

# A Family-Systems Model of Intervention

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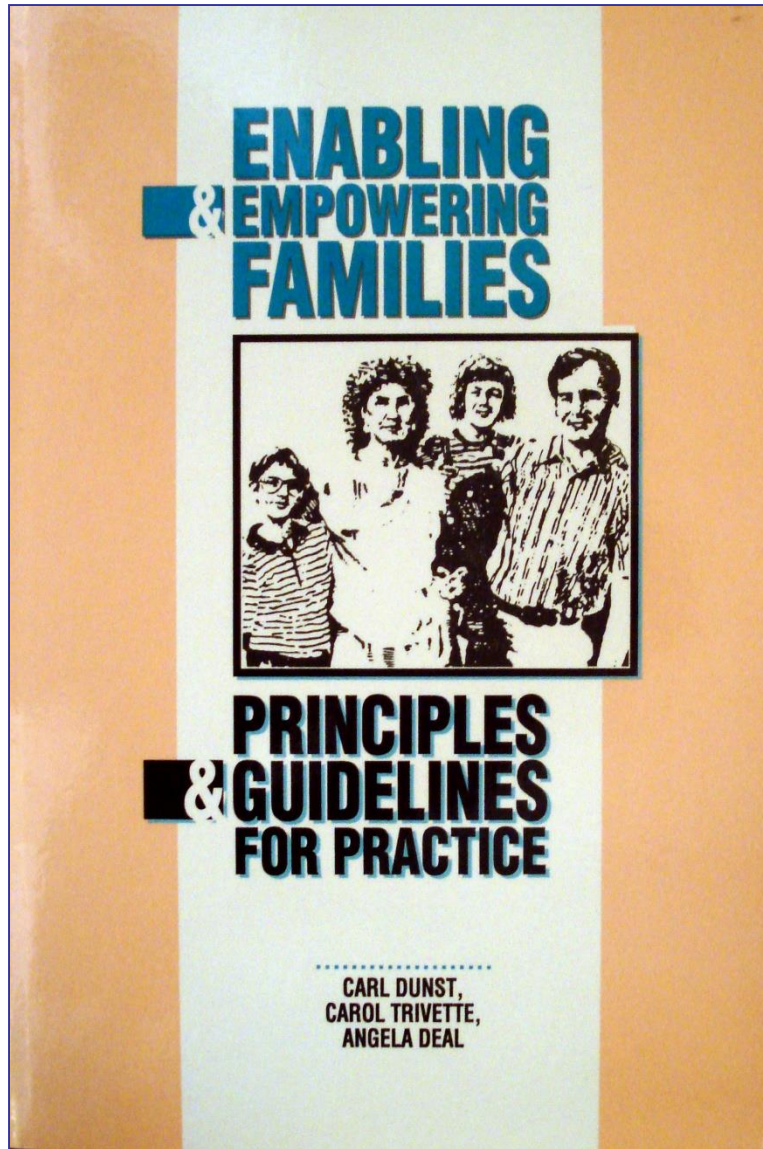
Frameworks for practicing evidence-based early childhood intervention and family support. Lecture prepared for the “Knowledge-Based Family Intervention in Long-Term Illness and Disability” Course, Swedish Institute of Health Sciences, Lund University, Lund, Sweden, September 5, 2011.

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# Background

The family system model of early childhood intervention and family support that has been the focus of my research and practice and that of my colleagues was first developed in 1982 and has been revised and updated based on lessons learned during the past 30 years from both research and practice. The changes that have been made include better conceptualization and operationalization of key features of the model.



The approach to early childhood intervention and family support described in *Enabling and Empowering Families* (published in 1988) used tenets from a number of different theories to identify key features that formed the foundations for the principles and practices guiding work with young children and their parents

