



COMPILED BY JOAN KELLEHER

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### Community strengths

**Black, A. & Hughes, P. (2001), *The identification and analysis of indicators of community strength and outcomes*, Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra.**

This aims of the project described in this report are: to provide a review and analysis of literature on the conceptualisation and measurement of community strength and its outcomes; place this information in an analytical framework, identifying the commonalities and differences between various approaches to these issues; provide a clear and comprehensive menu of options of indicators for measuring community strength, especially indicators on which data are available or collectable; and evaluate those options as a total set. The primary context of the report is that of the Federal Government's announcement of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.



### Early intervention

**Bryce, H. & Ellison, L. (2001), "Unlocking the essence of professional home visiting: A strengths approach to improved parenting", Paper presented at *Family Strengths: Everybody's Business, Everybody's Gain – Second Australian Conference on Building Family Strengths*, University of Newcastle, December.**

What happens when a professional home visitor visits a family? What do those involved with professional home visiting value most? If one were to duplicate the essential components of this type of service, what would they need to know and do? Based on the professional home visiting model implemented by Northern Lakes Home Visiting,

the authors of this paper address these questions. They begin by describing Northern Lakes Home Visiting, a service of Uniting Care Burnside. Its pilot phase extended from 1997 to 2000, and it continues to operate in the Northern Wyong Shire of New South Wales. The authors describe the development of the model, its context, theoretical framework and the type of service offered. They also question the usefulness of relying on negative-type indicators to assess services, which are philosophically strengths based.

**Drielsma, P. (2000), "Hard wiring young brains for intimacy: The essential first step to breaking generational cycles of abuse and neglect", *Child Abuse Prevention***

***Newsletter*, vol. 8, no. 2, Summer, pp. 6-11.**

This article is based on the concept that if infants do not develop the capacity to attach to other living beings in a meaningful and appropriately intimate way, then as adults they are largely incapable of forming social networks, providing social support, and being part of a sustainable civil society. This has critical implications for community development and ultimately the creation of sustainable communities. Furthermore, the development of sustainable communities is critical for supportive structural networks that enhance the health and welfare of families and children in a way that protects against child abuse

and neglect. The author explains that this concept is based on the meaning and operation of social capital, an understanding of how the brain develops in the first three years of life, and the interplay of these two areas of knowledge.

**Emerson, L. (2000), "Stronger Families and Communities Strategy", *Family Matters*, no. 57, Spring/Summer, pp. 66-71.**

The Federal Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy was launched in April 2000. With its emphasis on prevention and early intervention strategies in family policy, the Strategy is a major shift from more traditional social policy. The author describes the context and underlying philosophy of the Strategy, and how these are translated into a new approach to funding community projects and building the evidence base in Australia.

**Gauntlett, E. et al., (2001), *A meta-analysis of the impact of community-based prevention and early intervention action*, Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra.**

This commissioned study posed two principal questions of the Stronger Communities element of the Commonwealth Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy: What is the evidence that prevention and early intervention programs promote the development of stronger communities and create measurable positive social outcomes? What is the evidence that there is a cost-benefit to be achieved by government supporting such programs? The study focuses on reviewing relevant national and international literature on community based approaches to responding to family and community problems by: reporting on the

financial implications of prevention and early intervention approaches with reference to the five factors of the FaCS Stronger Communities Strategy, and emphasising the short-term and long-term costs and benefits of investing in these approaches; and where appropriate, extrapolating the benefits of particular local projects to estimate what the costs and benefits would be if that approach, or a similar one, were to be applied nationwide. The report is in the following sections: Introduction; Community well being; Early childhood and families; Young people; Seniors and intergenerational programs; Conclusion.

### Family support services

**Anthony, L. (2000), "Paying attention to our children", *Child Abuse Prevention Newsletter*, vol. 8, no. 2, Summer, pp. 1-4.**

The Government has announced a number of new children's contact services which will offer a neutral location for changeovers between resident and non resident parents and for supervised contact visits. The purpose is to provide separated parents with the skills and support they need to deal reasonably with each other for the benefit of their children. This article focuses on the strategies necessary to ensure children are receiving the attention they deserve: early intervention and prevention of problems; working with the community to provide better services and support for parents; holistic responses to problems; and using existing activities to build better approaches. Part of the Government's commitment to help families build resilience and strength is the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy which is described in this article.

