

PARENT-ADOLESCENT CONFLICT IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE: RESEARCH AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAMS

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The early years of adolescence are characterized by dramatic physical, cognitive, social, and emotional changes initiated by the onset of puberty. These changes are associated with transformations in family relationships and with the emergence and escalation of conflict between young adolescents and their parents. Research indicates that parent-adolescent conflict increases during the middle school years and involves the everyday events of family life. During this period, conflict has been found to be most evident in interactions between adolescents and their mothers. The prevalence of parent-adolescent conflict during the early adolescent years has direct implications for middle school programs, presenting an opportunity for family and consumer sciences teachers to address the real-life problems and concerns of students. By incorporating a practical problem-solving approach, teachers can empower young adolescents to resolve conflicts with parents in more effective ways, and thereby enhance family relationships.

Family and consumer sciences is concerned with the functioning of families and the significant problems of everyday life (Brown & Paolucci, 1979). By using a problem-based curriculum, family and consumer sciences teachers prepare young people for the challenges of family life. At the middle school level, family and consumer sciences teachers deal with a population of students who are undergoing dramatic physical changes and a host of cognitive, social, and emotional transitions associated with the maturational process of puberty.

The changes initiated at the onset of adolescence impact, among other things, young adolescents' conceptions and feelings about themselves and their relationships with others, including parents. In terms of family life, research has substantiated that adolescence is a period in life characterized by a transformation and reorganization in family relationships (Steinberg, 1981; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). The early years of adolescence in particular, encompassing the period of ages 10-15 years, have been linked with the emergence and escalation of conflict between young adolescents and their parents (Laursen, Coy, & Collins, 1998; Montemayor, 1986; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991). The heightened conflict that surfaces in the families of young adolescents presents unique challenges to both young people and their parents as they attempt to deal with the changing nature of their relationship. It also presents unique educational opportunities for family and consumer sciences teachers as they address the current and reoccurring practical problems confronting young adolescents in their personal life and in their family life.

The research examining parent-adolescent conflict during the transitional years of early adolescence has identified a number of important characteristics of these negatively charged interactions. First and foremost, it is important to elucidate that conflict in parent-adolescent relationships serves an important developmental function. Engaging in reciprocal exchanges that involve divergent and opposing points of view provide adolescents with opportunities to enhance interpersonal negotiation skills, think logically, abstractly and critically, and consider alternative

and/or opposing points of view (Rubenstein & Feldman, 1993; Steinberg, 1990). Conflictive interactions provide the context for psychosocial development, and in particular, the development of psychological autonomy and identity (Mazor & Enright, 1988).

Literature supports the claim that conflict is an integral and inevitable component of parent-adolescent relationships. On the other hand, although conflicts are typical during this period, they are not necessarily problematic for these relationships. In fact, the majority of families with adolescents report satisfying relationships that are generally harmonious (Adams, Montemayor, & Gullotta, 1989). Conflicts between adolescents and parents in most families are relatively infrequent, short lived, and mild in intensity (Montemayor, 1986). When disagreements do occur, they tend to involve the normal, everyday events of family life, such as household chores, family rules, personal habits and choices, social relationships, and family obligations (Allison, 1999; Montemayor, 1983; Smetana, 1989). Although arguments about major issues such as sex, drugs, religion, and politics are much less frequent during the early years of adolescence (Allison, 1999; Montemayor, 1983; Smetana & Asquith, 1994), they are a real source of conflict for some families.

A review of research suggests that conflict between parents and adolescents increases and peaks during the early years of adolescence and is associated with the onset of puberty (Holmbeck & Hill, 1991; Steinberg, 1988). Within the middle school years, several studies have found heightened levels of conflict to be most prevalent in grades six and/or seven, the transitional years between later childhood and adolescence (Allison, 1999; Galambos & Almeida, 1992; Smetana & Asquith, 1994). In addition, conflict within families occurs more often between adolescents and their mothers, and between mothers and daughters in particular (Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991).

This research-based information regarding the nature and extent of conflict in parent-adolescent relationships is pertinent to the family and consumer sciences curriculum and to middle school teachers, specifically, who prepare young adolescents for family living during a difficult and often challenging stage in the family life cycle. What, then, are the implications of this research for family and consumer sciences programs at the middle school level?

Implications

Prepare middle school students for the developmental changes associated with early adolescence.

Early adolescence is a time when dramatic changes occur in a child's physical, cognitive, and socioemotional development. During this transitional time in life, young adolescents need teachers who are knowledgeable about the changes that transpire at the onset of puberty and who are empathetic to the needs of young people at this stage in life (Tippett, 1994). Furthermore, teachers must be prepared to help young adolescents understand and deal with the sometimes confusing array of changes and emotional shifts they are likely to experience during this period (Strahan & Van Hoose, 1994).

Be responsive to individual differences and variation in young adolescent growth patterns

The variation among individual students is tremendous during the transition from childhood to adolescence. Extreme differences are evident in height and weight and in rate of maturation during the middle grade years. Because children will not exhibit the same developmental changes at the same time or in the same way during these years, a number of

children in middle school classes will be ‘out of step’ with their peers (Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991). Teachers need to be prepared for a considerable amount of variation in the maturational changes of their middle school students and be prepared for how young adolescents will react to and experience these changes (Lounsbury, 1994; Strahan & Van Hoose, 1994). This variation among children presents unique challenges to the middle school teacher. By designing instructional strategies that will be effective with a diverse group of young adolescents, teachers can be sensitive and responsive to individual needs, differences, and concerns of their students.

Incorporate research-based knowledge about parent-adolescent conflict into the family and consumer sciences curriculum

Family relationships undergo a transformation during the transition to adolescence that is often accompanied by an increase in conflict between adolescents and their parents. Teachers and students alike need to realize that conflict is a normal and expected component of adolescent-parent relationships that often escalates during this time as young people push for more independence, challenge parental authority, and seek rationales for parental demands (Santrock, 2000). This reality provides an educational opportunity for middle school teachers, especially in grades six and seven, to discuss the disagreements that young adolescents experience in their relationships with parents and help them to explore their feelings and frustrations about conflict. In addition, the prevalence of conflict in family relationships during this time provides a personally meaningful context for identifying and exploring alternative problem solving and coping strategies, as well as conflict resolution strategies. The incorporation of the research on parent-adolescent conflict into the family and consumer sciences curriculum enhances the educational and learning objectives of the middle school program while helping young people to strengthen and improve family relationships.

Recognize that gender may be an important factor in parent-adolescent conflict during the middle school years

The research literature on parent-adolescent conflict has indicated that while conflict is normative during the early years of adolescence, it is particularly evident in interactions between female adolescents and their mothers (Laursen, 1995; Montemayor, 1982). Middle school teachers, therefore, need to be aware of, and prepared for, the possibility that male and female students in their classrooms may not be experiencing the same frequency or intensity of conflict with parents, that the conflict more often involves mothers than fathers and that the mother-daughter relationship may be more strained during this period. Class discussions that contrast typical disagreements with mothers and fathers and compare the experiences of females and males within the class would be instructive in emphasizing the potential importance of gender in family conflicts and aid in the development of effective resolution strategies.

