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Effects of the family cluster experience on family member's perception of the quality of their family as a unit

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**EFFECTS OF THE
FAMILY CLUSTER EXPERIENCE
ON FAMILY MEMBER'S PERCEPTION OF
THE QUALITY OF THEIR FAMILY AS A UNIT**

A Thesis

**Presented to the
Department of Counseling
and the**

**Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
University of Nebraska at Omaha**

by

Terry Coleman

April 1992

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts,
University of Nebraska at Omaha.

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ABSTRACT

This study grew out of a need to examine the possibilities of family enrichment programs as opposed to remedial programs. A review of the literature revealed that no previous outcome research has been published regarding the Family Cluster.

The purpose of the study was to use the Family Cluster model with families perceiving weaknesses, as identified by the Family Strengths Inventory, to determine if those weaknesses may be significantly improved.

The experimental design used was the Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design. Initially ten intact families were identified to take part in the study, five randomly assigned to experimental group and five to the control group. Both groups had one family discontinue leaving an N of four in each group. The families were selected from a local church in the Omaha area. The pretest was administered in two parts. First the Family Strengths Inventory-Construction Form was administered and the "results" were used to design the Family Strengths Inventory which was the second portion of the pretest. This pretest was used to determine the curriculum for the Cluster experience which was conducted in eight, seventy minute sessions. After the completion of the eight sessions the same instrument was administered as the posttest.

Gain scores were computed and subjected to a t-test of means using the .05 level of confidence. This study was intended to provide some baseline data concerning the processes and outcomes of using the Family Cluster program with families having perceived weaknesses.

The findings did not support acceptance of the hypothesis:

The Family Cluster experience will significantly change a family's perception of itself, in terms of improved family functioning, as measured by the Family Strengths Inventory.

Recommendations for future studies contain seven recommendations to be considered with such research. While no significant differences were found, the benefits of the Cluster are not to be determined ineffective.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The family's ability to function as a unit has been influenced by a variety of experiences. The family "model" provided during the formative years; peer pressures; culture; economic factors; education; as well as experiences specific to a particular family are but a few of those experiences. No doubt several other influences could be identified, all of which impact positively and/or negatively the family structure and function.

Much of the focus of the helping professions, particularly in the fields of ministry and counseling, has been directed toward assisting families to correct or overcome those behaviors resulting in family dysfunction. While some attention has been given to education in an attempt to prepare people for effective family life (Weissman and Montgomery, 1978), the typical approach has been remedial rather than preventive.

Recent attempts to alter this pattern are to be seen in the various family enrichment programs being conducted in a variety of agencies (Bowen, 1985; L'Abate, 1985; Weissman and Montgomery, 1978). Specifically, the Family Cluster experience (Sawin, 1986) has been developed to assist families in identifying areas of potential difficulty. Such an approach assumes it is possible to predetermine, or at least identify, conditions within the family's structure and function which have the potential for dysfunctional behavior within that family. Given the difficulty in establishing cause and effect, one can only assume that a lack of certain "conditions" contributes to dysfunctions.

For example, Barbara Vance (1989) has developed the Family Strengths Inventory (see Appendix A). Her thesis is that strong families are adaptable,

cohesive, appreciative, committed, communicative, can cope with crises and stress, are spiritually well, and spend time together. It is intuitively obvious that a lack of these attributes suggests a family to be weak in these areas; that is, further development in these areas would be beneficial.

Enrichment: Help Before the Problem

The concept of enrichment is relatively new within human service agencies. In the area of counseling, remediation is the most used form of assistance given to individuals and families (Mace, 1979). By contrast, according to Mace (1979), enrichment's meaning is: "...to improve the quality of whatever is already there, latent and hitherto unappropriated, and allowing it to function. It is closely related to the concept of realizing potential. It may also be seen as achieving an optimal state of health (p.409)." The Family Cluster model (Vance, 1989) is a form of enrichment that influences the entire family at the same time.

