones. . . . He can look through the literature quickly for what relates to the emerging theory he has generated. He is astutely relevant. All does not look of the same importance. He can skip and dip, thereby gaining greater coverage, since he now has a clear purpose for covering his field, which is to integrate his generated theory with the other literature in the field to show its contribution. (Glaser, 1979, p. 32)

Other theories are neither proven nor disproven. If this researcher discovers that some of her ideas have been used by others, the proper attitude is to simply recognize that the other researchers discovered them also (Glaser, 1979).

The literature suggests a variety of concepts related to family strengths. Family sociologists have frequently referred to family strengths as resources (Angell, 1936; Cavan & Ranck, 1938; Koos, 1946; Hill, 1958; Burr, 1973). Others have referred to family strengths as qualities

helpful to marriage and family relationships (Pollock, 1953; Young, 1953). Otto (1963) described family strengths as abilities, and Stinnett and Sauer (1977) called them characteristics (cited in Olson & McCubbin, 1983).

While many writers of family literature have referred to family strengths, only two researchers were found to have defined the concept. Otto (1975) defined family strengths as: "Those forces, and dynamic factors in the relationship matrix, which encourage 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" (p. 16).

Stinnett (cited in Stinnett, et. al, 1979) incorporated and expanded Otto's definition.

Family strengths are defined as those relationship patterns, interpersonal skills and competencies, and social and psychological characteristics which create a sense of positive family identity, promote satisfying and fulfilling interaction among family members, encourage the development of the potential of the family group and individual family members, and contribute to the family's ability to deal effectively with stress and crises. (p. 2)

Olson and McCubbin, et al. (1983) explained,

At present, there is a lack of clarity, both conceptually and empirically, in distinguishing between these two concepts. . . . Are "family strengths" the same as "family resources" or are they a smaller constellation of attributes encompassed by the broader term "resources?" Otto (1963) and Stinnett and Sauer (1977) have taken the approach of incorporating a potpourri of family attributes, combining behavioral and attitudinal dimensions interchangeably . . . (p. 95)

McCubbin, Jay, et al. (cited in Olson & McCubbin, et al., 1983), delineated four types of resources: (a)

personal resources, (b) social support, (c) coping and (d) the family system's internal resources.

There is also lack of clarity as to how marital strengths and family strengths differ. It has been difficult for theorists either to integrate or differentiate between the two concepts.

Olson and McCubbin (1983) developed a scale to measure family strengths and an inventory to measure marital strengths. The family strengths scale measured family pride and family accord. Family pride consisted of loyalty to and optimism and trust in one's family. Family accord consisted of feelings of being able to accomplish tasks, deal with problems and get along well together. The marital strengths inventory measured eleven content areas, that is, communication, conflict resolution, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children, family and friends, egalitarian roles, financial management, personality issues and religious orientation.

No doubt the research of Olson and McCubbin (1983) has produced a wealth of useful data. They did not necessarily intend however to differentiate between marital and family strengths. When predicting high and low stress families they stated, "For the purpose of simplifying this presentation, we will refer to marital strengths, family strengths, coping strategies and resources collectively as family resources" (p. 203). Olson and McCubbin (1983) affirmed that marital and family strengths are very

significant, positive characteristics of families and that, "Couples and families possessing these strengths seemed to function more adequately across the life cycle" (p. 238).

It was also difficult for this researcher to differentiate between the concepts of marital and family strength. Family strength was considered to be an overall global quality, with one component of a strong family being high quality high stability marriage. The envired unit, for purposes of this research, was defined as the marital couple only. The facets related to family strength of the couple as a unit were discovered by this researcher. This strength can be developed and contributes to high quality in marriage. Each spouse contributes personal resources to the marriage. These together contribute to the development of the family system's internal resources. The sources or origins of the family's strength are seen as resources, in that they are reserve sources of support for the future.

Next, key descriptive sentences from each of the discovered sources of strength are stated. Then they are compared to the existing literature.

Sources of Family Strength

Shared Enjoyment of Each Other and Humor

1. In high quality high stability marriage the marital couple and also other family members frequently enjoy one another's company.

Stinnett (cited in Stinnett, et al., 1979) in his study of strong families, identified the expression of

appreciation by family members and spending a good deal of quality time together as two separate family strengths. The strong families studied genuinely enjoyed being together. Time together was not specifically mentioned by this researcher. However time together is inferred in the shared enjoyment of each other.

Foster (1982) in studying couples in Omaha, Nebraska married continuously for 35 years or longer found that the spouses typically enjoyed each other's presence and desired to do things together.

2. They are generally contented with life and have an optimistic outlook.

The strong families identified by Stinnett (cited in Stinnett, et al., 1979), "Managed even in the darkest of situations, to look at the situation and to see some positive element, no matter how tiny and to focus on it" (p. 29).

3. The marital couple has a buoyancy derived from daily living, spiked with spontaneous humor and relaxing laughter.

No literature related to humor and quality of marriage was found.

Continuing Constructive Communication and Tolerance of Some Differences

1. In high quality high stability marriage conflicts are dealt with verbally and not with physical violence. The

atmosphere of the home allows for open expression and most communicating is direct and clear.

