

Toward a Theory of Family Well-Being II

Follow-up to Dialogue Session

**Annual Meeting of the
American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
Washington, DC
June 1997**

Editors:

**Margaret I. Henry
Dorothy I. Mitsifer
Frances M. Smith**

Published by

**Kappa Omicron Nu Honor Society
4990 Northwind Drive, Suite 140, East Lansing, MI 48823-5031
Telephone: (517) 351-8335 • Facsimile: (517) 351-8336 • Web Site: www.kon.org**

© 1998 by Kappa Omicron Nu. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced by any means without express written permission of
Kappa Omicron Nu
4990 Northwind Drive, Suite 140, East Lansing, MI 48823-5031.

Contents

Preface	
Dorothy I. Mitstifer	3
Introduction	
Margaret I. Henry and Frances M. Smith	6
Family Well-Being: Extending the Dialogue	
Margaret I. Henry	8
Family Well-Being Through the Lenses of Habermas' Three Human Interests	
Frances M. Smith	20
Toward a Theory of Family Well-Being	
Donna Pendergast	29
Implications of a Conceptual Framework for Research, Teaching, and Community Outreach	
Edith E. Baldwin	34
Personal Resource Systems Management	
Barbara S. McFall	41
Well-Being: An Appropriate Framework for Family Public Policy	
Bonnie Braun and Jean Bauer	58
From Welfare to Well-Being: A Framework for Dialogue and Action	
Bonnie Braun and Jean Bauer	60
A Practitioner's View of Family Well-Being	
Judith E. Breland	65

Preface

This publication is the second in a series on family well-being published by Kappa Omicron Nu. The Introduction (p. 3) explains the origin and discusses the content. My goal here is to give some background of the concept of dialogue and its importance for the profession of family and consumer sciences. An earlier discussion of dialogue explores its importance to leadership and community (Mitstifer, 1996a).

Chapter 7 of the *Paradigm Conspiracy* (Breton & Largent, 1996, p. 217) is entitled “Dialoguing our Way to Social Order.” This title implies that dialogue sends a liberating message in response to a control-paradigm world. Dialogue is a healing alternative. It communicates openness, trust, mutual respect, as well as adventure and shared exploration. A Rumi saying says that dialogue is “a love-breath that lets you open infinitely.”

Credit goes to David Bohm who first differentiated between dialogue and discussion. He describes discussion as Ping-Pong—opinions go back and forth. “Dialogue has a different dynamic. Its purpose isn’t to establish a victor or to prove a position but to ‘love the truth’ and pursue it. We let the truth be what it is, whether it fits our paradigm agendas or not” (p. 218). Bohm suggests that the purpose of dialogue is to reveal the incoherence in our thought. To promote dialogue, Bohm suggested three rules: (a) suspend paradigms, (b) honor each other as equals, and (c) create a genuine spirit of inquiry. These rules “establish dialogue as a way of learning together, rethinking the collective thought-base, and evolving our paradigms for experiencing it” (p. 223).

The chart, Comparison of Dialogue and Debate (Andrews, Paschall, & Mitstifer, 1993), on the next page offers yet another clarification of dialogue. Peter Senge in *The Fifth Discipline* (1990, pp. 238-249) explains Bohm’s (1965) original interest as a physicist, a quantum theorist, in dialogue and his continuing development of the notion. Bohm is a significant contributor to the emerging knowledge and theories of team learning. Garmston and Wellman (1998) compare dialogue and discussion and propose that unskilled debate is a consequence of discussion gone awry and that conviviality is a pitfall of dialogue. Comfort rather than productive tension weakens dialogue. Senge relates the importance of conversation to the development of scientific thinking and its original source in ancient Greece and in primitive societies such as the American Indians. Seems like we have a lot to re-learn!

In the first issue in this series (1996b) I wrote about the interest of Kappa Omicron Nu in the discourse about family well-being. I wish to quote that explanation.

“What’s in it for Kappa Omicron Nu to use its resources for this purpose?” The answer is simple. With the mission of *empowered leaders*, it is incumbent upon the organization to provide the means for achieving this ambitious objective. The scholarly study of family well-being contributes to this agenda.

Dorothy I. Mitstifer
Executive Director, Kappa Omicron Nu

Andrews, F. E., Paschall, G. T., & Mitstifer, D. I. (1993). *Leadership for a culturally diverse society*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.

Bohm, D. (1965). *The special theory of relativity*. New York: W. A. Benjamin.

Breton, D., & Largent, C. (1996). *The paradigm conspiracy*. Center City, MN: Hazelden.

Garmston, R., & Wellman, B. (1998). Teacher talk that makes a difference. *Educational Leadership*, 55(7), 30-34.

Mitstifer, D. I. (1996a). Dialogue. *Kappa Omicron Nu Dialogue*, 6(1), 1-5.

Mitstifer, D. I. (Ed.) (1996b). *Toward a theory of family well-being*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline*. New York: Currency/Doubleday.

Reprinted by permission of Kappa Omicron Nu
 Andrews, F. E., Paschall, G. T., & Mitsifer, D. I. (1993).
Leadership for a culturally diverse society. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.

Comparison of Dialogue and Debate	
Dialogue is collaborative: two or more sides work together toward common understanding.	<i>Debate is oppositional: Two sides oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong.</i>
In dialogue, finding common ground is the goal.	<i>In debate, winning is the goal.</i>
In dialogue, one listens to the other side(s) in order to understand, find meaning, and find agreement	<i>In debate, one listens to the other side in order to find flaws and to counter its arguments.</i>
Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes a participant's point of view.	<i>Debate affirms a participant's point of view</i>
Dialogue reveals assumptions for reevaluation.	<i>Debate defends assumptions as truth.</i>
Dialogue causes introspection on one's own position.	<i>Debate causes critique of the other position.</i>
Dialogue opens the possibility of reaching a better solution than any of the original solutions.	<i>Debate defends one's own positions as the best solution and excludes other solutions.</i>
Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude: An openness to being wrong and an openness to change.	<i>Debate creates a closed-minded attitude, a determination to be right.</i>
In dialogue, one submits one's best thinking, knowing that other people's reflections will help improve it rather than destroy it.	<i>In debate, one submits one's best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right.</i>
Dialogue calls for temporarily suspending one's beliefs.	<i>Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs.</i>
In dialogue, one searches for basic agreements.	<i>In debate, one searches for flaws and weaknesses in the other position.</i>
In dialogue, one searches for strengths in other positions.	<i>In debate, one searches for glaring differences.</i>
Dialogue involves a real concern for the other person and seeks not to alienate or offend.	<i>Debate involves a countering of the other position without focusing on feelings or relationships and often belittles or deprecates the other person.</i>
Dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of the answer and that together they can put them into a workable solution.	<i>Debate assumes that there is a right answer and that some one has it.</i>
Dialogue remains open-ended.	<i>Debate implies a conclusion.</i>

Adapted from a paper prepared by Shelley Berman, based on discussion of the Dialogue Group of the Boston chapter of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR). Other members included Lucille Burt, Dick Mayo-Smith, Lally Stowell, and Gene Thompson. For more information on ESR's programs and resources using dialogue as a tool for dealing with controversial issues, call (617) 492-1764.

Introduction

According to Marjorie Brown, home economists/family and consumer sciences professionals have long argued that the focus of their area of study is the well-being of individuals and families. Yet, she argues, the literature and presentations of these same professionals do not paint a clear picture of the meaning of well-being. In fact, Brown further asserts that their actions, at times, do little to promote the well-being of those whom they claim to serve.

In 1996 Frances Smith and Edith Baldwin initiated a process whereby a dialogue within the profession on the issue of family well-being could begin. It was envisioned as a beginning of an on-going dialogue. To date there have been two annual meeting sessions of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (1996, 1997) to give interested professionals an opportunity to consider family well-being. A third session was sponsored by Kappa Omicron Nu at the 1998 Annual Meeting. In addition, several articles were published by Kappa Omicron Nu in 1996. This current publication continues the examination of this issue through reflective papers. We owe a debt of gratitude to Dorothy Mitstifer and the Kappa Omicron Nu Board of Directors for their support in the publication and dissemination of these writings.

As Donna Pendergast writes in her paper, the [process] of dialogue must remain central to our undertaking. The notion and practice of dialogue can cause frustration. Often the process is slow, repetitious, and time consuming. There is no answer at the end of the session, only more reflective participants who have gained a deeper understanding of the concept of family well-being.

But as the dialogue continues and expands it is hoped that the work of professionals will

begin to exhibit central themes that will be taken seriously by the public. We believe more definitive themes (after all, we are not the only organization interested in family well-being) can more clearly define who we are. Some

evolution of themes is already happening in some groups within the profession.

Edith Baldwin's paper in the publication, *Toward a Theory of Family Well-Being* (1996), was the starting point of the discussion. She used Jurgen Habermas' tripartite pedagogical theory in which he proposed that knowledge can be informed by "technical," "practical," and "emancipatory" interests. A number of professionals in our field (e.g., Marjorie Brown, Francine Hultgren, Virginia Vincenti, Julie Johnson, Kinsey Green) have adopted Habermas' theory and used it as a framework for examining questions in home economics/family and consumer sciences. Frances Smith and others have used this framework to begin the development of a description of family well-being. In the meantime, other professionals have not limited their writing to this conceptual framework.

This publication presents further dialogue and perspectives on family well-being. Some of the authors have attempted to work within the Habermasian model, but others have made adaptations, expansions, and raised questions. The Frances Smith paper provides a draft example of how the Habermasian framework might be used to begin a description of family well-being from which practitioners might work. Margaret Henry transcribed and summarized the two-hour dialogue that took place in response to the 1996 papers and the above example. Donna Pendergast answers several questions related to that dialogue and offers an example from her work in promoting the importance of family well-being. Edith Baldwin's paper offers an expansion of her earlier work by outlining some implications of the Habermasian framework for professional practice, i.e., research, teaching, and community outreach. Barbara McFall conducted research using a critical framework to examine textbook models of resource management in family and consumer sciences and generate a new model for management of resources to promote family well-being. Judith Breland and also Bonnie Braun and Jean

Bauer have commented on family well-being from the viewpoint of practitioners. Each of these papers adds to the dialogical process and provides expanding viewpoints to consider. Each paper is “grist for the mill,” so to speak.

One question arising from this dialogical process is whether or not our purpose should be to reach agreement on a framework in which to determine family well-being or to reach agreement on a definition/description of the meaning of family well-being—both of these or neither of these. Habermas claims that, through the process of argumentation and debate (dialogue), consensus/agreement can be sought and achieved. (No mention has ever been made of how long this might take.)

The idea of consensus or agreement concurs with the modernist thinking to which Habermas subscribes. More recent postmodernist writers are not so concerned about reaching consensus or agreement. Rather they argue it is important that in dialogue all the conflicting points of view are presented, all the voices are heard, and that everyone is given the opportunity to speak. From the postmodernist perspective, reaching agreement is not as important as gaining an understanding of the multiplicity of positions that can be adopted.

This may mean that, as a profession, we never achieve ultimate agreement as to the meaning of family well-being but that our understandings are open to on-going change and development/evolution, reflecting on and questioning the on-going changes and developments in society. This too is worthwhile.

We trust that you, the reader, will also feel included in this dialogical process as you read the points of view presented in this collection of papers. We invite you to join the dialogue on family well-being by participating in conversations with your colleagues in formal (e.g., 1998 AAFCS Annual Meeting, state meetings) and informal sessions wherever possible or by submitting a written piece for publication in a professional journal.

We look forward to your contribution to this on-going dialogical process.

Margaret I. Henry
Frances M. Smith

Family Well-Being: Extending the Dialogue

Margaret I. Henry
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.

Dr. Henry is a consultant home economist, having retired from Queensland University of Technology, School of Public Health, Brisbane, Australia.

The writer wishes to acknowledge the contribution of Dorothy Mitstifer and Frances Smith to this article.

Introduction

This paper is based on an analysis of the panel discussion on **Family Well-Being** that took place at the 1997 Annual Meeting of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) held in Washington, DC in June 1997 (2). Tapes of the discussion were transcribed by the author; the tape and verbatim transcription are available from Kappa Omicron Nu.

Background To The 1997 Panel Discussion

In 1996, Frances Smith (Iowa State University) and Edith Baldwin (Oregon State University) instigated the first of three panel discussions addressing family well-being. This decision came from the challenge offered by Marjorie Brown in her 1993 publication (3) in which she argues that family well-being is one of the ways in which home economists/family and consumer scientists identify themselves (4). Brown argues that our politics, rhetoric, and activities do not always send congruent messages as to what that means to us (5). Frances Smith's intention was to begin a dialogic process whereby issues relating to family well-being might be discussed in the hope of achieving agreement on a framework or process through which meaning of family well-being can be understood, clarified, revised, used, etc.

In preparation for this dialogic process, Edith Baldwin wrote a paper extending Brown's thesis and advocating a conceptual schema for family well-being (6). Responses were invited and these, together with Baldwin's paper, formed the basis of the forum discussion on family well-being held at the AAFCS Annual Meeting in 1996 (7).

As a follow-on to the 1996 forum, Frances Smith prepared a conceptual model of family well-being. Drawn from the work of Brown and Baldwin, Smith's conceptual model identified two axes: Habermas' three human interests and a number of categories of family well-being (See Appendix 1.1 and 1.2). This model was distributed to a number of home economists/family and consumer scientists working in education and in the community.

This group became the panel for the 1997 discussion reported in this paper (8).

The Process of Dialogue

One of the key factors in clarifying the meaning of family well-being was identified as the process of dialogue. Because of the significance of this process in reaching mutual understanding (which is central to Habermas' pedagogy) some time was spent, at the outset of the 1997 discussion, outlining the elements of dialogue.

Dialogue is often slow and repetitious as participants grapple with the ideas under consideration. It involves the sharing of ideas as members endeavor to verbalize their thoughts and to understand each other. Dialogue can be fraught with frustration because it often appears that little progress is being made. But because the purpose of dialogue is to reach mutual understanding, the process is necessarily slow and time-consuming.

At the outset of the panel discussion, the characteristics of dialogue were outlined. Citing Bohm, Dorothy Mitstifer explained that dialogue is a collaborative venture, it seeks a common ground and requires listening. Dialogue enlarges and may change one's position; it reveals assumptions and causes introspection. It seeks a better solution and creates openness; it uses one's better thinking and calls for suspending one's beliefs; it seeks basic agreements and seeks strengths. Dialogue involves real concern and assumes many pieces to a solution.

Finally, three rules for dialogue were proposed: suspend paradigms, honor each other as equals, and create a genuine spirit of inquiry.

Analysis of Panel Discussion (9)

As a result of the panel discussion, a number of issues were raised. These are presented in the paper that follows. For the purposes here, these issues are grouped under five headings:

- Theoretical Frameworks
- Application of Theory to Practice
- The Meaning of Family Well-being

- The Role of the Professional
- Where to from Here?

Theoretical Frameworks

Smith's Conceptual Model

The starting point for this discussion was Smith's conceptual model (See Appendix 1.1 and 1.2).

Because all panelists had received pre-meeting reading material detailing the model, the assumption was made that panel members were familiar with Habermas' theoretical framework. It became apparent that, although panelists may have had some understanding of Habermas' work, translating theory into practice was somewhat more difficult. Similarly, although Smith's model appeared to cover a breadth of contexts in which individual and family well-being is highlighted, there was considerable debate as to whether these categories covered all potentialities. Some panelists proposed additional categories. One participant suggested an alternative list (10), another proposed deconstructing the categories thus ensuring mutual understanding and agreement.

Hierarchical, Integrative and Dialectical Models

Whether these two lists (either Habermas' human interests or the categories of well-being) were hierarchical or interactive/integrative in nature was a basis of much controversy.

It was argued that Habermas' human interests are hierarchical, that the technical interest is basic to human survival, whereas emancipatory interest is of a higher order. Some argued that this makes emancipatory knowledge more important than either technical knowledge or practical-moral knowledge. One person suggested that this is implied, if not overtly stated, in work based on Habermas. Yet other instances were cited where technical information might be more important for the survival of families than so-called higher levels of knowledge. The question was asked: Can technical knowledge be emancipatory?

This same argument, concerning hierarchical order, extended to include the categories of well-being in Smith's model. Some suggested that these categories were simply another expression of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs.

One member of the audience proposed that, rather than thinking in terms of hierarchies, Habermas provides different lenses through which to consider the various categories of well-being. Furthermore, these different perspectives, together, provide a total picture.

This was supported by other participants who suggested that components of both axes of the model (interests and dimensions) might be viewed, not as mutually exclusive, but as integrative in nature—inter-relating and overlapping, rather than discrete entities in themselves.

One member preferred not to think of hierarchies in an evaluative sense, but as a description of a developmental sequence, detailing levels of complexity. Responding to the Habermasian model she suggested that home economists/family and consumer scientists should not limit themselves to technical interpretations of well-being, neither should they work only from the emancipatory position. Each of the three interests provides important insights into family well-being.

From another perspective, another panelist suggested that the technical and practical interests in Habermas' model could be seen in a dialectic relationship, one informing the other. The role of the emancipatory interest, she said, was to intersect the dialogic process, questioning both the technical and the practical interest.

During the discussion, one of the issues that began to emerge was the constraints of language and visual images in explaining complex relationships that are neither linear nor static. What was needed, it was argued, was some means of illustrating the relationships among ideas which are often dynamic and changing.

Alternative Paradigms

Further discussion highlighted the potentially restrictive nature of the Smith's model. One suggestion was to identify the categories as examples, thereby opening up possibilities for other categories to be included as understanding of the model (and well-being) increased.

Another suggestion was made that perhaps new ways of conceptualizing home economics/family and consumer sciences need to be investigated. Referring to resource management models that are traditionally used in theorizing about home economics/ family and consumer sciences, she argued that these are confining because they suggest ways of working within limited resources. Another panelist proposed an alternative model of family well-being, integrating Habermas' interests and systems theory. This proposal was challenged with the argument that Brown has previously critiqued this approach and questioned its appropriateness. A two-dimensional paradigm was also proposed which integrates the notions of empowerment and recognition (11). Yet another suggestion was made that all of these models are flawed in some way, limiting the potential for conceptualizing family well-being. What is needed, she proposed, is an unstructured approach, one that is open to a range of different possibilities (12).

One participant expressed concern that models can become very complex, to the extent that they are confusing and meaningless. She suggested that questions need to be asked: What purpose do these models serve? Are they intended to guide practice? Do they develop understanding of what we do? Or are they used in some other way?