The intent of the Family Cluster is to identify and address potential problem areas in families. This is accomplished by group activities that encourage community building and support. The anticipated outcome will be that the family will perceive itself as improving in family functioning.

Question to be Answered

As pressures increase on families today, ways to improve their functioning as a family may be beneficial. Some may need counseling while others may be able to identify problem areas and profit from enrichment experience, thereby avoiding the need for remedial or corrective action later. The Family Cluster program is designed to help families learn how to deal with areas that have the potential of becoming problems such as communication between parents and

children. The question this research is designed to investigate is: Does the Family Cluster program accomplish its goal?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to use the Family Cluster program with families having perceived weaknesses, as identified by the Family Strengths Inventory, to determine if those perceived weaknesses may be significantly improved.

Hypothesis:

The hypothesis of this study was:

The Family Cluster experience will significantly change a family's perception of itself, in terms of improved family functioning, as measured by the Family Strengths Inventory.

Delimitations of the Study

The Family Cluster program has traditionally been used with families having a Christian orientation. The sample for this study also consists of intact families with that orientation; therefore, the findings will be specific to that population. Since no published data exists, this study was intended to provide some baseline data concerning the processes and outcomes of using the Family Cluster program. More specifically, families having perceived weaknesses in terms of family functioning were identified with the intent of assessing the effect of a Family Cluster program on family functioning.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Overview

In the specific area of outcome research on Family Clusters, there is very little if any literature to be found. Barbara Vance (1989) states:

It is too soon to draw any conclusions about the effectiveness (cause and effect) of Family Cluster. Such research requires the experimental approach. To my knowledge, such research is not available concerning Family Cluster. It has yet to be done. (p.87)

Discussion with Ms Vance revealed she is currently involved in writing up some research she conducted at Brigham Young University, but that will not be available for some time.

Historical Background

The concept of Family Cluster is rooted in the ideas of David Mace who started the couple enrichment programs in the United States during the early 60's. Others saw the benefits of developing the positive aspect already present in a couple's relationship and considered how such an approach may be used with the entire family. Margaret Sawin (1986) developed the Family Cluster as a way for the entire family to learn together in order to enhance the family system. She implemented the program within an already existing institution, that being religious organizations. Religious organizations were seen as the only places that: "...have the complete family as their clientele and where all generations are involved; therefore, they provide a natural place in which to work preventively with families" (Sawin, 1986). In 1971 Herbert Otto

developed a similar model but did not affiliate it with an already existing institution. It has been in decline since that time (Sawin, 1986).

There have been some articles written that deal with other types of family enrichment (Wright and L'Abate, 1977; L'Abate, 1985; Bowen, 1985) but none that deal specifically with the Family Cluster. And while the idea of enrichment is present in all these programs, there are some unique aspects of the Family Cluster approach.

Family Enrichment

L'Abate and O'Callaghan (1977) suggested that family enrichment lends itself to a clearer explanation of outcome research results. They suggest it is easier to identify what happened during the enrichment process, especially when the program is written in manual form. It is also easier to control the length of the process, thus permitting between group comparisons. (L'Abate and O'Callaghan, 1977)

Wright and L'Abate (1977) addressed the need for research in the area of family enrichment, as well as other aspects of family development and interaction. They proposed that research be designed which would get at the issue of identifying "dysfunctional interactional patterns before they become entrenched pathological symptoms." Such findings would perhaps encourage the development of intervention strategies, such as the Family Cluster program, to possibly prevent continued family dysfunction. (Wright and L'Abate, 1977)

Family Cluster

The Family Cluster is characterized by the following aspects. First of all, the curriculum for each Cluster is designed for the needs of the families involved by using the Family Strengths Inventory-Construction Form (FSI-CF)

and then the Family Strengths Inventory (see Appendix A). Once the curriculum has been designed, the entire family is involved in the sessions along with several other families. This allows interaction among families with different points of view. The Family Cluster also allows for more participation by the group members. By using games, singing, and other activities the family members are encouraged to observe and develop new skills for use in other contexts outside of the Family Cluster. The families are also encouraged to bring all family members, not just the ones who understand the activities taking place. (Vance, 1989)