## Definitions of Enablement and Empowerment

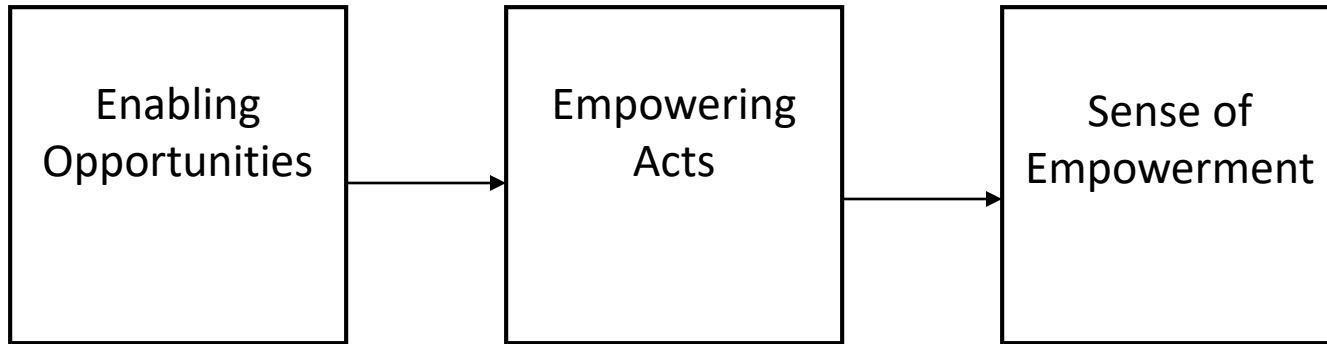
***Enablement:*** To make able; to provide a means or an opportunity

***Enabling:*** Create or provide opportunities to become able or competent

***Empowerment:*** The act of decision-making, choice, and the sense of capability resulting from empowerment acts

***Empowering:*** The sense of control and self-efficacy resulting from enabling experiences and opportunities

# Relationship Between Enabling Experiences and Empowering Acts and Consequences



# Theories and Models Guiding the Development of the Family-Systems Intervention Model

- Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory of the ecology of human development
- Julian Rappaport's theory of empowerment
- Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory
- Nicholas Hobb and his colleagues model of family strengthening practices
- Nick Stinnett's framework of family strengths (qualities of strong families)
- James Garbarino's theory of social environments
- Philip Brickman and his colleagues model of capacity building help giving practices

## A Social Systems Perspective of Parenting Capacity

“Whether parents can perform effectively in their child-rearing roles within the family depends on the role demands, stresses, and supports emanating from other settings...Parents’ evaluations of their own capacity to function, as well as their view of their child, are related to such external factors as flexibility of job schedules, adequacy of child care arrangements, the presence of friends and neighbours who can help out in large and small emergencies, the quality of health and social services, and neighbourhood safety. The availability of supportive settings is, in turn, a function of their existence and frequency in a given culture or subculture. This frequency can be enhanced by the adoption of public policies and practices that create additional settings and societal roles conducive to family life.”

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 7)

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Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.



# Julian Rappaport's Perspective of Empowerment

“Empowerment implies that many competencies are already present or at least possible....Empowerment implies that what you see as poor functioning is a result of social structure and lack of resources which make it impossible for existing competencies to operate. It implies that in those cases where new competencies need to be learned, they are best learned in a context of living life rather than in artificial programs where everyone, including the person learning, knows that it is really the expert who is in charge.” (*Rappaport, 1981, p. 16*)

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Rappaport, J. (1981). In praise of paradox: A social policy of empowerment over prevention. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 9*, 1-25.

# Guiding Principles

- *Enabling and Empowering Families* was developed to be a flexible approach to family-systems intervention that could be used with families from diverse backgrounds having different life circumstances and in many different settings and contexts.
- The family systems model was also developed so that it could be used by practitioners from different disciplines who may have had little formal training in working with families.

# Applications of the Family Systems Intervention Model

- Parents of children with developmental disabilities in early childhood intervention programs
- Parents of preschool children in family support programs
- Teenage mothers receiving social support interventions
- Families on welfare involved in social support interventions
- Multi-cultural families involved in early childhood intervention programs
- Parents of school aged children involved in parenting support programs
- Parents of children with disabilities enrolled in elementary schools

## Others Use of the Family Systems Intervention Model

The family systems model, or components of the model, have been used widely in early childhood intervention, human services and mental health programs, health care programs, and parenting support programs with families from diverse backgrounds and in different settings (e.g., incarcerated parents) in the United States, Europe, Canada, and Australia.

# Family-Systems Intervention Model

- Definition of Intervention
- Social Systems Framework
- Conceptual Foundations
- Operational Elements and Features

## Definition of Intervention

Provision of supports and resources to families from informal and formal social network members that either or both directly and indirectly influence and improve parent, family, and child behaviour and functioning.