Stinnett, Chesser and DeFrain (1979) also identified good communication patterns as a family strength. The strong families studied were good listeners. Listening communicated a very important message. That was respect for one another. It was also observed that openness and honesty contributed to good verbal communication patterns. It was reported that the strong families fought. "They get mad at each other, but they get conflict out in the open and they are able to talk it over, to discuss the problem" (p. 27).

Happily married couples have better verbal and non-verbal communication patterns than unhappy couples. They keep communication channels open and listen to each other (Navran, 1972). In keeping with these findings, previous studies identified openness (Lewis, et al., 1976; Montgomery, 1981) and effectiveness of communications (Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Snyder, 1979) to be critical to high quality in marriage.

2. Although developing mutually satisfying communication skills takes time and effort, there is continuing improvement.

Stinnett, Chesser and DeFrain (1979) observed that experience contributed to good communication patterns. This was confirmed by Foster (1982) in her study of couples married 35 or more years. As the years passed, spouses felt that their ability to communicate had improved, through

arguments, trial and error methods of problem solving and persistence. Spouses were typically comfortable and open with each other and indicated that they had grown closer through the years. It was indicated by Argle and Furnham (1983) that in general there is more conflict with younger spouses, supporting the idea that conflicts need to be worked through.

3. Some differences of opinion and personal idiosyncrasies are accepted or tolerated by each of the spouses.

No research on the relationship between quality in marriage and the acceptance or tolerance of personal idiosyncrasies was found.

A Strong Positive Family Feeling

1. In high quality high stability marriage the marital couple feels a continuity through the generations of their families. The marital couple feels positive influence from living family members and also from some who are dead.

Satir (1972) believed that anyone who has ever been part of a family leaves a definite impact. "A departed person is often very much alive in the memories of those left behind. Frequently, too, these memories play an important role in what is going on in the present, and much of the time a negative one" (p. 144).

2. Family identity is extremely important and is considered to be a strength.

Davis (cited in Olson & McCubbin, et al., 1983) identified family pride as contributing to family strengths. Family pride was defined as a family member's perception that his or her family is a worthy group. Olson and McCubbin, et al. (1983) stated that, "Davis's work gives support to the idea of narrowing the definition of family strengths to a constellation of attributes that are part of a family system's internal resources" (p. 98).

Gunn (1980) thinks that there is a concept which he calls family identity that is analogous to the concept of personal identity formulated by Erikson (1968). In developing a sense of identity, an individual experiences a feeling of well-being with oneself and a feeling of acceptance by the community.

Family identity, then, may be interpreted as a necessary developmental task for any family. Some of the content of the family's identity may come from its collective role activity as perceived and reflected by the larger society. Increasingly, families may find such identities insufficient for building a feeling of family self-worth, purpose, and self-esteem. (Gunn, 1980, p. 22)

Shared Values and Ideals

Belief or faith in a source of strength beyond or greater than themselves is of supreme importance. This source of strength gives meaning and direction to their lives.

The older couples that Olson and McCubbin (1983) called "balanced," were typically less stressed than younger couples and relied on spiritual support to cope with

problems. Since the sample was mainly of Lutheran families this was not surprising.

Stinnett, Chesser and DeFrain (1979) reported that the strong families they studied had a high degree of religious orientation. This quality involved more than participation in religious activities. Stinnett referred to the quality as a spiritual life style.

What many of these families said was that they had an awareness of God or a higher power that gave them a sense of purpose and gave their family a sense of support and strength. The awareness of this higher power in their lives helped them to be more patient with each other, more forgiving, quicker to get over anger, more positive, and more supportive in their relationships. (p. 28)

Stinnett, Sanders and DeFrain (1981) found in studying strong families that religious faith was a practical, personal rather than theoretical religion. "These families indicated that the awareness of God in their daily lives helped them to be less petty, more forgiving and more patient with each other" (p. 386). In keeping with these findings Pittman, et al. (1983) documented that greater religiosity is associated with less reported hostility from one's spouse. They stated,

Current family theory does not provide an explanation for this negative relation. . . . However, classic descriptive studies of marital adjustment (e.g., Lock, 1951) provide a possible explanation. These studies take religiosity as a form of conventionality supported by a social institution and a reference group. Such involvement may support individuals in attributions that minimize the perception of relationship hostility (and maximize the favorability of one's own marriage compared with others). (p. 529)

Continuing Commitment to Each Other

1. In high quality high stability marriage the spouses expect some strong negative emotions from time to time and do not allow these feelings to derail them from their marriage commitment.

Argle and Furnham (1983) in a study of sources of satisfaction and conflict found that a spouse was the greatest source of both satisfaction and conflict and concluded that satisfaction and conflict are apparently compatible with each other.

Roberts (1980) in his study of long married couples stated that,

"Divorce, no: murder, yes" was said by a few people with a smile. Many volunteered information which indicated that their marriage had "had its ups and downs" and its problems. They regarded this as normal. They had married with the intention of staying together. (p. 275)

Troll and Bengtson (1979) stated that,

Where affect runs high, it is rarely only positive or negative. . . . Where love is to be found, hate can also be prevalent. Bengtson, et al. (1976) data show high correlations between positive and negative affect, particularly in youth, and similar findings have been reported by Lowenthal, et al., (1975). There are analogous data for husband-wife relationships. (Feldman, 1964, p. 151)

Mace (1976) also affirmed from his experience that love and anger were two dynamic emotions in marriage. He stated that it was important to teach spouses to make friends with anger. When anger is not used constructively old conflicts are reactivated. It is when love and anger work together that intimacy is achieved.

