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RESEARCH ON SUCCESSFUL FAMILIES

A report on a conference sponsored by the
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What is research on successful families?

This is a body of research on families that are enduring, cohesive, affectionate, and mutually-appreciative, and in which family members communicate with one another frequently and fruitfully. They are families that raise children who go on to form successful families themselves. They are not necessarily families that are trouble-free. Some have experienced health problems, financial difficulties, and other problems. But they are adaptable and able to deal with crises in a constructive manner.

The goal of research on these families is to discover the conditions and behavior patterns that make for family success.

Who is doing research on successful families?

The study of family strengths has been pursued by researchers from a variety of disciplines, including psychology, psychiatry, sociology, social work, and marriage and family counseling. Many of the individuals involved work to assist troubled families, as well as doing research on families that function well.

Thirteen of the leading researchers in this field came together recently to describe their work in a two-day conference in Washington. This document provides a report on that conference. (Names and biographical sketches of conference participants may be found at the end of the report.)

How is research on successful families different from other research on families?

A great deal of family research focuses on families that experience problems like spouse abuse, adolescent pregnancy, divorce, alcoholism or drug abuse, welfare dependency, and child maltreatment. Research on these family-related problems is essential if society is to develop better methods of dealing with them. Studies of successful families complement problem-focused research by teaching us how negative behavior patterns may be prevented in the first place or dealt with by families themselves. Research on strong families can also teach us how families transmit positive values and encourage beneficial behavior patterns like hard work, prudent risk-taking, responsible childbearing, and community involvement. Just as good health at the individual level is more than

the absence of disease, so healthy family functioning is more than a lack of obvious problems. A review of the successful families research literature, "Identifying Successful Families: An Overview of Constructs and Selected Measures," was prepared prior to the conference and is available from the Office for Social Services Policy, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, or from Child Trends, Inc.

What are the policy implications of research on strong families?

Society relies on families to perform a number of essential functions such as providing for the economic needs of dependents, rearing and nurturing the next generation, and caring for the frail and disabled. When families break down or malfunction, everyone pays a price. Some of the critical functions of families may be taken over by public agencies or private charities that cannot carry out these duties as efficiently as family members could, or the needs of family members may go unmet.

Problem prevention. The prevention of problems within the family tends to be less costly in every sense of the word than dealing with problems after they have developed. If the key attributes of successful families can be identified, and ways can be found to develop these characteristics among troubled families, then the costs of public health and welfare programs might be reduced. A stronger labor force and fewer social problems might also result.

Social indicators and policy appraisal. Knowing what makes families work makes it possible to develop a broader range of statistical indicators of the condition of family life in the United States. Current statistics count the number of families in the country and describe their composition but tell little about how they are functioning. We need indicators that gauge the quantity and quality of communication between family members, the depth of commitment to each other, the frequency of shared activities, the satisfaction or dissatisfaction that members feel about how the family is operating, the division of labor within the family, and the extent of cooperation with respect to ends and means. Such measures could be used in evaluation studies that appraise the effects of specific policies on the behavior and well-being of affected groups. Research findings on strong families may also give policymakers and citizens a better

basis for judging whether proposed policies will be helpful or harmful to families.

Public information and encouragement of private initiatives. Research on successful families is relevant to government efforts to inform the public and encourage individual actions and organizational policies that promote family health. Some of the findings are clearly applicable to specific areas of individual choice and business policy, whereas the practical implications of other findings will become clearer as theory and empirical evidence are further developed. Dissemination of the findings may help families to identify and develop behaviors and interaction patterns that enhance family functioning and may help foster a climate of public opinion that is more favorable to families.

What are the characteristics of strong, healthy families?

Based on various assumptions about what a strong family does, researchers have developed lists of structural and behavioral attributes that characterize successful families. In spite of differences in discipline and perspective, there seems to be a consensus about the basic dimensions of a strong, healthy family. The following constructs, which are often interrelated and complex, will be identified, defined, and described briefly as they exist in strong, healthy families:

- communication
- encouragement of individuals
- expressing appreciation
- commitment to family
- religious/spiritual orientation
- social connectedness
- ability to adapt
- clear roles
- time together

The presence of effective communication patterns is one of the most frequently mentioned characteristics of strong families. Researchers characterize the communication patterns of strong families as clear, open, and frequent. Family members talk to each other often, and when they do, they are

honest and open with each other (Stinnett and DeFrain, 1985; Lewis, 1979; Epstein, 1983; Olson, 1986).