Educate parents about developmental characteristics and changes that young people confront during adolescence

Because development takes place in the context of the home and the school environment, family and consumer sciences teachers should serve as a link between early adolescents and their families (Smith & Ndon, 1994). Teachers need to inform parents about developmental characteristics of children during the transitional years from childhood to adolescence. By educating parents about the normative changes associated with the onset of puberty and discussing concerns of young adolescents, teachers can prepare parents for the conflict they will

likely experience in their relationships with young adolescents, as well as the specific issues likely to be catalysts for disputes. The 1989 Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development has recommended that middle grades schools need to help parents engage in the school and provide opportunities for parents and teachers to share and learn from each other. Through family support programs and parent advisory boards, parents can be better informed about the concerns and attitudes of adolescents that impact family relationships (Erb, Wissman, & Havlicek, 1994).

Implement FCCLA projects that focus on family relationships

Family and consumer sciences teachers should encourage students to become involved in FCCLA chapter projects that focus on healthy home relationships and help young adolescents to further explore personal interests and concerns. In-class and extended FCCLA activities enhance classroom instruction and provide additional learning opportunities for adolescents while helping them to develop leadership skills and self-confidence through their achievements.

Utilize a practical problem solving approach to teach about family relationships

Early adolescents are increasingly capable of understanding relationships because of intellectual changes that enable them to use abstract reasoning and introspection (Santrock, 2000). In family and consumer sciences, students are helped to understand that the actions and the decisions they make about and within the family have implications for other family members and for the well-being of the family. The concern with consequences for others makes family and consumer sciences unique among other school subjects, such as health and social studies, that may also include family-related concepts (Thomas, 1998). Through the practical reasoning approach, students are acquainted with multiple perspectives to a problem, thus requiring them to consider the viewpoints of others and be willing to reason with others. Through this process, early adolescents not only think about themselves in specific situations, they must also consider the impact of their actions and decisions on others (Dohner, 1994).

By addressing family conflict, family and consumer sciences teachers afford young learners the opportunity to solve real-life problems and address concerns in their daily life. By implementing practical problem-based strategies and incorporating real problems from students' actual experiences in the family, middle level family and consumer sciences teachers can challenge and empower young adolescents to resolve conflicts with parents in more effective and satisfying ways.

Conclusion

The incorporation of the research on parent-adolescent relationships during the early years of adolescence, and parent-adolescent conflict in particular, into the family and consumer sciences curriculum at the middle school level provides a means for middle school teachers to focus on issues that are of immediate concern to young adolescents. In this way, family and consumer sciences teachers can be responsive to the needs of this unique age group as they help them to understand the changes that often create tension and frustration in their relationships with parents. Further, by addressing the reoccurring, practical problems of individuals and families, family and consumer sciences teachers are in a logical position to help young adolescents understand the nature of changing family relationships at this stage of life by challenging them to reflect on their relationships with parents, gain new insights into their interactions, and ultimately enhance their relationships with parents.

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THE STUDENT AND COOPERATING TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

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The relationship between the student teacher and cooperating teacher is important in the student teaching experience in Family and Consumer Sciences. This paper provides an overview of a phenomenological study conducted to examine the nature of the relationship of the student teacher and cooperating teacher in facilitating the student's professional development. The five student teachers participating in the study were taught from a critical science perspective. If the curriculum perspective held by the student teacher and cooperating teacher are in conflict there may be difficulties for the student teacher. Themes identified are related to (a) the purpose and outcomes of the student teaching experience, (b) the relationship between the student and cooperating teacher, and (c) the knowledge and skills of the student teacher.

The relationship between the student teacher and cooperating teacher is a significant component in the preservice education of teachers. If the perspective of the cooperating teacher conflicts with the perspective learned by the student teacher, this relationship does not permit a smooth transition for the student teacher. Critical science is one perspective in Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Education (Brown, 1978; Brown & Paolucci, 1979). As we move toward this perspective preservice teachers must be prepared to use critical science-based concepts for both planning and implementing instruction. The student teaching experience is an important part of the student's preparation, and requires that cooperating teachers have an understanding of this approach. This paper gives an overview of a study conducted to examine the nature of the student teaching experience, and more specifically the relationship of the student teacher and cooperating teacher in facilitating the student's professional development. One specific objective was to examine the patterns or types of knowledge which are supported in the student teaching experience. The critical science perspective represents alternative forms of knowledge which have not been emphasized in the past.

The Critical Science Perspective

Curriculum orientations, or beliefs, held by a teacher are important to the practice of teaching. Traditionally, home economics has been approached from an empirical-rational perspective where emphasis is placed on factual and "how to" knowledge and skills. Subject matter includes foods and nutrition, clothing, housing, parenting, family relationships, and child development. In a critical science approach emphasis is placed on both subject matter and processes, that is, intellectual and social skills (Brown, 1978; Brown & Paolucci, 1979; Johnson & Fedje, 1999). Important concepts in the critical science-based perspective include recurring concerns of the family, work of the family, practical reasoning and family systems of action. Preservice teachers and cooperating teachers need to have an understanding of these concepts in order to be able to plan and implement instruction based on a critical science perspective. A teacher with a more traditional orientation may hold different educational beliefs than a teacher with a critical science orientation. Ideally, a teacher's orientation is reflected in practice. If a

cooperating teacher holds a different orientation than the student teacher, it is possible that conflict may result.

Social Relationships and Knowledge Formation

The social relationship between the student teacher and cooperating teacher are important in knowledge formation. Moore (1992) proposed a model to examine the relationship of the site supervisor and student intern as related to the forms of knowledge and practice which are implemented. Knowledge and practice can be fixed (rote, certain, used according to mandated practice) or flexible (transformative, situational, amenable to additions or change). Relationships are hierarchical (controlled, distribution of knowledge is static and delivered top-down) or collegial (participatory, knowledge is widely distributed across roles, all members can participate in its creation and use). An example of a hierarchical relationship is illustrated by the cooperating teacher who tells the student what and how to teach, or how to resolve problems, based on the cooperating teachers' own practices. In a more collegial relationship, the student and cooperating teacher work together to determine what should be done with regard to teaching or problem resolution.

The constructivist learning perspective also emphasizes the social relationship between the teacher and student and building of knowledge (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Good & Brophy, 1994). In the social constructivist view, learning is advanced by: (a) exposure to new input from others, creating an awareness of what is unknown and therefore leading to the expansion of cognitive structures; (b) exposure to new ideas that may contradict one's own beliefs and cause a reexamination and restructuring of beliefs; and (c) communication of one's own ideas to others which forces articulation and sharpens conceptualizations. As a result of such social interactions cognitive structures become more fully developed.