2. They recognize that their relationship is never static, but is ever changing, and needs continuing attention.

In a study of 50 couples married an average of 55.5 years, even though life-satisfaction and marital adjustment scores were mainly positive, few spouses would say that there had not been adjustments over the years. Adapting and changing the relationship continued through the years (Roberts, 1980).

3. Although the marital commitment is strong, the relationship is much more meaningful than an endurance contest.

Rubin (cited in Adams, 1979) assumed that achievement of intimacy and a commitment is a developmental process:

The development of intimacy and of commitment are closely linked, spiralling processes. When one person reveals himself to another, it has subtle effects on the way each of them defines the relationship. Bit by bit the partners open themselves to one another, and step by step they construct their mutual bond. The process only rarely moves ahead in great leaps . . . and inasmuch as no one can ever disclose himself totally to another person, continuing acts of self-revelation remain an important part of the developmental process. (p. 261)

Commitment in the past may have been more to the institution of marriage than to a spouse. Foster (1982) studied self-disclosure and intimacy in long-term marriages. The couples reported that they expected from the beginning that their marriages were for life.

Over and over again, these older persons said that divorce never occurred to them. When they got married, it was "for keeps." Divorce was not an alternative even to the couple in the troubled marriage. They had

deep feelings of responsibility to the marriage as did all the other couples. (p. 363)

Roberts (1980) reported that "years of life experience coupled with commitment to the relationship resulted in wanting what was best for the mutual benefit of both partners" (p. 270). In a study of subjective rewards from spousal interaction in marriages intact from 25 to 62 years,

Among the longest married, there was a tendency to view love in a deeper spiritual sense by using such expressions as "faithfulness," "fidelity," "self-fulfillment," and "respect." Among other reasons stated, companionship and commitment increased correspondingly with length of time married. (Rowe, 1981, p. 388)

This researcher assumes that the marriages studied by Stinnett, Chesser and DeFrain (1979) were characterized by high quality, not just stability. In these strong families a high degree of commitment was evidenced. Family members were committed to promoting one another's happiness and welfare.

Continuing Commitment to a Purpose Beyond Themselves

In high quality high stability marriage the marital couple is not consumed by personal concerns. They transcend their own circumstances to share encouragement and strength with others.

Erikson (1963) referred to the middle years as a time for nurturing, teaching and serving others. This psychosocial stage he called generativity versus stagnation. Successful accomplishment of generativity brings a sense of fulfillment and of life being worthwhile.

Sheehy (1981) in describing her research of those overcoming crises of adult life explained,

Although one might have guessed the other qualities vital to pathfinding, would any child of a century that has conceived of God as dead, man as a being in nothingness, and morality as relative to the situation have guessed that one of the chief requisites of a happy life is purpose?

Yet the one constant in the lives of people who enjoy high well-being--in every group I studied--was a devotion to some cause or purpose beyond themselves. To put it as simply as possible, my research offered impressive evidence that we feel better when we attempt to make our world better.

What do people derive from having a cause or a purpose?

People often say, "There's nothing that makes you feel so good as doing something nice for someone else." We need to feel that we are good. Not everybody feels that way, and nobody feels that way all the time, but there is evidence that to believe we are good people, and becoming better, is one of the natural imperatives in our development. A sense of purpose also helps to satisfy the need to believe "I matter," that a single life might "make a difference." Further, to have a purpose beyond oneself lends to existence a meaning and direction--the most important characteristic of high well-being. (pp. 264-265)

In high quality high stability marriage generativity of the couple as a unit is both a cause and outcome of mutual commitment.

Nature of the Linkages Between the Family and Its Informal Support Systems

First, the informal support systems are rank ordered in terms of their observed importance as sources of support to the marital couple. The discussion that follows compares these elements of the emerging theory to the existing literature.

The discovered order was:

1. Supports between the spouses of the marital couple.
2. Supports between the marital couple and the adult children.
3. Supports between the marital couple and extended kin.
4. Supports between the marital couple and friends.
5. Supports between the marital couple and neighbors.

In the emerging theory spousal support ranked first in terms of frequency of incidents recorded and also in importance to the marital couple. While there was evidence to indicate that reciprocity has been unequal during times of stress, it appeared to be quite equal at the time of the study.

The happily married older couples studied by Troll, et al. (1979) looked to spouses for comfort and support and they anticipated increasing interdependence. Johnson (1983) also found that in couples aged 65 years or older, the marital dyad was the key source of support. Husbands and wives were expected to fulfill instrumental needs and also social and emotional satisfaction.

Theorists have long debated about whether or not relationships based on love transcend social exchange.

Theorists have speculated about the ability to accurately look at fairness in one's marriage. For example in a warning against "marital scorekeeping," Lobsenz and Murstein (1976) warned men and women that if they look for fairness in their marriages, they are in trouble. (Cited in Traupmann & Hatfield, 1983, p. 89)

While there was evidence to indicate that reciprocity had been unequal during times of stress, there was no apparent concern about reciprocity or desire on the part of the spouses to keep score. Johnson (1983) stated that,

The husband-wife dyad is more likely to be regulated by the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), which is by definition based on equivalence. It is non-exploitive and it is dominated by social and emotional factors. Exchanges are calculated not only on services exchanged in the past but also on those that one might need in the future. (p. 382)

In the opinion of the researcher, this is inadequate to explain spousal support in high quality high stability marriage.