Summary

The dearth of published research, relating to family enrichment programs, points to the need for more research and, specifically, the communication of those findings. The fact that no research on the Family Cluster model is currently published provides opportunity to begin that process. Such data will enable those who work with families, in Christian settings, to refine both their ability to identify potential problem areas within the family and to perfect programs designed to improve family relationships.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Procedure

An announcement regarding the availability of a Family Cluster experience was made to the congregation of a church located in the Omaha area. Information presented indicated that research was going to be conducted and that participation was voluntary. Confidentiality was assured within the context of the Family Cluster group by an explanation by the researcher of the importance of confidentiality among the group. Interested families provided their names and addresses and raised any questions they had at that point. A letter (see Appendix B) explaining the details of the research, the Family Cluster experience, and any other relevant information was mailed to each family.

Sample

Ten families were identified for participation in the study. Each family was assigned a number and the random selection process identified five families as the experimental group, and the remaining five families constituted the control group. During the course of the study one of the control group families failed to complete the posttest and one of the experimental families decided to drop out at the halfway point. Thus, the sample was reduced to two groups of four families each.

Instrumentation

The Family Strengths Inventory-Construction Form (FSI-CF) was administered, by mail, as the first portion of the pretest of both groups. It consists of several items in each of eight categories of family strength that

might be considered typical of the ideal family. Following are the eight categories and an example from each.

Adaptability

We shift household responsibilities from person to person.

Appreciation:

In our family, we say things to each other that makes us feel good about ourselves.

Cohesion:

We like spending time with one another.

Commitment:

In our family, we are devoted to one another.

Communication:

If we make mistakes in our family, we can admit them to one another.

Coping With Crises and Stress:

We unite as a family to face stress or crisis.

Spiritual Wellness:

We meditate or pray in our family.

Time together:

We have meals together as a family.

The respondents were asked to select three items in each category and rank order them as to what they believe the ideal family would be like. The results of the FSI-CF were then tabulated to construct a Family Strength Inventory (FSI) that was unique to both the experimental group and the control group. The FSI contained the top three choices in each category and was administered as the second portion of the pretest of both groups. They were asked to rate, on

a scale of -3 to +3, how much of each one of these characteristics exists in their family and, on a scale of 1 to 7, how important they felt that characteristic was when determining their family strengths. The product of these two numbers was used in determining which areas would be covered in the curriculum of the Family Cluster. The items which had the highest negative numbers (showing lowest presence and most importance) were the areas selected.

Characteristics of Respondents

The instruments were filled out by both parents of all the families. However, those children whose parents thought they could understand the statements on the instrument were encouraged to complete the instrument. Thus, only a small number of the children were included in the data.

Planning

Pretest data were analyzed to determine the prevailing perceived weaknesses among the families. This data constituted the approach and focus for the Family Cluster experience. The eight categories of the Family Strength Inventory are:

1. Adaptability
2. Appreciation
3. Cohesion
4. Commitment
5. Communication
6. Coping with Crises and Stress
7. Spiritual Wellness
8. Time Together

The number for each category identified above is used in the following table for purposes of showing how the two groups compared. Table 1 includes the mean score for each category for both groups. This data was then used to develop the "agenda" for the Family Cluster program provided as "treatment" to the experimental group.

