

# RESEARCH REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

<b>PROJECT TOPIC</b>	A Community Engaged Approach for Defining Child and Youth Thriving in Pittsburgh Communities		
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## REPORT INTRO

Optimizing child and adolescent development in diverse communities is a primary goal of health care providers and public health professionals. Developing strength-based interventions requires pediatric measures of thriving that span developmental stages and settings and resonate with families and communities. Despite recognition of the importance of positive assets and well-being on child health, we lack a clear definition of child/youth thriving that accounts for diverse community perspectives and environments.

### Department/Community Affiliations:

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**Keywords:** concept mapping; community engaged research; child thriving; community strength

## BACKGROUND

The Pittsburgh Study, an Allegheny County-wide, community-partnered intervention study, is being developed to identify, implement, and optimize interventions that support child health and thriving. The Pittsburgh Study plans to enroll participants in six cohorts—pregnancy, infancy, early childhood, early school age, middle childhood, and adolescents—from across the County. The Study is jointly led by the University of Pittsburgh, the UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh (CHP), and the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and is guided by nine scientific committees comprised of at least 50% community members representing diverse populations and community organizations, including the Allegheny County Health Department, Allegheny County Department of Human Services, family support centers, community non-profits, and local foundations. These partnerships are supported by funding for committee members’ time and input, encouraging the co-production of research goals and shared decision-making with University researchers. During the formative phase of The Pittsburgh Study, we engaged community members and other stakeholders in three diverse neighborhoods to help define child and youth thriving.

### Objectives/Aims:

*Aim 1:* Identify and define constructs of thriving children in Pittsburgh.

*Aim 2:* Prioritize associated constructs and explore the relative importance of each construct.

*Aim 3:* Develop frameworks illustrating the pathways connecting the constructs and the relationship to child wellness.

*Aim 4:* Inform the development of associated metrics and measurement tools and recommendations about age appropriate interventions to enhance child wellness.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Through concept mapping, a mixed-methods community-based research approach, this study explored neighborhood conceptualizations of child/youth thriving. Concept mapping is a participatory, action-oriented research method uniquely suited for developing group consensus about complex systems, illustrating relationships between concepts, informing the development of a coherent framework, and identifying intervention opportunities. We conducted a series of three stakeholder-partnered and structured steps (brainstorming; sorting and ranking; and interpretation) in three Pittsburgh communities and an online community to develop a framework of child thriving and identify potential measures and intervention opportunities.

## CONCLUSIONS

A total of 48 participants completed the study: 19 community residents from three communities (Sheraden, East Hills, and Hazelwood) and 20 providers, policy makers, and academic researchers. Participants generated 250 items related to child/youth thriving that were consolidated into 104 unique items. On average, participants sorted the items into 7.5 clusters (range of 3 to 15 clusters). Based on analysis, the solution with the best fit had seven clusters: 1.) Community Resources & Outlets; 2.) Healthy Habits & Informed Families; 3.) Environmental Health & Wellness; 4.) Self-recognition, Self-worth, & Coping; 5.) Healthy Relationships & Support; 6.) Role Models for Socialization & Communication; and 7.) Community Activists & Assets. Participants used a 5-point Likert scale to rank the importance of each item for supporting children to thrive in Allegheny County and the likelihood of being able to make an impact on these items in your community. Items that ranked the highest in both importance and impact in the community were children having pride in themselves, having someone to talk to, and having hope for their future.

By incorporating diverse community input, this study significantly advances our understanding of how families view child and youth thriving and provides a definition and framework of this complex construct. Additional interpretation sessions with youth, pregnant women, and fathers in other neighborhoods will be conducted to refine the current concept map. This conceptualization will inform the design and interventions of the larger Pittsburgh Study.