The encouragement of individual members encompasses a range of affective dimensions related to mutual support, recognition, and respect. Strong families cultivate a sense of belonging to a family unit, but also nurture the development of individual strengths and interests. Members enjoy the family framework, which provides structure but does not confine them.

Stinnett describes commitment to the family as follows: "Commitment goes in two directions. Each family member is valued; each is supported and sustained. At the same time they are committed to the family as a unit. They have a sense of being a team; they have a family identity and unity. When outside pressures (work, for example) threaten to remove family from its top priority, members of strong families take action and make sacrifices if necessary to preserve family well-being" (Stinnett, prepared statement to the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, 1986, pg. 48).

"Delivering a high level of positive reinforcement to family members, day in and day out, doing things that are positive from the other person's perspective, just for their sake, not merely as a strategy for 'buying their love,' etc." is Schumm's (1986) description of appreciation as an important characteristic of strong families. Related to this, W. Robert Beavers and others stated that a sense of "delight" with the child is important to his or her successful development. Similarly, Olson summed up that it is important, when studying a family, to emphasize the delight, liking, warmth, and humor that family members share, which are all aspects of this construct and which distinguish some families from others.

A religious or spiritual orientation is identified by many researchers as an important component of strong families. Indeed, Beavers noted that all studies have found some aspect of religiosity or spirituality as a component of strong families. However, as described below, there is disagreement over which aspects of religion are most critical to family functioning.

A family's ability to adapt to stressful and potentially damaging events as well as to predictable life cycle changes, has also been identified as an important characteristic of strong families. Beavers noted that strong families

are those with an ability to absorb stress and cope. The more rigid a family system, the more disturbed. Olson equates adaptability with flexibility, which he describes as the capacity of a family system to change the power structure, roles, and rules within the family. Healthy families change; unhealthy families remain stuck. Researchers note that ability to adapt is contingent upon a number of other characteristics common to strong families such as effective communication, affective involvement, external resources, etc. In addition, two of the other characteristics of strong families (social connectedness and clear definition of roles) are linked closely to this adaptability dimension.

Successful families are not isolated; they are connected to the wider society. One effect of social connectedness is the availability of external resources, identified by researchers as important to effective coping by families. A family's social connectedness can be measured in terms of the availability of external resources in the form of friends, family, and neighbors, as well as participation in community organizations.

Many researchers identify clear role definition as an important characteristic of family functioning, and as essential for a family's ability to adapt to changing situations. With a clear, yet flexible structure in place, family members are aware of their responsibilities in and to the family. Consequently, in the face of crises and problems, members know their roles. The nature of this aspect of family functioning is described as follows: "[it] focuses on whether the family has established patterns of behavior for handling a set of family functions ... In addition, assessment of the roles dimension includes consideration of whether tasks are clearly and equitably assigned to family members and whether tasks are carried out responsibly by family members" (Epstein, et al, 1983).

Successful families spend time together, and the shared time is high in both quality and quantity. Self-report instruments assessing family functioning address this topic in terms of the number of activities done as a family and the extent to which family members enjoy spending time together. For example, questions are asked about whether "family members like to spend their free time with each other" (Olson's FACES), and about "spending time together and doing things with each other" (Stinnett and DeFrain, Family Strengths Inventory).

What methods are used to identify strong families?

Researchers have devised a number of methods to measure the characteristics of family life, and to identify the attributes of strong families. Methods include both self-report instruments, such as questionnaires and check-lists, and observational procedures in which rating scales are filled out by trained observers who are present with the family in their household or a laboratory, or who view and code from a videotape made of the family interacting. Observed activities include both structured tasks, such as discussing what each member would like to change about the family, and everyday pursuits, such as family meals. Assessments range in scope from measures of overall family functioning to measures of the individual constructs discussed above. In general, the family strengths measures employed to date are rather global and do not provide information on family behavior patterns. For example, the observer may judge how well family members communicate without specifying what is entailed in "good" communication.

What are some of the major substantive issues surrounding the area of successful families research?

Among the major substantive issues discussed at the conference were the social and economic contexts in which families operate, the implications of changing roles and behavior patterns for our notions of family health and normality, the diversity of family life and whether current research findings are applicable to minority and low-income families, the precise role that religion and religiosity play in helping to make for strong families, and whether this research can inform the debate over "family policy."