## Social Systems Framework

A family is viewed as a social unit embedded within other informal and formal social support networks [where] the behaviour of a developing child, his or her parents, other family members, and the family unit as a whole, are influenced by events in settings outside the family which either or both directly and indirectly influence parent, family, and child behaviour and functioning.

## Conceptual Foundations (Capacity Building Paradigm)

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Promotion Models

Enhancement and optimization of competence

Empowerment Models

Create opportunities to use existing abilities and learn new competencies

Strengths-Based Models

Emphasis on the use of strengths to obtain resources improving functioning

Resource-Based Models

Use of a broad range of resources and supports as “interventions”

Family-Centered Models

Family choice and family involvement in obtaining resources and supports

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# Contrasting Approaches to Intervention

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Capacity-Building Models	Traditional Models
Promotion	Treatment
Empowerment	Expertise
Strengths-Based	Deficit-Based
Resource-Based	Service-Based
Family-Centered	Professionally-Centered

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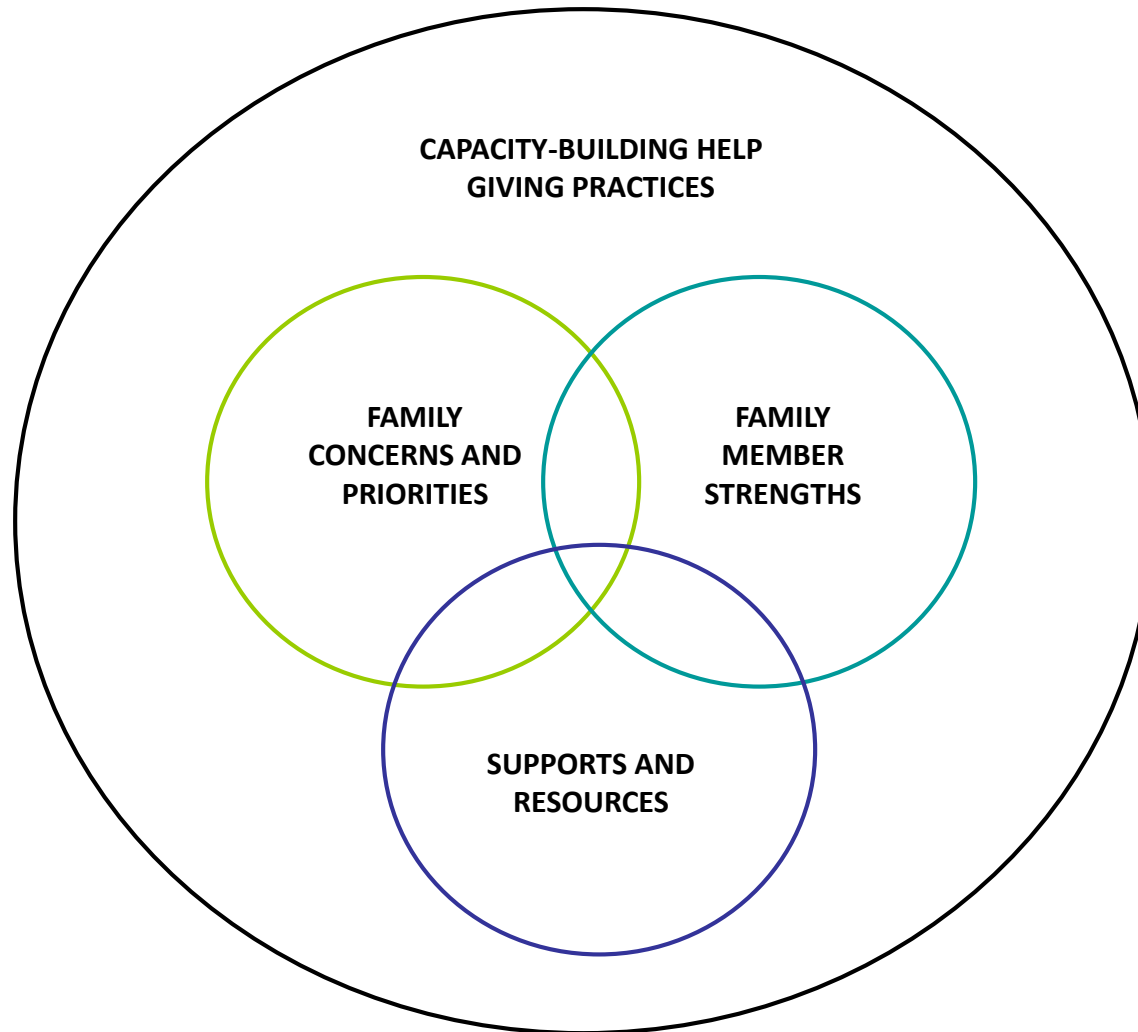
## Operational Elements of the Family-System Model

