

How Does the Family Matter?

Tracing Risk and Protective Factors
from Preschool through Adolescence

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Definition: Risk Factors

Characteristics of individuals and their environments associated with the increased likelihood of developing mental disorders or problems in the future.

i.e., smoking → lung disease

Definition: Protective Factors

Characteristics of individuals and their environments associated with the increased likelihood of avoiding or recovering from mental disorders or problems in the future.

i.e., trauma || social support

**Levels
of Risk**

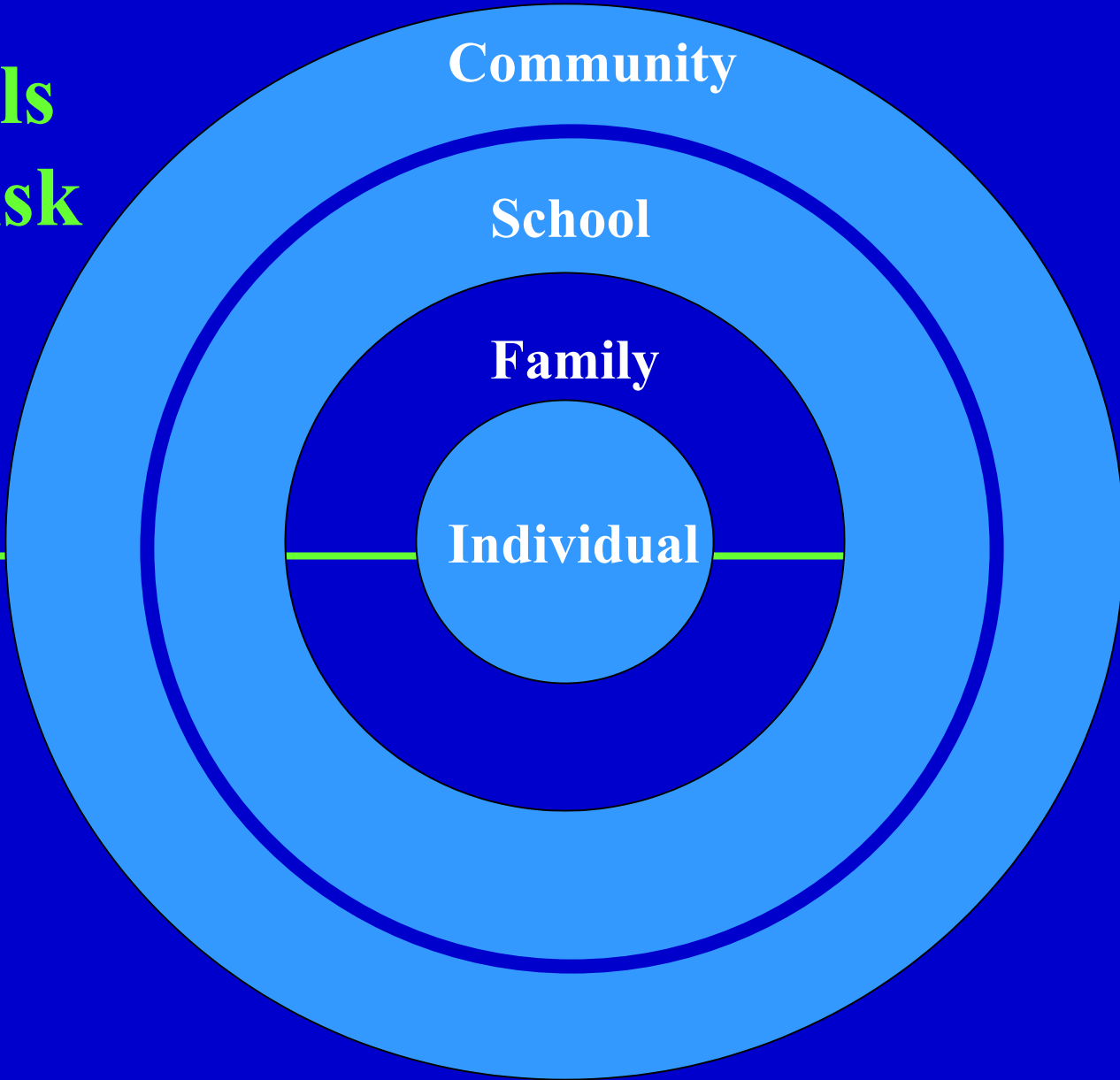
Community

School

Family

Individual

Time



Risk Factor? Divorce

Age 9

Short term impact on school performance

Short term impact on behavior

Age 15

Short term impact for girls

Girls reported a greater need for social support

Girls showed more behavior problems

Wallerstein, 2000

Kinard & Reinherz, 1986

Frost & Pakiz, 1990

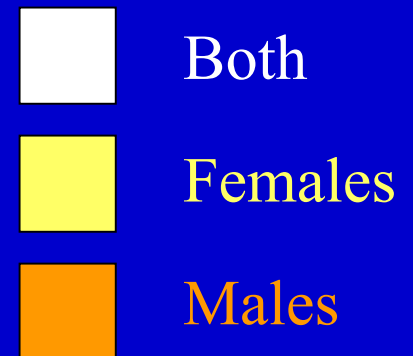
Risk Factor? Working Mothers

- No negative effects
- Mother's education
 - Improved school performance
 - Behavior not affected

Risk 1: Family conflict and violence (by age 15)

At age 18,

- Alcohol Disorders
- Lower high school GPA
- Major Depressive Disorder
- Drug Disorders
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Behavioral and emotional problems
- Suicidal thoughts

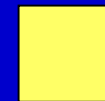


Risk 2: Death of a parent (by age 15)

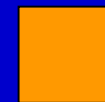
- Major Depressive Disorder
- Alcohol Disorders
- Poorer self-esteem
- Thoughts of suicide



Both



Females



Males

Risk 3: Not valued as a family member

5 items

“yes” or “no”

Sample items:

1. My family is disappointed in me
2. I cause trouble to my family

Piers-Harris, administered at ages 9 & 15

Risk 3: Not valued as a family member (age 9)

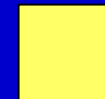
- Major Depressive Disorder
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Suicidal thoughts
- Behavioral and emotional problems
- Interpersonal problems

- Drug Disorders

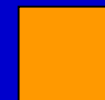
- Poorer self-esteem



Both



Females



Males

Risk 3: Not valued as a family member (age 15)

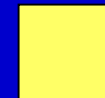
- Drug Disorders
- Poorer self-esteem
- Lower high school GPA