-- Does successful families research pay enough attention to the social and economic contexts in which families operate?

Several conference participants felt that successful families research needs to pay more attention to the social and economic conditions in which families operate. They argued that an appreciation of the environmental context was critical to any appraisal of family functioning. For example, child development expert Urie Bronfenbrenner noted that although the focus of research on successful families is on family processes, there are certain conditions under

which these processes can and cannot occur. Some of these conditions are not wholly in the power of the family to create or eliminate. The availability of steady and adequately-paid employment is an example. While families can do things that increase the chances of gainful employment, there are larger economic forces at work shaping the job market. The effects of these external conditions must be considered when assessing family strengths.

Job demands and family functioning. Therapist Froma Walsh also emphasized that many family problems are contextually bound. For instance, in families that are trying to raise young children while both parents have full-time jobs, the lack of flexible and supportive work environments can create stresses and challenges that interfere with harmonious family functioning. Dual careers may also make it harder for family members to spend as much time together as they would like.

On the other hand, the work environment can be supportive of family functioning. Walter Schumm gave the example of a Major General in the U.S. Army who was the Commander of Fort Reilly. The Commander made it a policy that every Thursday afternoon after 3 P.M. was a time for soldiers to go home and spend time with their families.

Stresses and coping resources. A number of participants pointed out that in their research they did try to measure the stresses that families experienced and the resources available to them for coping with these problems. Researcher David Olson asserted that any appraisal of family strengths must incorporate an indicator of the level of stress experienced by the family. Margaret Owen said she found it worthwhile to measure both the "daily hassles" and the "daily uplifts" that parents experience. Lawrence Gary added that it was important to include a measure of racial discrimination when assessing the level of stress experienced by minority families.

It was noted that **social connectedness** was one of the attributes that had been repeatedly found to characterize successful families, and that better-connected families tended to have more resources available to them for coping with crises, as well as with the problems of daily living. Some families may even develop special mechanisms for bringing resources to bear on a problem. In a study of stable, black families, Lawrence Gary found that many of these

families had one member who acted as a "cultural broker." The broker was a family member who had the know-how and ability to deal with social agencies, businesses, schools, and other institutions with which the family had to interact. Although relatives, friends, and colleagues often provide assistance to families, especially in times of crisis, Urie Bronfenbrenner observed that, paradoxically, social networks can sometimes be a source of stress; they are not always the social support they appear to be.

There was general agreement that future research on successful families should devote more attention to the interaction between family characteristics and community conditions, including such factors as: employment and unemployment patterns in the area; job-related demands and benefits; level and stability of family income; availability of quality child care and schooling; crime and drug problems; and community supports and resources. There was also interest in exploring the effects on families of broader social conditions, such as the intended and unintended impacts of government policies and issues of whether media influences help or hinder successful family functioning.

Definitions of family health and normality. In his comments on the conference proceedings, philosopher Robert George addressed the issue of whether changing patterns of family living, employment, sexual behavior, child care, and division of labor by gender should cause us to alter our definitions of what is normal and healthy in families. George argued that it would be a mistake to do so. He said that a thing is functioning well if it does what it is supposed to do. Thus, we should ask ourselves: What are families supposed to do? George noted that there were value questions involved here that social science alone could not resolve.

It is not a neutral, scientific position to say that ideals should shift in response to changing realities of social behavior. Non-shifting values permit a cultural critique of changing realities. To treat norms as shifting is to take a controversial, relativist view. One can argue that the prevailing value systems are corrupt or defective. But that would be moral argumentation, not social science.

George noted that after seeking alternatives to the family during the 1960s and 1970s, liberal elites have now endorsed the family as necessary for society.

But they have also recognized significant deviations from traditional norms as acceptable behavior patterns. He wondered whether this was not contradictory. Are we "pushing the limits" in trying to function as a society without a commonly agreed upon set of values for families?

-- How well do existing research findings apply to racial and ethnic minorities and to low-income families?

A review of the successful families literature reveals that much of the research has focused on white, middle-class, two-parent families. Thus, there are questions regarding the extent to which the findings may be generalized to the population as a whole, and especially to subgroups such as racial and ethnic minorities and low-income families. Those researchers who have studied minority families have provided some important insights, and have raised issues and constructs that are not always identified by researchers studying white, middle-class families. For example, in studying strong black families, Lawrence Gary found that a sense of **racial pride or consciousness** was a frequent characteristic of these families. They focused on developing strong positive feelings toward their heritage, as well as talking openly about racism and teaching their children how to protect themselves against it. Of course, this construct can be extended to non-minority families as well. An understanding and appreciation of family history and cultural heritage, and the transmission of these traditions to children are probably characteristic of strong families in all racial, ethnic, and religious groups.

