

Why we should theorize about families

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Presented at LOTM

November 16 2021

Outline

- Beneficiaries of family
- Why families matter
- The role of theory
- Macro and Micro theories
- Benefits of theory
- Lessons learned

Who Benefits from Families?

Individuals and Communities

- Individuals
 - Ascribed status
 - Facilitate acquired statuses
- Foundation to strong community
 - Connections
 - Belonging
 - Access resources

Nation

- Family is the most economic unit to raise a human being (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).
- Provide man power

“Loneliness kills. It’s as powerful as smoking or alcoholism.”
— Robert Waldinger

Why Families Matter

- [The Harvard study on happiness](#) prove the interdependency of human relations found in families and community.
- Several studies have found that people's level of satisfaction with their relationship at age 50 was a better predictor of physical health than their cholesterol level (Mineo, 2017)
- Research has established association between role of parenting and outcomes of children's life.

Families without Theories

The six blind men who went to see the elephant. Each one felt a different part and believed that was the elephant.
Individualized family stories parallel the six blind men. We only see what we are privy to.



Looking at Families without a theory

- Biased
- Individualized
- Limited
- Contradictory
- Not representative

Theorizing about families

- A common lens through which to look at family:
 - Increases objectivity
 - Reduces bias
 - Increases intentionality
 - Guide



With theory

Without theory

Family Theories

Macro

- Examine the role of interacting systems in sustenance of families.
- Answers the question: What is conducive environment for families to thrive?

Micro

- Examine the internal dynamics within the family such as interactions between members

A: Macro: Ecological Theory

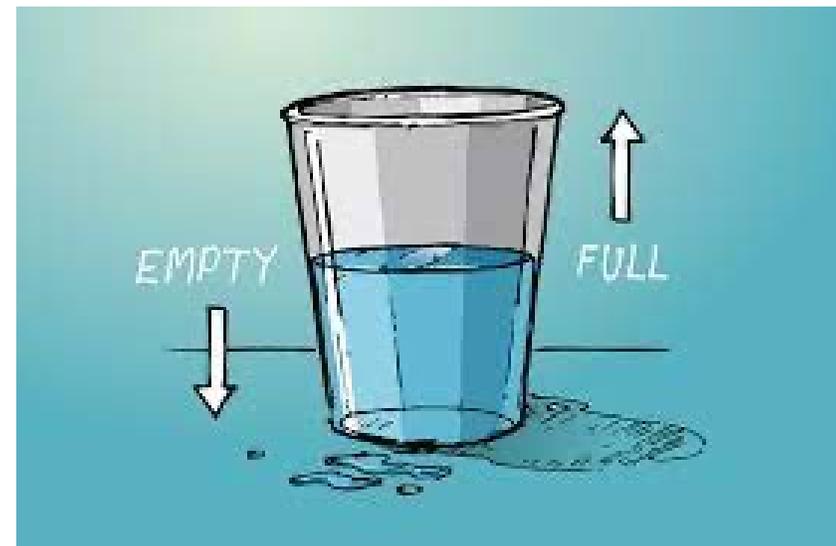
- Authors: Bronfenbrenner & Bublitz and Sontag
- Assumptions
 - Families are adaptive, but adaptation is influenced by environment
 - Environment is composed of interacting organic (natural) and inorganic (manmade physical and social) parts

Micro: Family Systems Theory

- Principles of Family systems theory
 - Task performance (role)
 - Interdependence
 - Homoeostasis
 - Boundary

Macro and Micro: Family Strength Perspective

- Authors: DeFrain & Asay
 - Community and culture provide strength and challenges
 - Whatever you seek to find about families, you will.
 - There are problems and strengths in families
 - Challenges help families to build strength



Macro: Family Strength Perspective

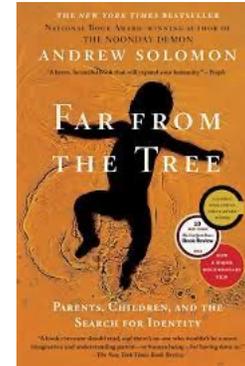
- Community Strength
- Cultural strength

Micro: Family Strength Perspective

- Showing appreciation and affection.
- Commitment.
- Positive communication.
- Enjoyable times together.
- Spiritual well-being.
- Ability to manage stress and crisis effectively.

Metaphors of family life

- The apple does not fall far from the tree
- Blood is thicker than water





Birthplaces of the 100 Fastest 7500m Runners of All Time

Metaphors of family life in Luo (Ethnic community in Kenya)

- Metaphors on personal responsibility
 - You strike the snake with your own stick
 - The elephant must carry its head
- Metaphors on collectivism
 - One must respectfully draw water from a relative's well
 - It takes two nails to kill a louse
- Challenges to collectivism
 - The eye that you help cure can be evil towards you. (Feeding the mouth that bites)
 - Two cockerels cannot be cooked in one pot
 - When bees have honey they sting indiscriminately

Theories on families

- Helps us answer the question: Why is my family like this by encouraging and normalizing
 - seeking deeper meaning of realities
 - Exploration of role of diverse variables
 - Challenging stereotypes and myths
 - Discovery of similarities in differences

Through Theory...

- We become
 - More curious
 - Less judgemental

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