A balance of multiple forms of knowledge/practice may be important in the student teaching experience. However, establishing this balance may be difficult. The student teacher and cooperating teacher relationship is sometimes described in conflicting ways: mentor vs. tormentor, reciprocity and tensions, harmony of dissonance (Enz & Cook, 1992; Graham, 1993; Sudezina, Giebelhaus, & Coolican, 1997). Cooperating teachers may perceive their role in different ways, for example, as a model, mentor, guide, or facilitator (Koskela & Ganser, 1998). Ideally, the relationship would help the student develop reflective practice (Stern, 1997). Understanding the relationship of the student teacher and cooperating teacher is important in facilitating the student's development.

In the student teaching experience alternative curriculum perspectives may be held by the student teacher and cooperating teacher. Alternative curriculum perspectives represent different patterns or types of knowledge which are emphasized in teaching practice. One way these perspectives are communicated is through the dialogue and actions of the student teacher and cooperating teacher. This social relationship impacts the knowledge and practice emphasized within the experience. The student teacher's and the cooperating teacher's interpretations of this social relationship are subjective. Understanding the nature of this relationship is important to the preparation of FCS teachers.

Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of the student teaching experience in Family and Consumer Sciences. Specific objectives included the following:

1. Gain an understanding of the relationship of the student teacher and cooperating teacher in FCS.
2. Identify patterns or types of knowledge which emerge in the student teaching experiences, and the meaning of those experiences to undergraduate learners.
3. Identify patterns or types of knowledge which are emphasized by the cooperating teacher as being meaningful to undergraduate learners.
4. Examine the social construction of knowledge through the relationship of the student teacher and cooperating teacher.

A phenomenological research perspective was used to explore the nature of the experiences of the student and cooperating teacher. Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of everyday experiences (Van Manen, 1990).

Interviews were conducted during the 1997-1998 academic year with five student teachers. All participants were female and ranged in age from 22-25 years. The student teachers were taught critical science-based concepts as part of their undergraduate course work. Student teachers were interviewed at the beginning of the semester, mid-semester and after the student teaching experience concluded. Each interview was approximately one hour in length.

Interviews were conducted by the primary investigator. Interview questions included:

- How would you define FCS?
- What are the important ideas that you like students in FCS to learn?
- What are some key events that stand out in your mind about student teaching?
- In what ways was student teaching a positive experience?
- What could have made the student teaching experience better?
- Describe the ideal relationship between a student teacher and cooperating teacher?
- What was the relationship like with your cooperating teacher?
- What ideas, skills or knowledge will you take with you to a new position?
- What gaps do you think you still have?

Each student teacher completed experiences at both the middle and high school levels (eight weeks at each site), and therefore, worked with two different cooperating teachers. All ten cooperating teachers were interviewed after the completion of the experience. Interviews were conducted by an emeriti professor in FCS Education and were approximately one hour.

Interview questions included:

- How would you define FCS? What are important ideas that you would like students in FCS to learn?
- Why did you agree to be a cooperating teacher? As a cooperating teacher, what were highlights of the experience for you? What do you believe were highlights of the experience for the student teacher?
- Describe the ideal relationship between the student teacher and cooperating teacher. Describe your relationship with the student teacher.
- In what ways did you interact with the student teacher? In what ways did you help the student teacher grow professionally?
- What questions or concerns did you have before the student teacher started? While the student teacher was at the setting? After the student teacher left the setting?

Interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Transcripts were returned to the teachers to review with an opportunity to indicate desired changes in order to accurately reflect the teachers' intended meanings. The reviewed transcripts were then analyzed for themes.

The ten cooperating teachers in this study were also female and had completed from 8-31 years of teaching experience (an average of 18.6 years). Each participated in ongoing course work beyond their B.S. degree but had varying experiences related to the critical science perspective. The majority of the teachers were experienced in working with student teachers; nine of the teachers had worked with a student teacher previously (an average of seven student teachers over their career).

Themes

The overall theme of this study was that the student and cooperating teacher's relationship was important to the professional development of both the preservice and inservice teacher. The meaning and nature of the experience, however, were different. Themes related to (a) the purpose and outcomes of the student teaching experience, (b) the relationship between the student and cooperating teacher, (c) the knowledge and skills of the student teacher.

Purpose and Outcomes of the Student Teaching Experience.

For the cooperating teachers in this study the student teaching experience provided a way of examining one's own knowledge and practice. For example, one cooperating teacher, Sarah, stated the following:

. . . What I gained from my student teacher was looking through the eyes of a beginner, and not, you know, after 25 years of teaching. You don't realize you become so set . . . and it opens your eyes all of the sudden that this is what the beginner is seeing for the first time. . . .

The student teaching experience was also perceived as an opportunity for the student teacher to bring new knowledge to the cooperating teacher. The student teaching experience was further described as an opportunity to contribute to the professional development of the student teacher and as an opportunity to contribute to the profession more broadly.

For the student teachers, the experience was primarily perceived as an opportunity to apply knowledge learned as well as a career affirmation experience in order to "see if I like teaching." It was also described as an opportunity to provide the cooperating teacher with new knowledge or information. Ashley shared the following at the beginning of the semester:

I think that she does have the expectation that I'm going to have all these new and good ideas. . . . After awhile [she has done] the same things over and over again, you know, she's looking for the new ideas. And I think she does think that I'm going to bring those to her. . . and I thought 'well, I hope she's not disappointed.'

Relationship Between the Student and Cooperating Teacher.

The cooperating teachers described an ideal relationship with the student teacher as being based on components such as good communication, trust, and respect. Their actual relationship, however, was described as including both personal and professional dimensions. From a personal perspective, eight of the cooperating teachers described "friendships" with the student teacher; two relationships were not characterized in that way. The cooperating teachers also described a professional relationship by providing support, direction or guidance related to teaching. These two perspectives are illustrated in the following example by Kirsten:

I think we had a good relationship. I think it was a relationship where there were some times when I had to tell her something that maybe she didn't want to hear but I think she respected that and she listened. . . . I think we had good rapport. I didn't want it to be a mother and a daughter [relationship] but I think that she respected me as a teacher and as her teacher, and but yet we know we had a good time and laughed and had fun together.

For the student teacher, the ideal relationship with the cooperating teacher was described as based on good communication, understanding, and support for teaching. However, the actual relationships which were described included both personal and professional dimensions, but they were much more diverse than what the cooperating teachers described.

Student teachers described the personal dimension of their relationships as ranging from including friendships to no perceived friendships. An important finding is related to the professional dimension. Student teachers described they received support for teaching but also, in some instances, described confusion or conflict regarding FCS curriculum, teaching methods, and/or classroom management. One student teacher, Ashley, described the relationship in a positive way, which supported her teaching:

. . . For the most part, [the cooperating teacher] and I got along great. . . . She had file drawers full of materials that I could look through and she just let me go on my own to plan and, if I had questions then I would seek her help. . . We had it established that if I had questions I would come to her and ask; otherwise she would just let me on my own to work and figure things out.

Another student teacher, Nicki, who perceived no friendship with the cooperating teacher, experienced confusion regarding “what do to” about content and activities. She worked with Kirsten who perceived they had “good rapport” (described in the section above).