In the three generational study of Hill (1970) it was clearly evident that parents gave much more than their adult children. This was confirmed by the emerging theory. It was discovered that the adult children desired more reciprocity with their parents. However, the adult children's offers of help were frequently thwarted by the parents. No studies considering this phenomenon were found. Hill (1970) reported that strains were introduced among the generations when help moved predominantly one way. The strains introduced by non-reciprocity were more for the recipient than for the giver. This finding is in keeping with the emerging theory that adult children experienced some frustration and bewilderment when their offers of help were thwarted. Apparently this is an area in need of further research.

For clarity, the terms used by Hill (1970) are used for the remainder of this discussion. He referred to the marital couple as the parent generation. The aging parents were called the grandparent generation.

The fact that the grandparent generation has frequent contact with the parent generation has been repeatedly identified by researchers. No attempt was made to verify that relationship.

Stoller and Earl (1983) confirmed that the parents assisted the grandparents when one of the grandparents was not present or when the level of support was insufficient. In keeping with this finding Johnson (1983) stated that when both grandparents were present a parent performed numerous services, but usually not equal to that of a spouse in quantity or quality.

In caring for the elderly, two principles have been conceptualized. They are the principles of substitution and the principle of a shared-functioning kinship system. Shanas (1979) described the principle of substitution as the availability of family members in serial order. If one person is not available to help, another will step in. Litwak and Szelenyi (1969) described the principle of shared-functioning kinship system where specific needs of the elderly relative are matched to the most appropriate relative as determined by long-term commitment, proximity and degree of intimacy. Johnson (1983) found that the

principle of substitution rather than shared functioning was most common.

There was much congruence between the emerging theory of this research and the study of mutual aid between the generations (Hill, 1970). The volume of giving was highest for the parent generation, lowest for the grandparent generation, with the adult child generation in between. Hill's (1970) study considered five types of help, that is, economic, emotional gratification, household management, child care and illness.

The parent generation quite clearly gives more help than it receives in all five areas of exchange. The grandparents, in sharp contrast, receive substantially more help than they give in all areas except child care where they have, obviously, no need of help. The married child generation gives more than it receives in three areas--emotional gratification, household management and illness. This generation receives more than it gives in the economic assistance and child care areas. (Hill, 1970, p. 68)

The four types of help categorized by this researcher were social-emotional, physical, economic and informational. They were really not comparable to those of Hill (1970). If this typology is useful more research using it will be needed. No studies were found that categorized informational help.

Even though the types of help given need clarification, it is clear that the mutual helping relationship between parents and children continues throughout life. Early in life the balance is in favor of children. In adulthood it becomes more equal, then in later life shifts in favor of the parents (Cicirelli, 1983). It

could be termed a deferred exchange process. Each generation turned to the kin network when it needed help and lacked resources.

The success or failure of the kinship network leans heavily on the kinkeeping middle generation which serves as the lineage bridge across the generations, being most involved with its adjacent generations both in intergenerational contacts and in help exchanges. (Hill, 1970, p. 330)

In a search of the literature it appeared that friends and neighbors supply intermittent supplementary help, but not on a long-term continuous basis. Litwak and Szelenyi (1969) in a study of Hungarian women in Detroit, found that neighbors and friends provide an important source of help for short-term problems. Confirming this finding, Cantor (1980) found that friends and neighbors assist only when family members are not available (cited in Johnson, 1983). Latinos in Detroit preferred the help of spouses and relatives over formal support systems. Martinez (1977) found that informal support systems provided twice as much help as formal support systems (cited in McCubbin & Patterson, 1981). Shanas (1979) reported that older people are most likely to turn first to family, then to friends and neighbors, and last of all to social and government agencies. Hill (1970) found that preferred sources for help by the parent generation were to (a) grandparents, (b) married children, (c) peers (also called the friendship network), (d) private specialists and (e) siblings.

There is some lack of consensus among researchers as to whether or not the grandparent generation or adult children

are preferred sources of help of the parent generation. It is clear that spousal support ranks first, followed in order by other kin, friends and neighbors, and last of all formal support systems. Search of the literature did not clearly differentiate between friends and neighbors.

Previous studies have consistently reported that families resort to external supports only when they do not have sufficient internal resources. This was reconfirmed by Olson and McCubbin (1983) who stated,

Families at the later stages seem to receive more support from either internal family resources or informal social networks and less frequently rely upon more formal programs and sources offered through various community organizations. (p. 162)

The emerging theory concurred with the finding that families rely on internal resources first and also with Stinnett, Sanders and DeFrain (1981) who documented that strong families experienced many crises, but dealt with them in similar ways. First, they were able to be optimistic and see the positive aspects of situations. They also united and provided one another much support. During times of crises they especially recognized how much they meant to one another.

Patterns of the Linkages Between the Family and its Informal Support Systems

The three patterns that emerged were:

1. Support is given according to where perceived responsibility is greatest.

2. Support is given according to where perceived need

is greatest.