Application of Theory to Practice

One of the frustrations experienced by some participants was that much of what was being said was repetitious and that little progress was being made. Although this may have appeared to have been the case, in fact almost half of the session time was devoted to discussing ways in which these theoretical constructs are reflected in home economics/family and consumer sciences practice. One member of the audience

reminded participants that Habermas' theory translates into systems of action and another proposed that these systems of action ought to guide practice.

A number of questions arose concerning ways in which a model of family well-being might inform the practice of home economics/family and consumer sciences when working with individuals and families both in the community or in educational settings. These included: Whose well-being are we talking about? How does society make an impact on family well-being? and What part does government policy play in determining family well-being?

Whose Well-being?

A question posed repeatedly was: Whose well-being are we talking about? The well-being of families or the well-being of individuals? One panelist spoke of the interactive nature of families and individuals and the fact that the well-being of one necessarily influences the other. But, she continued, the question that many home economists/family and consumer scientists face in their daily work with families is: Where should we focus our efforts? Should we support individuals and their personal development or should we focus on the development of the family as a collective? Furthermore, she continued, sometimes our work with individual family members may actually have detrimental effects on the family as a whole.

A number of participants believed that the focus of their practice is the individual. One person said that, even within families, sometimes the well-being of one individual may be measured against or even achieved at the expense of other members of the family. Well-being, within the family, should be negotiated among family members. It is a collective endeavor. Other panel members recognized that the focus of home economics/family and consumer sciences practice is the well-being of the family, as an entity in itself.

Others spoke of the complexity of family life in the 1990s and the fact that family well-being is a complex issue. Catering to family well-being may be fraught with difficulties which

sometimes requires the intervention of specialist groups in the community, such as home economists/family and consumer scientists. Such groups can act as advocates for families.

This raised the question: Which families? How do we decide? One suggestion was: We're for everyone! Yet, the reality is that, with limited resources, decisions are made that certain families receive help and others do not. How are such decisions determined and why?

But concern for well-being is not limited to families and individuals, as one member pointed out, it extends to include the well-being of society as a whole. Individuals and families that are empowered to act with autonomy ultimately contribute to the greater good of society.

The Impact of Society on Family Well-being

Although individuals and families contribute to the well-being of society, society in turn impacts on the well-being of individuals and families.

As one panelist recalled, social values, structures, and mores play a major role in determining the way that individuals and families act and their expectations of themselves and each other. Ultimately, this determines their level of well-being, both as individuals and as families.

Often these values, structures, and mores tell individuals and families: This is what you must do! This is how you must be! This is how you must act! Yet these are merely social constructs, they are devised by society, they do not exist of themselves. Thus they can be challenged. They do not require unquestioning compliance nor mindless acceptance as "the way things are" nor "the way things must be."

Many of these social structures are manifest in government policies and a number of participants questioned the impact of government policy on family well-being. One member of the panel argued that many decisions made at State and Federal Government levels are not in the best interest of family well-being. Much of the work of home economists/family and consumer scientists, she claimed, requires examination of the implications of policy

decisions for family well-being. Another panelist spoke of how values enshrined in certain policy documents may actually work against the well-being of families.

Of particular concern was the process of policy decision-making. It was argued that levels of well-being (usually determined in terms of measurable outcomes and indicators) give a distorted picture. In fact, she continued: as professionals, we know that family well-being may be compromised or may be really depressed. Many other factors that are less readily measured by objective means also need to be taken into account in determining the effectiveness of government policies in responding to family needs.

The question was also asked: Is welfare necessarily in the best interests of family well-being? Or are there other strategies that can be employed to help families take control of their lives?

The Juxtaposition of Theory and Practice

Much of the panel session was devoted to discussing Smith's proposed theoretical framework and its application to professional practice. At times there appeared to be a tension between these two elements. Some participants expressed the view that the discussion was too abstract and did not readily apply to practice. Others argued in favor of spending more time clarifying theoretical concepts in the model. Yet, as the session continued, participants began to consider ways in which theory and practice might be integrated.

For example, one panelist spoke of helping her students establish links between theory and practice, through applying the model to family life. Another used the model to explain issues which engage families: creating families that are technically sufficient, practically meaningful, and emancipatory for its members. One member spoke of how her theoretical understanding of Habermas' framework changed as a result of her work with families in the community. And another expressed the view that there is danger that professionals become so caught up in theoretical argument that they avoid engaging in

emancipatory action, thus defeating the purpose of the theoretical enterprise entirely.

Both theory and practice are two equally important dimensions of family well-being. Theory informs practice, and practice in turn directs theory. Neither one can exist without the other. Practitioners need to have a theoretical understanding of what they do. But they also need to put those ideas into practice in the real world. One without the other is meaningless.

The Meaning of Family Well-Being

Although it was perhaps assumed that there would be some agreement regarding the meaning of well-being, in fact this was not so. Early in the discussion, one panel member asked: What is well-being? How is it defined? And this question was reiterated throughout the discussion.

Some members of the audience volunteered their own understandings of well-being. One person equated well-being with personal adequacy which involves helping young people develop a sense of themselves as individuals, to feel good about themselves, and to feel adequate to the challenges of life. Another spoke of an assumption implicit in her dealings with families—the worth of each individual. Everybody’s important, she said, that’s what we are working for. Another panelist suggested that individual understandings of well-being may vary. These are determined by a person’s life experiences or their world view. Another factor which impacts on the meaning of well-being is culture. Different cultural values and mores determine how people from different cultures interpret well-being.

Panelists also spoke of well-being in terms of emancipation. For some, emancipation was interpreted as empowerment, gaining power over one’s life. One panel member described emancipation as qualities that give you power. Others described emancipation as accepting responsibility for your decisions/actions. Another spoke of the emancipatory potential of interaction and dialogue.

There was some debate as to whether well-being is concerned with the emancipation of

individuals or of collectives/groups. Although some believed that emancipation was an individual experience, others argued that it was a collective endeavor.

Some members of the panel saw well-being as a dynamic concept, incorporating Habermas’ three levels of human endeavor, each contributing to overall well-being of families. Technical well-being equates with the basic information and survival skills that individuals and families need in order to cope with everyday life. Practical well-being refers to ways in which individuals and families deal with the moral/ethical issues that living in community groups raises. And emancipatory well-being refers to the ability, on the part of individuals and families, to act with autonomy. This includes accepting responsibility for one’s own actions and the actions of others, both individually and collectively. Each dimension of well-being contributes, in some way, to the overall well-being of the family.

The Role of the Professional

A question was posed: What is our role? Two groups appear to have been represented—educators and community workers, each with different concerns. Educators, who worked with students in schools and higher education institutions, were concerned with such issues as: preparing young people for their future adult roles in society and helping students develop and apply theoretical concepts to real life situations. Home economists/family and consumer scientists in the community often worked with families in difficulty, translating government policy into practice and endeavoring to enhance the well-being of families in tangible ways. It is to this latter group that the following discussion refers.

One panel member asked: Who decides what we do—we or our clients? Who best knows what our clients need? Some believed that it was the client who should determine what help they want, others thought that clients do not always know what is best for them. Another asked: As professionals, coming in from the outside, do we really know what families want or need?

At issue, here, is what was referred to as the culture of home economics/family and consumer sciences. This is often evidenced in differences in values between home economists/family and consumer scientists, as a professional body, and those whom they claim to serve. One participant believed that clients are people like us! Another replied: They are people not like us, but we want them to be like us.

One panelist said that much of her role was spent in information giving. Another saw her role in making meaning out of, and helping families decide how to use, that information. Her role, she believed, was to facilitate that process. Another panelist said that sometimes she becomes caught in roles she did not wish to play. Largely, she saw her role in helping families take responsibility for their decisions and to take control of their lives. Ultimately, she said, we aim to make our clients free from us.

Creating communities for families where dialogue can take place, is one way that this can be achieved. One panel member suggested that home economists/family consumer scientists can make important contributions to family well-being by creating safe places where families can discuss issues of mutual concern. Such communities facilitate a genuine sharing of experience, support, and understanding. They do not rely on technical expertise or the transmission of information, but on a genuine concern for the well-being of those who participate.

Another participant said that much of her work involved interfacing between government and families. She believed that home economists/family and consumer scientists need to be more politically active, become involved in policy-making and broader political issues. This is contrary to the traditional stance adopted by the profession that has tended to avoid controversial debate. She believed that, as a profession, we must involve ourselves in issues that have an impact on families.

Another aspect of our professional role emerged, that of the professional association. As a community of family and consumer scientists we need to ask: What support do we offer one

another? Does the professional community provide a place where we can engage in dialogue about issues of concern to our profession? In such a context we can learn to question our own theory and practice and to consider alternative ideas and practices. We must learn to not accept the status quo, but to question the social structures and meanings that often pass unchallenged. Finally, we must learn to accept responsibility for our actions, to recognize that, individually and collectively, we have a part to play in what happens in the world in which we live.

Where to from Here?

Toward the end of the dialogue session, the question was asked: Where do we go from here? Some considered further research they would do, others spoke of an ongoing quest to obtain meaningful data on family well-being. Others considered ways of communicating these ideas to other members of the home economics/family and consumer sciences profession. Another proposed that all participants document and share their insights, inviting dialogue with others.

Some participants expressed regret that little progress had been made in the dialogic process. One member of the audience asked: But what can we do? Have we come up with anything that families can use? Another argued that the dialogic process is slow. What was important, she said, was a mutual sharing of ideas and a coming to understand the ideas of others.

Conclusion

This paper has reported on an analysis of the panel discussion on **Family Well-Being** held at the AAFCS Annual Meeting in June, 1997. It has identified the key issues that arose in that discussion as:

- The theoretical frameworks which informed that discussion
- The interplay between theory to practice
- Explorations of the meaning of well-being
- Professional issues for home economists/family and consumer scientists
- Possibilities for future direction

For those expecting a definitive framework for family well-being, the session was a disappointment. For others, the session marked another step along the road to merging theory and practice in the work of facilitating family well-being. Some tentative conclusions are (13):

1. Families will benefit from knowledge in the technical, practical, and emancipatory areas of human interest. It is beneficial for families and professionals to work together to determine the appropriate action to take in a given situation.
2. Categories in which to identify family well-being are at best seen as *examples* to help professionals deliberate on and consider actions to facilitate family well-being. Continuing dialogue on meaning of terms and revisions (additions, subtractions, clarification, and expansion of categories) is necessary to keep categories viable and useful.
3. Continued dialogue at the interface between theory and practice will help our professional practice be informed, coherent, and successful in promoting well-being.
4. There was some desire to view the categories of well-being and Habermas' interests as integrative in nature, although some saw them as hierarchical.
5. Professionals will want to continue to explore the questions: Whose well-being? Which families? Our standard answer of **all** families needs to be tested, constantly. We need to be constantly aware of our own ideologies, the hidden messages in our decisions.
6. Dialogue was helpful in the growth of understanding of the majority of the participants. The ability to involve more professionals in this work remains a challenge.

Many questions still remain. Some to consider for the time being include:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of attempting to reach consensus/agreement on a framework for family well-being, as a working document for professionals in family and consumer sciences?
- What role do/should the categories play in the dialogue about family well-being?
- What is the significance of a framework (such as one provided by Brown/Baldwin/Smith) in dialogue on family well-being?
- How do we, as advocates for family well-being, determine what is important for families?
- How do families make decisions?
- How can we determine if our actions/practices are **right** actions/practices?

Notes

1. The writer wishes to acknowledge the contribution of Dorothy Mitstifer and Frances Smith to this article.
2. Invited panel members for this dialogue session included: **JoLynn Cunningham** (University of Tennessee), **Sandra Evers** (South Dakota State University), **Margaret Henry** (Consultant Home Economist, Brisbane, Australia), **Barbara McFall** (Virginia Tech), **Mary McPhail** Gray (Kansas State University), **Dorothy Mitstifer** (Kappa Omicron Nu), **Donna Pendergast** (Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia), **Kathleen Shibley** (Ohio State University), **Frances Smith** (Iowa State University), **Ann Vail** (Iowa State University).
3. See Brown, M.M. (1993). *Philosophical studies of home economics in the United States: Basic ideas by which home economists understand themselves*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University.
4. See Brown (1993), 415-490
5. See Brown (1993), 484-490
6. Baldwin's work, like that of Brown, draws from the writings of German philosopher, Jurgen Habermas.
7. Baldwin's paper (Family Well-being: A Conceptualization Guide to Professional Practice), along with responses by Dorothy Mitstifer, Elizabeth Goldsmith and Margaret Henry, is published in the Monograph: *Toward a Theory of Family Well-being*, available from Kappa Omicron Nu.
8. In preparation for the 1997 meeting, panelists received three items: Baldwin's 1996 paper, Smith's conceptual model of family well-being, and a set of questions relating to these materials (See Appendix 2).
9. A tape-recording of the panel discussion with an accompanying verbatim transcript is available upon request from Kappa Omicron Nu.
10. An alternative list proposed by one panelist comprised the following categories: intellectual, organizational, social, material, natural, and financial.
11. This two-dimensional model for family well-being integrates empowerment (meeting one's own needs) and recognition (attention to the needs of others).
12. The model being proposed here draws from the postmodernist paradigm that recognizes that there are no set patterns or answers to social problems, rather the range of possibilities is limitless.
13. Contributed by Frances Smith.

Bibliography

- Baldwin, E. E. (1996). Family well-being: A conceptual guide to professional practice. In D. I. Mitstifer, (Ed.), *Toward a theory of family well-being*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.
- Brown, M. (1993). *Philosophical studies of home economics in the United States: Basic ideas by which home economists understand themselves*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University.
- Goldsmith, E. (1996). Balancing work and family: Response to technical action and material dimension of family well-being. In D. I. Mitstifer (Ed.), *Toward a theory of well-being*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.
- Habermas, J. (1989). *Knowledge and human interests*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Habermas, J. (1987). *The theory of communicative action: Lifeworld and system*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Habermas, J. (1981). *The theory of communicative action: Reason and the rationalization of society*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Henry, M. I. (1996). Family well-being: Insights gained through the process of critical reflection. In D. I. Mitstifer (Ed.), *Toward a theory of well-being*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.
- Mitstifer, D. I. (1996). Power and the emancipative dimension of family well-being. In D. I. Mitstifer, (Ed.), *Toward a theory of well-being*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.
- Smith, F. (1997, June). Family well-being: A working paper. Unpublished.

APPENDIX 1.1

Habermas' Three Human Interests

Human Interests			
Categories	Technical	Practical	Emancipatory
Orientation	To predict and control environment	To understand one another and to reach mutual agreement	To free individuals or groups from systematic repression or irrationalities in communication
Knowledge	Technical and strategically useful; subject specific	Integrated/holistic; practical, moral, and aesthetic	Knowledge of existing social structure; nature of ideology; concepts of freedom, justice, and equality; standards of rationality
Action	Correct action	Good action	Socio-political action
Outcome	Product	Interaction	Freedom, truth, justice
Models of Theoretical Development	Empirically analytical sciences	Cultural sciences; humanities; history	Critical sciences
Problems or questions	What are the observable attributes of an object, idea or event?	What is the meaning of an idea, event or object(s) connected to them?	What social structures and processes impede social-political action for common good in implementing certain ideas and events?

Adapted by Smith, F. (1997) from: Brown, M. M. (1984). Needed: A critical science perspective in home economics. Paper presented at the American Home Economics Association, Anaheim, CA. Grundy, S. (1987). *Curriculum: Product or praxis*. New York: Falmer Press.

APPENDIX 1.2

Family Well-Being

Human Interests			
Categories	Technical	Practical	Emancipatory
Physical needs	Food, shelter, clothing	Meaning of resources	Question too many or too few resources; resources for whom
Socio-psychological	Significant others; “being” there; rules of human development	Communicating; security/love; nurturing	Sense of belonging for all; interpret worth of individual and group
Commitment	Contractual; legal document; blood; choice	Meaning of responsibility; mutual understanding	Question beginning; sustaining; ending of commitment
Democratic	Rules of participation; rights and responsibilities	Meaning of shared decision making; unequal responsibility	Collective power; pluralism within

Developed by Frances Smith through dialogue with small groups of faculty and graduate students, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences Education and Studies, Iowa State University, 1997.

APPENDIX 2

Possible Questions for Discussion
Extending the Dialogue: Family Well-Being
American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
Washington, D. C.
June 21-25, 1997

1. How has Baldwin used Habermas' framework to begin the discussion of family well-being through the concepts of work, language, and power? [Baldwin, E. E. (1996). Family well-being: A conceptualization guide to professional practice. In D. I. Mitstifer (Ed.), *Toward a theory of family well-being* (pp. 3-11). East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.]
2. What are some of the other aspects of family well-being that can be delineated using the human interests categories?
 - How do the values of the material/technical aspects of family well-being exist independently or in tandem with social interaction and a level of socially shared meaning?
 - To what degree and in what aspects is family well-being concrete? Abstract? Emotional? Individual? Collective?
 - Is family well-being absolute or relative? Subjective? Objective? Transactional? Domain specific?
3. How do persons come to hold their views of family well-being? What must persons believe to perceive themselves in a state of well-being?
4. Whose family well-being? Individual families, Individuals in families, All families in the community? Nation? World?

These questions would be used near the end of the session:

1. To what degree and/or in what way is consensus on the meaning of family well-being essential or not essential for AAFCS?
2. Who is responsible for affecting family well-being?
3. What now? Where do we go from here?

Smith, F. (1997, June). *Family well-being: A working paper*. Unpublished.

Family Well-Being Through the Lenses of Habermas' Three Human Interests

Frances M. Smith
Iowa State University

Dr. Smith is Professor Emeritus, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, Iowa State University.

For the last few years, my work in curriculum has allowed me the privilege of studying the work of Marjorie Brown and others with graduate students. Together we tried to determine the directions in which we wished to take family and consumer sciences curriculum in the educational institutions that represented our respective places of employment. The students in the represented institutions included a wide variety of ages—teens through older adults—and a variety of nationalities, e.g., European, African, Asian, and Hispanic. Although the discussion began with a curriculum focus, it soon encompassed a broader perspective including work, family, and society. The group also discussed the place of the profession in society and how that has an impact on professionals themselves. Because one group of graduate students was able to work together for two semesters a year apart, they were able to concentrate specifically on the concept of family well-being. The tables designed in this group work were shared with the participants in the program session that featured dialogue on family well-being at the 1997 Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Annual Meeting. This manuscript will endeavor to reconstruct some of the thinking and discussion that went into making Tables 1 and 2 presented here. The tables continue to be viewed as a work in progress, to be questioned, clarified, and revised. (See pp. 27, 28.)