. . . I got mixed signals because she said that I could do whatever I wanted, but on the other hand she said ‘This is what you have to cover today, [because the other teacher] is covering this, and you also need to cover this, and these are the activities you need to do.’

Knowledge and Skills of the Student Teacher.

The cooperating teachers perceived the student teachers as knowledgeable. Concerns related to the student teacher's understanding of adolescents and teaching content at appropriate levels, and planning in a timely way. Jill, a cooperating teacher, stated:

. . . It seems the concern that I've had most recently would be that . . . sometimes they fly by the seat of their pants a little more than they should. . .

There were also limited concerns regarding gaps related to technical skills, (e.g; sewing skills) or subject matter knowledge, (e.g.; in-depth knowledge of the birthing process). The cooperating teachers described no concerns related to the student teacher's ability to incorporate critical science-based concepts, such as work of the family, family systems of action, or practical

reasoning. In some instances, the teachers shared that they wanted additional information regarding critical science-based perspective.

In contrast, the student teachers' descriptions about their knowledge and skills about teaching ranged from confidence to lack of confidence. Linda, a student teacher, described her confidence:

[In student teaching I learned about] . . . organizing lesson plans, organizing myself so that I'm ready to teach. . . I think that I definitely learned how I like to be prepared in order to teach at [the first site] I was just able to get everything prepared well in advance so there really was no excuse that I wouldn't be ready to teach.

The student teachers described limited concerns related to gaps in technical skills or subject matter understanding. This had been an issue prior to the student teaching semester which emerged during class discussions. While the cooperating teachers did not see the student's knowledge of critical science concepts as a concern, student teachers did talk about their concerns related to (1) degree of their own understanding related to critical science-based concepts, and (2) how to implement critical science-based concepts due to perceived constraints, (e.g., lack of knowledge, lack of teacher support). Emily shared the following:

. . . I don't even know what I'm supposed to be doing. We come in with all of these things that were supposed to tie in with work of the family . . . [and I] just don't see how [I would] be able to do it with the way the teacher wants it taught [from a traditional perspective].

Discussion

The broad purpose of this study was to examine the nature of the student teaching experience in FCS. One specific objective was to gain an understanding of the relationship of the student teacher and cooperating teacher in this experience. According to Moore (1992), the social relationship between the student teacher and cooperating teacher are important in knowledge formation. In this model, relationships were described in hierarchical and collegial dimensions. In this current study, however, the cooperating teacher and student teacher relationship was not clearly described by the participants in these dimensions. The term "friendship" seemed closest to that of a collegial relationship in which support and guidance were provided by the cooperating teacher. The student teacher who perceived "no friendship" with the cooperating teacher, described characteristics that were more hierarchical in nature, for example, in directly telling the student teacher specifically "what to teach."

Two additional objectives in this study related to the identification of patterns or types of knowledge which emerged in student teaching experience, the meanings held by the student teacher, and emphasis placed by the cooperating teacher. Moore (1992) linked social relationships to alternative dimensions of knowledge and practice: fixed and flexible. Although in-depth examples did not emerge from the interviews, illustrations of both fixed and flexible knowledge/practice were described. The application of fixed knowledge was emphasized by the student teachers. For example, for all of the student teachers the study, the experience was predominately an opportunity to apply knowledge already learned. Cooperating teachers raised concerns regarding flexible knowledge and practice. For example, concerns were raised about

the student teachers' understanding of adolescents and adapting content at appropriate levels within the specific setting.

Knowledge is also represented in the curriculum orientation which is held by the student teacher and cooperating teacher, and the ways in which knowledge is put into practice. In a traditional perspective emphasis is placed on specific subject matter and learning factual knowledge and skills. In a critical science perspective emphasis is placed on recurring concerns of the family and learning both subject matter and processes. In this study, "grand tour" interview questions were designed to elicit broad answers to gain better insights regarding participants' orientations and teaching practices. Questions about critical science were not asked directly so participants would not be led to a specific answer.

Surprisingly, a predominate theme did not exist regarding the implementation of critical science-based concepts by both the cooperating teachers and student teachers. The critical science approach is still relatively new to FCS and descriptions of conflict between orientations was anticipated. Student teachers did describe some concerns related to their own understanding and opportunities to implement the critical science perspective. It is important to note that the cooperating teachers perceived the student teachers as being knowledgeable but questions still remain as to what knowledge is being emphasized with the student teaching experience.

The last objective of this study was to examine the social construction of knowledge through the relationship of the student teacher and cooperating teacher. A constructivist learning perspective suggests that learning is promoted through experiences such as exposure to new ideas, contradiction of beliefs, or communicating ideas to others. Ideally, a constructivist learning orientation would seem ideal in facilitating the student teachers' development. Limited examples were identified in this study which suggested why this approach was implemented. Cooperating teachers described the experience as a way of examining their own knowledge and practice through "new eyes." As indicated earlier, a contradiction of curriculum orientations or beliefs was anticipated, but this did provide the opportunity to influence the experience in a positive way. The student teachers in this study may not be at a conceptual level to fully communicate differences in curriculum orientations and practice to the cooperating teacher.

The relationship between the student teacher and cooperating teacher is important to professional development of the student teacher. Relationships perceived as being more collegial appeared to facilitate development. The student teacher and cooperating teacher may hold alternative orientations about FCS which may influence the implementation of critical science-based concepts.

Implications for Practice and Research

The themes of this study suggest that the nature of the relationship between the student and cooperating teacher are important to professional development but further attention may be needed to assist both preservice and inservice teachers in examining, planning and implementing the critical science perspective. Student teachers may need further assistance in developing skills in communication regarding their curriculum perspective. Prior to the student teaching semester, both the student teacher and cooperating teacher should examine alternative relationship models which support professional development. The student teachers and cooperating teacher should also examine their curriculum perspectives and potential differences, and establish structures for implementing instruction based on these perspectives.

Additional research is needed regarding the critical science perspective and relationships which support professional development for preservice and inservice teachers in FCS. Further research is also needed regarding the knowledge and practice supported in student teaching experiences including the school setting as well as University structures. In addition, research is needed to further examine the transition of FCS from an empirical science-based perspective to a critical science-based perspective.

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EXPECTATIONS OF FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES UNDERGRADUATE INTERNS

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Internships are one educational method by which Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) professionals are prepared. A phenomenological approach was used to examine the experiences of FCS undergraduate students' internship experiences. Three major themes are identified regarding students' professional expectations: the internship experience matched, exceeded, or mismatched their expectations. Case studies are used to illustrate each of these themes.

Individuals are often prepared for professional work through experiential learning opportunities, such as internships. Frequently Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) teacher educators also serve in the role of internship coordinator and are responsible for facilitating students' learning through internship experiences. Within professional preparation the purpose of an internship should be the professional development and growth of the student. In actual practice, however, the emphasis of the internship may be the completion of work tasks or projects with little emphasis placed on students' development (Montgomery, 1999). Therefore, there is a need to better understand internships as a method for preparing individuals for professional work in FCS. The purpose of this paper is to highlight literature related to the internship as a form of experiential learning and to report the findings of a study conducted on the nature of the internship as experienced by FCS undergraduate students.