**Barnardos Australia (2001), "Getting it right on both fronts: An integrated strengths based approach to practice and organisational management", Paper presented at *Family Strengths: Everybody's Business, Everybody's Gain – Second Australian Conference on Building Family Strengths*, University of Newcastle, December.**

Barnardos South Coast Centre is a Children's Family Centre, one of

four such Centres established by Barnardos Australia. Children's Family Centres are made up of integrated family support services, that is family support services in the generic sense, which are managed in a way that makes them "seamless to clients". This paper describes how Barnardos South Coast Centre is using an integrated strengths based approach to practice and organisational management. It focuses on the evolution of these strengths based approaches to working with marginalised families in the Centre, and describes the Family Support program restructure – a process which is building on lessons from the early years research and practice evidence. Barnardos have developed a framework that delivers prevention and early intervention services across a continuum of need. Practice examples of integrated child and family services are also provided.

### Father role

**Fleming, J. (2002), "Just the two of us: The involvement of fathers in building stronger families", *Developing Practice: The Child, Youth and Family Work Journal*, no. 4, Winter, pp. 60-70.**

Fathers have been a neglected area of research and interest in the area of child and family welfare. However, they are also often recognised as being a key to the functioning of the family. This paper begins by exploring some common themes that have been identified about fathers in the child and family literature. It then aims to clarify what are the realities for fathers and the underlying tensions, and examines where fathers are likely to be overlooked in child and family work. Finally it discusses ways of developing an alternative framework for working with fathers.

**Grose, M. (2000), *A man's guide to raising kids*, by Random House, Sydney.**

For the most part children are brought up by mothers and from the age of five they spend much of their productive time in school, being taught by other adults. The notion of fathers being involved or active in the lives of their children has been reduced to a minor part.

Active fathering is more than being a presence in the lives of their children. It is about doing whatever needs to be done and sharing fully with a partner the enterprise of raising children, or of taking full responsibility if single. Men who can enjoy healthy relationships with their children are generally happier and lead fuller lives. This book is a guide to being a father and provides advice about: managing a busy schedule; rejecting myths surrounding fatherhood; discipline; raising both daughters and sons effectively; effect of birth order on children; getting involved in children's sports; fathering after divorce or separation; being a step-father; getting through adolescence; and the role of grandfathers.

**King, A. (2001), "Engaging fathers in group work: Creating cooperative environments", *Developing Practice: The Child, Youth and Family Work Journal*, no. 1, Winter, pp. 30-37.**

The generative fathering framework is a model for understanding the non deficit approach to fathering. This approach proposes that most men take an active interest in the lives of their children. In this paper, the author develops the non deficit perspective which argues that fathers are interested in family life, and that their engagement with support services is influenced by a variety of pressures within their life. These pressures include "generative chill", a type of anxiety resulting from a perceived or real danger of losing one's child or children, life crises such as separation and divorce, and juggling life demands. The paper is based on the experiences at a Fathers' Centre in Western Sydney where fathers access crisis counselling or group programs.

**King, A. (2000), "Working with fathers: The non-deficit perspective", *Children Australia*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 23-27.**

One of the highlights of the 1990s has been the greater recognition of the role of fatherhood by government departments, media organisations and community services. However this apparent embrace of fathering also reveals an underlying tension. This paper reflects on

Burnside's extensive experience in developing father valuing programs that support children and families within disadvantaged communities. As practitioners, the need for quick decision making may result in the resources which fathers (within separated or intact families) can offer being overlooked. Drawing on current United States research into nondeficit approaches to fathering, the paper recognises a variety of assumptions, which reduce the resources that fathers provide. Due to socialisation, Australian males often display a healthy dose of suspicion and mistrust of authority figures. Because of this, it is important for professionals to maximise the initial period of engagement when they have contact with a family. A variety of case studies are used to examine the challenge of engaging fathers in the process of strengthening family systems. (*Journal abstract*)

**Sullivan, R. & Howard, S. (2000), "Focus on fathering: a project of the Children's Commission of Queensland", Paper presented at *Family futures: Issues in research and policy*, 7th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Sydney, July.**

Currently there is a public spotlight on men's issues, as changes in gender relationships have led to a questioning of what it is to be a man, and a father in contemporary Australia. We are seeing an increasing recognition of the importance of healthy relationships of the effects of domestic and family violence on children, either as witnesses or victims, and of the costs to men, children, families and society of problematic relationships. Given these factors, relationships between men and their children are of special interest to the Children's Commission of Queensland. Mindful of research which demonstrates the link between strong familial relationships and productive and fulfilling adult citizenship, during the year 2000 the Commission is undertaking a specific initiative to raise awareness and inform public debate on contemporary fathering issues, and to promote positive

fathering skills. This paper provides a brief introduction to the Children's Commission, considers aspects of the current context which have led to the Children's Commission Focus on Fathering Project, and describes some of the activities being undertaken as part of that project. (*Author abstract, edited*)