The writings of Baldwin (1990, 1995, 1996), Brown (1984, 1985, 1993, 1995), Dewey (1990), and Grundy (1987) were the basis of this work. In order to use the work of Baldwin, Brown, and Grundy, it was necessary to examine our understanding of Jurgen Habermas' three areas of human interests. Table 1 began as a curriculum chart to introduce 30 faculty and graduate students to Habermas' three areas of human interest. A 90-minute workshop was planned and implemented by students using the original table. Later, Table 1 was revised to encompass a more generic framework for incorporating research and service as well as teaching in the understanding of the three areas of interest.

The chart's design features four separate and distinct columns, one column for each interest. The fourth column identified the labels through which to view each area of interest. Using the work of Baldwin, Brown, and Grundy the general categories chosen were Orientation, Knowledge, Action, Outcome, Models of Theoretical Development, and Problems or Questions. The primary purpose of Table 1 is to stimulate discussion of key concepts that clarify the understanding of the three human-interest paradigms.

In general, we observed that we were more familiar with the **technical** human interest. We had more background in the empirical-analytical sciences. Our profession, like so many others, has adopted the language and methods of inquiry used by science and technology. Research findings based on data statistically analyzed, although not always the most meaningful, seemed to be acceptable and manageable. We were familiar with the "right answers" to test questions, with the value of information useful in our future work, and with the arguments for keeping family and consumer sciences as a specific subject in the curriculum.

But there was general agreement that the technical mode did not suit all situations; there was the recognition that it limits the potential of some students by not taking into account previous experience. Last, there was the recognition that often knowledge is irrelevant when stripped of a context. We were intrigued by an integrated curriculum, practical problem format, and a political/moral aspect of decision making that the **practical** human interest provided. Meaning is important in how information is used and how concepts are interpreted. The class operated with more group input into what the curriculum would be, more power shared by students and teachers, and more acknowledgment of each person's unique contribution to the work being undertaken. But this also proved frustrating. This is illustrated by a student comment, "The frustration was due to the domination of a technical consciousness looking out for efficient use of time. A major part of the

frustration was also based on the fact that we were all coming in at different levels, varied agendas, mindsets, and insecurities as far as grading was concerned. This represented special interests; the class could have appeared harmonious although in fact it was conflict ridden.” Not having definite guidelines at the beginning, having to spend so much time trying to reach consensus on readings, projects, and formats for class dialogue, and especially dealing with evaluation that had to be translated into letter grades were areas that challenged us all. Again a student comment: “Grading has implications for the participants beyond the class. Equity, justice, fairness became live issues in the class! Could the professor be trusted to be fair and just?”

But then came the most difficult area of all, **emancipatory**. What are the key concepts in this area of interest? Whose interest? What is political/moral action? Is this interest really possible in the world we have now? Is it realistic? Is it subversive? What are our own ideologies? Are these ideologies so immersed we are not aware of them? Can we engage in this kind of thinking with our students? Attention was drawn to Freier’s (1989) statement that often the oppressed (students) can easily become the oppressor (teacher) when they enter that role. Spending so much time discussing grades, re-reading some parts of our assignments over and over, and never coming to closure was not easy. It was often easier to say, but I don’t agree with you and ending the discussion than to continue. We really never endorsed the value of argument as worthwhile in and of itself. We realized how difficult consensus (the best argument) was. We often endorsed the product idea: What do we have to show for all our time? If at the end of a session, we did not have something concrete to show for time spent, then time was wasted. Concepts like freedom, justice, and equity are so abstract. How will we know when we truly understand what they are? What markers can be set along the way to judge our progress in understanding? When will we be able to identify actions that promote family well-being when we relate to families as professionals? And what difference does our understanding of freedom, justice, and equity make anyway in the day-to-day work of taking

classes, working for assistantships, and competing for scholarships? There was always some doubt as to how far we’d come and what we could really do in our own institutions in the future. But we felt some change in ourselves. We came to some understanding of the ideological beliefs plaguing family and consumer sciences curriculum and also some of the consequences of professionals failing to act upon their beliefs.

Family Well-Being

But the real test for understanding the three human-interest paradigms came in the development of Table 2 on family well-being. The choice of the concept of family well-being seemed appropriate as we continued our studies of Brown. Brown (1993) had identified five basic ideas by which home economists (family and consumer sciences professionals) understand themselves. One of these basic ideas was “the well-being of the individual and the family” (p. 49).

Through an extensive review of past written documents and public addresses by professionals in the field, Brown found two dimensions of the concept of family well-being: (a) economic and physical well-being through efficiency in management and control of things and (b) social-psychological family well-being through interpersonal relations and personality development in the family. Brown indicated that we were very naive about our belief that we could separate the first dimension from the second in our work with families. Much of our past work would be classified in the area of the technical interest, e.g., how to make a product, how to choose among options, or how to become involved. Because professionals rarely searched themselves for their own ideologies, they often inadvertently tried to help families become more like the ideal family they visualized. Often the hidden agenda of educational sessions, sales agendas, or group dialogues were not examined in an open and free fashion.

Beginning with the concept of economic and physical well-being, the graduate students and I began to determine what basic material

goods in the area of food, shelter, and clothing are necessary for well-being. What does a family need? How should a family fulfill these needs? Should professionals develop a product and create a need or find a need and then create a product? Or are these even the right questions? Often professionals go into their work situations with pre-determined answers to the needs of families, when perhaps what is needed is the skills to help families understand the broader issues related to physical needs of individual families and to explore ideologies about material goods sanctioned by society as a whole. Because in this country we have such an abundance of resources we often do two things. We assume (a) that there is an unlimited supply and (b) that material possessions in and of themselves will bring us the satisfaction for which we strive. Both of these assumptions need to be explored in light of our ultimate goals and the choices we make.

But physical goals are not totally separated from other aspects of family well-being. Food, for example, is not just for maintaining physical well-being, it is often used as a part of social gatherings or as rewards and punishment for certain types of behavior. As we viewed the economic and physical aspects of family well-being in the light of the practical and emancipatory areas of human interest, new parameters of learning and research seemed possible, even needed.

What meaning does clothing and shelter give to our lives? What are the consequences of excess or insufficient supplies of these aspects for physical well-being? Then, the most difficult question is how does one family's economic well-being fit into the overall picture of economic well-being for all families? This diverse group of graduate students agreed that global resources were not unlimited and some sort of sharing and equitable distribution would be a desirable overall goal. Capitalizing on Aristotle's (1962 translation) concept of "good" being on a continuum from excess to insufficient, with moderation being the goal, too many resources (an excess) as well as too few resources (insufficient) for individual families or groups were not the ideal. The concepts of excess and

insufficient were also explored in the light of global families or world distribution of resources. Exploring an awareness of the needs of all families with families themselves seemed a worthwhile activity.

Family well-being is much more than economic well-being. But the category to describe family well-being in other than the economic and physical dimension was very difficult to label. After many tries with different labels we agreed to use the words social-psychological identified by Brown. Thus, we concluded early in the process that the categories were not mutually exclusive. In the social-psychological category of family well-being, the technical interest would involve finding out how families function. How do members of a family communicate with each other? What are the human emotions involved in family interaction? What role does family interaction play in the development of individual family members?

In the practical interest, the social-psychological questions raised might be: What character traits, values, and attitudes are worthwhile or even essential to family well-being? What experiences are necessary for a child to grow to his/her fullest potential? As the questions became deeper it seemed we needed to explore the answers to them in light of other criteria than the most obvious ones, e.g., IQ, SAT scores, language skills, attachment to mother, or family composition, cited in large studies concerned with family well-being and/or development of children. Perhaps one of the most frequent questions discussed today is, Who should be responsible for the care of our children and why? But is that the correct question? Is the first question, What kind of care should they have? And having identified the care needed (no easy task) then, Who can best provide it? Or how can it be best provided? And is this a one-correct-answer fits all families with children? If not, how can we provide choice for all families in this category? Again, by separating out care of children as the dominant issue separate from other family related questions, we often make judgments that are not in the best interest of all.

The third category was labeled stability after much “trying on” of countless labels. (Labels are important because of the meaning they convey, but getting just the correct one is often not easy.) The dialogue related to this category involved an examination of the role of commitment in a relationship. What role does a legal marriage contract play in the establishment of family stability? What, if any, is the difference between a legal and a moral commitment? Would the kind of commitment (legal or moral/ethical) make a difference in a relationship? With more time we would have liked to explore the idea of commitment as illustrated by a wide variety of legal or other binding contracts related to establishing families or maintaining established families. Are these contracts for the benefit of the newly established family, the larger community, the former unit from which the new unit is established, or all of these? What ideologies do we have regarding the use of written, spoken, or other contracts of commitment? Do all who enter into an agreement have the same level of commitment in the beginning, middle, or end of the contract? Are all participants entering into a contract doing so under their own free will? The discussion included many uses of the word family, e.g., gangs calling themselves families, extended family, as well as other forms of the nuclear family of parents and children. Even though the discussion focused on many forms of the family, there was not agreement on one form as being superior to all others. Returning to this discussion will happen many times in the continued discussions on family well-being, we predict.

The fourth identified category related to interaction. At one point we called it political because political relates to governing, but that category name did not feel comfortable. The category concept relates to how family members interact with each other, how the family functions, and how decisions are made. In the technical interest, families might promote definite figures of authority and definite roles and responsibilities for each family member. As in technical learning, everyone can know the expectations at the beginning. In the technical human interest, family members’ expectations are based on an

identified role. In the practical interest, discussion centered on different ways in which decision making in the family was shared or could be shared and how it affected the workings of the family. The group explored the concept of the differentiation of roles, e.g., parents and children, areas of interest or expertise, as well as unequal expectations of responsibility. In the emancipatory interest, questions and discussion related to decision making and power inside and outside the family. What role does power play within the family itself? How much power does the individual family exert on those outside the family, e.g., community, village, society? How much influence does the larger community, village, or society exert on the individual family and its members? What is the relationship of the concept power implied in the preceding questions and the concept empowerment? Just as no man is an island, no family stands alone.

The last two categories were added at a later time so the discussion by the foregoing group of students was not possible. The spiritual/moral category opened up additional aspects of family well-being. Spiritual is broader than moral, but morality often has a spiritual base. This category seemed to add a dimension that is a part of almost any culture. The cultural aspect of family well-being had not been separated out as a specific category because it seemed imminent in the exploration of all categories. No individual or family is without some cultural heritage and, even if that influence tends to be overtly ignored, its hidden influence is always a part of the questions asked, the words used, and the parameters chosen.

Margaret Henry (1995) in her dissertation on well-being has used the more encompassing term transpersonal. Quoting from literature on the concept, she indicates that the transpersonal “includes such nonquantifiable qualities as love, responsibility, sacrifice, integrity, and trust. . . . [It] embraces the spiritual world, including experiences with nature and relations with God.” Quoting yet another source, she says, “The spiritual domain also includes a belief in social justice, altruism, idealism, a sensitivity to human pain

and suffering, and an awareness of one's relationship to self and others, a belief in an ultimate power in the universe" A narrower version of the concept spiritual/moral guides the discussion that follows.

The technical interest would have experts provide families with correct answers to moral questions, e.g., abortion, family forms, sexual orientation, how to raise children, and roles for men and women. The argument is that consensus on the rules of moral conduct makes for a smooth running family, hence a smooth running society. In the Western world, often Christianity is the dominant religion and a literal interpretation of the Bible is promoted. But other religions come into play here also.

However, in the practical interest, families are encouraged to examine the dominate philosophies of different religious groups. The meaning of being human and the role of all races and religions in the overall universe are analyzed. A relationship to a higher being (being accountable to God, or . . . or . . . for our actions) adds meaning to some lives.

In the emancipatory human interest, life in its entirety is a part of the dialogue. What role, if any, does an acknowledgment of a higher power (as a part of a religion or other views) play in the spiritual/moral realm? Can a belief in science and technology substitute for the belief in a higher being? Can this belief furnish the ultimate answer to a better life? Above all, what is the ultimate meaning of life on this planet earth?

The last category to be examined here in relation to individual and family well-being is aesthetics. In the technical interest families follow the rules of design (e.g., balance, rhythm, proportion, color) as the guiding principles of their lives. Art and dance, for example, are taught in a structured and precise manner. Skills are developed and executed. Characteristics of an aesthetic medium (art, dance, drama) are studied.

In the practical interest the arts and humanities are seen as integrated with the sciences, not separate from them. Appreciation of beauty is developed; entertainment and recreation are

seen as playing a role in well-being. The beauty of human life is explored in all its facets simultaneously. The emancipatory interest brings in the role of aesthetics in the achievement of freedom, justice, and equity for all. Creativity and self-expression are fostered. If aesthetics brings out some of the best in humankind, what methods of access for all are most valuable? What connections among the past, present, and future are possible through this medium? How can a perspective on art, dance, music, and drama from a variety of cultures highlight similarities and differences among peoples? How useful can the aesthetic dimension be in changing family life, community setting, and/or values within a society?

Conclusion

So much remains to be done. The task of clarification and revision is an on-going one. This manuscript is an attempt to give the author's interpretation of a beginning dialogue on family well-being through the lenses of Habermas' three areas of human interest. The concepts outlined here are largely untried and untested and are fraught with ideologies both recognized and unrecognized by the author. The ideas (many will be controversial) are enumerated here solely to stimulate dialogue, not to support one particular point of view (although the author's point of view will be evident). Hopefully, the point of view presented will stimulate further clarification of that point of view or the development of an entirely different one.

The hindsight of a lifetime professional career in education has convinced the author that a workable description of family well-being will be a long-term process. If the ultimate description is to direct the work within the profession, it will need the commitment of the best minds available. It will need to be based on a belief in the value of the description for guiding professional practice. And lastly, resources for the continuation of the work begun in 1996 will be needed. It is my hope that we will not become discouraged before the work is complete.

References

- Aristotle. (1962). *Nicomachean ethics*. (Martin Ostwald, trans.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Baldwin, E. E. (1990). Family empowerment as a focus for home economics education. *Journal of Vocational Home Economics Education*, 8, 1-12.
- Baldwin, E. E. (1995). Transformative professional practice: Overcoming ambivalence, building community. *Kappa Omicron Nu Forum*, 8(2), 21.
- Baldwin, E. E. (1996). Family well-being: A conceptualization guide to professional practice. In D. I. Mitsifer (Ed.), *Toward a Theory of family Well-Being*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.
- Brown, M. M. (1984). Needed: A critical science perspective in home economics. Paper presented at the American Home Economics Association, Anaheim, CA.
- Brown, M. M. (1985). *Philosophical studies of home economics in the United States*, Vol. I and II. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University.
- Brown, M. M. (1993). *Philosophical studies of home economics in the United States: Basic ideas by which home economists understand themselves*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University.
- Brown, M. M. (1995). *The concept of theory in home economics*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.
- Dewey, J. (1989). *The child and the curriculum*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Freier, P. (1990). *The pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- Grundy, S. (1987). *Curriculum: Product or praxis*. Philadelphia, PA: The Falmer Press.
- Henry, M. I. (1995). *Well-being, the focus of home economics: An Australian perspective*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Armidale, NSW, Australia.

Table 1 - Habermas' Three Human Interests

Human Interests			
Categories	Technical	Practical	Emancipatory
Orientation	To predict and control environment	To understand one another and to reach mutual agreement	To free individuals or groups from systematic repression or irrationalities in communication
Knowledge	Technical and strategically useful; subject specific	Integrated/holistic; practical, moral, and aesthetic	Knowledge of existing social structure; nature of ideology; concepts of freedom, justice, and equality; standards of rationality
Action	Correct action	Good action	Socio-political action
Outcome	Product	Interaction	Freedom, truth, justice
Models of Theoretical Development	Empirically analytical sciences	Cultural sciences; humanities; history	Critical sciences
Problems or questions	What are the observable attributes of an object, idea or event?	What is the meaning of an idea, event or object(s) connected to them?	What social structures and processes impede social-political action for common good in implementing certain ideas and events?

Adapted by Smith, F. (1997) from: Brown, M. M. (1984). Needed: A critical science perspective in home economics. Paper presented at the American Home Economics Association, Anaheim, CA. Grundy, S. (1987). *Curriculum: Product or praxis*. New York: Falmer Press.

Table 2 - Family Well-Being

Human Interests			
Categories	Technical	Practical	Emancipatory
Physical needs	Food, shelter, clothing	Meaning of resources	Question too many or too few resources; resources for whom
Socio-psychological	Significant others; “being” there; rules of human development	Communicating; security/love; nurturing	Sense of belonging for all; interpret worth of individual and group
Stability	Contractual; legal document; blood; choice	Meaning of responsibility; mutual understanding	Question beginning; sustaining; ending of commitment
Interaction	Rules of participation; rights and responsibilities	Meaning of shared decision making; unequal responsibility	Collective power; pluralism within
Spiritual/Moral	Correct behavior; rituals; rules, e.g. tithing	Meaning of being human; relationship of self to higher being	Transformation; ultimate meaning of life
Aesthetic	Rules of design; characteristics of different mediums	Appreciation; role of entertainment & recreation	Creativity; self-expression; role of freedom, justice, and equity

Expanded version by Frances M. Smith through more dialogue with faculty and graduate students, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences Education and Studies, Iowa State University, 1998.

Toward a Theory of Family Well-Being

Donna Pendergast
Queensland University of Technology

Ms. Pendergast is currently a doctoral student, having been a lecturer in the School of Professional Studies, Queensland University of Technology, Australia.

Objective of the Paper

This paper contributes to a collection of essays as a follow-up the 1997 American Association of Family and Consumer Studies (AAFCS) session on family well-being. It aims to help prepare for further dialogue at the proposed 1998 AAFCS session. The underlying objective is to continue the dialogue about the meaning of family well-being, its manifestations, and the means for enhancing it. The author has followed the format suggested by the editors, responding to a generated set of questions.

1. *What have we learned from the dialogue so far? What have we omitted and should consider?*

From the dialogue thus far (see for example the first Monograph in this series entitled *Toward a Theory of Family Well-being* published by Kappa Omicron Nu in 1996 and the AAFCS 1997 conference panel discussion on family well-being) it seems that we have learned a number of things. Before considering these, I must first state the point at which I believe these discussions have made a determination and that is, that we have accepted as a premise for these discussions that the focus of home economics is to optimize/enhance family well-being. Hence, I shall not debate this issue, but rather work within the confines of this assumption.