The Internship as a Learning Experience

Experiential learning is the means by which an individual builds linkages among education, work, and personal dimensions (Kolb, 1984). It also "empowers individuals to gain control over their learning and hence their lives, and to take responsibility for themselves" (Griffin, 1992, p. 32). Although experiential learning is viewed as important, and there is interest in providing students opportunities for internships as part of their educational program, there has been very little research devoted to the study of internships broadly or within the profession of FCS. Meaningful experientially-based internships are important to professional development. Internships are generally perceived as successful, however, if the experience engages students in work and if it is perceived as having a positive outcome by the participants (Bell, & Haley, 1995; Eyler, 1995). There are many variables which may contribute to the positive outcomes, or success, of an experience. Bead and Morton (1999) identified six predictors of success in internships. These include the student's academic preparation, proactiveness, positive attitude, and compensation received for the experience, such as academic credit or payment. Predictors of success also included quality of work site supervision and organizational practices and policies that structure the internship.

Martin (2000) suggested that students' expectations about the FCS profession are not always clear, however, they are a factor in the success of an internship. Academic preparation should include a dialogue about the expectations related to professional work in FCS. If students have realistic expectations they are more likely to have positive experiences; however, a discrepancy between expectations and the actual experience leads to negative outcomes (Cole &

Knowles, 1993; Feldman and Weitz, 1990; Walter & Marks, 1981). An internship is experienced through developmental stages beginning with the expectations or anticipation of what will happen and potential disillusionment regarding what really does happen in the internship (Swietzer and King, 1999).

Undergraduate students may or may not have prior experiences which help to clarify their expectations regarding professional work. If students are preparing to be teachers, they “. . . bring with them beliefs, attitudes, ideals, influences and expectations developed over years of life experience and exposure to a wide variety of teaching-learning situations and contexts” (Cole & Knowles, 1993, p. 458-459). Students’ career expectations are also influenced by work or volunteer experiences (Astin, Sax & Avalos, 1999; Luzzo, McWhirter & Hutcheson, 1997). However, students may not have had experiences which prepare them to be human services workers, community educators, or consumer advisors.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of FCS undergraduate learners in an internship program. This study examined the broad question: What is the nature of the internship experience for undergraduate interns in FCS? Specific questions included: How do interns describe their expectations about their internship experiences? What is the nature of these expectations? What is the role of expectations in the experiences of undergraduate interns?

Methodology and Sample

This study was concerned with understanding the lived experience of undergraduate interns. A phenomenological approach was used to direct the study. “Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9). One premise of a phenomenological approach is that “experience is a valid and fruitful source of knowledge (Becker, 1992, p. 10).

The sample for this study included seven students enrolled in a three-credit semester internship course. Each student completed approximately 150 hours in the internship experience. Students also attended class meetings every other week and completed written assignments. Students were purposefully selected for this study in order to represent the diversity of all students enrolled in the course, including both males and females, traditional and non-traditional age students, and various majors. Majors included one student in Family Financial Management, four students in Family Science, and two students in FCS Education.

Data was collected in various forms including: an internship application (which was completed prior to the beginning of the semester), reflective journal entries (written by students each week throughout the semester), a final reflective paper completed at the conclusion of the semester, and an exit interview conducted after the internship was complete. Data was analyzed from the beginning of the study and continuously. Significant events were identified for each student and cross-case analysis was used to identify common themes.

Findings: Expectations and the Reality of the Experience

Students’ expectations and the reality of their actual internship experience were identified through the qualitative data. Three primary themes emerged:

1. The reality of the experience matched the student’s expectations,
2. The reality of the experience exceeded the expectations held by the student, and
3. The reality of the experience mismatched the expectations held by the student.

Based on data analysis, each student in the study fit into one of these three categories. These themes are illustrated by the following case studies.

Matched Expectations: Dave and Phyllis.

Students who matched expectations experienced a ‘fit’ between what they thought would happen and what they perceived actually happened in the internship regarding their professional roles. Dave was a student majoring in Family Financial Management. From the beginning he seemed very confident about his choice of an internship site. He had been working as a part-time teller at a local bank prior to his internship. He sought out and secured an internship placement in the auditing department at the same bank. He selected a site supervisor he thought would be supportive of his work.

Dave’s major expectation was to ‘build his resume’ by gaining professional experiences through the internship. This idea of building his resume recurred throughout the semester. In a journal entry he wrote “I started to type up my resume and I think this experience will look good for future employers.” In his final paper reflecting upon his semester goals he indicated “My goal really stayed constant; I just wanted to learn as much as I could in order to gain knowledge for the future and my resume.” Building his knowledge base was an important expectation in order to give him future job advantage.

[My internship has] allowed me to learn more about banking, the financial side, and put it on my resume . . . Hopefully, it gives me a better advantage than other people who have applied for the same job, that I have had more experience and at least have a grasp about what is going on. So hopefully that will look a little better than just the average Joe that just went through college and didn’t do anything but study . . . That would give me an edge. (Dave, Exit Interview)

While Dave’s expectations were matched by the actual experience, it is interesting to note that it was more difficult than he expected.

I just expected to go there and learn and everything would fall into place. . . As I started . . . I thought ‘This is going to be a piece of cake.’ . . . I was a bit gullible going in, but everything went into place, my work hours, and my school schedule, so I could go in a couple of hours here, an hour there.

Overall, Dave had a very satisfactory experience and matched his expectation of building his resume by adding new experiences and knowledge to his already existing knowledge of his professional role.

Phyllis also experienced a match in her expectations. Phyllis appeared to be very satisfied with her internship experience. She had become interested in helping with the grief support group at her church. Initially, Phyllis thought that she would be a part of a three-person team leading the support group. However, when the experience began, she discovered that the other two volunteers were unable to participate. At this point she altered her expectations and developed a plan to conduct the support group as an individual facilitator. She seemed to adjust to this change and to be very satisfied with her experience. Phyllis summarized the experience during her exit interview by saying:

I'd like to say that the experience was very [good]. It was a tough semester but all in all it was a very good experience knowing that I helped some people and it was fun to watch their progress, to see them grow. You could tell as time went by, fewer and fewer Kleenexes were used at the group so you know people were getting stronger. . . . Personally it has been a good place for me to be this semester, helping me to work through some personal loss in my life. . . . I'm very glad that I have had this experience and it's been very rewarding. (Phyllis, Exit Interview)

Phyllis appeared to grow both professionally and personally through her internship experience. The internship matched her expectations to have an experience that allowed her to facilitate a grief support group and to observe growth in the lives of the attendees.

Exceeded Expectations: Jean and Margo.

The second theme emerged when students' expectations were exceeded in the internship experience. Jean was a non-traditional student majoring in Family Science. She completed her internship at an outpatient counseling facility for individuals' with chemical dependency and mental health problems. Her site supervisor had never supervised an intern before.