- Family Concerns and Priorities
- Family Member Strengths
- Supports and Resources
- Capacity-Building Help giving Practices

## Main Focus of Each of the Model Components

- Family concerns and priorities are viewed as determinants of how people spend time and energy engaged in preferred or necessary activities
- Family strengths are considered the abilities and interests used to engage in desired activities
- Supports include the information, assistance, experiences, opportunities, etc. for addressing family concerns and priorities
- Capacity-building help giving practices strengthen the ability of family members to obtain supports and resources resulting in a sense of competence

# Family-Systems Intervention Model



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Dunst, C.J., & Trivette, C.M. (2009). Capacity-building family systems intervention practices. *Journal of Family Social Work*, 12(2), 119-143.

## Definition of Family-Centred Capacity-Building

Family-centred capacity-building refers to the methods and procedures used by practitioners to create enabling experiences and opportunities to strengthen existing and promote the development of new parenting and family abilities in a manner that enhances and strengthens self-efficacy beliefs and parent and family knowledge and skills

## Family-Centred Practices

Research conducted by myself and my colleagues has consistently found that there are two clearly discernable subsets of family-centred practices that “fall into” distinct categories of practice:

- Relational Practices
- Participatory Practices

# Relational Practices

Relational practices include behaviours typically associated with effective help giving (active listening, compassion, empathy, etc.) and positive staff attributions about program participant capabilities

- These kinds of practices are typically described in terms of behaviours that strengthen program participant and practitioner interpersonal relationships (mutual trust, collaboration, etc.)
- Relational practices also include help-giver beliefs about existing family member strengths and their capacity to become more competent as well as practitioner respect for personal and cultural beliefs and values

# Participatory Practices

Participatory practices include behaviours that involve program participant choice and decision making, and which meaningfully involve participants in actively procuring or obtaining desired resources or supports for achieving desired life goals

- These kinds of practices strengthen existing competencies and provide opportunities for learning new capabilities by engaging family members in informed choices and acting on those choices
- Participatory practices also include help-giver responsiveness to a family's situation and changing life circumstances, and help-giver flexibility to these situations and circumstances