One of the things we have learned is that the notion and practice of dialogue is still a cause of frustration for some and there is evidence in the text produced from the dialogue that this is the case. The process of dialogue is, by its very intent, a slow, repetitious, and time-consuming process and may never have an end point. It must therefore be recognized that an *answer* will not emerge at the end of sessions or presentations or in the text of writings such as those in this collection. However, the philosophy of dialogue must remain central to our undertaking or we have the wrong purpose in mind; expeditiously pushing on just to tie loose ends together does not achieve the intent of dialogue.

On the topic in question, it seems also that the concept of *well-being* and hence *family well-being* is still a challenge and draws the attention of thinkers. It is my view that we should accept an explanation not dissimilar to that of the

compromise reached out of the International Year of the Family attempts to define *family*. These deliberations revealed that family is neither a unitary concept nor an unchanging one, such that people define families in different ways, and furthermore, these definitions change over time. The final position becomes one of no final position, but instead, of self-definition, and one which may change over time. I consider a self-definition of well-being and hence family well-being to be a position which will allow for multiple definitions, like that of family, each of which hold relevance and importance for the definer. This also ensures that values, prejudices, and morals do not stifle versatility. In suggesting this approach, I do not devalue the work of those who have assisted me in coming to this point, but applaud them for taking on the challenge (e.g., see Henry, 1995) and highlighting the reality that indeed, well-being is a slippery concept.

The dialogue also suggests that there is speculation about the real or intended hierarchical nature of Habermas' theory (technical, practical, emancipatory) and the place of home economics within this. For example, Frances Smith developed the conceptual model that in many ways has stimulated this type of discussion. This debate appears to be one that can probably be resolved with a greater understanding of critical theory. More importantly, the point at which we now find ourselves is, "How can the notion of family well-being, perhaps with a critical theory understanding, be in some way translated into practice?"

The things that we have perhaps missed in our dialogue are the changes going on around us in theorizing and philosophizing, and particularly those shifts towards postmodernist thought and the implications this has for our further dialogue. Perhaps we can use Habermas as a spring board from which to leap to new ideas and concepts, rather than remain confined by one way of thinking and conceptualizing. Our minds must be receptive to new ideas, and we must not take the view that there will be a definitive account, an answer, because change and time will always ensure obsolescence or at the very least, inadequacy. For example, Habermas' critical theory has been criticized because of its ideological framework that moves to fix identities, categories, and outcomes. Indeed, Habermas explicitly divorces himself from postmodernism

and contemporary thinking, retaining his concern for “*rationality, universality, and the likelihood of rational consensus*” (Green, 1994, p. 440). Thus, in restricting our thoughts to this approach, we out-date our thinking from the outset.

2. *How are various institutions and specialization’s (extension, family and consumer sciences education, child and family development, etc.) within family and consumer sciences enhancing well-being? What should they be doing?*

I wish to provide details of a project I have been involved with which I consider has made a very concerted effort to promote and ensure the importance of family well-being as the focus of our field. But first, it is imperative to note that in Australia, the place of home economics has been marginalized with ongoing changes in the education curriculum at all levels. My Masters and current doctoral studies recognize this context, outlining the need to re-think the thinking that has marginalized our field to its current position. The familiar process of name change as a validation and legitimization process has of course affected us, and in each state and territory of Australia there are differing names of the field. For example, in Queensland (my state of origin) secondary schools call the field “home economics” whilst higher education is split between home economics for teacher preparation and “family and consumer studies” for the professional area. However, the national body has been steadfast in its refusal to shift from home economics—at least to date. So, forget the nomenclature and please accept the use of the terminology home economics in my example, as this reflects the most common title of our field in Australia. Further, the name debate becomes an issue that takes focus off the real issues.

I was involved as a specialist writer in the development of a book that had the objective to provide a “*reinterpretation of the place and nature of home economics in secondary schools*” (Curriculum Corporation, 1996, p. v). This book was supported by a national recognition of the importance of the field, and yet the uncertainty of its place in curriculum at various educational levels. As a result, this book has become the vehicle by which we, in Australia, have advocated the role of home economics in enhancing family well-being. Further, we have operationalized this

concept through the development of units of work that attempt to ensure that enhancing well-being is the goal of home economics education. We consider this contemporary work to be enormously important in promoting our field and in ensuring that home economics is achieving its purpose. With a framework such as that offered in this conception of the field, home economics cannot be criticized as failing in its goal to enhance family well-being.

In my view, the most important aspect of this conceptual thinking is the development of a framework which shows the links between home economics content areas, ideas, and processes, and the central focus of home economics, which we consider to be promoting the well-being of families and individuals in their everyday activities. There are three dimensions that are applied to identify and elaborate upon concepts appropriate for each of the content areas (in this instance food, clothing, housing, human relationships, family). The dimensions are:

- the relationship of home economics concepts to the well-being of families and individuals in their everyday activities;
- the influences on practice of families and individuals; and
- practices to promote the well-being of families and individuals. (p. 11)

In the book we advocate that working at only one of these levels or dimensions is an inadequate version of home economics, and that all three levels must be incorporated over time, to be a truly adequate and comprehensive study. In order to assist in understanding this, I have included a table as Appendix A to provide examples of just the content that might be included in the three dimensions. In this way, the course of study is upfront in asserting its role and goal as enhancing the well-being of families. Furthermore, it ensures that not only lip service is paid to this philosophy, but that the curriculum is structured around this philosophy. I strongly support the value of this approach and advocate its use to ensure that family well-being is at the core of our work.

3. *What are the categories of family well-being within the technical, practical, and emancipative human interests? How are they manifested?*

Based on my previous comments regarding the notion of well-being, it is clear that I would not advocate for a confined list of categories of family well-being. However, using the work of Frances Smith (1997) as the foundation, I support her categories of: physical needs, socio-psychological, stability, interaction, spiritual/moral, and aesthetic. I would immediately add to this *cultural*, *environmental*, and *economic* as I see deficiencies in these areas. I would also keep the list open to possibilities by adding the category of *other*, and thereby facilitating individual/family additions based on their own interpretations and desires.

I found Frances' ideas to be a very useful starting point. I think I would be tempted to rename *categories* and instead call these *dimensions* as this seems to be less isolating and absolute.

I would also advocate the inclusion of a statement that removes any perception of hierarchy based on the order of the categories/dimensions on paper, because this is where the individual definition of *family* and *family well-being* will become evident in the prioritizing of what they see as the most important categories/dimensions for their individual and family well-being.

4. What are some generalizations about family well-being that can be drawn from reflection on practice? From reflection about your personal family life?

Family well-being can be conceptualized globally, but cannot be tied down in strict hierarchies, definitions, or categories because this is not the same for any person or family and because this contradicts contemporary views about the way we are encouraged to re-think the thinking that has previously restricted our options. However, the development of a conceptual base can be generated from the work done thus far, the point is that it should never be seen to be absolute, final, or the formula or answer.

The other point about family well-being that begs attention and which can be drawn from reflection on practice is the question of whether we, as a profession, are focusing on *individual* or *family* well-being. There are strong advocates for both camps, with arguments such as the notion that individual well-being facilitates family well-being

and vice versa. However, it can be equally argued that individual well-being is sometimes sacrificed for family well-being, or again, vice-versa. Where does this leave us? My suggestion for dealing with this dilemma is to break down the duality that has been put in place by this either/or type of thinking. Why does this duality exist, in whose interests is it to preserve this type of thinking? Perhaps it is either/or/both depending upon the context in which well-being is being considered.

I reiterate my concerns expressed earlier in this paper that distractions or arguments about these generated assumptions about polarity or trying to tie things down to the finite degree are disruptive to the aim of developing a theory of family well-being. Do not misunderstand me, dialogue is imperative, but let us consider the way we have been thinking and the limitations we have placed on our way of thinking.

References

- Curriculum Corporation (1996). *Home economics in secondary schools*. Melbourne: Curriculum Corporation.
- Green, M. (1994). Epistemology and educational research: The influence of recent approaches to knowledge. In L. Darling-Hammond (Ed.) *Review of research in education* (pp. 423-463). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Henry, M. (1995). *Well-being the focus of home economics: An Australian perspective*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of New England.
- Mitstifer, D. I. (Ed.) (1996). *Toward a theory of family well-being*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.
- Smith, F. (1998). Family well-being through the lenses of Habermas' three human interest. In M. I. Henry, D. I. Mitstifer, & F. M. Smith (Eds.). *Toward a theory of family well-being, II*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.

Appendix A

Table 1: Content areas described in terms of the key knowledge for each dimension.

		DIMENSION		
		Relationship to the wellbeing of families and individuals in their everyday activities.	Influences on the practice of families and individuals in their everyday activities.	Practices to promote the wellbeing of families and individuals in their everyday activities.
K E Y K N O W L E D G E	F A M I L Y	Diversity of family structures; influence of family on growth and development of family members; human relationships developed in families; gender issues: role of family in provision of food, shelter and clothing;	Culture: customs, traditions, habits; ethics and values; media: public and private policy; economics; social norms and practices; technology; availability and management of resources; impact of technology; laws and legislation;	Consumer advocacy; political advocacy; effective interpersonal relationships; support services, equality, sharing and caring; cooperation;
	H U M A N R E L A T I O N S H I P S			
	Rights and responsibilities: emotional and social development; self-esteem; patterns of continuity; diversity of views; tolerance; autonomy;	Cultural ideas and practices: power structures; gender; values; ethics; expectations; assumptions; equality; economic constraints; opportunities, work-related practices;	Effective communication skills: conflict resolution and management skills; managing change; availability of support services: local, state and federal laws; social networks;	
	F O O D	Major nutritional requirements for growth and energy; food storage and preparation; hygiene and optimum nutrition; emotional and social aspects of food; issues relating to eating eg fast foods, vegetarianism, weight loss diets, personal dietary problems;	Peers: access to food supply; gender; social construction of body image; culture; values; ethics; habits; economics; food and nutrition policies; advertising; media: food innovation, food product development;	Personal diet patterns and adjustment for changing needs; planning meals; resource management; consumer competence; creating change in the community (eg canteen menus); food preparation skills; acting to achieve health promoting food goals; challenging issues impacting on consumer choices; legislation and laws relating to food;
	H O U S I N G	Housing as a safe and healthy environment; as a sign or symbol of wealth, security or status; as a haven or source of privacy; cultural differences;	Access to public and private housing; laws and legislation related to housing; availability and management of resources; impact of work and leisure outside the home; way space is utilised within the home and community; financial institutions;	Environmental and ecological influences; hygiene; appropriate use of space; impact of technology;
	C L O T H I N G	Self-concept and confidence through clothing; uniformity, belonging and acceptance; identity; cost; cultural implications;	Culture and tradition; popular culture and media; peer pressure; financial resources available for clothing; historical evolution of fashion; technology; environmental issues; availability of domestic sewing machines; skill acquisition and time availability for clothing construction;	Labelling; consumer rights and responsibilities; laws and legislation relating to clothing; technological changes in the clothing industry (including piecework and computerisation); making clothes;

Source: Curriculum Corporation (1996). *Home economics in secondary schools* (p. 12). Melbourne: Author.

Implications of a Conceptual Framework for Research, Teaching, and Community Outreach

Edith E. Baldwin
Australia

Dr. Baldwin lives in Airey's Inlet, Victoria, Australia. Her previous academic affiliations were with Penn State University and Oregon State University.

In an earlier paper (Baldwin, 1996) I tried to show how a conceptual framework to guide professional practice enhancing family well-being could be derived from the work of Habermas (1971, 1987). The framework incorporates three interwoven spheres of family life, i.e., the sphere of work or labor employing technical or means-end action toward control of the natural environment to produce food, clothing, shelter; the sphere of language or communication directed toward practical-moral action in the social world; and the sphere of power in everyday life calling for critique of beliefs upholding repressive social forces and for emancipation from those forces. From this perspective, family well-being is dependent upon the ability of family members and citizens to engage in technical, communicative, and emancipative action so that legitimate needs are met. Here, I will outline some implications of this framework for professional practice, i.e., for research, teaching, and community outreach.

Research

Each category of science (empirical-analytic, interpretive, critical) appropriately addresses certain types of questions, producing knowledge logically appropriate for one form of action (technical, communicative, or emancipative action). Although positivists have claimed that only empirical-analytic research generates valid knowledge, their arguments have been refuted by contemporary philosophers of science (Suppe, 1977). Critical theory recognizes this, and maintains that each category of science presents a different view of the world and makes its own contribution to human knowledge and action. From an interdisciplinary perspective, researchers from these different persuasions could work together to contribute to a holistic understanding of the complex and multidimensional concerns of everyday life (Brown, 1993). Yet, as theorists have shown, over-reliance upon empirical-analytic science has led to fragmentation of knowledge, narrow specialization, and one-sidedness of rationality (Habermas, 1987; Midgley, 1991; Postman, 1993).

Home economics (family and consumer sciences) has certainly not been without critics of narrow specialization and lack of integration (Brown, 1984, 1993; East, 1980; Green, 1990; Horn, 1988; Huepenbecker, 1986; Kellett, 1994; Raitt, 1935). Some have expressed concern that specializations

are more oriented toward market and career goals than toward promoting family well-being according to the historical mission of the field. Critical of the domination of empirical-analytic science and technical rationality, Brown (1993, p. 262) contends that our field has become “fragmented, piecemeal, and lacking coherence as a conglomeration of specialties in search of a conceptual framework.” She sees the need for a “radical transformation of the organization of knowledge [that] could mean an improved profession—with specializations—addressing a real set of human problems.” As complex human problems with moral implications, problems of the family do not fit neatly within the boundaries of any one specialization and cannot be adequately addressed by any one mode of research.

In order to address “a real set of human problems,” an important first step would be for a team of researchers (empirical-analytic, interpretive, and critical researchers) to develop a conceptual framework. This would need to be “a mutually acceptable integrating overall (transdisciplinary) conceptual framework within which both disciplinary and interdisciplinary investigations and education [could] be conducted” (Brown, 1993, p. 224). The framework sketched earlier (Baldwin, 1996) could be further developed so that the concepts of “work and the family,” “communication and the family,” and “power and the family” were thoroughly examined in relation to the well-being of the individual, the family, and society. A fully developed conceptualization would show how these spheres are interrelated in everyday life and how problems of the family are rooted in them.

Against this macro-background, a particular problem could be addressed as an interdisciplinary research project. We might take as an example a problem of interest to a research group because of citizens’ concern about social alienation and lack of motivation among local teenagers who seem to be involved in increasing numbers in gang membership, violence, and drug use.

Seeking to show “what is the case” with respect to the problem, *empirical-analytic researchers* might gather statistical evidence of crime, drug use, and gang membership in this population of teenagers; look for a relationship between drug use and crime, between crime and gang membership, or

between gang membership and family patterns; show the effects of drug use on teenagers' health; determine the effect of community programs on gang membership; raise questions concerning possible outcomes for family and community life if the problem were not addressed, and so on. Research providing factual data would provide a useful starting point for the team project.

Understanding the moral significance of the problem, interpretive and critical researchers would address the question, *What ought we do* about the well-being of teenagers and families in this case?

The *interpretive researcher* would recognize and focus on the individual's capability for self-reflection and self-determination; patterns of belief and action would be uncovered through dialogue with teenagers, parents, and others directly involved in the problematic situation. The researcher might focus on such reflective questions as, What is the meaning of gang membership (or crime or drug taking) for the teenager? What are the teenager's reasons for engaging in these activities? What does "family life" and "community life" mean for the parents and teenagers? What cultural values and social norms have an impact on patterns of belief and behavior embedded in the problem? Throughout the dialogue, the interpretive researcher would clarify assumptions underlying choice and action to reveal participants' reasons for certain behaviors or actions.

Sometimes, interpretation brings to light unrecognized contradictions, i.e., contradictions in belief and behavior may become apparent. Although a teenager may believe that it is in his interest to conform to peer pressure (to take drugs or commit crimes), in so doing, his own well-being and that of others is undermined. Although parents may believe that children should fend for themselves without parental discipline and love, growth toward autonomy is at stake when they act upon this belief. Although people may believe that involvement in community life is invasive of privacy and time wasting, absorption with individualistic pursuits sometimes paves the way for social isolation, alienation, or exploitation.

Misunderstandings, self-deceptions, or distorted meanings that have been adopted unreflectively are

uncovered through inquiry. Because problems are often created by the beliefs and conceptions that people hold, and because misunderstandings are rooted in social structure and process, critical theory would be drawn upon to expose the sources of misunderstandings and their relation to the problem. Here, there is a move from interpretive to critical research.

The *critical researcher* might ask these questions: Are these teenagers' and parents' beliefs about their activities distorted or repressive? Is there a problematic conception (of human freedom) here? Do these people unwittingly undermine their well-being when they act upon this belief? What is the historical source of this belief (about human freedom) in society—where does it originate in our thinking? What contemporary social forces reinforce it? What are the consequences of acting according to this belief, i.e., consequences for the teenager, the family, society? Whose interests are served? What are the true interests and needs of people affected by this situation? What alternative, justifiable belief could be upheld? What should be done to overcome repressive forces? As the research proceeded dialogically within the community a *complex of theories* would be developed (Fay, 1987):

1. A theory of systematic misunderstandings would be unreflectively held by people involved (parents, teenagers) and causing this particular problematic situation (e.g., conceptions of needs, human freedom). The theory would show how people came to have these beliefs and how they are maintained. It would show how interpretations are false or incoherent and the fundamental contradictions developing as a result of actions based on false interpretations. An alternative belief (e.g., conception of needs, freedom) would be juxtaposed and justified in terms of possible consequences for the individual, family, and society.
2. A theory of crisis would be developed to show what the situation actually is. The dissatisfactions of people and the threat posed to social cohesion would be examined. The history of the crisis situation (the increasing destructiveness of youth alienation) would be traced in terms of the beliefs promoting it and social conditions sustaining it.

3. A theory of education would be developed to suggest how enlightenment may be promoted in the current situation.
4. A theory of transformative action would indicate which aspects of family and social life might be altered, and a general plan of action for crisis resolution would be agreed upon. Researchers would participate with teenagers, parents, and other citizens in a theoretically grounded program of action to generate a new way of seeing the situation so that together they may bring about constructive social change. Knowledge would thus be linked to action—theory and practice would be united in the interest of family well-being.