Gary also found a **secure economic base** to be important for black families, involving income that was not necessarily high but steady, and a **strong work orientation**. Family members showed a great deal of **resourcefulness**, often possessing skills and talents that could help them to produce or barter for needed goods and services. Other characteristics that Gary identified in stable black families were parallel to those recognized in research on non-minority families: a sense of family unity and cohesion; frequent displays of mutual appreciation, love, and acceptance; flexibility and adaptability in carrying out family roles; a high degree of religious or spiritual orientation; strong kinship bonds; and **community involvement** and concern about the climate of the neighborhood.

Research by sociologist William Vega has pointed to the unique experiences and needs of immigrant families, particularly in terms of adaptation, as well as the importance of assessing family strengths in light of a family's level of acculturation. In terms of measurement issues, Harriette McAdoo pointed to the overall need to develop scales and measures relevant to racial and ethnic minority populations, which would presumably include measures of the above constructs. Indeed, most of the instruments used to measure family strengths have been developed based on white, middle-class families.

While existing research suggests that many of the basic constructs are applicable across different racial/ethnic minority groups and income levels, the extent to which measurement instruments and cross-cultural results are valid for these populations is unclear. Further work must be done to address these concerns, as well as to identify additional constructs which may be unique to minority and low-income families.

-- What is the role that religion plays in helping to make for strong families?

There was extended discussion at the conference about the definition of religiosity or spirituality, and the precise role that this attribute plays in making for strong families. It was generally agreed that a religious or spiritual orientation as it manifests itself in strong families is not necessarily synonymous with frequency of church attendance. Spirituality can consist of a variety of things, such as: membership in an organized religious body, joint participation in worship or charitable activities, a shared sense of a greater purpose in life, and adherence to an explicit values system or moral code. Further research is needed on how these aspects of religion interrelate and which are most critical to successful family functioning.

Lessons from the Jewish American experience. As part of a presentation on the role of family in American Jewish culture, historian Steven Bayme noted that the divorce rate for Jewish couples is lower than that for the U.S. population at large. Among those who are affiliated with a synagogue, one-in-eight marriages end in divorce. For those not affiliated, the divorce rate is one-in-three. More orthodox congregations have lower divorce rates than less orthodox ones. However, according to Bayme, the synagogues that do best at supporting families are those that are more than just houses of worship. The successful

synagogues are total communities that provide an array of services, activities, and peer-group supports to member families. "Strong communities build strong families," said Bayme.

Bayme attributed the strength of Jewish families to the central role that the family occupies in Jewish life. The family and the community are seen as closely intertwined. Marital success is important to the self-esteem of Jewish adults. Marriage provides companionship and fosters one's development as an adult. But a strong family also allows one to transcend the self and forge links with the larger Jewish culture and heritage. The family is, of course, a mechanism for reproduction and procreation. It is also the primary vehicle for the transmittal of values and the sense of Jewish identity. Judaism has a number of family-centered rituals and explicitly calls for family members to spend "quality time" together on a regular basis.

While acknowledging that the Jewish-American community has an over-representation of upper middle-class families, Bayme felt that their strength derived more from non-economic aspects of Jewish religion and culture. He felt that all groups could benefit by placing more emphasis on **communication between parent and child, individual sacrifice for the sake of the family unit, a sense of family that comes from the "bottom up",** rather than being preached from the "top down", and the regular **setting aside of time for shared observance** of religious and cultural rituals.

-- Can successful families research inform the debate over "family policy"?

Patrick Fagan observed that the field of successful families research had to be developed further before it could be used as a basis for government policy. Nonetheless, there was discussion at the conference about possible policy implications of current findings. Steven Bayme noted that much of the conflict over "family policy" consisted of debate between those who advocated government policies that would provide resources and services to families in need, and those who saw the government's role as primarily one of "cultural education." Bayme felt that both groups could learn from one another.

Bayme suggested that there was a need to pay attention to the "cultural climate", and whether it was supportive of positive family functioning. It was

also desirable, he felt, to strengthen communities in which families flourish, and to strive for well-integrated social policies. He defined these as ones which sought to provide assistance to dysfunctional families, but also considered the possible effects of the assistance on families that are functioning well.

