

RESEARCH BRIEF

The impact of Strong Families, Strong Communities on relationship functioning in low-income African American and Hispanic individuals: Findings from a federally funded randomized control trial.

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Low-income minorities often face many complex barriers to building stable and healthy families.

Why is this research important?

- African American and Hispanics are the two largest minority groups in the United, and they are disproportionately impacted by poverty
- Racial and/or ethnic minority status further exacerbates consequences associated with poverty
- Much of previous research has been focused on middle class Caucasian couples that were engaged or married and recent research has begun focusing on low-income minorities that may be cohabitating
- There is a lack of diverse and culturally sensitive providers

Who was part of this study and how was the research conducted?

- AVANCE Houston, a non-profit community-based organization, developed the Strong Families, Strong communities (SFSC) program.
- AVANCE Houston recruited 1,331 African American and Hispanic adults who spoke English and/or Spanish and were from low income backgrounds. Participants heard about the study through partner agencies, health clinics, community centers serving the population, head starts, flyers, radio ads, tv interviews, and word of mouth.
- The study is a randomized control trial (RCT) based on individuals who were randomly assigned to either a 12-month waitlist (control) group or the SFSC (treatment) group, which received a 7-week series of workshops on healthy relationships, financial literacy, parenting, job placement and career management.
- Researchers examined four dimensions of relationship functioning: relationship satisfaction, relationship connectedness, relationship quality, and conflict resolution.

What did we find?

- Strong Families, Strong communities had a positive impact on the four dimensions of relationship functioning
- The ultimate goal of these federally funded programs is to improve family and child outcomes, and results suggest these programs are a step in the right direction.

Action steps:

- The need for continued research on supportive programs for healthy marriages and relationships among low-income minorities

ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS

Dr. Sheara Jennings is an Associate Professor and the Humana Endowed Chair in Social Determinants of Health. Since joining the GCSW in 2004, Dr. Jennings has been actively engaged in leadership, scholarship, teaching, and service. Her current research activities work to address the well-being of minority (African-American and Hispanic) youth and families via the promotion of healthy marriage and relationships, and the prevention of teen pregnancy and the transmission of HIV/STIs.

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