Implementation of this type of integrative research would demand changes not only in disposition but also in organizational structure within the university (Brown, 1993, pp. 229-274). No doubt there are examples of interdisciplinary research that could be useful to family and consumer scientists. Dealing with these realities is, however, beyond the scope of this paper. My point is that through this team approach, family and consumer science researchers could identify and appropriately address “a real set of human problems.”

Teaching and Community Outreach

Knowledge of problems of the family developed through family and consumer science research should make a significant contribution to teaching and community outreach programs. Of particular concern here are family and consumer science programs in colleges and universities, cooperative extension, and high schools.

College and University Teaching

An integrative core program within family and consumer sciences would focus on practical-moral problems of the family; i.e., on questions of what ought to be done with respect to certain issues having an impact on individual and family well-being. Brown (1980, p. 111) argues that “Substantive content [should be] organized around problems of the family both for helping students (a) to conceptualize the form and substance of such problems and (b) to develop commitments, understanding, and a global view for deliberative

action in seeking solutions to problems of the family.”

The traditional approach to teaching and learning would be replaced by critical pedagogy. The traditional, technical orientation based on what Freire (1984) calls the “banking concept” of learning is a conceptualization in which teacher-deposited knowledge is stored by the student for later withdrawal and use. The curriculum draws its content and organization from the disciplines that are seen as stores of knowledge; the dominant culture is paramount, and the student’s lifeworld of ideas and values is ignored. The teacher’s role is one of monological transmitter of knowledge and the learner’s is one of passive recipient.

Critical pedagogy, on the other hand,

is activist in its questioning of the status quo, in its participatory methods, and in its insistence that knowledge is not fixed but is constantly changing. More than just dynamic and filled with contending perspectives, critical knowledge offers a chance to rethink experience and society. (Shor, 1992, p. 189)

In this dialogic classroom, students are invited to become active learners.

Drawing upon critical theory including theory developed by transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary researchers, the core teacher would enable students to develop a critical understanding of society and problems of the family. Specialist faculty would contribute to the dialogue as particular problems of the family were addressed. As practical reasoning is employed to determine *what ought to be the case* in relation to a certain practical-moral issue, students and faculty would engage in this process.

Practical reasoning is an informal, dialogical process to determine the validity of a certain value or action for its moral or aesthetic justifiability (Habermas, 1987). At times, discussion is set aside in order to seek further information. Habermas’ “ideal speech situation” provides a guideline for discourse, i.e., (a) speech is intelligible, (b) participants speak the truth insofar as it is known, (c) what is said is normatively appropriate considering the relation between participants and between them and the issue at hand, and

(d) participants are sincere in attempting to reach understanding and agreement. Furthermore, people are considered to be equal participants in dialogue, no coercion is brought to bear, and decisions rest on the force of the better argument. We must remember that this situation regarding public discourse does not exist in everyday life—it is an *ideal* to work toward.

Through engaging in practical reasoning to determine what ought to be the case with regard to particular problems of the family, students improve their ability to listen and think critically and to participate in rational argument. This is important, for the teaching program should develop not only students' critical insight into complex family issues in contemporary society but also communicative skills and positive attitudes toward participation in community dialogue to promote family well-being.

Cooperative Extension Programs

Educational activities of the Cooperative Extension System during the International Year of the Family heightened public awareness and understanding of family issues and promoted collaboration of family support groups in the interest of family well-being. The year-long program also brought forth “a good example of what can be done when individuals come together to discuss mutual concerns and provide appropriate support for the empowerment of families at the community level to solve their own problems” (Liedenfrost 1995, p. 6). Empowerment of families within the community to resolve problems affecting their lives is a major focus of the approach outlined here.

Extension personnel would base their problem-solving practices on the methods of social critique and dialogue experienced in their professional education. They would work directly with families and groups of people confronted by crisis situations, e.g., a group of single parents unable to meet work and family commitments in a social environment indifferent to their needs; a group of teenagers undermining their well-being because of peer pressure; or a community group concerned about homeless families in their midst. Drawing upon theoretically grounded research, the practitioner would raise critical consciousness of the nature and sources of misunderstandings

underlying a particular case, help the people involved to determine their real interests and needs, and facilitate movement toward rational collective action to change oppressive conditions.

The need for community solidarity is acknowledged by the Cooperative Extension System (Liedenfrost, 1995). Experience has shown that collaboration between family members, extension officers, colleagues from other organizations whose mission centers on family well-being, and community policy makers results in enhanced community awareness of family issues and action toward prevention as well as resolution of problems. Building supportive networks at local community and state levels is an important element of the expansion of outreach for the creation of a family-friendly environment.

High School Programs

High school curriculum would adopt the integrative, practical problem-solving approach experienced in the family and consumer science core program in higher education. However, problems selected would be appropriate for the age and experience of students. Examples of this type of curriculum are found in some curriculum documents (Oregon Department of Education, 1996a, 1996b). Teachers with whom I worked on projects during the development of these documents, identified and examined with their students such problems as, What ought we do about: commercial pressures on kids of the 90s? the need for nurturing child care? communication in family life? social forces affecting adolescent nutrition? teen pregnancy? peer group pressure? exploitative adolescent employment? racial antagonism among families in our community?

The procedure usually employed in class is:

1. The problem or crisis situation is introduced (e.g., through a video, case study, news report, panel discussion, etc.) to raise the question, What should be done in this particular case? (e.g., a case in which racial antagonism among families in the district is making an impact on school life). A dominant belief underlying the problematic situation is identified (e.g., a belief in white superiority).

2. The class seeks the origin of this belief in social history. Current social forces reinforcing it are examined.
3. Action resulting from the pervasiveness of the belief is examined in terms of consequences for the individual, family, and society. Contradictions are brought to light (e.g., we say we believe in democracy and human freedom but look upon certain groups of people as being in some way inferior with xyz consequences).
4. The class puts forth an alternative to the problematic belief, and the possible consequences of acting according to it are considered (e.g., a belief in racial equality may result in abc consequences for the individual, the family, the society).
5. If the alternative is accepted as valid, the class seeks ways of overcoming the problematic belief in this particular case. Although social change is a slow process, strategies for change in the situation are agreed upon as justifiable.

Throughout the problem-solving process teacher and students enhance their knowledge and understanding through a wide range of activities (e.g., drawing upon various forms of media, conducting interviews, preparing and presenting reports, engaging in laboratory exercises, participating in dialogue). The process culminates in agreed-upon action by the class. Students develop the critical thinking and communicative skills necessary for collective action to resolve practical problems in family and community life through this type of curriculum.

Discovering that a single problem may involve issues of power and communication as well as material need, the teachers involved in the Oregon project readily understood that family problems do not fit neatly into compartmentalized content and cannot be resolved by merely drawing upon technical, text-book information. They recognized that technical, communicative, and emancipative knowledge and skills are employed and enhanced through this type of problem solving. Furthermore, various class activities helped to forge important links between school, family, and community life.

Although excited by the new approach, teachers sometimes felt frustrated because of insufficient knowledge of the socio-cultural and political-economic forces having an impact on family life. They felt that adoption of this approach to curriculum raised an urgent practical problem for our profession: What ought we do to provide an adequate knowledge background for our teachers? This is a question that this paper attempts to address. It is a question to which we should respond in ways that would lead to an improved profession addressing a real set of human problems.

Conclusion

A contention here is that the conceptual framework sketched earlier (Baldwin, 1996) could be further developed to provide wholeness of perspective concerning family well-being and a guide to research, teaching, and outreach programs. The conceptual framework incorporates three modes of inquiry to expose the complexity of problems of the family. It does not deny the significance of physical and material well-being but highlights the importance of raising critical consciousness of powerful forces that influence need interpretation and the family's ability to meet needs. And importantly, it directs us toward classroom development of communicative competence that will carry over into family and community life for the collaborative resolution of issues. Fostering democratic community life, the development and acceptance by the profession of this conceptual framework would promote the empowerment of groups of people within the community to deal with real human problems in the interest of justice, equity, and human freedom.

References

- Baldwin, E. E. (1996). Family well-being: A conceptualization guide to professional practice. In D. I. Mitstifer (Ed.). *Toward a theory of well-being*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.
- Brown, M. M. (1980). *What is home economics education?* Minneapolis: Dept. of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Minnesota.
- Brown, M. M. (1984). *Philosophical studies of home economics in the United State: Our practical-intellectual heritage*. Vol. I & II. East Lansing, MI: College of Human Ecology, Michigan State University.

- Brown, M. M. (1993). *Philosophical studies of home economics in the United State: Basic ideas by which home economists understand themselves*. East Lansing, MI: College of Human Ecology, Michigan State University.
- East, M. (1980). *Home economics: Past, present, and future*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Fay, B. (1987). *Critical social science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Freire, P. (1984). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Green, K. B. (1990). Commemorative Lecture. Our intellectual ecology: A treatise on home economics. *Journal of Home Economics*, 82(3), 41-47.
- Habermas, J. (1971). *Knowledge and human interests*. (J. Shapiro, Trans.). Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, J. (1987). Lifeworld and system. *The theory of communicative action*, Vol. 2. (T. McCarthy, Trans.). Boston: Beacon Press.
- Horn, M. J. (1988). Undergraduate majors in home economics: Integrate or eliminate? *Journal of Home Economics*, 80(4), 28-32.
- Huepenbecker, A. (1986). Vision and visibility. *Journal of Home Economics*, 78(4), 9-12.
- Kellett, C. (1994). Family diversity and difference: A challenge for change. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, 86(3), 3-11.
- Leidenfrost, N. B. (1995). The impact of the International Year of the Family on the cooperative extension system. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, 87(2), 3-11.
- Midgley, M. (1991). *Wisdom, information and wonder*. London: Routledge.
- Oregon Department of Education. (1996a). *Family and consumer studies curriculum for Oregon middle schools*. Salem, OR.
- Oregon Department of Education. (1996b). *Balancing work, family, and community life*. Guidelines for Oregon public schools. Salem, OR.
- Postman, N. (1993). *Technopoly. The surrender of culture to technology*. New York: Vintage.
- Raitt, E. I. (1935). The nature and function of home economics. *Journal of Home Economics*, 27, 265-273.
- Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering education: Critical teaching for social change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Suppe, F. (1977). *The structure of scientific theories*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Personal Resource Systems Management PRSM Theory

Barbara S. McFall
Virginia Tech

Ms. McFall completed her master's work in Family Resource Management in the College of Human Resources and Education at Virginia Tech.

The most exciting feature of the process that we have engaged here is the dialectic that challenges participants to think their own thoughts and then allows them the freedom to do so. I am new to academe, and to family and consumer sciences (FCS), having spent thirty years of my adult life in business. In 1996, just as I was beginning my research proposal, I had the extreme good fortune to wander into the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) session that Edith Baldwin and Frances Smith were conducting on family well-being. I had returned to school for the express purpose of trying to understand the elements that contribute to family well-being, so I was open to Dr. Smith's call for a graduate student to perform further research (Smith, 1996). This paper reports that research, which was subsequently structured to:

1. Analyze the capacity of textbook models of resource management in FCS (1975-1996 to support research and practice related to well-being or quality of living;
2. Explore interdisciplinary sources for concepts to extend the theoretical base of resource management with regard to well-being; and
3. Generate from the findings a model for the management of personal resources toward the goal of well-being.

In the course of the research project, I developed a healthy respect for the systems and ecological theories expressed by earlier resource management models (Deacon & Firebaugh, 1975; Nickell, Rice, & Tucker, 1976; Paolucci, Hall, & Axinn, 1977; Gross, Crandall, & Knoll, 1980; Swanson, 1981; Rice & Tucker, 1986; Deacon & Firebaugh, 1988; Goldsmith, 1996). I also came to appreciate the compelling case that Patricia Thompson made for acknowledgment of traditional home economics as an orientation to private rather than public activities (Thompson, 1988). In response to these multiple influences, the theory that ultimately emerged from my research was interactive and personal, rather than critical and family centered. This is a very subtle, but I think important, shift towards preserving the congruence and coherence

of the discipline. Yet, I believe that Personal Resource Systems Management (PRSM) model still addresses the concerns of critical theorists, and conforms in spirit to the understanding established by the Baldwin framework. I hope that the product presented here successfully crafts a coherent whole from the contributions of *all* of these remarkable thinkers who have contributed so much to the field. Together, their efforts provide a format for the further study of well-being.

Interactive Practice

Interactive practice is a joint venture between theory and application. Patterns are co-constructed, guided by a theoretical framework but defined by the unique contributions of each individual. Wilson and Vaines (1985) depict interactive practice as evolving from a shared understanding of historical perspectives and networks of meaning (Figure 1). They describe such practice as “build(ing) a consensus of understanding directed toward the enhancement of human life” (1985, p. 349). Consensus, in interactive practice, occurs as a result of analyzing experience, deliberating upon the practical applications involved, and discussing the merits of available alternatives. Meaningful discourse at this level requires a flexible framework around which to make connections.

In the Wilson and Vaines framework, customary practice presents a practitioner as skilled in traditional arts; instrumental practice presents the practitioner as a scientific expert; and reflective practice presents the practitioner as an ethical critic. Each of these world views offers valuable insights but positions the practitioner as hierarchically superior to the operational partner and values the practitioner's viewpoint over that of all others. In contrast, interactive practice features a collaborative practitioner exchanging meanings and understandings with fully engaged partners. Interactive practice acknowledges that communication is a dialogic process in which each participant is a contributor of valued information. In such an environment outcomes are negotiated as understandings are built.

**A Theoretic Framework for the Examination of Practice
Considerations of Practice**

	Supporting structures of knowledge	Mode of inquiry	Purpose of practice	Patterns of action	Inducement to action	Relationship between knowledge & action	
Dimensions of practice	Customary practice	Basically atheoretical	Historical precedent; personal experience; conventional wisdom	To solve particular and immediate problems. To become aware of professional social traditions	Commonplace solutions to practical problems; professional routines and social conduct	Preserving traditions, professional folklore, and cultural heritage	Action is guided by personal expertise based on historical cultural tradition
	Instrumental practice	Empirical theories of casual explanation	Empirical examination of predefined problems	To control the social and natural environment in predefined ways. To produce technically useful knowledge	Predetermined systems of action; techniques directed toward intervention/prevention	Applying the laws and methods of science. Prediction and control of results	Action is controlled by analytical data; it may be viewed as distinct from theoretical knowledge
	Interactive practice	Interpretive theory Historical analysis	Analysis of experience; practical deliberation; discourse and dialectic	To build a consensus of understanding directed toward the enhancement of human life	Negotiation with others of acceptable solutions to given problems; orienting action in desired direction	Understanding "what is" in historical perspective. Acknowledging other perspectives, sharing of networks of meaning	Knowledge is tied to action through interpretation and orientation
	Reflective practice	Critical and normative theory	Dialectic; critical reflection; reflexive examination	To change the individual or social order. To build a just society for all	Social action directed toward long term change	Disclosing constraints which inhibit change; perceiving what "ought to be."	Constant interplay between professional knowledge and the way it is translated to action

Figure 1. A Theoretic Framework for the Examination of Practice

Note: From A Theoretic Framework for the Examination of Practice in Home Economics by S. W. Wilson & E. Vaines, 1985, *Home Economics Research Journal*, 13(4), p. 349. Copyright 1985 by the American Home Economics Association, Washington, DC. Reprinted with permission of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, Alexandria, VA.

The mannerly grace of interactive practice extends to the individual, to other professionals operating within the boundaries of the field, to experts in other disciplines, and to the constituents served by the practice. Personal rights and responsibilities are valued in both self and others.

An actual theory of interactive practice that would guide users in attempts to analyze that experience, consider practical applications, and evaluate alternatives was not specified by the Wilson and

Vaines treatise and has remained undefined. PRSM developed from the historical models of resource management (1975-1996), provides a framework for interactive dialogue. In so doing, PRSM retains many time-tested qualities that have proven valuable to the practice, eliminates others that have proven problematic, and introduces fresh understandings from external sources as suggested by Bohle, Grobe, and Olsen (1997), Key and Firebaugh (1989), and Arcus (1987).

The Purpose of Theory

Four parameters shape the practice in any discipline:

- a *theory* of how and why things work;
- *assessment* instruments to determine the current state of things;
- *research* methodologies to structure further investigation;
- and *application* procedures to implement the findings.

Although each of these parameters makes an important contribution to the strategy of the practice, this research has been confined to the review and development of theories. Theories are speculations about the nature of the phenomenon in question. As such, they provide a good first step in any study.

As a scientific tool, there are certain things that a theory can and cannot do. A theory is a system of assumptions, a “best guess” about what is going on based on current empirical observations and prior theories. That set of assumptions creates an abstract world in miniature that can be used to examine, explain, and predict happenings in the much messier “real” world. Although the correlation between the theoretical world and the empirical world is never perfect, a good theory can illuminate the elements and relationships encountered and thus give meaning to life experience. Because theories are not facts, they can be neither right nor wrong, though they can be more or less useful (Liebert & Spiegler, 1990). The utility of a theory is determined by its ability to:

1. organize and clarify observations,
2. explain causes and predict effects,
3. aid understanding of the subject matter, and
4. generate new ideas and research.

Several theories emerged from the review of resource management literature. Systems theory describes the actions of matter/energy in time/space. Ecological theory describes the nature of the time/space envelope and identifies the position of relevant matter/energy elements. And, critical theory questions the meaning of it all, and calls for a progression toward well-being.

PRSM Theory

The purpose of the Personal Resource Systems Management (PRSM: prism) Theory, developed by this research, is to ***establish an interactive format for improving the quality of human life, through the study of person-environment transactions***. The resulting framework is an integrative product addressing issues related to the person as an individual, individuals interacting as family or community groups, the specialty resource management, the FCS field, and more generally the systems and social sciences.

Person-Environment Transactions

By focusing on person-environment transactions, PRSM theory sought to retain the best of historical home economics and to apply those historical concepts to the demands of current society. The person-environment focus was entertained early in the evolution of this field (Lake Placid Conference, 1902) and has been a recurring theme of the practice since (Scott & Butler, 1997). Justification for this focus was also found in the 1975 mission statement of the professional association which called for promoting . . . optimum balance between people and their environments (Home Economics, New Directions II, 1975).