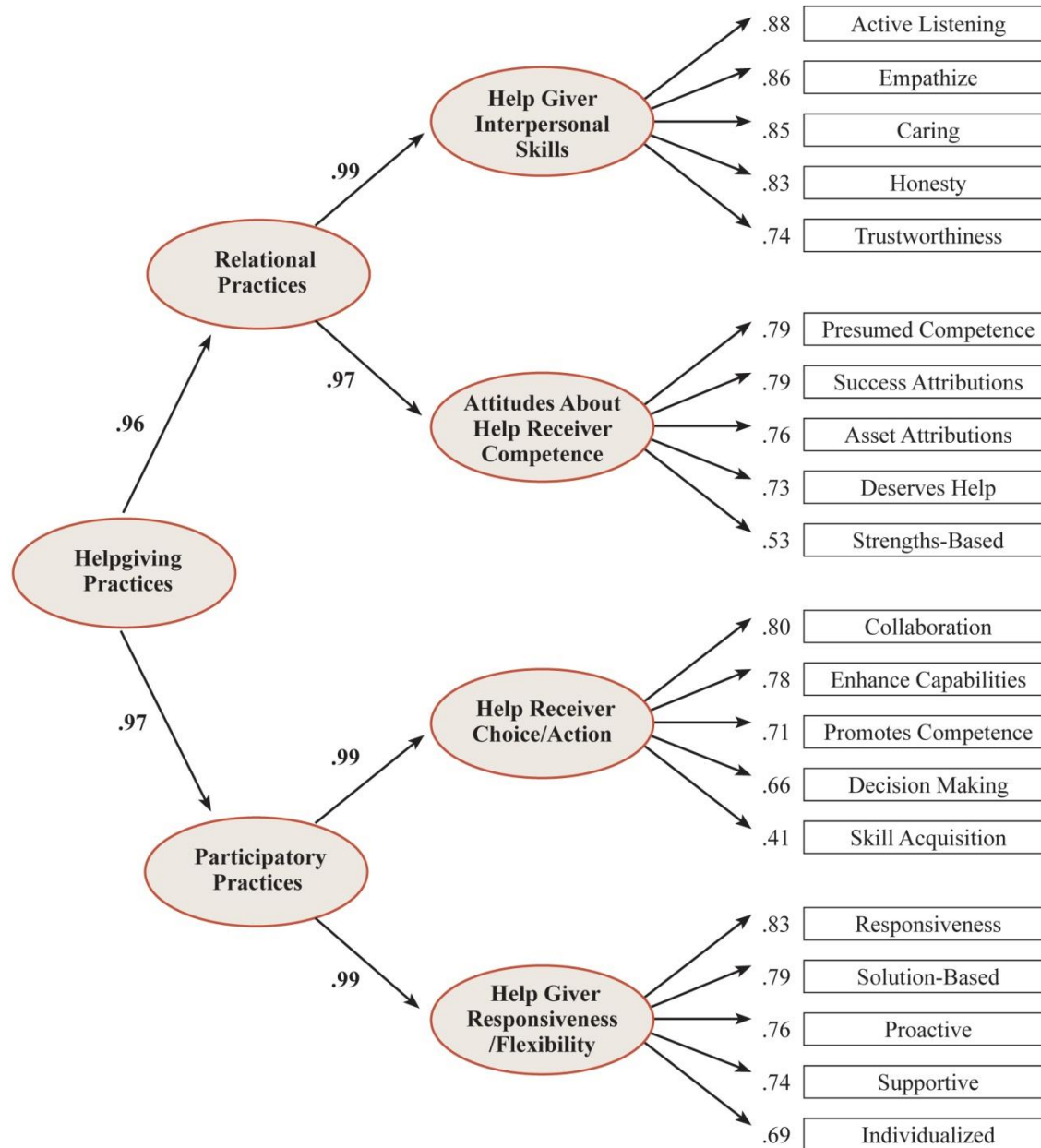
# Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Family-Centred Practices

Our most recent research on the structure of family-centred help giving practices used confirmatory factor analysis to determine if the patterns of relationships among the items on the *Help Giving Practices Scale* (Trivette & Dunst) provides support for a multicomponent model.

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Trivette, C.M., & Dunst, C.J. (2007). *Capacity-building family-centred helpgiving practices* (Winterberry Research Reports Vol. 1, No. 1). Asheville, NC: Winterberry Press.

# Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Family-Centred Help Giving Practices Indicators



*Fit Indices*  
0.90 to 0.95

## Research Syntheses of Studies on the Family Systems Model Components

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Model Component	Number of Studies	Number of Participants
Concerns and Priorities <sup>a</sup>	32	7,781
Family Strengths <sup>a</sup>	32	2,924
Social Supports <sup>a</sup>	79	10,932
Help giving Practices <sup>a</sup>	52	12,211

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<sup>a</sup> In progress.

<sup>b</sup> Completed.

## Family Systems Measures Used in the Synthesis Studies

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Model Component	Independent Measures
Concerns and Priorities	Family Resource Scale, Family Needs Scale
Family Strengths	Family Functioning Style Scale, Family Hardiness Index
Social Supports	Family Support Scale, Support Functions Scale
Help Giving Practices	Help Giving Practices Scale, Measure of Process of Care, Family-Centered Practices Scale, Enabling Practices Scale (+9 other scales)

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# Outcome Measures in the Synthesis Studies