- Major Depressive Disorder
- Dropping out of high school
- Suicide attempts

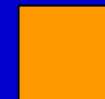
- Alcohol Disorders



Both

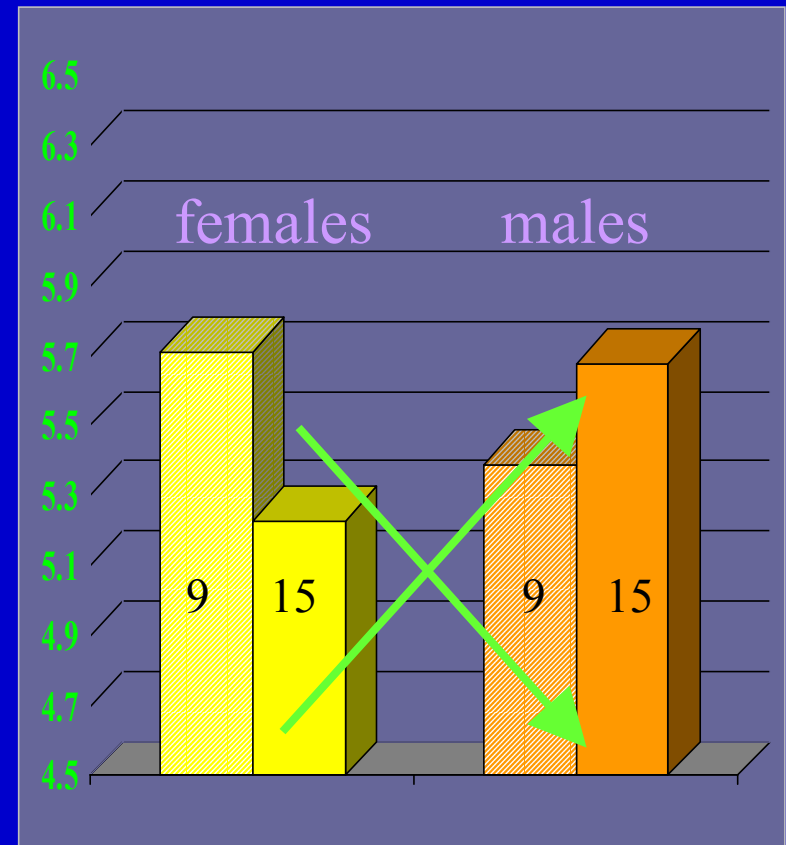
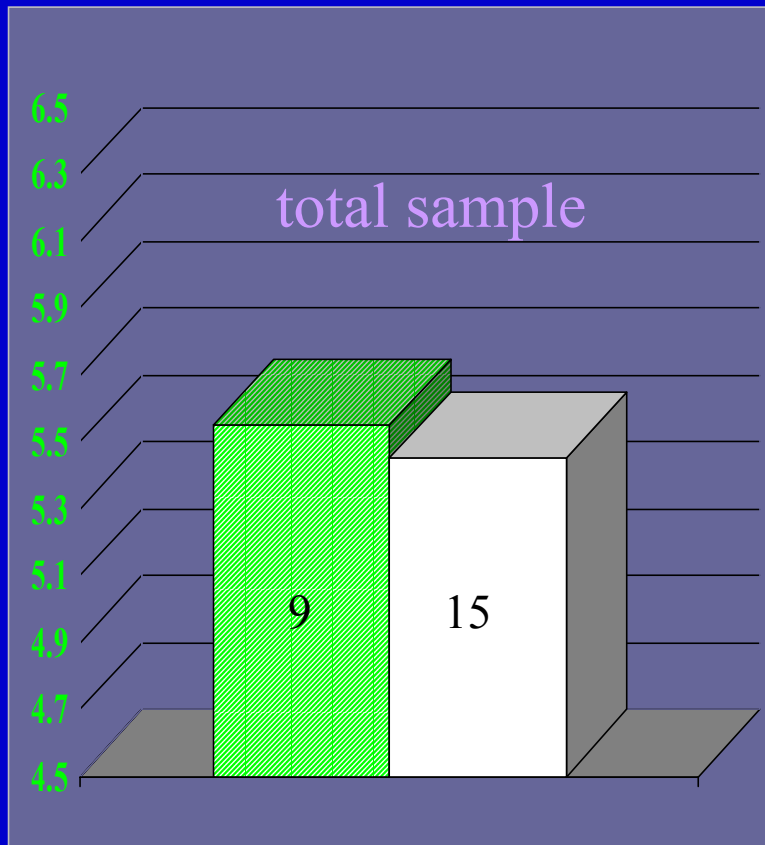


Females



Males

Valued as a family member



Families as influences and reinforcers of good outcomes

- Social support¹
- Family cohesion²

¹Barrera, 1980

²Olson, 1985

Social Support: Family member as source of advice

Positively predicts...

Higher self-esteem

Higher high school GPA

Reduces risks for...

Major Depressive Disorder

Alcohol Disorders

Drug Disorders

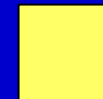
Suicidal thoughts

Behavioral and emotional problems

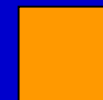
Dropping out of high school



Both



Females



Males

Social Support: Family member as confidant

Positively predicts...

Higher high school GPA

Reduces risk for...

Depressive symptoms

Behavioral and emotional problems

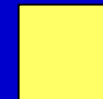
Alcohol Disorders

Drug Disorders

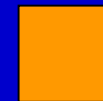
Suicide attempts



Both



Females



Males

Family Cohesion

10 items

Rating scale: 1-4

Sample items:

1. Family members feel very close to each another
2. Family togetherness is very important

Olson et al, 1985

Protective Factor: Family Cohesion

Positively predicts...

Higher high school GPA

Higher likelihood of receiving honors

Reduces risk for...

Alcohol Disorders

Drug Disorders

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

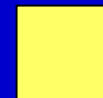
Major Depressive Disorder

Suicidal thoughts

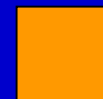
Behavioral and emotional problems



Both



Females



Males

Does the Family Matter ?

The Family does Matter

- The family provides both risk and protective elements
- There are gender specific pathways to good mental health
- Violence and loss of a parent are potent risks
- Both family social support and cohesion are powerful protective factors