Table 1

Means of Each Category of Family Strength Inventory by Experimental (E) and Control (C) Families

	Category							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Family								
E1	-1.2	-3.6	1.7	1.4	-3.6	-3.6	-2.5	-2.9
E2	0	-6.7	-3.8	-2	-10.7	-6	-3.5	-2.7
E3	-2.5	-.75	-1	0	-3	-1.6	-4.9	0
E4	-1.4	-6.8	-.9	-.5	-1.7	-1.5	-.4	-2.3
C1	-4	-1.2	-1.8	-1.2	-5.6	-6.8	-5.8	-4.7
C2	-2.3	-3.8	.8	0	-2.2	-2.7	-2.3	-1.8
C3	0	-5.5	0	0	-3.9	-6	0	-1.8
C4	-.7	-9.7	-3.8	-1.2	-6.8	-5.5	-4	-1.8

Table 3

Most Important Topics Selected By Families Taking Part in a Family Cluster Experience (Top Three Categories for Each Family)

Family Strengths	Number of Families Indicating Possible Lack of Strength
Adaptability	1
Appreciation	6
Cohesion	0
Commitment	0
Communication	7
Coping with Crises and Stress	6
Spiritual Wellness	3
Time Together	1

Treatment

The four families constituting the experimental group then participated in an eight week Family Cluster experience. The group met weekly in 70 minute sessions conducted by two leaders familiar with the Family Cluster model. To avoid bias, the researcher was not involved in leading the sessions. A typical session consisted of singing, game playing, community building, and education. (see Appendix C)

Data Analysis

Following the last session, both groups were administered a posttest by mail. The same FSI was used to determine any changes in family perceptions which may be attributable to treatment.

Gain scores were computed for each group. Means and standard deviations were then calculated and the t-test was employed to determine if posttest means differed significantly.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The Analysis and Its Significance

The design for this study employed what is commonly referred to as a Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design. The pretest concept was employed because of the necessity to formulate a Family Strengths Inventory. The "results" of this procedure were then the basis for developing the content of the Family Cluster experience.

Random assignment of families to experimental and control groups was done to achieve as much assurance as possible that the families were similar and to control for sources of internal invalidity.

Gain scores for both the experimental and control groups were obtained. These gain scores were then subjected to a one tailed t-test. The level of significance adopted was .05. This approach permitted determination of rejecting the hypothesis as stated:

The Family Cluster experience will significantly change a family's perception of itself, in terms of improved family functioning, as measured by the Family Strengths Inventory.

Presentation of the Results

Means, standard deviations, and gain scores along with the resulting t-values are presented in Table 4.

The one-tailed t-test results described in Table 4 show no significant difference between the gain scores of the experimental and control groups at the .05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected.

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations, and Gain Scores for Treatment and Control Groups

(n=4)

	Pretest		Posttest		t-value
	E	C	E	C	
<u>X Scores</u>	-2.55	-3.17	-2.09	-1.68	
<u>SD</u>	-1.11	1.21	1.29	.99	
<u>Gain Scores</u>			.46	1.49	.53

p < .05, one-tailed

CHAPTER V

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Discussion

Even though there was no significant difference between the gain scores of the experimental and control groups, some observations can be made about the Family Cluster. L'Abate and O'Callaghan (1977) and Wright and L'Abate (1977) establish a need for this type of research. Problems with the research and possible solutions will be discussed later.

About one month after the conclusion of the eight weeks of sessions, an informal poll of the participants was conducted in order to ask some open ended questions about other circumstances that were occurring during the time of the Family Cluster. There was a recurring theme among the experimental group suggesting a variety of additional stressors were present during treatment, and that perhaps these stressors interfered considerably with the intent of the program. Job changes, illness, and related problems were some of the factors mentioned. The families also indicated there were some positive aspects that were not measured by the Family Strengths Inventory. For instance, the ability to see other families interacting and sharing some of their experiences was an encouragement to those who wanted to be doing some of those same things. Another family was grateful for the time that they were able to spend together during the sessions. Even though this was one of the items in the Family Strengths Inventory, they did not perceive that they were able to spend any more time together outside of the Cluster as a result of the sessions.

The size of the group worked very well. The Cluster started with five families which is a very workable number. One of the families decided to drop

out because they felt their children were too young to receive any benefit and they also felt they were spending too much time concerned about the behavior of the younger children and were not able to participate as much as they wanted to.

