

HOMOGENEITY OF PARENTAL TRAITS AND SIZE OF OKLAHOMA FARM FAMILIES

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Several years ago McKain and Whetten (1936) reported the results of an investigation into the relation between size of family and homogeneity of parental traits. The study was based on data from two field surveys made in Connecticut, one conducted in a suburban area and the other in a rural part-time farming area. The inquiry indicated that insofar as these groups were concerned there was a positive correlation between homogeneity of parents, as measured by the number of common traits, and size of family. The present paper is a summary of an investigation made to test this conclusion on a sample of the Oklahoma rural farm population.

The study is based on information concerning 797 unbroken farm families obtained by means of a field survey conducted in four Oklahoma counties which were selected to represent the farm population of the State. The parental traits studied were residential background, age, religion, and education. Standards for determining similarity in these traits were established and all schedules were sorted according to the number of parental traits held in common. Next the mean numbers of children per family and the standard errors of the means were computed for each of the parental groups. Finally, the differences between the means of the successive classes along with their standard errors were computed. The critical ratios then were determined to discover the reliability of the observed differences in means.

To conserve space only the means are given here. These are shown in the column headed "Total" in Table I. From this it is apparent there is a tendency for the average number of children to increase with the number of common parental traits. However, none of the differences between the parental groups are statistically significant. These results do not corroborate the findings of McKain and Whetten. To determine the effect of age of family on the relationship, the families were again subdivided by age of wife. This made possible the comparison of families in different stages of their development. The means were then computed and are shown in Table I for three age groups. Again the same general relationship between size of family and similarity of parental traits is observed in each age group. However, the tendency for the number of children to increase is less true for the two younger family groups than for the oldest group. In the two younger groups only the differences between couples with one or no traits in common and those with two, three, or four are significant. However, for the oldest group the families in which the parents have one or no similar traits have significantly fewer children than those in which the parents have three or four common traits. Also those with two common traits have significantly fewer children than those with three or four common traits. The fact that there are statistically significant differences in the case of the oldest family groups is of considerable importance to the general hypothesis since this group represents completed families whose effective fertility has ceased and therefore the full influences of differences in parental traits has been exerted completely. These results tend to confirm the general hypothesis but do not indicate that it holds for families in all stages of their development.

TABLE I
*Average number of children per family according to number
of common parental traits*

Number of traits in common	AGE OF WIVES (in years)							
	TOTAL		30 or less		31-43		44 and over	
	Number of families	Average number of children	Number of families	Average number of children	Number of families	Average number of children	Number of families	Average number of children
0 to 1	45	3.29	9	1.11	14	2.50	22	4.68
2	148	3.57	43	1.93	41	3.39	64	4.78
3	307	3.80	105	2.06	101	3.94	101	5.48
4	297	3.78	105	1.97	96	3.91	96	5.63
Total	797	3.72	262	1.97	252	3.76	283	5.31

LITERATURE CITED

McKain, W. W., and N. L. Whetten. 1936. The size of family in relation to homogeneity of parental traits. *Rural Sociology* 1(1): 20-28.