Nick Stinnett presented a view of current social conditions and trends that captured the concerns of many conference participants. He asserted that current societal values emphasize the importance of work and career and de-emphasize the importance of family. There has been a loss of primary relationships and an increase in secondary relationships. More people lead hectic lives with chronically high levels of stress. In addition, there are generally no clear avenues for the transmission of values to young people, such as those which exist within the Jewish culture.

All of this leads, according to Stinnett, to families that are often too busy and fragmented to provide the warm, repetitive interactions, the irrational commitment of parent to child, and the mutual delight in one another that all humans must have. The lack of these developmental supports can lead, in turn, to social problems such as drug abuse, violence, domestic abuse, teen suicide, and runaways. The challenge for successful families research, noted Patrick Fagan, is to provide information that can help develop programs and policies that might reverse the negative trends described by Stinnett and help to strengthen families that are now in jeopardy.

What are some of the important methodological concerns?

Many issues related to measurement technique were raised during the conference. Among these were the advantages and disadvantages associated with self-report and observational techniques. The lower financial and time investment for self-report measures is a major advantage for this technique. There was consensus among the researchers that if observation techniques were impossible for reasons of time and/or cost, self-report measures were preferable to dropping a given construct. Owen identified conflict, adaptability, cohesion, and communication as constructs best measured through observation. John DeFrain noted that time together, community involvement, and values/religion are best assessed with questionnaires.

Several participants noted the importance of measuring family characteristics and processes using information from more than one family member. Doing so, however, creates a variety of analysis problems. For example, multiple perspectives from several members of the same family are rarely highly correlated. Schumm noted that he has developed some statistical techniques for handling problems caused by score discrepancy among family members. Also, Olson cautioned that researchers cannot assume that results obtained using self-report measures will correlate with results based on observation techniques. Indeed, in some of her research, Owen found that the predictive power of interaction observations could be reduced by the inclusion of self-report data into the analysis.

One of the most salient methodological issues to surface during the conference was the problem of small and unrepresentative samples that characterizes much of the existing research on successful families. The review of the literature prepared prior to the conference reveals that much of the work in this field has focused on white and/or middle class families. Often, the samples used are self-selected. This has obvious implications for the ability to generalize the findings to the population as a whole, as well as to subgroups such as minorities and low-income families. An informal survey of conference participants identified the following populations as research priorities: black families, dual-worker families, and single parent families. Applying family strengths measures to a national probability sample of families is critical at this stage of successful families research in order to test the generality of the findings obtained to date.

What are the next steps for successful families research?

Throughout the course of the two-day conference, numerous suggestions for future research were proposed which would move the field of successful family research forward, as well as provide useful information to policymakers, practitioners, and individuals interested in helping families. The following suggestions were offered:

- 1) Research on more varied populations. In addition to assessing family strengths in a national probability sample of families, there is a need to conduct studies about other populations such as racial/ethnic minorities, dual-

worker families, rural families, families with a member who has a chronic disease, single-parent families, blended families, and families with low or no religious involvement.

2) A need to conduct longitudinal studies across the life cycle of the family, with particular attention to families with aging parents.

3) The development of a survey module comprised of measures derived from the successful families literature that could be used in other surveys. This would allow incorporation of items to assess family strengths in large sample surveys that can address questions such as the number of strong families in the total society and their demographic and economic characteristics.

4) The study of successful families from a process perspective. Conference participants identified the following processes as research priorities: role of the father in the process; process of racial, cultural, and/or family of origin identification; the process by which family strengths are developed; and identifying the community characteristics which help nurture family strengths.

5) The development of measures to assess the effect of the family on the development, functioning, and well-being of its adult members.

6) The integration of the findings of successful families research into intervention and prevention strategies, as well as public policy. This could be facilitated by the creation of a clearinghouse of studies on family strengths, making the findings more readily available to counselors, teachers, and policymakers as well as other researchers.

7) *The integration and comparison of the family strengths literature with other sociological and psychological theories of the family, such as social capital theory, and with theories of deviance and delinquency that focus on negative behaviors, such as drug use.*

8) The development of prevention and intervention programs based on the findings of successful families research, and rigorous evaluations of these programs. In order to develop such programs, the family strengths constructs, which are now stated in rather general terms, need to be developed more fully. This will make it possible to identify specific skills that can be transmitted to families who are experiencing problems.