Conclusion

The results of this study are not able to support the stated hypothesis.

Summary

Pretest data were obtained for 10 families assigned randomly to an experimental and control group. These data were then used to formulate the Family Cluster program. The program was conducted by two experienced leaders, for a total of eight, 70 minute sessions over an eight week period. The sessions consisted of singing, game playing, community building and education.

Posttest data were obtained from both groups. Gain scores were computed, means and standard deviations established, and a t-test of means was employed to test the hypothesis:

The Family Cluster experience will significantly change a family's perception of itself, in terms of improved family functioning, as measured by the Family Strengths Inventory.

The level of confidence was set at .05, one-tailed test.

The results indicated rejection of the hypothesis.

While the number of families used for the study may be considered small (n=4), the "real" number of participants was twelve. This number counteracts somewhat the problems associated with small sample statistics. A critical value of 2.353 was required for a one-tail test, using the .05 level of confidence, for

the hypothesis to not be rejected. A value of .53 was obtained; thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this was a pilot study intended to provide some baseline data for future research, the following suggestions seem appropriate based upon the author's perceptions and experiences.

Sessions were scheduled during the Sunday School portion of the morning schedule of a local church. This put a time limit of seventy minutes on the session which did not allow enough time to be spent on portions of the Family Cluster. Because of the time of day the participants were usually dressed in clothes that did not necessarily contribute to freedom of movement because of the fear of getting dirty. The recommendation is that specific times be arranged by the leaders and group members which would provide a wider range of options in terms of time of day and attire.

The length of the program may also be changed, if participants agree. While eight sessions are recommended, more sessions may allow for more in-depth work on issues as they arise once the program is begun. The length of each session might also be tailored to the make-up of the group. That is, younger children may do better with shorter sessions because of attention span. Such considerations could be better served by increased flexibility.

The age level of children in the group might also be a factor in terms of program content and activities. Developing the Family Cluster program from the Family Strengths Inventory would perhaps be better accomplished during a pre-program session. Parents, children, and leaders could discuss the "findings" from the FSI and then jointly develop an outline of topics to be

undertaken. This process would engage the families rather than have a leader-developed program imposed upon them.

The data analysis could be modified to look for other factors. By separating the data by male and female, gender bias may be detected in the responses. After the control group has been given the opportunity to participate in a Family Cluster experience, they could be administered the posttest again to see if there is any change in their responses.

There are also some weaknesses in the Family Strengths Inventory as an instrument of perceptual measurement. All of the items have the potential of being marked "too much". Item twelve, for example, in the Family Strengths Inventory (see Appendix 1) is a statement about the parents' fidelity. Is it possible to be "too faithful" to one's spouse? On the items which the "too much" choice is appropriate, it may be perceived as a weakness by the respondent but the instrument is not designed to treat it as one.

Finally, the scale on the FSI has respondents rate the presence of family strength on a scale of -3 to +3. Currently there is a midpoint of 0 on the scale that is said to be "just right." This allows respondents to remain neutral and therefore nullify many of the responses on the FSI. Perhaps a likert rating scale of 1 to 7 would allow respondents to identify a clearer range of responses regarding each family strength.

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Appendix A

Family Code:_____

FAMILY STRENGTH INVENTORY CONSTRUCTION FORM

INSTRUCTIONS:

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS FORM. This is not a test.

The following pages contain some items in each of eight categories of family strength. These are items that might be typical of the ideal family.

For each category you are asked to select three items and rank order them in each category (that is, 1, 2, and 3). As you make your rankings, please keep in mind your idea of the ideal family and what would be most typical of such family members in each category.

Your selections and rankings will be totaled with others who are filling out this same form. Then a selection will be made of a few items that seem to best fit each category. The result will be a Family Strength Inventory unique to your Family Cluster. You will be asked later to complete the Family Strengths Inventory (which will have only 24 items on it.)