3. Support is given according to where desire to give is' greatest.

The literature related to patterns of giving was mainly related to filial responsibility. Filial assistance has been associated with a combination of motivational factors that is, affection, gratitude, guilt or a desire for parental approval (Treas, 1977). The strong sense of filial responsibility experienced by many of the parent generation is referred to as filial maturity. This characteristic is an identification of the middle-aged with their aging parents. There is a developing recognition on the part of the parent generation that it is being depended upon by the grandparent generation (Blenkner, 1965). The parent generation internalizes the belief that they are responsible for the grandparent generation and therefore behaves very responsibly (Brody, 1970).

As might be expected, some of the parent generation are motivated to help the grandparent generation out of a sense of duty. Others may be motivated by affection (Adams, 1970). Cicirelli (1983) found that when the parent generation perceived the grandparent generation's needs it responded by helping and also,

The adult child makes contact with the parent at least partially out of love for the parent and because he or she wants to do so, not just out of a sense of duty or because the parent needs help. (Cicirelli, 1983, pp. 35-36)

Horowitz (1980) found that the two strongest predictors of

care by the parent generation for the grandparent generation were the grandparents' needs and the parent generation's affection (cited in McCubbin & Patterson, 1981). After informal observations and discussions with parent generation caretakers, LeVande (1980) was convinced that many of the caretakers were motivated out of a deep affection and compassion for their parents.

In reflecting on his research Hill (1970) thought,

It may be that three prevalent norms run throughout the life cycle. These are the norms of reciprocity, filial responsibility, and "noblesse oblige." To be more explicit, it may be that help given or received is governed first by the norm of reciprocity which places constraints and obligations on both the giver and the receiver, and second by the norm of responsibility of children for their parents (in this case the norm is seen reflected primarily in transfers from parent to grandparent). Thirdly, the helping behavior observed may stem from the desire and sense of obligation of the more advantaged family to aid those perceived to be in less fortunate circumstances. It would seem timely that future research into family helping patterns should examine more closely than has been done to date what combination of norms are associated with the giving and taking of help within the kinship network. (p. 78)

It is quite clear that filial assistance is motivated out of perceived responsibility of the parent generation and need of the grandparent generation. Whether or not the parent generation is motivated out of desire is less clear. In the emerging theory it was very clear that in high quality high stability marriage, the couple was motivated to give continually not only to kin, but to others. They were motivated by feelings of responsibility, the needs they observed, and a strong desire to help others. This appears to be an area for further research.

In this chapter the emerging theory was compared with existing literature until the researcher was satisfied that no new information was being received. Portions of the emerging theory where research was non-existent or lacking were noted. Now, after further reflection, integration and revision, the emerging theory is restated in Chapter VII.

CHAPTER VII EMERGING THEORY II

Marital strength is an intangible internal resource of the couple as a unit that can be developed. Each spouse contributes personal resources to the relationship that are exchanged or shared. Family strength is an overall global quality with marital strength being one component of it. In marital strength the core concept is commitment to each other.

Commitment to Each Other

The continuing commitment in high quality high stability marriage is not to the institution of marriage, but to each other. The relationship, however, is much more meaningful than mere obligation. The marital couple recognizes that the relationship is never static but is ever changing, and needs continuing attention. Support for each other is supreme. Facets that affect development of commitment are appreciation, communication, acceptance, family esteem and purpose.

Appreciation

In high quality high stability marriage the spouses frequently enjoy each other's company. They are generally contented with life and have an optimistic outlook. The marital couple has a buoyancy derived from daily living, spiked with spontaneous humor and relaxing laughter.

Communication

In high quality high stability marriage conflicts are dealt with verbally. Although developing mutually

satisfying communication skills takes time and effort, there is continuing improvement. The atmosphere of the home allows for open expression and most communicating is direct and clear. The spouses expect some strong negative emotions from time to time and do not allow these feelings to derail them from their commitment to each other.

Acceptance

In high quality high stability marriage some differences of opinion and personal idiosyncrasies are accepted or tolerated by each of the spouses. They allow each other room for personal development and individuality.

Family Esteem

In high quality high stability marriage the spouses feel an esteem for the couple as a unit and also have a feeling of esteem for the family as a whole. This esteem gives the marital couple an awareness that the family is a worthy group with an identity of its own.

Purpose

In high quality high stability marriage the spouses have shared values and ideals. Belief or faith in a source of strength beyond or greater than themselves is of supreme importance giving meaning and direction to their lives. Commitment to a purpose beyond themselves causes them not to be consumed by personal concerns. They transcend their own circumstances to share encouragement and strength with others. As the years pass the spouses in high quality high stability marriage develop generativity of the couple as a

unit. They nurture, teach and help others. This generativity brings a sense of fulfillment and of purpose in life. Help or support is given in accordance with greatest perceived responsibility, need and desire to give.

1. Responsibility

Primary responsibility is to kin, but other persons and causes are also supported.

2. Need

As needs change, persons receiving help also change.

3. Desire to Give

Enjoyment is derived from giving. It is much more meaningful than duty.

The marital couple relies on its internal resources and spousal support first. However, when support is received the preferred sources in rank order are (a) other kin, (b) friends and neighbors and (c) last of all formal support services.