Jean's previous volunteer and practicum experiences in counseling were considered valuable by the site and she was given more responsibility than undergraduates usually were given in a similar setting. Jean expressed dissatisfaction, however, with a previous practicum experience.

I can honestly say that I did not take away anything meaningful or useful from [my prior practicum] experience -- which is in contrast to the present experience. Essentially all I did was make phone calls, that's all I did. Make phone calls and file some things and those were not the types of experiences I was after. I think that it was a situation where the person that I was working with really didn't know what to do with me . . . (Jean, Exit Interview)

This unsatisfactory experience motivated Jean to seek out a position which would fully meet her needs. She had particular criteria in mind for the types of practice in which she would be engaged:

. . . Something specific with regard to counseling, therapy, and direct contact with clients. Those were the types of things that I viewed as meaningful and the types of things that would help me to develop. (Jean, Exit Interview)

She also described learning both professionally and personally from her internship position. It was in regard to personal development that Jean exceeded the expectations for her experience.

I didn't expect to take away so much on a personal level from this [experience]. I expected to gain professional skills, to see and learn and understand, process some of what was going on. It would help my professional development . . . But what I didn't expect . . . [was] the degree of personal development that has gone along with that. . . . It was every good thing I expected in terms of professional

development but the personal growth and development from it was the ‘and more.’ It was over and above. It was that extra part that allows me to say that this was an incredible experience for me. (Jean, Exit Interview)

Jean’s outstanding experience exceeded her expectations. From the beginning she was determined to experience a professional role in a counseling setting. Jean set out to find an internship placement which would provide the experience that she wanted and ultimately she found an internship that met her expectations for professional development and went beyond her expectations for personal development.

Margo seemed to have a very satisfying internship experience. When she set out to find a placement, Margo knew that she wanted to work for the corporate office which owned the restaurant where she had been an employee for three years. She approached the director of operations with her ideas and together they developed Margo’s internship. Margo had an experience that exceeded her expectations. She described the following event as her professional turning point:

Looking back at my internship experience I can remember many daily affirmations of my professionalism. I feel like I was continually receiving feedback on my progress and development as a professional in the office. My personal turning point as a professional occurred late in my internship experience. This particular turning point for me was when I was offered the opportunity to continue working in the office as an administrative assistant and training coordinator following the end of my internship and graduation. It was a tremendous feeling knowing that I had made a professional impression during my internship experience, which lead [my site supervisor] to ask me to stay as a part of the management report team for [the organization]. (Margo, Final Paper)

Margo’s foresight to seek out the specific internship placement that she wanted paid off in the end. Throughout the semester, she described a rewarding experience that was beyond her expectations. It is evident that receiving and accepting an offer for permanent employment made this an excellent experience for Margo.

Mismatched Expectations: Nicole, Sara and Keesha.

The third theme which emerged represents a mismatch of students’ expectations. These are illustrated by three students’ experiences that each resulted in different outcomes. While Nicole’s expectations were not an initial match, she was able to overcome these differences and have a satisfactory experience. Sara and Keesha, however, also experienced a mismatch of expectations but were not able to overcome this discrepancy.

Nicole was majoring in FCS education and also pursuing teacher certification. She chose to complete an internship to increase her opportunities for future employment after graduation. Her internship was completed in a nonprofit foundation which supported youth programming. The site supervisor had experience in working with interns previously.

Nicole agreed to work at the site before she had an in-depth discussion with the site supervisor regarding the focus of her work. Early on, Nicole formulated her own concept of what her internship would be like and she believed she would be working directly with youth. Her expectations were based on her own experiences as a participant in the program as an

adolescent. Her discussions with the site supervisor clarified the position and altered her expectations.

When I got there, I found out that I was going to be raising money for the foundation. Right away I was really hesitant because [I thought] maybe I've gotten into something that I really don't want to do. . . . This was more . . . in the business world or sense than what I thought it was going to be. (Nicole, Exit Interview)

However, although there was an initial mismatch, Nicole seemed to alter her expectations as she wrote in her journal at the beginning of the semester:

I am looking forward to the rest of the semester and working with the talented staff here at [the site]. I think leadership breeds leadership and there are many talented people whom I can learn from . . . I think this will be a great learning experience as well as a possible future job. (Nicole, Journal Entry).

When asked if she would make any changes in her experience, Nicole indicated she would do it all again. It appears that once Nicole had the opportunity to clarify her expectations at the beginning of her internship, she was able to experience a match between her expectations and reality.

Sara also experienced a mismatch of her expectations, but in contrast to Nicole, was unable to overcome these differences. Sara was majoring in Family Science. She sought an internship placement within the area of social services because she was contemplating an entry-level job in this field upon graduation. For her internship position, she agreed to work with a program which provided assistance to low-income new mothers.

Sara actually started her internship before the site supervisor began her position within the agency, and before a clear position description had been developed. While her site supervisor had no experience in working with interns, other persons in the agency had worked with interns previously. By the time she first interacted with her site supervisor, Sara had already determined her expectations and what she would and would not do in the experience.

[The site supervisor] asked me what I would like to accomplish through this experience, I responded by telling her that I wanted to be active in coordinating and improving the utilization of the agency. . . [The site supervisor stated one responsibility] . . . would be to assess the needs of these moms-to-be or new mothers. However, I will only do this assessment in the office. In the past they have sent the intern out for home visits to assess the living conditions . . . Alarms went off in my head. First of all, I would never put myself at risk by going into a home I didn't know. Secondly, I am not trained to do so, and those that are, [such as caseworkers] go with a chaperone. This made me feel very uncomfortable that they would ask me to do this. It isn't my job position to do home visits. My job is the organization of outreach educational programming to enhance parenting skills and to locate resources of less fortunate or uneducated women. (Sara, Journal Entry)

The intention of the site supervisor was to provide a full experience for Sara regarding the roles and responsibilities of the agency by doing client assessments. Although Sara did eventually accompany another caseworker, she refused to take on this responsibility independently. She stated in a journal entry “I feel as though they are pushing me into something I’ve stated I don’t and won’t do.” During the exit interview, she continued to discuss the discrepancy between the expectations of the agency and her own comfort level.

. . . I really did not feel comfortable independently going into someone’s house. That’s just not for me. That was kind of a point of conflict because the whole agency is like ‘This is what we do.’ And I said, ‘This is not what I’m going to do.’ . . . I just didn’t think it was safe and then I started going on these visits with another person. I didn’t care. I just wanted another warm body with me. I started going in and I’m glad that someone was with me because I saw the environments in which most of our clients came from and I would not feel comfortable going in there by myself . . . I was just thrown in and didn’t feel comfortable with that. But then I started matching them up and doing the follow-ups and seeing how the program really worked and that was pretty beneficial. (Sara, Exit Interview)

Sara described this experience as changing her immediate career plans.