Please complete the following information before you go on to the pages that follow:

Your sex: Male____ Female____

Your age: Years____Months____

Now turn to the next page. Follow the instructions for that page and the ones to follow. This shouldn't take very long because there are only eight categories.

ADAPTABILITY

THE STRONG FAMILY IS ADAPTABLE. (This means that the strong family changes rules to fit the needs of the family members and that family decisions are made by more than one person in the family.)

[Select and rank order (1,2,3) your **THREE** top choices of items below that you think are most important and best fit this family strength. Imagine what would be the most typical of the **IDEAL** family related to this category.]

- ___ 1. In our family, when problems are solved, the suggestions of the children are followed.
- ___ 2. In our family, children have a say in their discipline.
- ___ 3. Different persons act as leaders in our family.
- ___ 4. Our family changes its ways of handling tasks that need to be done around the home when changes are needed.
- ___ 5. In our family, parents and children discuss punishment together.
- ___ 6. In our family, the children make the decisions.
- ___ 7. Rules change in our family.
- ___ 8. We shift household responsibilities from person to person.
- ___ 9. It is hard to identify the leader(s) in our family.
- ___ 10. Sometimes household chores get done, and sometimes they don't because they haven't been assigned to specific people.

[The above items adapted from **FACES III**]

APPRECIATION

THE STRONG FAMILY EXPRESSES APPRECIATION FOR ONE ANOTHER.

[Select and rank order (1,2,3) your **THREE** top choices of items below that you think are most important and best fit this family strength. Imagine what would be the most typical of the **IDEAL** family related to this category.]

- ___ 1. In our family, we say things to each other that make us feel good about ourselves.
- ___ 2. In our family, we do things for each other that make us feel good about ourselves.
- ___ 3. People in our family are good receivers of compliments.
- ___ 4. People in our family leave notes of love and appreciation for one another in unexpected places and at unexpected times.

COHESION

STRONG FAMILIES ARE COHESIVE FAMILIES. (That is, the members of the family like each other and are emotionally bonded to one another.

[Select and rank order (1,2,3) your **THREE** top choices of items below that you think are most important and best fit this family strength. Imagine what would be the most typical of the **IDEAL** family related to this category.]

- ___ 1. In our family, we ask each other for help.
- ___ 2. In our family, we approve of each other's friends.
- ___ 3. We like to do things with just our immediate family.
- ___ 4. We feel closer to one another in our family than we do to people outside our family.
- ___ 5. We like spending our free time with one another.
- ___ 6. We feel very close to one another in our family.

- ___ 7. When we get together to do things as a family, everybody in the family is present.
- ___ 8. We consult one another in our family about our decisions.
- ___ 9. Family togetherness is very important to us in our family.
- ___ 10. It is easy for us to think of things to do as a family.

[Adapted from FACES III]

COMMITMENT

STRONG FAMILIES HAVE AN INVULNERABLE SENSE OF COMMITMENT.

(That is, strong families will never abandon one another; they share common goals and priorities; the family comes first; the members feel unified as a family and want it to stay that way.)

[Select and rank order (1,2,3) your THREE top choices of items below that you think are most important and best fit this family strength. Imagine what would be the most typical of the IDEAL family related to this category.]

- ___ 1. We, as a family, are dedicated to each other.
- ___ 2. We would do anything for each other's welfare and happiness in our family.
- ___ 3. In our family, the family comes first.
- ___ 4. Each of us in our family is unconditionally valued as a person.
- ___ 5. People in our family are valued for what they are, not for who they are.
- ___ 6. In spite of trouble or bad times, we stick together in our family.
- ___ 7. Family togetherness is a top priority in our family. (That is, we like being together and doing things together.)

- ___ 8. In our family, we have traditions, things we always do to celebrate special days.
- ___ 9. In our family, our parents are faithful to each other.
- ___ 10. In our family, we can count on one another.
- ___ 11. In our family, we are devoted to one another.

COMMUNICATION

STRONG FAMILIES HAVE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION PATTERNS.