Commentary

It is recognized that the emerging theory of marital strength is partial. The facet called purpose is more developed than the others. More facets could likely emerge from studying families in differing socio-economic or minority groups, or at other stages in the family life cycle. One facet that emerged but did not saturate from the study of this family was an element of adaptability or flexibility in adjusting goals and roles. The couple

studied had quite clearly defined traditional roles and were not experiencing unusual change. This facet would probably be easier to detect during times of change.

In this chapter the emerging theory has been restated after further reflection and integration with the literature. The researcher recognizes that the theory is partial and is still evolving. The concluding chapter will summarize the process and findings and include implications for practitioners and researchers.

CHAPTER VIII SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The focus of this study was on what is going right with families rather than on what is going wrong. One objective was to gain deeper insight into family strength by identifying sources and evidence of family strength, discovering how a marital couple perceived its strength and by describing the linkages between a family and its informal support systems. Another objective was to work toward a grounded theory of family strength with emphasis on the marital unit. The family studied was selected from a pool of known families. The couple had been married more than 25 years as an indication of high stability. High quality marriage was evidenced as follows:

1. The couple appeared to enjoy time together.
2. They appeared to have positive regard for each other.
3. They communicated easily.
4. There was no overt evidence of continuing discord or unresolved conflict.

In this concluding chapter the research process is summarized. This is followed by a summary of the emerging theory, reflections by the researcher about use of the family ecological framework and implications for practice, theory and research.

Summary of the Process

In using the grounded theory method of Glaser and Strauss (1967), the researcher first started with a general

purpose in mind. Four questions guided the researcher:

1. What are the sources of family strength?
2. What are the evidences of family strength?
3. What is the nature of the linkages between the family and its informal support systems?
4. What are the patterns of the linkages between the family and its informal support systems?

Before entering the field the researcher made a preliminary but not extensive review of the literature about high quality high stability marriage. Decisions were made regarding techniques to use for data recording, collection and criteria for selection of a family to study. After a family agreed to participate in the study certain facets of the consent agreement were negotiated with them before the researcher entered the field.

The family ecological framework was used to focus observations and interviews in analyzing and describing the family's strengths and to examine the interrelatedness between the marital couple and its informal support systems.

The family ecosystem has three central organizing components: the environed unit, environment and the patterning of interactions and transactions between them (Andrews, Bubolz and Paolucci, 1980). For the purpose of this study, the environed unit or family was defined as the marital couple only. The second component, the near environment, includes adult children, extended kin, friends and neighbors. The third component of this family ecosystem

was the interaction and reciprocal relationships between the first and second components, that is the marital couple and its near environment.

A discovered grounded theory mainly uses concepts that emerge from the data. Some existing ones may be used if they fit the data and are clearly useful. In studying the nature and extent of the linkages between the marital couple and its informal support systems, four existing concepts about types of help were useful. These were social-emotional, physical, economic and informational help (Andrews, Bubolz and Paolucci, 1980).

For 17 days, from April 22 through May 8, the researcher was a live-in participant observer in the marital couple's home. During this time many observations were recorded in fieldnotes. Informal ethnographic interviews were recorded on tape and verbatim transcriptions were also recorded into notebooks. Using the grounded theory method of Glaser and Strauss (1967) all fieldnotes and interviews were analyzed repeatedly for the emergence of categories. As categories became saturated, observations and interviews became more and more focused.

Both ethnographic interviews and observations were used to determine the marital strength. Questions about behaviors and artifacts were focused in such a way as not to divulge the full intent of the study. Family members were initially aware that the study was of stable marriage. They were not aware, until the last two days of the researcher's

residence that the full intent was also to study high quality marriage. The nature and patterns of the linkages between the family and its informal support systems were based almost entirely upon observations until after categories and patterns became clear. Then some focused questions were asked. A preliminary statement of the emerging theory was written while the researcher was still in the field.

Next, the researcher returned to the existing literature. The emerging theory was compared to and integrated with the literature. Then the theory was revised and restated in light of this integration and further reflection.

Summary of the Emerging Theory

Marital strength is an intangible internal resource of the couple as a unit that can be developed. Each spouse has personal resources that are exchanged, shared and contribute to the strength of the unit. In the development of marital strength the core concept is commitment to each other.

Spousal support is extremely critical. Facets that affect development of commitment are (a) appreciation, (b) communication, (c) acceptance, (d) family esteem and (e) purpose.

In high quality high stability marriage, the couple develops generativity of the couple as a unit. They support other persons and causes in accordance with their greatest perceived responsibility, need and desire to give. When

support is received the preferred sources in rank order are (a) spousal, (b) other kin, (c) friends and neighbors and (d) last of all, formal support services.

Reflections About Use of Family Ecological Framework

The family ecological framework was useful in studying the couple as a unit and its relationship to its informal support systems. The couple had identity, actions and character of its own, that were more than the sum of these attributes in the individual spouses. Studying the couple as a unit enabled the researcher to see the elements of strength and also to some extent elements that deplete the family.

Generally couples who are beyond the launching period and into the retirement years experience a time of more freedom when demands of family life are minimized. The family studied had experienced a tremendous emotional toll and the immense strain of continuous prolonged caregiving to a grandson severely handicapped as a result of an accident. Even though no reluctance on the part of the caregivers was observed, there was evidence of cumulative fatigue. Much support continues to flow out from the couple, not only to kin but to others in the community.

