

Conceptualization of What Constitutes a Strong Family

Family Social Science
 COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
 + HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction and Methods

Developing Family Theory

The Strong Families framework was developed through a comprehensive review of the literature regarding family protective factors, which revealed nine key components of strong families. Collectively, these nine components leverage individual and relational strengths for healthy family development and the maintenance of the family equilibrium, while minimizing strife, pathology, and distress.

The foundational basis for the components was initially created by combining the work of Benzie and Mychasiuk (2009), Black and Lobo (2008), and the Family Readiness System Logic Model (DoD, 2012) into a comprehensive list of possible factors that support strong families. From there, a thorough literature review supported the inclusion and adaptation of some factors; other factors were eliminated based on a lack of sufficient inclusion in the literature.

Translation of Theory to Practice

All three of the companion posters demonstrating CYFAR programs support holistic, family-centered, community-based programs developed with active citizen participation in all phases. Overall, they promote building resiliency and protective factors in youth, families, and communities.

Strong Family Components

Four posters are a part of the Children, Youth, and Families At-Risk (CYFAR) grant programs funded by the USDA. Each of the companion CYFAR program posters focuses on one of the nine components of strong families, operationalizing different ways in which programs can support strong, communicative, and resilient families within their communities.



Theoretical Concepts

What Works for Families

Families are faced with a variety of challenges throughout the family life cycle, both positive (e.g., birth of child) and negative (e.g., death of loved one). They also manage the daily stressors that face every family such as completion of homework and household chores, monitoring finances, and meeting work deadlines. Some families navigate these challenges more effectively than others, and some are more successful in managing the shifts in these domains that occur over time. Strong families celebrate successes and learn from failures. They have clearly defined roles, yet are responsive to the changing needs, challenges, and issues that arise across a family's life cycle (Guilfoyle, Goebel, & Pai, 2011).

The theoretical framework includes:

- positive psychology
- family systems theory
- inter- and intrapersonal intelligence models

This model conceptualizes the idea of a strong family as one that must be understood in context, including the context of the individual, their relationships, the broader family unit, and the societal context (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Constantine, 2006; Gardner, 1983; Linley et al., 2006).

Implications for Policy

- **Be mindful of** the diversity of modern families including culture, sexual orientation, and family composition.
- **Implement** strategic planning to identify the strengths and areas for growth of families within their environment.
- **Design** programs and policies that are positive and preventive.

Implications for Programs

- **Gather** information about the current state of the families within the program and practices and policies that affect those families.
- **Use** assessments, evaluations, policies, and protocols as well as resource allocations to accomplish the prioritized goals and objectives.

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