(That is, they enjoy conversing with one another and are open and honest with their ideas and feelings.)

[Select and rank order (1,2,3) your **THREE** top choices of items below that you think are most important and best fit this family strength. Imagine what would be the most typical of the **IDEAL** family related to this category.]

- ___ 1. In our family, we spend lots of time conversing with one another.
- ___ 2. Conversations in our family get started easily and flow easily.
- ___ 3. Conversations in our family show lots of caring for one another.
- ___ 4. In our family, when we talk to one another, we are open about our ideas and feelings. [that is, we don't hide them.]
- ___ 5. When we talk to one another, we are honest about our ideas and feelings. [That is we say exactly what we think and feel.]
- ___ 6. We are willing to deal with problems in the family when they come up.
- ___ 7. When conflicts come up in our family, they are dealt with the moment they come up.

- ___ 8. When we talk with one another in our family, we say what we mean and mean what we say.
- ___ 9. When we talk with one another in our family, we really listen to one another.
- ___ 10. When anyone talks in our family, the message is always heard.
- ___ 11. If we don't understand what someone has said in our family, we say so.
- ___ 12. In our family, we talk about feelings.
- ___ 13. In our family, we talk about ideas.
- ___ 14. If we make mistakes in our family, we can admit them to one another.

COPING WITH CRISES AND STRESS

A STRONG FAMILY HAS THE ABILITY TO COPE EFFECTIVELY WITH CRISES AND STRESS. (A crisis is something overwhelming that may change the direction in life of the family, such as the birth of a baby or the loss of employment of the breadwinner[s]. Stress is the everyday pressure people feel in their lives.)

[Select and rank order (1,2,3) your **THREE** top choices of items below that you think are most important and best fit this family strength. Imagine what would be the most typical of the **IDEAL** family related to this category.]

- ___ 1. We have faced crisis and stress as a family.
- ___ 2. When we face crisis or stress, we see that something can be learned from it.
- ___ 3. We unite as a family to face stress or crisis.

- ___ 4. When we face a crisis or stress, we seek out others to support us during the stressful situation or the crisis.
- ___ 5. In time of crisis or stress, we draw on spiritual resources to help us through.
- ___ 6. In time of crisis or stress, we communicate to solve our problems.
- ___ 7. In time of crisis or stress, we openly and honestly express our feelings about what is going on.
- ___ 8. In time of crisis or stress, we are flexible and adaptable as a family.
- ___ 9. We don't allow stress or crisis to overwhelm us as a family.
- ___ 10. We as a family take stress and crisis in our stride.

SPIRITUAL WELLNESS

SPIRITUAL WELLNESS IS TYPICAL IN A STRONG FAMILY. (That is, family members feel that a power greater than themselves guides them and that they have a sense of purpose and direction in life.)

[Select and rank order (1,2,3) your **THREE** top choices of items below that you think are most important and best fit this family strength. Imagine what would be the most typical of the **IDEAL** family related to this category.]

- ___ 1. We have a sense of purpose and direction in life as a family.
- ___ 2. In our family, we have a sense that a power greater than ourselves guides our lives.
- ___ 3. In our family, we share the same spiritual convictions, a shared sense of meaning and purpose in life.
- ___ 4. In our family, we feel connected to others in the world around us.

- ___ 5. In our family, we share the conviction ALL people are of worth even if they do dumb things.
- ___ 6. We meditate or pray in our family.
- ___ 7. In our family, we engage in our religious rituals enthusiastically.
- ___ 8. In our family, we feel a sense of reverence for life.
- ___ 9. In our family, we have a strong sense of the sacred in life.
- ___ 10. In our family we practice what we preach.

TIME TOGETHER

STRONG FAMILIES SPEND LOTS OF TIME TOGETHER

[Select and rank order (1,2,3) your **THREE** top choices of items below that you think are most important and best fit this family strength. Imagine what would be the most typical of the **IDEAL** family related to this category.]