The more I became involved . . . I no longer thought this what I wanted to do, even for a year. Initially I did know that I did not want to make a career out of human services, but I felt as though the foundation in understanding family structure would allow me to administer better care to my future patients [as a nurse]. All I can say is that I was disillusioned. I don’t know what it was exactly, or whether it was a combination of different things. (Sara, Final Paper)

Overall, Sara seemed displeased with her experience. Based on her actual internship experience, Sara decided this was not the type of work she really wanted to do. Sara did express through her journal and interview that her internship experience helped her to clarify her future educational and career plans. Therefore, her internship was not entirely negative. The internship did fail, however, to meet Sara’s expectations. She seemed to be generally dissatisfied with the internship and appeared to be glad it was over.

Keesha seemed to struggle in her internship to do the type of work that she thought was of a professional nature. Through her first few reflective journal entries and discussions during the internship seminar, she expressed that she was doing mostly clerical work like copying, filing, answering phones, making phone calls, and drafting letters. Keesha became frustrated with her work because she expected her internship to be a professional experience. Keesha primarily shadowed her site supervisor and had little opportunity to assume an independent role in her internship. She summed up the lack of direction in her internship in her final paper:

Perhaps all of this confusion . . . was felt by both [my site supervisor] and myself . . . because of a lack of knowledge about each other and what we expected of each other. I think this happens to everyone once they enter a new position in the professional world. It is definitely a learning experience for both the employer

and the employee -- however, the employee must work 100 times harder to achieve the wanted results. (Keesha, Final Paper)

Overall, Keesha did not get the experience from her internship that she initially expected. She expected to assume a professional role during her internship; instead, she provided clerical support and shadowed the work of her site supervisor. Keesha did express that she liked the organization where she worked and that she was still interested in pursuing professional work in the field of family science.

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of FCS internships as experienced by undergraduate students. An important finding of this study is the role that students' expectations played in their actual internship experience. Ideally, it would seem by this time in their career preparation students would know what to expect in their professional role. A match between expectations and the actual experience would seem to be the most desirable in order to achieve positive outcomes for the student. Students in this study who matched or exceeded their expectations appeared to be more proactive with well-developed plans regarding their internship experience. Bead and Morton (1999) identified both academic preparation and proactiveness as factors which contribute to success in internships. This preparation may include academic preparation, as defined by Bead and Morton, but may also include personal preparation related to one's career goals.

The findings of this study also suggest that a mismatch of expectations does not always result in negative outcomes. However, when changes do not occur that help alter expectations for the student, learning is likely to be more limited. While this may seem to be "common sense," students' expectations and the developmental process of internships have not been addressed within FCS research-based literature. Through academic preparation we can better assist students in recognizing and developing realistic expectations regarding an internship and professional work within FCS. Pre-internship experiences might include, for example, students mentored by FCS professionals, job shadowing experiences, structured interviews with professionals or additional practicum experiences in FCS related organizations. These activities may be part of existing course work and may better assist students if they occur over time rather than as one semester events.

We cannot assume that all undergraduate students approach and enter their internships with the same level of preparation and experiences. Students enter the experience with varied levels of understanding of professional knowledge and skills. Internships need to be approached individually in order to help students' clarify and examine their expectations. Both students and site supervisors need to have a clear understanding of their expectations before the internship begins. Helping students to more fully examine their expectations and focused discussions among the student, site supervisor and internship coordinator may further assist in helping students be successful in their internship.

Through multiple experiences to increase understanding of the profession, students may be able to more fully match their expectations with the reality of their actual internship experience. Continued examination, discussion, and development of the internship experience are essential to prepare new professionals. Further research might be conducted on identification of FCS professional competencies and unique skills, an examination of the role of the site supervisor in facilitating professional skills and knowledge, or an examination of traditional and

non-traditional students in FCS internship experiences. Internships are important to the preparation of FCS undergraduate students and require our ongoing attention as the profession continues to evolve.

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INTERNET USAGE AMONG FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

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Data from a 1999 survey of FCS professionals were used to determine exposure to and use of the Internet within the field. Overall, the majority of FCS professionals are using the Internet and e-mail. Significant differences in Internet usage were found between those aged 60 and over and those under 60 for educational use of the Internet. Significant differences were also found between white and non-white respondents for e-mail usage and participation in chat groups. FCS educators were more likely than non-educators to use the Internet, including e-mailing, surfing to explore the Internet, and other educational, informational, and communication activities on the Internet.

Why should Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) education professionals be knowledgeable about the Internet? In addition to the wide variety of knowledge FCS education professionals are called upon to know each day, should they add yet another competency to their long list of duties? There are three main reasons why FCS education professionals need to stay current and knowledgeable about the Internet. First, the Internet can be a useful tool for FCS educators in many fields. Quick access to the latest information can help reduce the time spent in search of information, an important goal for a discipline that is experiencing a shortage of educators, forcing fewer people to do more (Stout, Couch, & Fowler, 1998). Second, as computer and Internet technology have become a greater part of the lives of families and individuals, FCS professionals need to be able to help prepare their clients and students to live and work in a technologically oriented society. Third, FCS professionals who work in educational fields are often the main way that FCS students are exposed to new technology before they enter the workforce, a place where technological skills and basic computer and Internet literacy are becoming a necessity (CEOs speak out, 1998; Hardy, 1998).

There has been a paucity of research on the technological skills of Family and Consumer Sciences professionals. Though few studies have looked at the technical skills required of today's FCS graduates in the job market, overall research has found that the majority of graduates today will be required to exhibit at least a basic familiarity with personal computers and the Internet. For example, a study of textile and apparel businesses found that computer literacy was rated as very important for professional competency (Arnold & Forney, 1998). This finding was accompanied by a call for greater use of the Internet in textiles and marketing education, both for technical competency and for exposure to the global business environment. A study conducted at Iowa State University found that FCS students (sampled from disciplines such as FCS education, Foods and Nutrition, Hotel/Restaurant Management, Human Development and Family Studies, and Textiles and Clothing) are less likely to use computers than students in other colleges at the university (Office of Institutional Research, 1999). Due to the lack of other studies it is not known if these findings are a national trend for Family and Consumer Sciences students. If it is a national trend, there is a need to put more emphasis on

sharing computer and Internet expertise within the discipline and addressing the problems that have prevented FCS professionals from obtaining the degree of technical literacy needed in today's classroom and global society.

Another survey distributed to FCS undergraduate students at a large southern research university found that approximately 85% of students indicated that they believed they would need to know how to find information on the Internet for their future careers (Sweaney, Manley & Meeks, 1999). An even larger percentage (94%) indicated that they would like to learn more about the Internet. Overall, the students in this study showed a strong preference for using the Internet for both personal and academic activities. This study also found that while 83% of students reported using the Internet to research a project or paper, only 56% stated that they had cited an on-line reference in a paper, and only 40% reported that they knew how to cite an on-line reference. This finding indicates that while students have learned how to find information on the Internet, they are still unsure of how to incorporate it into their research properly.