**Walter, M. (2000), "Parental involvement of unwed non-resident fathers", by *Family Matters*, no. 57, Spring/Summer, pp. 34-39.**

Modern western fatherhood is a paradox of competing images. While the importance of fathers to children and the unique value of father's role is increasingly recognised, the number of fathers who no longer live with their children

Additionally, the research plans to investigate the factors that work to constrain or enhance fathers' ability to assume active and responsible roles in their children's lives. The analysis uses a combination of data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1997) Family Characteristics Survey and the 1990 Australian Institute of Family Studies Child Support Evaluation.

#### Interagency collaboration

**Bourne, J. (2001), "Service delivery: A partnership approach", *Papers: National Social Policy Conference 2001, Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Sydney*.**

This paper discusses what the Department of Family and Community Services is doing to forge

**Collins, K. & Winkworth, G. (2001), "The ACT Schools as Communities program", Paper presented at *Family Strengths: Everybody's Business, Everybody's Gain -Second Australian Conference on Building Family Strengths, University of Newcastle, December*.**

This paper provides an overview of the Schools as Communities program, a new ACT Government initiative aimed at increasing social capital in "at risk" regions. It is a unique and innovative approach to early intervention and prevention which has grown out of the collocation in the ACT of child welfare services and government schooling. Addressing the gap between statutory child protection and family support and community development programs for children and

**Geggie, J. et al. (2000), *Family Strengths Research Project, Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle, Callaghan, NSW*.**

To determine which qualities Australian families perceived as family strengths, the Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle received funding from the Federal Department of Family and Community Services for two projects: the Building Family Strengths Project (BFSP) and the Family Strengths Theme Research (FSTR). This document describes the methodology and results of these projects. The development of the Australian Family Strengths Inventory, how family members were recruited, and the results of the participants' responses to the inventory are discussed in relation to the BFSP. How the qualitative analysis was conducted with the FSTR is identified and the strength themes are defined and illustrated with quotations from families stories, highlighting the challenges faced by families and coping strategies used. These themes are: communication, togetherness, sharing activities, affection, support, acceptance and commitment. The Australian Family Strengths Inventory is included in the appendices along with other methodological details.

**Silberberg, S. (2001), "Searching for family resilience", *Family Matters*, no. 58, Autumn, pp. 52-57.**

What gives a family the resilience to work through a crisis? Why is it that some families fall apart when faced with adversities, while others thrive and become stronger? What are the qualities of these resilient families? And how do these families establish and maintain these strengths? The answers to these questions have intrigued a broad range of people, from policy makers to community workers. The federal government instituted the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy with the purpose of building stronger family and community relationships. In 1999 the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle initiated the first Australian Family Strengths



is also escalating. The research reported in this paper tests the hypothesis that increased exnuptial births result in increased numbers of children being raised without significant paternal involvement. The major aims of the project are to establish the social, economic, personal and cultural characteristics of Australian unwed non-residential fathers and examine the level of parental involvement these fathers have with their children.

new ground in service delivery through working with the community in partnerships. Examples of the partnership approach are discussed, including the Centrelink and FaCS partnership, specific programs that are bringing partnerships to the community such as the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, the Reconnect Program Development Reference Group, and the formation of two new consumer Federations.

young people "at risk", the program assists schools and families to tap into the network of health and community services that exist in the ACT through a team of community outreach workers, in selected primary and pre-school sites. The program seeks to enhance educational and social outcomes for at risk children and young people by creating strong and effective working relationships between families, communities and their schools.

Research Project as part of the Strategy. The aim of this project was to determine which qualities Australian families perceived as family strengths, and the language families used to describe these qualities. In this article, the author provides an overview of the project.

### Social capital

**Baum, F. et al. (2000), "Families, social capital and health", in I. Winter (ed.) *Social capital and public policy in Australia*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.**

The social capital perspective discussed in this chapter recognises that major advancements in public health have traditionally relied on collective efforts for the common good, for equity and social justice. An empirical study, the Adelaide Health Development and Social Capital Project, is described. This study explored community participation, health and social capital in the western suburbs of Adelaide. Results are discussed around the following topics: categories of social and civic participation; participation and health status; family type; the influence of having children; the influence of neighbourhood; choosing not to participate; and implications for health and health services.