- ___ 1. We have meals together often as a family.
- ___ 2. We visit relatives together as a family.
- ___ 3. We visit friends together as a family.
- ___ 4. We celebrate holidays together as a family.
- ___ 5. We spend at least one night or day per week together as a family.

FAMILY STRENGTHS INVENTORY

Inventory Items:

1. Our family changes its ways of handling tasks that need to be done around the home when changes are needed.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
too little			just right			too much

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all important						very important

2. In our family, we say things to each other that make us feel good about ourselves.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
too little			just right			too much

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all important						very important

3. In our family, we ask each other for help.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
too little			just right			too much

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all important					very important	

4. Each of us in our family is unconditionally valued as a person.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
too little			just right		too much	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all important						very important

13. If we make mistakes in our family, we can admit them to one another.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
too little			just right			too much

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all important						very important

14. We unite as a family to face stress or crisis.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
too little			just right			too much

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all important						very important

15. In our family, we share the same spiritual convictions, a shared sense of meaning and purpose in life.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
too little			just right			too much

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all important						very important

16. Sometimes we spend one-on-one time with members of the family (such as mother with a son, father with a daughter, a brother and sister together, etc.)

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
too little			just right			too much

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all important						very important

17. In our family, children have a say in their discipline.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
too little			just right			too much

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all important						very important

18. People in our family leave notes of love and appreciation for one another in unexpected places and at unexpected times.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
too little			just right			too much

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all important						very important

19. We feel closer to one another in our family than we do to people outside our family.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
too little			just right			too much

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all important						very important

20. In spite of trouble or bad times, we stick together as a family.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
too little			just right			too much

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all important						very important

Appendix B
CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY

THE EFFECTS OF THE FAMILY CLUSTER EXPERIENCE ON FAMILY MEMBER'S PERCEPTION OF THE QUALITY OF THEIR FAMILY AS A UNIT

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

You are invited to participate in this research study concerning the perceived effects of the Family Cluster experience on the members of your family. The Family Cluster is an experience that will allow your family to interact with other families in order to learn more about how your family functions and possibly learn some other ways to interact within your own family.

BASIS FOR SUBJECT SELECTION

Since you are an intact family, (mother, father, and children) and your children are not yet teenagers, you are eligible to participate. All of the families meeting this criteria have been offered the opportunity to participate.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine if the Family Cluster program will have an effect on the perceptions of family member's view of how their family functions.

EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES

There will be an assessment given before the Cluster which will be in two parts. After this has been administered each of the ten families will be assigned a number. Five families will then be randomly selected to participate in the

Cluster. The other five families will have an opportunity to participate immediately after the completion of the study. The participant group will then have a series of eight sessions which will consist mainly of singing, game playing, community building, and an educational time. After the completion of the eight sessions all ten families will be asked to complete the last part of the assessment.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Participation in this study may give you more ideas on how to handle problems that may arise in your family in the future.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION

Some alternatives to participation in this study would be participation in another Cluster that is not involved in research or participation in a parenting class. Family therapy would be another alternative.

FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS

There will be minimal financial obligations. Any that are incurred will be for materials that will be consumed during activities.

ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Any data that is collected will be identified only by a number. Any information that is known by the investigator will be kept strictly confidential.

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE STUDY

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time. It is hoped that you will be willing to complete the study in order to assure the completeness of the data collected.

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN

Since this study involves families, your children will be participants also. By agreeing to all of the previous sections of this consent form you will also be agreeing to the participation of you children.

OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask them at any time.

Appendix C**FAMILY CLUSTERS**

1. **Singing**
2. **Name and jingle, after the game wear name tag**
3. **Group work--divide into dad's group, mom's group, and children's group.
Come up with two ideas as to what dad is or does, what mom is or does,
and what a child is or does.**
4. **Singing**
5. **Family group: Write down what you are thankful for or enjoy about each
person in your family.**
6. **Reminders: Time Capsule idea and play doh recipe.**
7. **Closing prayer**