Theoretically, this is a very rich conceptualization. The person-environment relationship described by PRSM (Figure 2), is a functioning unit comprised of two possible elements (person and environment) linked by a process. This familiar input-throughput-output-feedback form of the cybernetic system has been a staple of resource management since 1966 (Maloch & Deacon). New in the PRSM conceptualization is the dialectic orientation of person and environment. The person is depicted as forming constructions and reconstructions within self, as well as initiating and receiving transactions with the environment. The environment is similarly engaged. The Maloch and Deacon model showed personal and environmental inputs entering the system from a single direction, merging in a transaction process, and producing a common output and feedback. Critical theory provides a model for confronting issues of domination and oppression (Henry, 1995, p. 303). This requires acknowledgment of the disparate interests of persons and their environments. By creating a bilateral representation of the system, in the form of the person-environment interaction,

PRSM encourages recognition of the dual inputs and impacts involved in daily transactions.

PRSM Persons

PRSM persons are complex. Allocation of attention and personal evaluation of the resulting transaction, are dependent upon the specifics of individual perception and expression. Figure 2 featured a person interacting with the environment. Persons are more than mere actors and cannot be described by behavior alone. They are also thinking, feeling individuals. Figure 3 describes the processes of the person in terms of a holistic energy, which is focused in three distinct forms

- Mental,
- Emotional
- Physical

In PRSM, the person offers and receives affordances in each of these forms, allowing for recognition that persons differ in their modes of interaction and that this difference often influences the perception of, and access to, particular resources. This format provides clear connections with substantial bodies of knowledge in cognitive, affective, and behavioral psychology. The mental, emotional, physical format also aligns reasonably well, although not perfectly, with the critical interests of philosopher Jurgen Habermas. The critical theory of Habermas and the philosophers of the Frankfurt School has been promoted for use in FCS by Brown (1985), Baldwin (1996), and Smith (1996). Habermas described an emancipatory interest, which was the knowledge of reflection (thoughts); a practical interest, which shaped consensual expectations of behavior, and was often described in moral/political terms (feelings); and a technical interest expressed in rule-following action (deeds). Closer to home, the 4-H concept celebrates head, heart, hands, and a holistic concept termed health.

PRSM Environments

PRSM environments are also complex and multivariate. They require categorization. Critical theorists often take issue with other scientists over the establishment of theoretical categories. Categories are important because they guide inquiry and often determine what is seen as well as what remains unseen. On the plus side categories

allow the aggregation of knowledge as well as the sharing of concepts. The negative is that the initial categorical organization of elements strongly reflects the perceptions of the researcher and establishes implicit standards that may not be relevant across individuals, classes, genders, ages, or cultures. There is no perfect solution to this dilemma.

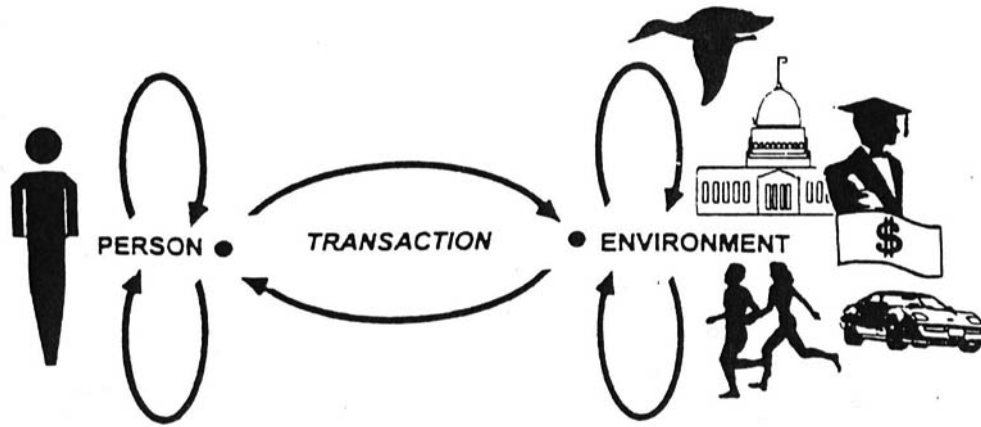
PRSM, following the example set by financial accounting, establishes broad formal categories for guided inquiry, aggregation, and comparison, but leaves the specific entries in those categories to individual respondents. The six categories of environmental elements established by PRSM are:

- Intellectual
- Organizational
- Social
- Material
- Natural
- Financial

These categories are familiar to the traditional resource management person, although this particular selection is a composite of several previous representations. The order of presentation largely accommodates the Foa and Foa (1971, 1974) understanding of resource exchange. Further, the presentation forms two triads; a basic triad (intellectual, social, natural) and a constructed triad (organizational, material, financial). Both distinctions, exchange and basic/constructed, have historically been addressed by resource management as important to issues of accessibility.

PRSM as a Toroidal Model

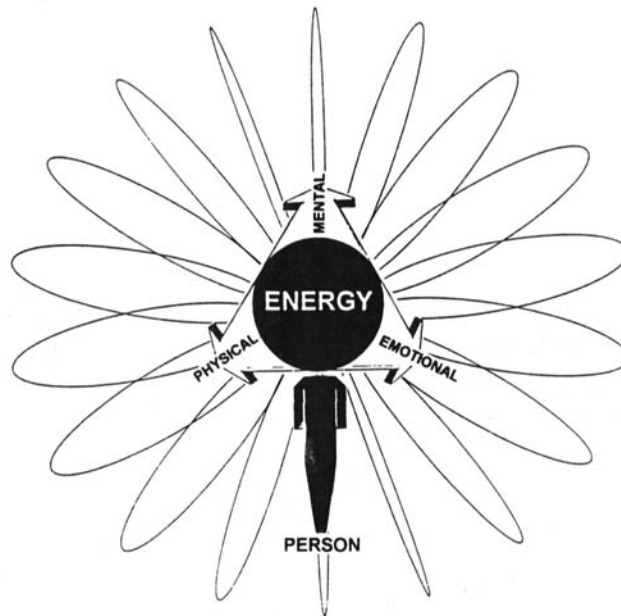
Figure 2 describes a single person-environment transaction. But personal systems are comprised of many such transactions, with new person-environment transactions being continually instigated as attention shifts from one environmental element to another. To represent the multiple opportunities for interaction available in the personal system, Figure 4 pivots these transactions around the person. The resulting configuration presents a central person surrounded by discrete transactions with specific elements, in six environmental categories. The resulting toroidal shape, which was proposed by systems theorist Donald McNeil (1995) for systems research, provides an opportunity to view



© by Barbara S. McFall, 1998

Figure 2. Person-environment transactions

Person-environment transactions form the fundamental unit of study in Personal Resource Systems Management. Organization and reorganization occur both in the person and in the environment. Transactions may be initiated or received by either the person or the environment.



© by Barbara S. McFall, 1998

Figure 3. The PRSM person exhibits three aspects of expression-perception

In the PRSM person, a holistic animating energy is focused to offer and receive affordances in three distinct forms—physical, mental, and emotional.

holistically the multiple transactional options present in a given event, a feature invaluable to effective management.

With holistic representation, the question becomes: Which transactions, out of an infinite array of options, should be considered? The ecological theory traditionally used in resource management placed the person in a hierarchical context, nested within multiple layers of context, each progressively more complex and remote (for example person, family, household, near, and larger environments). The implication of this representation was that larger environments could only be accessed through intervening environments. The reality of increased personal mobility and independence emerging in many cultures, especially American, belies that understanding. The toroidal organization of PRSM flattens this hierarchy by allowing direct connection with the full range of environmental elements. The selection of specific elements and transactions would be determined by the individual. Any available element *considered important enough for personal investment* could be drawn into the system. By this logic, PRSM has been designated as a *personal system* rather than a public system. The primary constraints imposed by a personal system are the limits of personal attention. This means that the only environmental elements recognized are those with which the person has direct contact, a personal transaction. These are first order transactions for the system. More remote concerns are not considered until they are reflected in a personal relationship. This doesn't mean that more public concerns are unimportant, just that they are not the focus of this schema.

Well-being in PRSM Transactions

The discussion to this point has been devoted to structure and function and has been generally value free. There has been little mention of the widely accepted mandate of the discipline to improve quality of life. This is a major shortcoming shared by current models of resource management according to critical theorists. Critical theorists take issue with systems theory, ecological theory, and other theories that they term instrumental, saying that such objective viewpoints promote action without meaning. Responding to the critical voice in the discipline, the most recent

mission statement of the AAFCS made the quality of life mandate more explicit with a call for action to promote "optimal well-being of families, individuals, and communities" (AAFCS, 1995).

Figure 5 introduces the method of valuing well-being in PRSM. The flow model used to evaluate PRSM transactions was developed by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990); it evaluates person-environment transactions in terms of boredom, anxiety, comfort, and flow. These states result from the shifting balance between personal skills and the challenges presented by situations.

Csikszentmihalyi found that if personal skills were greater than the challenge presented, boredom ensued. If the challenge exceeded available skills, anxiety was experienced. Boredom and anxiety are states of ill-being. Well-being was experienced as comfort when challenge was equal to skills at a routine level and as the heightened state of flow when challenge exceeded the routine and was met by developing skills.

Data for the flow model research were collected using the Experience-Sampling Method, for which Csikszentmihalyi has established validity and reliability (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1987). A similar model describing person-environment fit was developed by Lawton and Nahemow (1973).

The PRSM Matrix

One significant advantage of the dialectical person-environment organization is that it supports matrix organization. To prove truly useful, an observational system should offer more than a snapshot of a single transaction. Systems, after all, have no tangible reality. They exist only symbolically and are empowered by their ability to describe, predict, and prescribe. Personal Resource Systems Management is interested in how a particular personal system has operated in the past as an indicator of present and future possibilities. Longitudinal studies provide this information but require a format for the accumulation of data from one person over multiple time/space events.

PRSM is also interested in family and community resource management. This group orientation might require cross-sectional examination of multiple personal systems at a single time/space event to discern synergies and emergent properties.

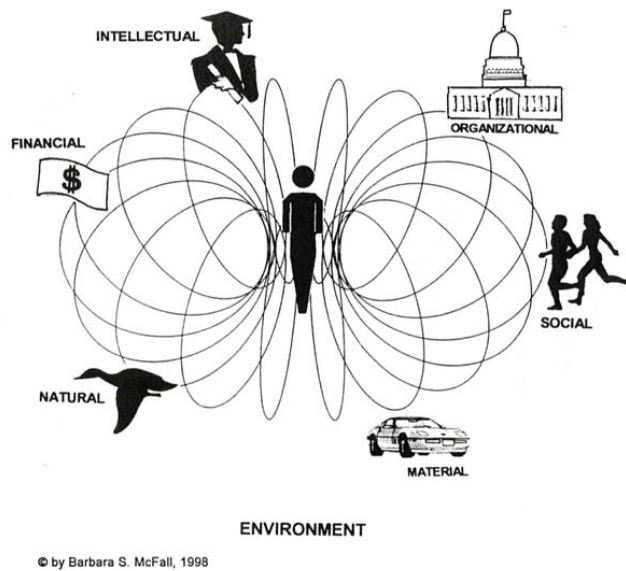


Figure 4. Multiple person-environment transactions form personal systems

Personal systems are comprised of multiple person-environment transactions pivoted around the person in toroidal form. Transactions are aggregated in six environmental categories (intellectual, organizational, social, material, natural, and financial). *Note:* Toroidal form adapted from D. McNeil (1995). A survey of applied systemology. *Systems Research*, 12(2), 133-145.

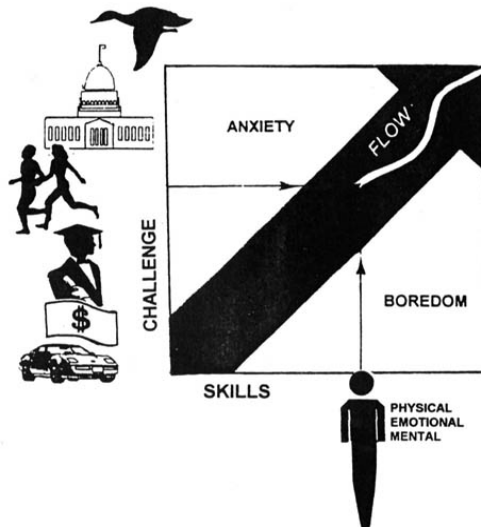


Figure 5. Person-environment fit determines well-being

Person-Environment transactions are evaluated in terms of resultant well-being using the flow model developed by Csikszentmihalyi. Skills exceeding available challenge lead to boredom. Challenge exceeding available skills creates anxiety. Matched skills and challenge at a routine level are experienced as comfort. Skills developing to meet a new challenge yield a heightened state of awareness termed “flow.” *Note:* Adapted from M. Csikszentmihalyi (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper.

The experiences of multiple persons at multiple time/space intervals are likewise of interest.

Further, PRSM is interested in improving the quality of living outcomes of personal strategies and public policies, so the manipulation and comparison of specific interactions is of interest. And finally, factor analysis is important in the diagnosis and intervention procedures of the practice. The concluding challenge addressed here is the accumulation and reporting of data generated by the PRSM model. The PRSM matrix provides that format.

The PRSM matrix provides that format. The matrix organization was suggested by developments in the power and utility of matrix algebra over the last twenty years. Matrix functions are presently well recognized as providing a powerful management tool and are taught in both high school and college course work. Vassily Leontieff was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1973 for his application of matrix operations to the analysis of whole economies, in a branch of economics called input-output analysis. This is only one of the powerful applications of the matrix process. But despite the power and complexity of the analysis, performing the analysis is not that difficult. These and other operations that currently guide public systems through optimization processes can be applied to personal systems as well. Support technology is readily available. Matrix functions are standard fare on better calculators today.

Many statistical procedures are also matrix based, and the utility of findings generated by statistical research in resource management would be greatly enhanced by a standard format. A standard format encourages comparison, and establishes expectations that highlight interesting deviations. A standard matrix format, specifying dependent and independent variables, would be especially useful in performing meta-analyses. PRSM views meta-analytical procedures as important to practice, because these provide a method of aggregating and interpreting basic research from many different disciplines for application to real life situations in personal resource management.

The PRSM matrix establishes quality of life, personal well-being, and environmental satisfaction as dependent variables; and casts

personal aspects (mental, emotional, physical) and environmental elements (intellectual, organizational, social, material, natural, financial) as independent variables. In the PRSM matrix (Figure 6), entries are transactions referenced by columns comprised of personal aspects (physical, mental, emotional) and rows representing environmental categories (intellectual, organizational, social, material, natural, financial). The value of the entry is established by the flow model. The column vectors describe personal well-being (physical, mental, and emotional). The row vectors describe satisfaction with the environment (intellectual, organizational, social, material, natural, and financial). The total personal well-being and total environmental satisfaction coordinate at the bottom right corner is a single identity termed quality of life.

Like the model, the PRSM matrix suggests environmental categories, but leaves the specification of unique elements to the user. Broad categories, which provide a basis for common discussion, may be defined more specifically for individual reflection by adding subcategories. Matrices facilitate consideration of multiple events either cross-sectionally (in the study of families, communities, and other groups) or longitudinally (in life cycle research and policy impact studies). or longitudinally (in life cycle research and policy impact studies).

Implications for the Future

The presentation of the PRSM matrix concludes the theory development that was the major focus of the current research. Now consideration can be given to the question: What are the implications of PRSM for the future? E. L. Boyer (1990) described four branches of scholarship that contribute to a practice: the scholarship of discovery or research, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching. Further development of the PRSM format could make a contribution in each of these forms of scholarship.

PRSM as a Research Framework

The flexible organization of the PRSM model and matrix describe interaction with minimal constraint, identify current contributions to the system, and highlight past patterns and future

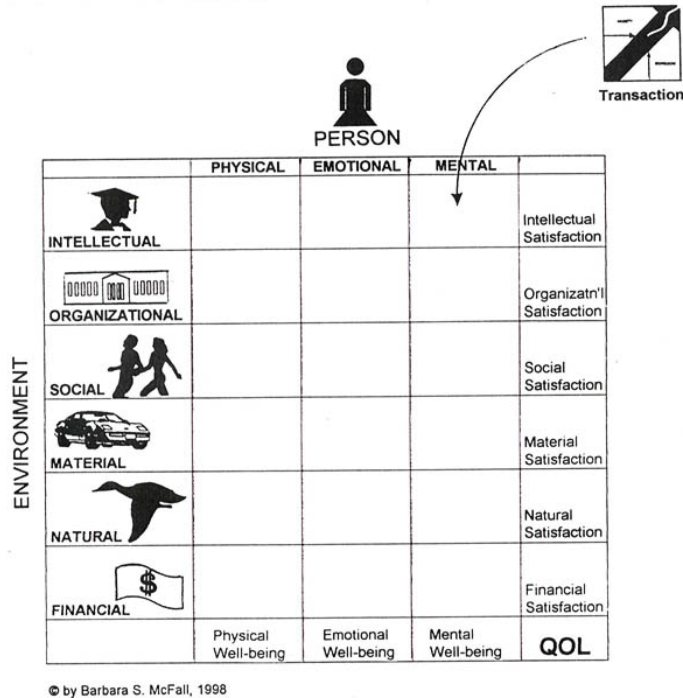


Figure 6. The person x environment matrix

Data generated by the PRSM application of the flow model is reported using the person x environment matrix. The matrix reports transactions between aspects of the person (physical, emotion, mental) and environmental elements (intellectual, organizational, social, material, well-being, and mental well-being). Row vectors report environmental satisfaction (intellectual satisfaction, organizational satisfaction, social satisfaction, material satisfaction, natural satisfaction, and financial satisfaction). Total personal well-being and total environmental satisfaction coordinate to describe quality of life.

options. These tools provide a method for examining aggregations (such as families and communities) and the synergies emerging from aggregation. And they provide a method for previewing and reviewing the outcomes of personal choice.

The PRSM format opens opportunities for interdisciplinary research. That could vastly expand the knowledge base of resource management. The extraordinary amount of information currently available presents a genuine opportunity for practitioners, engaging in interdisciplinary meta-analysis of existing studies, to maximize their contribution to society. Meta-analysis using the PRSM format could consolidate raw findings scattered across disciplines into usable resources and make those resources available to personal resource systems managers.

PRSM also presents a framework for case study, which allows researchers and individuals to examine a single human life in detail, perhaps even their own. PRSM offers **a balanced view of the quality of human life** that goes beyond simple measures of GNP, technological development, and material wealth to ask *"What is really important in your life?"* The logical next question for academics, politicians, parents, professionals, and caring people in general to ask is *"How can we make it better?"*

PRSM as Integrative Scholarship

The organization of elements in the PRSM format might also suggest a taxonomy for FCS that could more fully integrate the various specialties within the parent discipline, and thus enhance the meaning of the whole. An orienting format could

impart a new clarity of purpose to the entire enterprise. Such purpose would be exhilarating and could possibly re-energize flagging interest in the field.