**Giorgas, D. (2000), "Community formation and social capital in Australia", Paper presented at *Family futures: Issues in research and policy*, 7th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Sydney, July.**

This paper explores ethnic community formation and social capital among six groups: Germans, Dutch, Hungarians, Poles, Italians and Greeks. It argues that social capital within the family is particularly important in overcoming deficiencies in other forms of capital; although it can only be successfully used when close relations exist between parents and children. Thus cultures that place greater emphasis on the family and are collectivist in nature, such as Greeks and Italians, are more likely to use social capital. In contrast cultures that have an individualistic focus, for example, Germans and Hungarians, are more

likely to under-invest in social capital. Overall, the findings of this paper suggest that ethnic community formation has served as a positive strategy for immigrants in overcoming social isolation and economic difficulties by providing employment opportunities and a sense of familial surroundings within their own ethnic group. Social capital is used more effectively by groups with stronger cultural boundaries and a collective sense of identity. (Author abstract)

**Hampshire, A. & Healy, K. (2000), "Social capital in practice", Paper presented at *Family futures: Issues in research and policy*, 7th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Sydney, July.**

Australia's oldest not-for-profit organisation, The Benevolent Society, has identified the building of social capital as its key organisational objective. In order to begin to marry the theory of social capital with the practice of a medium sized not-for-profit organisation delivering a variety of community services (in the areas of the aged, children and families, women's health etc), the Benevolent Society has done some preliminary work on developing a Community Engagement Strategy. This paper provides a theoretical overview of social capital particularly in relation to social service delivery, and outlines the background, process and findings of The Benevolent Society's Community Engagement Project. The project involved extensive consultation across the organisation, a national and international search for best practice in community engagement, including the use of volunteers, and an examination of some high need communities in Sydney. The Benevolent Society and the University of Sydney are applying for funding to undertake a three year project which builds on this initial work.

**Stone, W. & Hughes, J. (2002), "Understanding community strengths", by *Family Matters*, no. 61, Autumn, pp. 62-67.**

Can existing theories provide an overall framework for achieving and identifying strong communities? This article identifies the

concepts of social cohesion and social exclusion as providing two theoretical frameworks whose relevance to Australian policy deserves greater exploration.

**Stone, W. & Hughes, J. (2002), *Social capital: Empirical meaning and measurement validity*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.**

Despite being described as an empirically elusive concept, "social capital" has attracted much policy and academic interest. However, little is known about social capital in practice, since measurement of the concept remains an emerging field. This paper aims to contribute to the development of theoretically based and empirically valid measures of social capital that can be applied in future

cluste-based typology of social capital, useful for understanding the types of circumstances that are associated with people being "social capital rich" or "social capital poor". (Author abstract)

**Stone, W. (2001), *Measuring social capital: Towards a theoretically informed measurement framework for researching social capital in family and community life*, by Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.**

In Australia, as in other nations, "social capital" is being looked to as a means of stemming the tide of perceived community decline and widespread distrust associated with it. The increasingly central role that social capital plays in Australian public policy has



work. The paper draws on data collected in a national random survey of 1,500 Australian households, to develop and test three competing approaches to measuring social capital, useful for application in different types of settings and for different research questions. The first develops network-based measures, the second explores the question of whether we can construct a single measure of social capital, and the third develops a

fuelled demand for empirical understandings of it. Yet, demand for empirical measures of social capital exceeds supply. Within this context the Australian Institute of Family Studies is undertaking the Families, Social Capital and Citizenship project. To inform the Institute project, this paper contributes to the development of clear links between theorised and empirical understandings of social capital by: establishing a



theoretically informed measurement framework for empirical investigation of social capital, and; reviewing existing measures of social capital in light of this framework. The paper concludes with a statement of guiding principles for the measurement and empirical investigation of social capital in family and community life.

**Stone, W. (2000), "Social capital and social security: Lessons from research", *Family Matters*, no. 57, Spring/Summer, pp. 10-13.**

In response to the central position social capital has come to occupy in discourse about the social and economic wellbeing of individuals, families and their communities, this paper first examines how the concept of "social capital" features in current public policy and welfare reform, and, second, draws upon available Australian and overseas research to provide analysis of how well the concept might meet policy expectations of it. In doing so the paper highlights some lessons about the social capital/social security nexus which have implications for the ongoing role of government in the provision and regulation of Australian social security.