9) The study of the relationship between individual strengths and family strengths.

10) The study of the relative importance of different family strengths and the interrelationships among them.

11) The incorporation of measures of family stress levels into studies of successful families, with attention to racial discrimination as a stressor for minority families.

Conclusion

The conference and literature review made it clear that a substantial body of theory and research exists on the topic of successful families. With encouragement to further develop the methods and constructs employed to study successful families, a mature literature could be developed. This would be of great use in understanding what makes families work well and how to help more families become strong.

Researchers Attending the Successful Families Conference

Steven Bayme, PhD, directs the Jewish Communal Affairs Department at the American Jewish Committee. He is an historian who has done research on the Jewish family in American society.

W. Robert Beavers, MD, is a psychiatrist and the founder and research director of the Southwest Family Institute. He approaches the study of families from a systems perspective and has developed a number of family assessment tools, including the Beavers-Timberlawn Family Evaluation Scale, an observational rating technique.

Urie Bronfenbrenner, PhD, is an emeritus professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Cornell University. He is a psychologist who approaches the study of human development from an ecological perspective.

John DeFrain, PhD, is a researcher, teacher, and marriage and family counselor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of Human Development and the Family. He has published a number of articles in the field of family strengths, and co-authored the book Secrets of Strong Families.

Lawrence Gary, PhD, is a researcher in the Mental Health Research and Development Center at the Institute for Urban Affairs and Research at Howard University. He was principal investigator for a study of the characteristics of stable black families.

Robert George, PhD, is a United States Supreme Court Fellow on leave from the Department of Philosophy at Princeton University.

Harriette Pipes McAdoo, PhD, Dean of the School of Social Work at Howard University, has researched and written extensively on black families. Her current research focuses on the inter-generational transmission of values.

David Olson, PhD, Professor of Family Social Science at the University of Minnesota, has designed a number of self-report inventories to assess family characteristics, including the widely used Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES). His book, Families: What Makes Them Work, outlines the Circumplex Model, and the findings of a cross-sectional study of intact families.

Margaret Owen, PhD, a member of the Research Staff at the Timberlawn Psychiatric Research Foundation, is involved with their Young Family Project. This longitudinal study of psychological health and family well-being has been following families from before the birth of their first child using a variety of psychological assessments, questionnaires, and videotaped sessions.

Walter Schumm, PhD, an Associate Professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Kansas State University, does research on the interrelation of family strengths, and has developed short self-report measures of family and marital satisfaction.

Nick Stinnett, PhD, a professor of Human Development at the University of Alabama, has authored and co-authored a number of books and professional articles on family relationships, including The Secrets of Strong Families. He has also co-edited a number of books based on a series of conferences on family strengths held at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

William Vega, PhD, is a sociologist at the University of Miami. His research interests include Mexican American families, with a particular focus on social networks, cohesion, adaptability, and depression factors, especially among recent immigrant families.

Froma Walsh, PhD, is a clinical psychologist, and an associate professor at the School of Social Service Administration and the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Chicago. Recent research and publications have addressed normal family processes, healthy functioning in divorced and remarried families, and the role of women in families, particularly as it relates to models of family therapy.

**Invited Researchers Who Were Unable to Attend
the Successful Families Conference**

Carolyn Pape Cowan, PhD, is a clinical psychologist in the Department of Psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, where she co-directs the "Becoming a Family Project." This is a longitudinal study of couples' transition to parenthood.

Jerry M. Lewis, MD, is a senior research psychiatrist at the Timberlawn Psychiatric Hospital and the Timberlawn Psychiatric Research Foundation, and has been involved with research on healthy families, including one study focusing on well-functioning working class black families. He recently published The Birth of a Family, based on findings from the Young Family Project, a longitudinal study of families.

Hamilton McCubbin, PhD, Dean and Professor at the School of Family Resources and Consumer Sciences at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, is co-author of the book Family Types and Strengths: A Life Cycle and Ecological Perspective, based on results from a large survey of families across the life cycle. He developed a number of the self-report inventories used to assess family dimensions for this study.

Rudolf Moos, PhD, holds appointments at the Social Ecology Lab at Stanford University and the Veteran's Administration Medical Centers in Palo Alto. He is a clinical psychologist whose research focuses on the family environment and factors relating to stress. He developed a widely used self-report instrument which assesses a number of dimensions of the family environment (the Family Environment Scale).

**Agency & Organization Representatives
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