Integrative scholarship has been described as “serious, disciplined work that seeks to interpret, draw together, and bring new insight to bear on original research” (Boyer, 1990). The work establishes connectedness between isolated facts and across disciplines, through which research is ultimately made authentic.

Integration requires a deliberate interpretive effort to fit research, your own and others, into larger intellectual schemes. PRSM has made every effort to establish resource management connections which function both within FCS (among the various specialties) and beyond disciplinary borders (to enable incorporation of research findings from other traditions).

Boyer discerned a shift in emphasis toward integrative scholarship that he described as “an intellectual sea change . . . perhaps as momentous as the nineteenth-century shift in [which] philosophy gave way more firmly to science” (Boyer, 1990). If such a change is indeed underway, applied sciences such as FCS and resource management should position themselves for the future by actively promoting the integrative scholarship that has always been an idealized feature of our tradition.

PRSM in Application

The scholarship of application is of special interest to land-grant fields of study such as FCS and its specialty, resource management. Not only must practitioners in this tradition acquire and extend knowledge but they must apply it to consequential problems as well. The process is dynamic, with research addressing problems as problems suggest new research. In the academic world, this form of scholarship is frequently undervalued. This has been the case in both FCS and resource management. Specification of goals, and assessment of progress towards those goals, has been problematic in the messy world of real life application. To receive credit for work done, one must be able to clearly explain what was done, why, and how it was beneficial. FCS as a practice has not always done this very well. Applied

disciplines such as business and psychology, with well developed assessment schemes, are valued because they have accepted methods for communicating their successes to others outside their fields. These methods also clarify progress within the discipline by sharpening the entire enterprise.

The structure of the PRSM model and matrix suggests development of an assessment tool that could validate the practice to outsiders. FCS and resource management have clearly stated a commitment to well-being or quality of life as a goal, but neither the field nor the specialty had provided a clear definition of either well-being or quality of life. The PRSM format is very specific both about the nature of the goals stated and about the elements contributing to those goals. This format provides opportunity for formal assessment both before and after intervention, a structured description of the intervention, and a clear identification of the benefits accrued. The resulting data could be applied to cost-benefit analysis that plays an important role both in justifying industry and counseling applications and in securing funding for traditional programs such as cooperative extension.

PRSM as a Teaching Tool

Teaching is the final form of scholarship to which we might apply the PRSM format. It is the lifeblood of our practice. When teaching falters, the continuity of knowledge is broken. The converse is also true. When the continuity of knowledge is broken, teaching falters.

Although chaos can be a very creative experience for any system, opening the door to new configurations and opportunities, there does come a time for systemic reorganization and for the preparation of the next generation. That function cannot be delayed if the enterprise is to survive. FCS and resource management have experienced two or three decades of chaos, reeling from societal changes that effectively dispersed the monolithic power of the home. This does not mean that the principles that formed historical home economics are lost. Today we find the principles that “mama taught” surfacing everywhere. Those principles have been internalized and made more mobile. They have become a part of personal systems.

But what will happen to this body of knowledge in the next generation as the collective memory of what it once was fades? Will there be sufficient structure to maintain and pass on the truths that we now know and identify those yet unknown? I sense a concern in the profession that there will not . . . that the torch will not be passed for lack of a viable vision.

I cannot claim that PRSM provides that vision for resource management, but I do believe that *all* practitioners must earnestly commit to the search for a unifying vision. We cannot teach or learn what we cannot envision, and teaching and learning, in one form or another, is our ultimate reason to be. Personal Resource Systems Management provides one example of a comprehensive organizing schema that might order resource management curriculum and provide scaffolding for both teaching and life-long learning.

Summary

Kappa Omicron Nu published *Toward a Theory of Family Well-being* (1996) in an effort to “stimulate thought, reflection, and inquiry—all of which ultimately encourage construction of multiple interpretations” (Mitstifer, 1996). The effort has certainly been successful from my viewpoint. The papers presented in this current volume bear testimony to the sustained efforts of all involved in the exercise.

Baldwin in her seminal paper for this endeavor described the family as a “set of relationships, a communicative environment responsible for the nurturance and well-being of its members” (Baldwin, 1996, p. 4). She then identified three dimensions of family life contributing to this well-being, the material dimension, the practical-moral dimension, and an emancipative dimension encouraging human autonomy and freedom.

PRSM addresses these same concepts in terms of person-environment transactions, defined by three personal dimensions (mental, emotional, physical) and six environmental dimensions (intellectual, organizational, social, material, natural, and financial). Each of the resulting eighteen interactions contributes to the well-being or ill-being experienced in association with an event. Interactions can be viewed cumulatively to

describe either personal well-being (mental, emotional, physical) or environmental satisfaction (intellectual, organizational, social, material, natural, financial). The co-ordinate totals of personal well-being and environmental satisfaction describe quality of life.

The PRSM format promotes autonomous personal systems, which communicate and cooperate to form effective family and community systems. This personal focus identifies specific resources contributed to the system by each person as well as by each environment. The format highlights strengths as well as weaknesses in the system, clarifying human interests.

PRSM is a *system* that can be taught with uniform results. People, ourselves included, can be taught to be capable, to pursue their own *systemic* well-being, and in doing so, to achieve an optimal relationship between person and environment. Using the PRSM format, that personal well-being could be extended and expanded through the synergy afforded by family and community cooperation.

We, as individuals, families, and practitioners, can learn to take our proper place in the rest of creation, and we can learn to understand our relationship to it (Baldwin, 1996, p. 9). An idyllic vision to be sure, but no more so than Adam Smith’s invisible hand that has guided the marketplace for over two hundred years. It seems almost anticlimactic to conclude that further research is most certainly needed. Let’s get on with it!

You are invited to join in discussion by evaluating the PRSM using the attached questionnaire. All comments are appreciated.

Acknowledgment

PRSM would not have been possible without the patient and dedicated support of my committee members, Dr. Irene Leech (Resource Management), Dr. Joseph Germana (Psychology), and Dr. Janet Sawyers (Family and Child Development). Thank you.

References

- AAFCs: 1995-2000 Strategic Plan (1995). Washington, DC: American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences.
- Arcus, M.E. (1987). A framework for life-span family life education. *Family Relations*, 36, 5-10.
- Baldwin, E. (1996). Family well-being: A conceptualization guide. In D. I. Mitstifer (Ed.), *Toward a theory of family well-being*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.
- Bohle, D. W., Grobe, D., & Olsen, G. I. (1997). Perception of managerial style as definition of self: A first approach. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 25(3), 286-297.
- Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Brown, M. M. (1985). *Philosophical studies of home economics in the United States: Our practical-intellectual heritage*, Vol. I & II. East Lansing, MI: College of Human Ecology, Michigan State University.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1975). *Beyond boredom and anxiety*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Larson, R. (1987). Validity and reliability of the Experience-Sampling Method. *The Journal of Mental and Nervous Disease*.
- Deacon, R. E., & Firebaugh, F. M. (1975). *Home management: Context and concepts*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Deacon, R. E., & Firebaugh, F. M. (1988). *Family resource management: Principles and applications*. (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Foa, U. (1971). Interpersonal and economic resources. *Science*, 171, 345-351.
- Foa, U. G., & Foa, E. B. (1974). *Societal structures of the mind*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Goldsmith, E. B. (1996). *Resource management for individuals and families*. St. Paul: West Publishing Company.
- Gross, I. H., Crandall, E. W., & Knoll, M. M. (1980). *Management for modern families*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Home Economics: New directions II* (1975). Washington, DC: American Home Economics Association.
- Key, R., & Firebaugh, F. (1989). Family resource management: Preparing for the 21st century. *Journal of Home Economics*, 81(1), 13-17.
- Liebert, R. M., & Spiegler, M. D. (1990). *Personality: Strategies and issues*. (6th Ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Maloch, F., & Deacon, R. (1966). Proposed framework for home management. *Journal of Home Economics*, 58, 331-335.
- McNeil, D. (1995). A survey of applied systemology. *Systems Research*, 12(2), 133-145.
- Mitstifer, D. I. (1996). Preface. In D. I. Mitstifer (Ed.), *Toward a theory of family well-being*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.
- Nickell, P., Rice, A. S., & Tucker, S. F. (1976). *Management in family living*. (3rd ed.) . New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Paolucci, B., Hall, O. A., & Axinn, N. (1977). *Family decision making: An ecosystem approach*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Rice, A. S., & Tucker, A. F. (1986). *Family life management*. (6th ed.). New York: Macmillan.
- Scott, J. P., & Butler, M. H. (1997). Subjective well-being in rural adults 75 years of age and older: A longitudinal evaluation. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 25(3), 251-268.
- Smith, F. M. (1996). Summary of dialogue in session II. In D. I. Mitstifer (Ed.), *Toward a theory of well-being*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.
- Swanson, B. (1981). *Introduction to home management*. New York: Macmillan.
- Thompson, P. J. (1988). *Home economics and feminism: The Hestian synthesis*. Charlottetown, PE: Home Economics Publishing Collective, UPEI.
- Wilson, S. W., & Vaines, E. (1985). A theoretic framework for the examination of practice in home economics. *Home Economics Research Journal*, 13(4), 347-354.

PRSM THEORY

Evaluation

Evaluator Name:

Credentials:

Interest and Expertise:

Purposes of PRSM Theory

According to Liebert and Spiegler (1990, p. 7), theory serves four general purposes in science. Personal Resource Systems Management (Matrix & Model), the PRSM theory, is an attempt to describe the person-environment interaction in terms of contributions to systemic well-being or Quality of Life.

How well do you think PRSM

- 1) organizes and clarifies observations,

- 2) explains the causes of past events so that future events can be predicted from the same causes,

- 3) provides a sense of understanding of the subject matter, and

- 4) generates new ideas and research.

Correctness of PRSM theory

Liebert and Spiegler continue by offering criteria for evaluating the correctness of a theory (1990, p. 8). They state that theories are mere speculations regarding the nature of phenomena. As such theories cannot be "right" or "wrong." However, theories can be more or less "useful" in serving their purposes. Seven major criteria for evaluating a theory are typically employed: empirical validity, parsimony, extensiveness, internal consistency, testability, usefulness, and acceptability. Theories fulfill these criteria in greater or lesser degrees, but rarely if ever perfectly. *How well does PRSM theory fulfill the following criteria?*

- 1) **Empirical validity** - Though theories are neither proved nor disproved by empirical evidence, each substantiating piece of evidence adds to the credibility of the theory, building confidence among potential users of that theory.

Which elements of PRSM theory do you consider well supported by empirical evidence?

In your opinion, which elements of PRSM theory would benefit most from further research?

- 2) **Parsimony** - Theories providing simpler explanations with fewer assumptions are preferable when all else is equal.

Would you consider PRSM theory parsimonious? Why or why not?

- 3) **Extensiveness** - The more extensive a theory is, the greater the scope of research efforts it inspires. All other things being equal, the more phenomena a theory accounts for, the better it is? Restricted theories tend to exclude important phenomena and ignore problems beyond their limited parameters.

Would you consider PRSM theory extensive or restricted? Why or why not?

- 2) **Internal consistency** - A theory should be more than a loose confederation of ideas and concepts. Its propositions and assumptions should mesh to form a coherent, larger explanation, free of internal contradictions.

***Does PRSM theory demonstrate internal consistency?
Why or why not?***

- 4) **Testability** - Whole theories are never tested directly. Instead, hypotheses, or specific predictions regarding the operations of specific elements of the theory, are tested by research. Better theories have clearly defined concepts which generate precise and unambiguous hypotheses.

How would you rate the testability of PRSM theory? Which specific points generate clear hypotheses? Where do you perceive a lack of clarity?

- 5) **Usefulness** - Irish poet James Stephens viewed theory as "but the preparation for practice." Theories that survive, particularly in the applied world of resource management, generally offer some form of important practical application.

Are there practical uses for PRSM theory? How might the theory be made more useful?

- 6) **Acceptability** - Theories must be appropriate to "their time." No theory can thrive in a social climate that does not find it plausible and acceptable. Public tolerance, funding of research, interest among researchers, and application by practitioners all depend on the acceptability of the theory.

In terms of your own practice, does PRSM theory provide an acceptable theory of person-environment interaction leading to well-being?

Final Comments

How would you improve PRSM to better serve your practice?

Do you have any further comments on either the purposes served by PRSM theory or on the correctness of the theory as proposed?

Return to Barbara McFall, PO Box 21301, Roanoke, VA 24018. Thank you.

Well-Being: An Appropriate Framework for Family Public Policy

Bonnie Braun
Jean Bauer
University of Minnesota

Dr. Braun is Associate Dean for Outreach and Associate Professor, Family Social Science, College of Human Ecology, University of Minnesota.

Dr. Bauer is Professor, Family Social Science, College of Human Ecology, University of Minnesota.

A window of opportunity opened for focusing on the well-being of children, youth, families, and communities with the passage of the most radical federal social policy in sixty-one years, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 and the related Agricultural Appropriations Act.

Starting in 1995, both social and economic aspects of families were in the public arena and subjects for national debate. Yet, at the same time, society lacked a common, family-oriented conceptual framework against which to measure the impact, or project the likely impact, of public policies. This lack of a commonly held family policy framework formed the justification for the work of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges' (NASULGC) Board of Human Sciences (BOHS) as well as the basis for the authors' Extension public policy educational programming conducted in 1996 to the present.

In the winter of 1995, BOHS charged its legislative committee with addressing the issue of welfare reform legislation recognizing that our institutions had research that could be used to inform the debate. The BOHS believed we had an imperative to offer the concepts of well-being and family impact analysis as a basis for emerging public policy.

The BOHS Legislative Committee, with assistance from AESOP, Inc. and staff at NASULGC, visited members of Congress and analyzed proposed legislation using a list of seven principles derived from family impact analysis. Questions were raised as to the extent to which the legislation improved the well-being of those directly and indirectly affected. The committee wrote a special report, "Welfare Reform: Social Justice for Children and Families" which reviewed the welfare policies of this country, described the shifts occurring in proposed legislation, and included the principles for family impact analysis. AESOP reported in November, 1995 that the principles BOHS developed were used by various members of Congress to test proposed legislation and to shift the stalemate that occurred that year!

In 1996, the BOHS created a Rapid Response Team that assembled two think tanks of faculty from land-grant universities at the University of Georgia. The thinking of participants was used to

mobilize other faculty to respond to the opportunity inherent in the federal and emerging state legislation. Based on the thinking of those faculty, a national conference was held in 1997 in Washington, DC, attended by over 100 people from a variety of universities and colleges and public and private associations and agencies. The conference was conducted as a partnership between the NASUGLC, the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, and the Economic Research Service. Conference attendees reaffirmed the use of a well-being framework as a basis for public policy education and other educational programming focused on children, youth, families, and communities. A web site was created to encourage the sharing of research, outreach programming, and references based on the well-being of children, youth, families, and communities:
(<http://www.cyfernet.org/welfare>)

The well-being framework, which we've consistently introduced to a wide variety of policy makers, citizens, and educators, is described in the next article (see pp. 71-76). We found it to be one that resonates with diverse people seeking tools to make sense of complicated public policy arising out of welfare reform. We used the framework to refocus the thinking of people from the "welfare of the few to the well-being of the many." We believe that in the years to come, and with appropriate modifications, the framework will serve society's need for "common ground" upon which to dialogue about the future of society and the quality of life of all human beings.

From Welfare to Well-Being: A Framework for Dialogue and Action

Bonnie Braun
Jean Bauer
University of Minnesota

Reprinted by permission of the authors. Published on the Internet in 1997 at
<http://www.cyfernet.mes.umn.edu/welfare/well-being.html>

Editors' note: This paper provides information about activities within the family and consumer sciences profession and a practical use for dialogue on family well-being.

The purpose of this [paper] is to suggest to the reader that a framework for analysis and response to welfare reform legislation is needed to improve communication, scholarship, education, and policy setting. Such a framework provides points of reference for people with multiple perspectives and experiences as a means of finding common ground for dialogue and action around a topic as complex and important as welfare reform. The framework of well-being was recommended by participants at two think tanks on welfare reform in November, 1996, and served as the basis for an April, 1997 conference on welfare reform.

Well-being as a Concept

The family and consumer sciences profession frequently uses the concept of “well-being” as an expression of a state of life for humans—individually and collectively. Although scholars debate the origins and applications of the concept, it seems to be one that the general public, policy makers, researchers, educators, and practitioners can use as a starting point for discussing the human condition. A useful introduction to the theoretical constructs is available from Kappa Omicron Nu, an honor society (Mitsifer, 1996).

For the purposes of this think piece, *well-being is defined as the condition of health, happiness, and freedom from want*. It is a state of being in which basic needs are met. For that state of being to be sustainable, it is one that maintains a sense of future well-being as well as current well-being.

Individual and family well-being are interdependent constructs as members of the family system affect each other and the overall quality of the family unit. Researchers at the University of Minnesota, in the Family Social Science Department of the College of Human Ecology, identified the relationship of personal well-being and the quality of family life (Rettig, Danes, & Bauer, 1991). In turn, a systems perspective acknowledges that families affect each other and the overall quality of society. Therefore, because of the reciprocity of families and society, it is prudent policy to find ways that sustain

families and communities so they can, in turn, sustain society.

Families, when they function well, provide individuals with a sense of security, belonging, and continuity based on affective relationships of love and reciprocal caring throughout the life span. If family well-being suffers, families are less able to perform the functions they ideally are intended to perform. In addition, when family well-being is at risk, democratic institutions are threatened. Families birth and nurture children—the next generation of workers and citizens—on whom all of society depends for the generation and consumption of goods and services in the private enterprise sector—the flow of wages, salaries, profits, and taxes to pay for private and collective goods and services. Families also provide care giving for everyone, and especially for those who cannot be self-sufficient—the disabled, the elderly, the sick. When families are not functioning well, society cannot function well. *At issue then is the extent to which family well-being should be used as a goal for public policy such as welfare reform.*

Well-Being as a Goal of Public Policy

Personal and family well-being vary with the policy choices and the political cultures of states and localities. They are also associated with families’ positions in the socio-economic-political structure of society. Well-being is also a measure of the fit between expectations and rewards and between needs or wants and available resources—personal, family, community. Family public policy is concerned with the variations in individual and family well-being over time and among groups of families. It centers on how best to address well-being and the extent to which it is increasing or declining (Zimmerman, 1992).