**Stone, W. & Hughes, J. (2000), "What role for social capital in family policy?", *Family Matters*, no. 56, Winter, pp. 20-27.**

In theory, social capital promises something for everyone. This paper outlines some of the potential benefits of social capital for government, business, communities and family life. It goes on to demonstrate, via review of the literature, that a gulf exists between social capital theory and empirical understandings of the concept. This gulf, it is argued, has resulted in confusion about the meaning, measurement, outcomes and relevance of social capital, and threatens to undermine the realisation of its potential. In an attempt to bridge this gulf, the paper concludes by presenting a conceptually sound and theoretically informed measurement framework for empirical investigation and understanding of social

capital, and sets out a research agenda for interrogating the value of social capital for Australian families, communities, business and policy.

**Winter, I. (2000), *Towards a theorised understanding of family life and social capital*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.**

Families are typically thought of as the wellspring of civil society and an important source of social capital. The aim of this working paper is to bring the relationship between families and social capital under some scrutiny. The paper defines the concept of social capital and reviews the literature on social capital within and beyond family networks. Drawing this information together reveals considerable gaps in our knowledge of what it is about family life that generates social capital and, in turn, strengthens civil society. To redress this, the paper draws upon "risk society" theory to construct family life as a theoretical subject and to provide a framework for understanding why family based networks and norms – and thus family based social capital – are undergoing change.

**Wise, S. (2001), "Creating 'child-friendly' communities: A strategy to reclaim children from risk", *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 36, no. 2, May, pp. 153-167.**

A review of the scope and characteristics of the problems facing Australian children and adolescents. Such issues as poor mental health, substance use and abuse, delinquency, violence, school drop-out rates, youth unemployment and suicide are explained in terms of shortfalls in community endeavour to protect families from risk factors associated with structural and social change. A strategy to reduce vulnerability is proposed, which would involve mobilising government, independent and informal local community sectors to support parents and encourage healthy, pro-social development. Sustaining the quality of social environments close to children and families requires a process of community capacity-building, including a

renewed emphasis on participation and democracy and better coordination between local service agencies. (*Journal abstract*)

### Strengthening marriage

**Maley, B. (2001), *Family and marriage in Australia*, Centre for Independent Studies, St Leonards, NSW.**

Commencing with an introductory chapter titled "The revolution that ate the children", this book first outlines social, cultural and economic changes which have led to family dysfunction and the growing instability of the nuclear family. The author argues that these changes – from the de-stigmatisation of premarital sex and illegitimacy to the introduction of sole parent pensions, no-fault divorce, the mass entry of women into the workforce, and the growth of child care – stem largely from the ideas of the 1960s sexual and gender feminist revolutions – ideas that are often expressed and supported in public policy today. Part two of the book, *Consequences and cures*, then examines the negative consequences for the traditional family and the socialisation of children, and suggests ways in which marriage might be restored to vigour, and the wellbeing of children put at its centre, by reforms in family law, taxation and other areas.

**Parker, R. (2002), *Why marriages last: A discussion of the literature*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.**

In the field of marriage and relationships research there has tended to be a preoccupation with relationship breakdown and dissolution, obscuring the body of literature that explores the reasons why many marriages are enduring, satisfying and happy. Drawing on this literature, this paper discusses some of what is known about why many marriages last for very long periods and considers how knowledge of the ways in which marriages can be made to last can help young couples create and maintain their own enduring and rewarding marriages. The paper is not intended to

provide a critical analysis of the literature on long lasting marriages. Rather, it aims to draw attention to the body of literature available on how enduring and rewarding marriages can be created and maintained. (*Author abstract, edited*)

**Parker, R. (2001), "Making marriages last", by *Family Matters*, no. 60, Spring/Summer, pp. 80-89.**

Why do some marriages dissolve in a relatively short space of time, while others go on for as long as 75 years or more, still vibrant happy relationships enjoyed by both partners? This article examines theoretical explanations of how marriages "succeed" or "fail" and reviews three studies that have gone to the source and asked long-married couples how they explain the longevity of their marriage.

### Stronger families projects

**FaCS (2001), "Stronger Families and Communities Strategy: Community guide", Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra.**

The Federal Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy focuses on three areas: early childhood and the needs of families with young children, strengthening marriage and relationships, and balancing work and family. This community guide includes details about the types of family and community projects that could receive government funding under the Strategy. Information provided covers the following areas: how projects will be identified and developed; who will get funding, for how long and how much; how projects will be assessed for funding; where the projects will be; how communities have their say; the role for Indigenous communities; examples of project proposal ideas; and details on how to contact the Federal Department of Family and Community Services.

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