Family systems are constantly in the state of change. "Families experience periods of growth and integration, periods of relative balance and stability, as well as periods of disorder and disintegration" (Andrews, Bubolz and Paolucci, 1980, p. 35). This family has demonstrated

repeatedly its ability to survive major crises. Even through adversity the marital couple has been able to continue to contribute to society. The family ecological framework was useful in seeing the family's life in its wholeness.

Implications for Practitioners

This researcher, as well as others, discovered that the preferred order of supports is spousal, other relatives, friends and neighbors and last of all formal support services. More consideration needs to be given as to how services might be designed to supplement, not replace, the family's internal resources and its informal support systems.

For example, federal programs cannot be expected to solve all problems of families regarding filial responsibilities. If families were supported by formal service providers, supplemental help could be provided caregivers in cases where total care of the elderly is impossible, but partial responsibility would be feasible and possibly desirable. Self help might be encouraged by providing respite services to prevent depletion, and maintain the physical and emotional health of caregivers. Possibly more tax relief could provide some economic incentive for those financially involved in home filial care.

The grandparent generation may not want to become a burden on the parent generation. However, by avoiding

planning, tremendous burdens can be created. Practitioners can encourage the generations of families to communicate about tentative plans before filial crises or other crises involving custodial care occur.

Professionals involved in formal support services need to consider how to enhance the involvement of informal support networks as a source of family strength. By being sensitive to the workings of these networks, where many essential service exchanges occur, formal and informal support systems might work together more cooperatively.

The emerging theory also has implications for family educators and counselors. It could help in alleviating or preventing problems and help families not only to survive but to be able to thrive despite life's hardships. Marital strength is an intangible internal resource of that couple as a unit, but its development can produce tangible benefits. Couples who develop this strength are likely to be able to be more resilient and less vulnerable in times of stress. The emerging theory indicated several facets that contribute to developing, sustaining and enhancing this resource. More consideration needs to be given to the recognition that developing satisfying communication skills takes time and effort. Each member of the marital pair needs space and understanding for development of individuality. Family esteem promotes feelings of continuity and well-being. Mutual enjoyment promotes bouyancy and relaxation, and a common purpose is essential

to development of generativity of the couple as a unit. All of these facets relate to continuing commitment to each other. In relation to this the words of the female spouse quoted earlier will be long remembered by this researcher, "So you fall out of love. So What! Hang in there and you will fall right back in" (Fieldnotes, April 27).

Implications for Research and Theory

The primary purpose of grounded theory is to generate ideas for further research. Following is a summary of ideas generated from the emerging theory.

In the family studied the parents were giving continually to their adult children. Help given was social-emotional, physical, economic and informational. The adult children desired more reciprocity. However, their offers of help were frequently blocked or thwarted by the parents. The adult children experienced some bewilderment and frustration because of this. The parents were more willing to accept social-emotional, physical and informational help than economic help. Research is needed to understand under what conditions thwarting occurs and the consequences of unequal exchanges. Thwarting was not found in the literature but was the term used by this researcher for the phenomenon. The family ecological framework could be used for this research, and also to study serial reciprocity and deferred exchanges among extended kin.

The emerging theory has indicated several other areas where further study could be beneficial. The marital couple

studied had a buoyancy derived from daily living spiked with spontaneous humor and relaxing laughter. No literature relating to the presence of humor in daily life and quality of marriage was found. The couple also accepted or tolerated some differences of opinion and personal idiosyncrasies about each other. No existing literature was found relating to this acceptance or tolerance and quality of marriage. The spouses expected some strong negative feelings from time to time, but did not allow these feelings to derail them from their commitment to each other. Some commentary, but no research, was found that discussed the relationship between love and hate. The spouses studied recognized that developing mutually satisfying communication skills takes time and effort. Research is needed to further understand the process. In using the method in another study, different questions could be asked in order to discover the linkages between the family and its nonformal and formal support systems.

Borrowing Erikson's (1963) term of generativity, the researcher described the spouses as having developed generativity of the couple as a unit. There was much evidence of their having reached filial maturity. They also were continually nurturing, teaching and helping those other than kin. They had a common purpose that gave direction to their lives. The phenomenon of generativity of the couple as a unit in high quality high stability marriage could also be a fruitful topic to study.

The emerging theory was developed using one family who apparently had managed its resources effectively through the years and was not especially worried about economic constraints. Before ideas from the emerging theory are included in a large scale study, this researcher thinks that some further testing would be beneficial. It would be helpful to test the emerging theory by studying families in other socio-economic and minority groups and also at other stages in the family life cycle. In continuing to work toward a grounded theory of family strength this researcher suggests that the next logical step is to study high quality parent-child relationships.

This study has demonstrated that the process has been useful in providing what Glaser and Strauss (1967) called "one slice of data." They explained that a variety of slices of data would be bewildering if one needed to evaluate them all as accurate evidences for verifications.