Various indicators of well-being can be collected from multiple sources and perspectives and used to determine the past, current, and desired state of well-being for children, youth, families, communities, and even society. These indicators can be used to monitor changes and measure impacts of those changes on well-being.

Well-being can be categorized into domains of social, economic, political, health, and others, to name a few. That is, we can examine data about our individual and collective resources—monetary, knowledge, skills, etc.—to know where individuals and families are in relation to others in their neighborhoods, communities, counties, states, and nation. We can look at factors which place individuals and families at risk of not having their basic needs and wants met, of having, and of exceeding those needs and wants. Researchers from many disciplines have identified those factors, or indicators, that should be monitored to inform policy and program decision making. The question is, *Do we have the political will to agree on the collection of such indicators and to finance the cost of collection, analysis, and sharing of the findings?*

To monitor effects of policies on families requires agreement on indicators of well-being and the methods of tracking the movement of those indicators. At a conference intended to mobilize the faculty and student expertise of the land-grant university system (a collaboration of USDA and universities), held in April, 1997, the 224 participants proposed indicators that should be collected. A report of the indicators they identified is included in another section of this web-site. (See list on p. 76.)

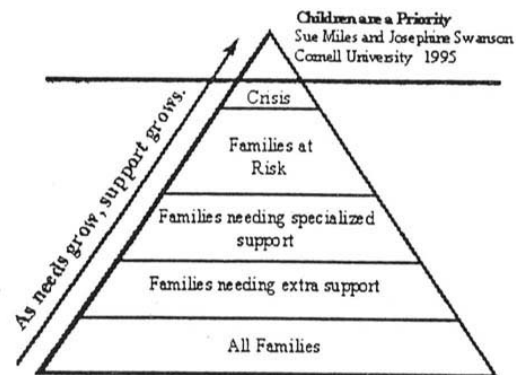
The list is intended to serve as a starting point for scholars, educators, practitioners, policy makers, agency and organization personnel and citizens of all states to use in determining markers of the human condition of well-being in their communities. Research studies, classroom courses, Extension programs can be built on these indicators and their measurement to determine the impact of welfare reform changes on a wide range of people and institutions in the years to come. However, to make sense of the data that comprises measures of well-being, additional frameworks of analysis are needed.

Well-being Frameworks for Analysis

Three frameworks are offered in this section. All provide a slightly different perspective on the condition of well-being. One is focused on

the programs offered in response to the state of well-being.

The first model originated at the Children's Defense Fund and was modified by Sue Miles and Jo Swanson, both with Extension at Cornell University (1995). Their model is that of a triangle with layers or levels of well-being from the basic needs being met to families at-risk. The Braun and Bauer modification is the addition of a level—families in crisis. The model can be used to communicate the proportion of families in each level.



Bauer & Braun, CES, University of Minnesota, Sept. 1996.

This model can be used to “map” the programs and services in communities serving those families in each category. Using the “asset-based” approach advocated by McKnight and others, such as the Minnesota-based Search Institute, the assets of families in these categories could be mapped. Projections can be made about what events in a family’s life span might move families into a category of higher need—what might precipitate even strong families to need a safety net and those who are less strong, who are more vulnerable to changes, to need even more support.

Another model for analysis of family well-being was produced by Charles Bruner and associates in Iowa (Corbett, 1993). This tool uses a matrix approach rather than a triangle. It does not visually show the proportion of families in each category. It does, however, list elements of family life that can be measured to determine if and where a family is at risk of being less than optimally safe and

secure. By adding specific statistics and other information about the condition of families in an area, the distribution of families in Bruner's three categories can be determined; **"thriving,"** those families that are growing and contributing to their well-being and that of the community; **"safe,"** families that are secure and have the potential to contribute to the community's well-being; and, **"at risk,"** those who cannot meet their needs, with growth potential and ability to contribute to the community, state, or nation, minimal.

Then, having determined the situation of families, Corbett's (1993) conceptual scheme to differentiate "dependency" on services and kinds of programs to meet those needs could be applied. His approach uses the metaphor of an onion with outer, middle, and core layers. Again, use of such a model could help a state or community determine: (a) the numbers of people currently in one of these situations, (b) set goals for numbers in those layers at points into the future, and (c) the alternative policies and programs for them.

	Nutrition	Income
At Risk	Not enough food &/or nutritional knowledge.	Unable to meet basic needs.
Safe	Hunger satisfied and basic nutritional knowledge.	Enough \$ & knowledge to meet basic needs.
Thriving	Well nourished.	Well off.

A Framework for Measuring the Potential of Comprehensive Service Strategies. - C. Bruner, 1994

Bauer & Braun, CES, University of Minnesota, 1996.

	Adults	Children
The Core	Intensive services. Jobs. Time limited financial help.	Intensive services. Education. Pregnancy prevention.
Middle	Limited assistance. Work training.	Limited services. School to jobs.
Outer	Earned tax credit. Transitional support.	Assured childcare.

Peeling the onion: Matching Reforms with Subgroups. - T. Corbett, 1993

Bauer & Braun, CES, University of Minnesota, 1996.

With any of these models, current and projected streams of federal, state, local public, and private sector funds to support those programs could then be applied to the models so that financial decisions are made—within a family impact framework (Ooms & Priester, 1988). Together with the financial status and some degree of agreement about well-being of families, states and localities can make informed decisions.

These models, and their variants, are keys to communicating among decision makers. The models also enable the user to inject relatively objective information about families that can become useful knowledge to be applied wisely to policy and programs that result from policy.

For community well-being, there is an emerging literature on "sustainability" which provides indicators of well-being of communities (Maser, 1997). Participants at the Welfare Reform Conference, "Meeting the Challenge of Welfare Reform," April 1997, based their thinking on a well-being approach to responding to welfare reforms. They urged the use of family impact analysis as a means of measuring impact and monitoring responses to welfare reform.

References

- Bruner, C., Coley, S., Gardner, S., Schon, L., & Young, N. (1994). *Making a difference: Moving to outcome-based accountability for comprehensive service reforms*.
- Corbett, T. (1993). Child poverty and welfare reform. *Focus*, 15(1), 1-17.
- Maser, C. (1997). *Sustainable community development: Principles and concepts*. St. Lucie Press: Delray Beach, FL.
- Miles, S., & Swanson, J. (1995, Spring). Children are a priority model. *AAFCS Extension Section Newsletter*.
- Mitsifer, D. I. (Ed.). (1996). *Toward a theory of family well-being*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.
- Ooms, T., & Priester, S. (Eds.). (1988). *A strategy for strengthening families using family criteria for policy making and evaluation*. Washington DC: Family Impact Seminar
- Rettig, K. D., Danes, S. M., & Bauer, J. W. (1991). Family life quality: Theory, assessment and replication. *Social Indicators Research*, 24, 69-299.
- Zimmerman, S. L. (1992). *Family policies and family well-being*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Indicators to Monitor Effects of Welfare Reform on Families

(Developed in self-selected working groups)

- I. Food and Nutritional Well-Being
 - Food Stamps (Food Security, Eligibility, and Benefits)
 - Child Nutrition Programs (Nutritional Impacts, Nutritional Standards, Eligibility, and Benefits)
 - Capacity-Building at the Local Level
- II. Children and Youth Well-Being
 - Child Care (State Allocations, Quality, Availability, Licensing Standards, Reporting Requirements)
 - Child Welfare (Placement with Relatives, Studies on Child Welfare)
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (Defining Disability Legislation Impact)
 - Child Support Enforcement (CSE) (Impact on Children, Privacy Issues)
 - Capacity-Building at the Local Level
- III. Family and Community Well-Being
 - Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families—TANF, Community Service, Work Requirements and Caseloads, Education Requirements, Work Hours, Work Requirements for Unwed Mothers, External Contracting)
 - Alien Eligibility for Welfare (Eligibility, Impact on Sponsors)
 - Capacity-Building at the Local Level.

A Practitioner's View of Family Well-Being

Judith E. Breland
CES, Mississippi State University

Dr. Breland is home economist in the Cooperative Extension Service, Mississippi State University in Stone County.

This opinion piece is an attempt to think about well-being from the perspective of my experience and to share some ideas and concerns. It seems to me that perceived needs have a relationship to the definition of family well-being, so my thinking starts there. Your acceptance of my effort in making sense of family well-being will be appreciated. My concern is that the dialogue be conducted and the theory conceptualized so that practitioners can relate to them. A dialogue on family well-being is a dialogue about families in our cities, states, and country and about our organizations, who are in a sense families. The outcome must be a win-win situation for all involved—the individual, the family, the practitioner, the researcher, the teacher.

Needs and Family Well-Being

As a practitioner and county Extension home economist in a small, rural community, the expectations of employment are that I will deliver educational programs in the area of family and consumer education to meet the needs of individuals and families within my geographic area of responsibility. The educational programs I deliver are provided through lesson plans presented at inservice training programs. All county home economists in Mississippi are receiving basically the same educational programs for their clientele. This programming is based upon local needs assessment that feeds into a specialist, who in turn provides program materials and lesson plans to address the need. From that perspective, needs assessment should provide an indicator of what individuals and families feel are those things, or needs, important to their individual well-being and that of the family.

Needs assessment, perhaps because of the implicit connotation of the words themselves, implies that families have needs that are not being realized. The question then becomes, who decides what “standard” or benchmark level of needs satisfaction constitutes well-being. If individuals at a needs assessment workshop indicate that within the family there are no needs, does that mean that these spokespersons are satisfied with their own or their family’s level of well-being? Typically, I

have had replies to needs assessment that articulate such needs as community beautification, more jobs, transportation for elderly, etc. I do not hear that they need more interpersonal relationship educational programs, more parenting programs, or more money management programs. In many instances, I am working with the county heads of human services, health department, Head Start, or WIC. Obviously these directors have some input from the various clients they see as to what needs are prevalent. But the question is “Which set of needs is most important?” Those identified by the facilitator? The individuals themselves? Or persons yet to be included in the needs assessment?

As we consider the definition of family well-being, we might use Adler’s (1981) notions. He writes in *Six Great Ideas* that the ideas we *judge by* are truth, goodness, and beauty; the ideas we *act on* are liberty, equality, and justice. In considering any one of these ideas, we have to also consider the others because our understanding of one affects the understanding of others. Being conversant with the great ideas will not prepare an individual for a profession; specialized schooling is required for that. But everyone is called to one common human vocation, that of being a good citizen and a thoughtful human being. Being conversant with the concept of well-being alone will not prepare an individual with the ability to deal with relationships and interactions inherent in the achievement of well-being.

Adler says, “I think that the constant and fixed character of human nature is something genetically determined in the case of the human species (as it is similarly determined in the case of other organic species) can be defended against the doubts or denials that have been leveled against it. But this by itself does not suffice to preserve the clarity of the distinction between human needs and individual wants. It is also necessary to answer the questions that have been raised about the effect of natural and other circumstantial factors upon the extent of human needs or what is required to satisfy them” (p. 220).

Historical Perspective

To appreciate the complexity of needs satisfaction at this time in history, I believe one must reflect on the changes that have occurred in the past 50 to 75 years. Toffler, in *The Third Wave*, suggested that the expansion of society comes in waves, and the third wave is that of communication, distancing agrarian society from communication society. Although this idea is much more apparent in the underdeveloped world where the level of living is directly connected to an agrarian base, the developed countries still experience a gap of understanding and communication because of the continuing development of technology. People are caught in the tension between the rapidly expanding technology explosion of the 1990s and lack of interpersonal skills to communicate effectively. Communication among the generations is more difficult today. For example, within an extended family, the grandfather can no longer talk about hoeing the garden with a child who is glued to the computer screen and has no clue about gardening. After all, doesn't food come from the grocery store?

In the early 1900s, social scientists and psychologists began to postulate theories of personality to explain why people acted and reacted as they do. Freud, Jung, and others began developing theories, based on early Greek ideas of personality. As the industrial age continued to blossom, time management, expressed by Taylor, became the watchword for efficiency. The theory of personality gave way to the theory of environmental conditioning. B. F. Skinner's work in the 1950s led to the idea that people could be shaped by the environment. Like Pavlov's dogs, people could be conditioned. From some of the work done in the early 1500s, Isabel Briggs Myers developed an inventory to study personality—the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory. This inventory was based on people's preference for acting in certain ways. This inventory is widely used in education, counseling, business, and industry. If nothing else, it provides a starting place for individuals to understand where others "are coming from"

and how they can better relate to those who have different preferences.

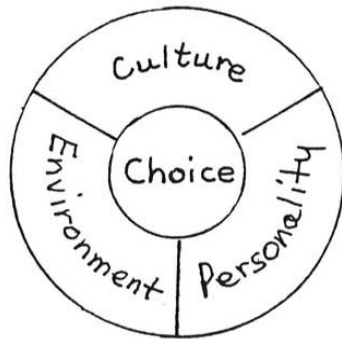
Following World War II, the war machine was turned into a production line to provide a plethora of work-saving devices from refrigerators, to vacuum cleaners, to numerous devices to make life easier. "Madison Avenue" began marketing the notion that every family had the right to a three-bedroom, two-bath, brick house with a double carport and two cars—the Great American Dream. The expectations now may even be greater.

Maslow postulated his theory of levels of human needs, noting that once the physiological needs were met for housing, food, safety, etc., then the individual moved to meet the psychological needs of socialization, which led to the higher need of self-actualization. As a practitioner, I can affirm that this hierarchy is alive and well in America today. When persons are concerned about where they will sleep that night or what they are going to eat, they are not interested in coming to a meeting. From a sociological standpoint, if they do not have clothes, if they cannot read, or other similar situations, they do not want to come to a meeting. So much of what is done in education involves a meeting. We need to think beyond meetings to other methods of promoting learning. For those who have been left behind in the stream of education, the idea of "catch-up" is overwhelming. What would be the definition of well-being for this individual or family?

A Possible Model

In my lifetime, I have worked in a variety of settings and have delivered educational programs for 14 years in the county where I now live. What I have come to believe is that the most critical action of an individual or family is a choice. I believe that the choice is influenced by environment, personality, and culture. In every choice, these three factors come into play. To make a change, an individual has to choose to change. When, through a cultural ritual, two individuals unite as a unit or family, each brings the three elements of environment, personality, and

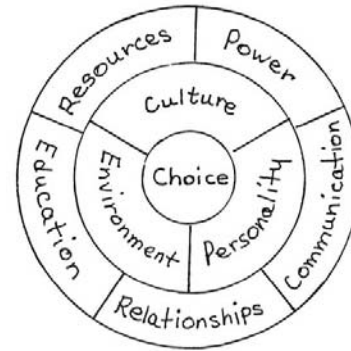
culture to the union as his/her basis for making choices (Figure 1).



The ability of those individuals to make choices that are compatible with each other is dependent upon their ability to accept the interplay between the elements in themselves and in the other, to recognize the reality that each of them has a different approach, and to appreciate the differences that each brings to the union. This is a function of personality impacted by environment and culture. I believe that the potential for recognition and internalization of the ideas that Adler projects is inherent. To achieve well-being, a family must determine what constitutes well-being for them. Then they use this as a goal. The reality is that they can reach a level in society dependent upon what their personality, environmental, and cultural elements allow.

To move the model a step further (Figure 2), the next circle expands the elements. These secondary elements—communication, power, resources, education, and relationships—are associated with well-being controlled by the initial elements that determine choice. From a practitioner standpoint, empowering individuals or families to make good choices will ensure that the level of well-being is satisfactory to them.

In a more concrete example, two individuals bring to a family (unit) their individual three elements of personality, environment, and culture. They want to purchase a house. This is a choice. If one lived in a brick home and one in a housing project, each will bring a different concept of what a house is and the responsibilities inherent in housing. The way they communicate their wants, desires, and



needs to each other, their view of their economic resources, and their knowledge of coping with the technicalities of the marketplace will affect the choices they make as a result of their personality, culture, and environment.

If as a profession we want to define a benchmark that constitutes well-being, we must take into account the personality, environmental, and cultural interplay that undergird choice. Covey (1989), writing in the arena of personal leadership, postulates that knowledge, desire, and skills in an interactive, overlapping manner create internalized principles and patterns of behavior. He says that there is a maturity continuum along which individuals move from dependence (you take care of me) to independence (I can do it myself) to interdependence (we can do it cooperatively). Effectiveness is centered on seven habits. “Because they are based on principles, they bring the maximum long-term beneficial results possible. They become the basis of a person’s character, creating an empowering center of correct maps from which an individual can effectively solve problems, maximize opportunities, and continually learn and integrate other principles in an upward spiral of growth” (p. 52). The seven habits include: be proactive; begin with the end in mind; put first things first; think win/win; seek first to understand, then to be understood; synergize; and take time to sharpen the saw. As each of these principles is expanded in the book, the complex of underlying premise is very familiar. What they lead to is “effective people,” which in turn should lead to effective workers, family members, and individuals.

As the individuals in the Covey group worked with leadership, they recognized that the habit of putting first things first was perhaps the most crucial. They said, “Principle-centered leadership is the personal empowerment that creates empowerment in the organization. It’s focusing our energy in our Circle of Influence” (p. 238). They describe a circle of influence that begins with trustworthiness. To inspire trust takes both character and competence. Character includes integrity, maturity, and an abundance mentality (the idea that life is ever expanding). Competence includes technical, conceptual, and interdependency notions. With trust, one can reach win-win agreements, become self-directing, align structure and systems, and be accountable. Here, within the realm of leadership for business, we find the basis for well-being through those intrinsic personality, cultural, and environmental elements of the individual.

Last Word

Perhaps in the long view, well-being can be established, as the poverty guideline was established, to provide a benchmark. In creating a standard, care should be taken to ensure that well-being is founded on the inherent elements and qualities that enhance freedom of choice. We might define well-being as the ability to make choices that allow individuals those rights as spelled out in the Declaration of Independence—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

References

- Adler, M. J. (1981). *Six great ideas*. New York: Macmillan.
- Baldwin, E. E. (1996). Family well-being: A conceptual guide to professional practice. In D. I. Mitstifer (Ed.), *Toward a theory of family well-being*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu.
- Covey, S. R. (1989). *Seven habits of highly effective people*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Covey, S. R., Merrill, A. R., & Merrill, R. R. (1994). *First things first*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Maslow, A. S. (1987). *Motivation and personality* (3rd. ed.). New York: Harper & Row.
- Myers, I. B. (1980). *Gifts differing*. Palo Alto, CA: Psychologist Press.