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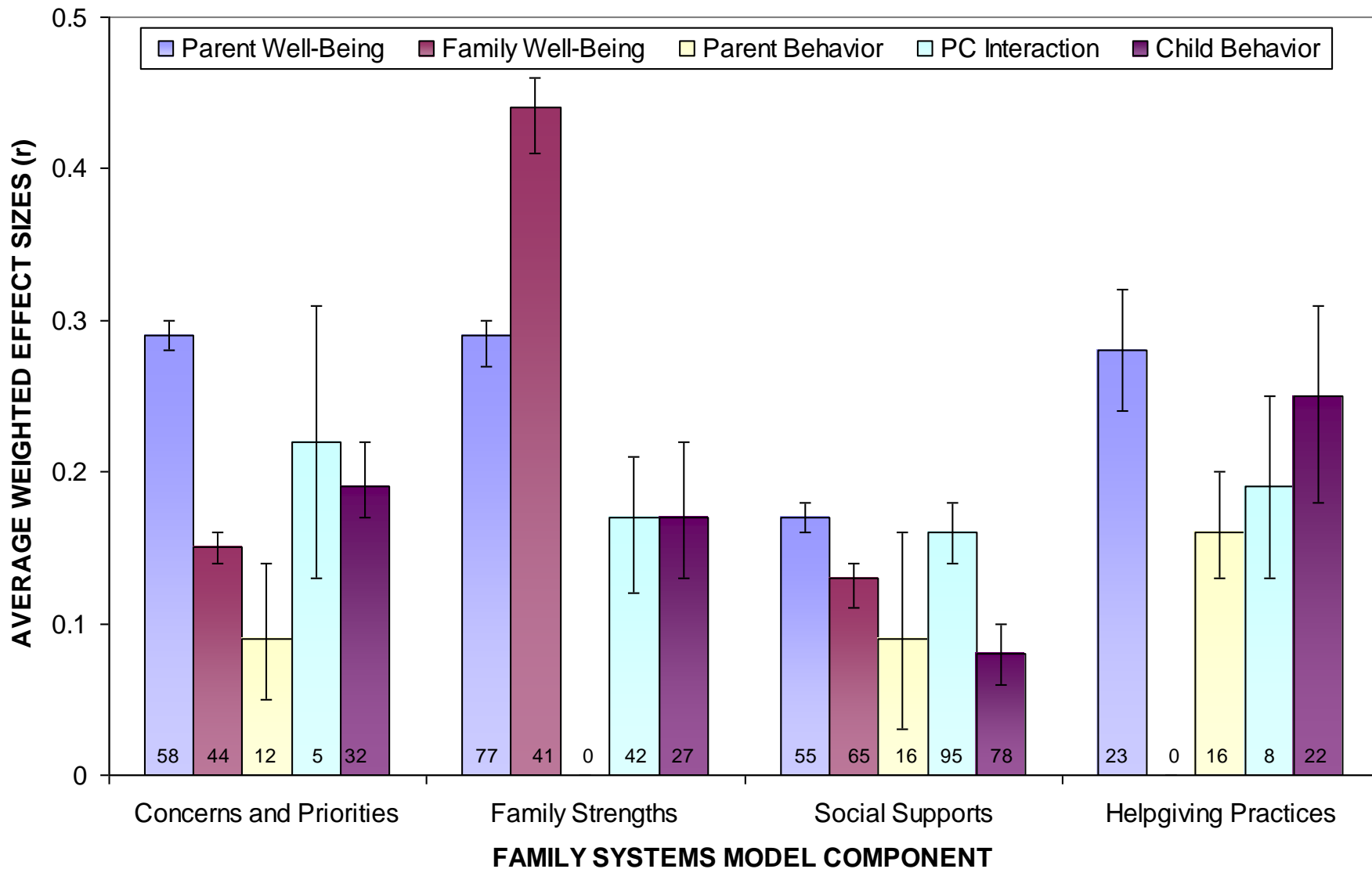
Outcome Domains	Outcome Measures (Examples)
Self Efficacy Beliefs	Family Empowerment Scale, Personal Assessment of Control Scale
Parent Well-Being	Psychological Well-Being Index, Parenting Stress Index, CES-D
Family Well-Being	Family Environment Scale, FACES, Self Report Functioning Scale
Parent/Family Coping	Coping Strategies Inventory, F-COPES, Ways of Coping Scale
Life Events	Parent Daily Hassles Scale, Family Inventory of Life Events
Parenting Behavior	Parenting Competence Scale, Everyday Parenting Scale
Parent-Child Interactions	Parent-Child Relationship Scale, Parent Styles of Interaction Scale
Child Behavior	Conners Parent Rating Scale, Child Behavior Checklist
Child Development	Bayley Scale, Vineland, Battelle, Adaptive Behavior Inventory for Children

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## Methods of Analysis

- Average weighted correlations between the independent and dependent measures (direct effects) are used as the size of effects between measures
- Indirect effects of the model components on the study outcomes mediated by self-efficacy beliefs (sense of empowerment)

## Some Preliminary Results



## Finishing Up!

- Final lecturer comments and remarks
- Student questions, comments, challenges, etc.
- Lecturer-student discussion, conversation, dialogue, etc.
- Any other things to clarify or discuss?