However, for generating theory this variety is highly beneficial, because it yields more information on categories than any one mode of knowing [technique of collection]. . . . When different slices of data are submitted to comparative analyses the result is not unbounding relativism. Instead, it is a proportioned view of the evidence, since during the comparison biases of particular people and methods tend to reconcile themselves as the analyst discovers the underlying cause of variation. (p. 67)

It is hoped that the slice of data in this study will be compared with others and modified or enriched and improved.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter to Family

November 17, 1982

Dear

I would like to choose the two of you for a study of stable marriage of 25 or more years. If you permit your family to be studied, I will need to:

1. Reside in your home for a two to three week period, but not continuously. If I drive, March or April '83 might be good but I can be somewhat flexible at this point.
2. Observe your lives together in the common living areas of your home and in the community, church and maybe school.
3. Sometimes just observe and at other times participate as a family member.
4. Discuss and agree with you about how my presence will be explained to others.
5. Take lots of notes and later ask questions. You always have the right to pass if you prefer not to answer, and can withdraw from the study at any time without recrimination.
6. Use a tape recorder to record interviews, oral histories and possibly some conversations. After the research is complete you may keep the tapes, or they will be destroyed.
7. Interview others selected by me, about their perceptions of your family. Two generations of family members are essential to the study and three generations are desirable. Are your parents and your daughter available to be interviewed?
8. Let you pick your own fictitious names for the written report.
9. Ask both of you to read my written description of your family and add comments or reflections.
10. Ask both of you to sign a permission form if you agree to participate in the study.

I will be home November 22 through 25. Would you please call collect with your questions and a decision when you are ready? If you need more time to decide, I will be home again December 19.

I will look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

College of Human Ecology
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

CONSENT FORM

We the undersigned freely consent to participate in a research study being conducted by Vivian Campbell under the supervision of Dr. Linda Nelson and Dr. Margaret Bubolz, Professors, Department of Family and Child Ecology, College of Human Ecology, Michigan State University.

The purposes of the project have been explained and we understand what our participation will involve.

We understand that the results of the study will be treated in strict confidence and that we will remain anonymous. A final report of the study will be made available to us at our request.

We understand that our participation in the study does not guarantee any beneficial results to us.

We understand that we are free to discontinue participation in the study at any time without recrimination.

Husband's Signature

Date

Wife's Signature

Date

Address

PAGE _____
CONTINUED _____
ANALYSIS _____

PAGE _____
CONTINUED _____
ANALYSIS _____

PAGE _____
CONTINUED _____
ANALYSIS _____

APPENDIX D

MEMO

Title: _____

[illegible]

APPENDIX E

Calendar of Daily Activities of Researcher

Friday, April 22

P.M. Observed, but asked no questions

Saturday, April 23

A.M. Observed

Went shopping with Harriet, Sue and Dennis

P.M. Worked on description of the home

Started description of family members

Studied photo albums

Sunday, April 24

A.M. Worked on coding and analyses

P.M. Family dinner to celebrate Rose's birthday

Observed interactions between family members

Noted many examples of supports

Asked some questions about historical data

Monday, April 25

A.M. Taped interview with Alice

P.M. Studied photo albums

Asked questions about historical data

Worked on description of family members

Visited in friend's home

Tuesday, April 26

A.M. Observed

Informal interview with Harriet as she quilted

Informal interview with Jack

Noon Lunch with Alice, Henry, Baby Hank, Sue, Dennis,
Harriet and Jack at restaurant

Alice's family returned home after lunch

P.M. Finished studying photo albums

Asked many questions, especially about Philip

Worked on kinship chart

Accompanied Harriet to church

Women's meeting

Wednesday, April 27

A.M. Observed

Informal interview with Jack and Harriet

Worked on floorplan of Philip's house

P.M. Worked on data analyses

Went to church in the evening

Thursday, April 28

A.M. Observed

Taped interview with Sue

P.M. Left for afternoon and evening to give self and
family a reprieve

Friday, April 29

A.M. Shopping trip with Jack and Harriet, much
informal interviewing

Noon Lunch at restaurant

P.M. Observed

Informal interview with Sue

Saturday, April 30

A.M. Got caught up on notes, analyses and memo writing

P.M. Shopping trip with Harriet

Accompanied Sue and Rose to community production
of My Fair Lady

Sunday May 1

A.M. Attended church with family

P.M. Studied Philip's medical reports

Monday, May 2

A.M. Observed

Taped interview with Jack

Noon Went to lunch with Rose and her friends

P.M. Taped interview with Rose

Tuesday, May 3

Recorded events of a typical day

Wednesday, May 4

A.M. Taped interview with Papa

P.M. Party to welcome Helen

Fellowship service at church

Thursday, May 5

A.M. Taped interview with Helen

P.M. Taped Harriet and Jack describing their maps of
family system and asked them questions

Friday, May 6

A.M. Observed

Taped interview with Jack and Harriet

Revealed full nature of the study

P.M. Went shopping with Sue

Viewed videotape of Harriet's retirement party

Viewed Philip on TV's six o'clock news

Informal interview with Jack and Harriet
regarding their further reflections

Saturday, May 7

A.M. Taped Jack and Harriet's discussion about family
strength

P.M. Concluding interview

Informal interviews with Jack and Harriet
regarding further reflections

Sunday, May 8

A.M. Attended church with family

Noon Restaurant meal to celebrate Mother's Day with
Jack, Harriet, Sue, Bill, Dennis, Helen, Rose,
Papa and Mama

P.M. Rehearsal of puppet show at church

Left Riverview 8 P.M.

Some time each night was spent augmenting notes,
analyzing data and writing memos.

LIST OF REFERENCES

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