In order for FCS students to become effective FCS educators and professionals, current FCS educators must facilitate technology use within the discipline. Instructors should be expected to be ahead of their students on the learning curve. Studies have shown, however, that across all disciplines instructors often lack the time and/or resources to devote to staying current on the latest technology (DeLoughry, 1996; Hardy, 1998; Pasquinelli, 1998; Whitfield & Bishop, 1986; Woodall, 1997). Additionally, educators may be overwhelmed by the Internet and the millions of webpages it contains with its accompanying lack of organization (Brauch, Gerhold, & Patt, 1996; Carvin, 1997; Grosse, 1998). For educators, especially Family and Consumer Sciences educators who must cover for the increasing number of vacancies in the profession (Nelson, 1999), sorting through the sea of information on the Internet may not seem like a worthwhile investment.

Even current preprofessionals may not be receiving the technological training they will need to keep up with their students when they begin their careers as educators (McQueen, 1999; Moursund & Bielefeldt, 1999; Woodall, 1999). Though improving over time, many primary and secondary teachers may not have access to the Internet in their classrooms (Bare & Meek, 1998). The lack of training and resources leaves many FCS educators on their own when it comes to gaining or improving their technological skills.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the Internet use and experience of Family and Consumer Sciences professionals in order to better assess the technological status of the field. By determining actual experience and use of the Internet, it will be easier to devote resources to the skills that are most lacking among various groups of FCS professionals. This type of research also provides a benchmark for comparison to other disciplines and professionals and for self-comparisons over time. In the year 2000, the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) adopted the theme of Invest in Families: Utilizing Emerging Technology. In order to meet this AAFCS goal of ensuring that families have access to the information and resources necessary to take part in the technological revolution we are experiencing as we begin the 21st century, we must first take stock of the resources we have within the discipline.

The Data

The data in this study were collected with a fall 1999 Internet usage survey of the Georgia affiliate of the American Association for Family and Consumer Sciences (GAFCS). The survey was developed based on the National Consumers League (NCL) instrument used for their 1999 Consumers and the 21st Century study (Krane & Cottreau, 1999). The GAFCS survey was mailed out to approximately 400 members. Completed surveys were returned by 111 non-students (professionals).

On the survey, respondents were asked if they used the Internet; if so, they were then asked more specific questions about their Internet activities. Respondents were also asked to report their race, age, and occupation. The survey included questions on 15 typical Internet activities, ranging from e-mail and communication to education and entertainment. Respondents were asked to reply yes or no for each category of Internet activity.

Survey Results

Analyses of the Internet usage survey were conducted for the entire group of respondents and for three distinct subsets of respondents. Respondents who identified themselves as teachers, professors, instructors, extension agents, or any education-related professions were collapsed into one category labeled educator. Since respondents self-identified their occupation, rather than describing their job duties, it is possible that some respondents who actually have educational components to their jobs were not included in the educator sample. Results were also calculated separately for respondents aged 60 and over and non-white respondents. Non-white respondents were primarily African American (13.2%).

Results of the 1999 Internet usage survey are reported in Table 1. Values in the table represent the percentage of respondents answering affirmatively (yes) that they use the Internet for the specific activity in question. Chi-square analysis was used to determine if there were significant differences between educators and non-educators, respondents over age 60 or older and respondents under age 60, and non-white and white respondents.

Table 1
Internet Experience Questionnaire Results

(% answering yes)	All professionals (n=111)	FCS educators (n=65)	Professionals age 60 and over (n=13)	Non-white professionals (n=21)
Use the Internet	81.8%	93.8%*	69.2%	71.4%
Use e-mail	77.3%	86.2%*	69.2%	57.1%***
Use the Internet for:				
Research	75.5%	86.2%*	61.5%	71.4%
Play games	20.9%	23.1%	23.1%	33.3%
Financial Management	29.1%	26.2%	30.8%	23.8%
News, updates, weather	58.2%	61.5%	61.5%	52.4%
Gather infor. on goods & services	68.2%	75.4%	69.2%	61.9%
Purchase good or services	40.9%	43.1%	38.5%	38.1%
Chat groups	2.7%	3.1%	0.0%	9.5%***

Surf to explore websites	55.5%	67.7%	46.2%	57.1%
Find & download software	20.9%	24.6%	23.1%	33.3%
Entertainment	22.7%	24.6%	30.8%	19.0%
Hobbies & interests	39.1%	44.6%	30.8%	38.1%
Business	40.9%	43.1%	30.8%	33.3%
Education	66.4%	86.2%	23.1%	66.7%
Information	74.5%	84.6%	69.2%	66.7%
Communication	65.5%	75.4%	53.8%	57.1%

* Statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) between respondents who work as FCS educators and those who work in non-education fields, are unemployed, or retired.

* * Statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) between respondents under age sixty and respondents aged sixty and older.

* * * Statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) between non-white and white respondents.

Respondents to the survey were primarily white (84.9%) or African American (13.2%). The vast majority of professionals (84.4%) were 40 years or older. Results from the survey also showed a majority of professionals using the Internet for a variety of activities. For the entire sample, an impressive 81.8% of respondents stated they used the Internet and 77.3% indicated that they use e-mail. At least half of all respondents indicated that they use the Internet for research, getting news, updates, and weather, gathering information on goods and services, surfing to explore new websites, education, information, and communication. The categories used by less than half the respondents were playing games, financial management, purchasing goods and services, chat groups, finding and downloading software, entertainment, hobbies and interests, and business.

When comparing educators to non-educators, educators were more likely to engage in every category of Internet activity with the exception of financial management. Results found that 93.8% of educators use the Internet, and 86.2% use e-mail. Educators were significantly more likely than non-educators to use the Internet for activities such as e-mail, research, exploration of websites, education, and communication. Comparing respondents aged 60 and older with respondents under 60, fewer older respondents indicated they use the Internet in general or e-mail, but within the subcategories of Internet activities, older respondents only showed a significantly lower percentage of users for educational use. Comparing non-white respondents to white respondents, significantly fewer non-whites use e-mail than whites, but non-whites are significantly more likely to use chat groups.

Implications and Conclusions

Given the growing importance of technology in most aspects of school, home, and work, it is of the utmost importance that FCS educators and students be technologically prepared for the future. In fact, the importance of understanding the impact of technology on issues important to Family and Consumer Science professionals was highlighted at the 2000 annual meeting of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (Frankel, 2000). In terms of teaching, positive teacher/faculty attitudes toward technology can positively impact their students' use and attitudes toward technology (Robertson & Seaforth, 1999). Therefore, FCS educators can directly impact their students by embracing and promoting the use of technology.

Additionally, integration of technology into the curriculum can help to legitimize Family and Consumer Sciences as an integral part of academia, as it has in other fields (Magnuson-Martinson, 1995). The results of this study indicate that despite increased demands on their time and resources (Nelson, 1999), FCS educators are making use of Internet technology and its applications. Though the majority of respondents are using the Internet and e-mail, FCS educators seem to be the leaders in integrating technology into the FCS curriculum and professional environment. This high degree of Internet use should help maintain and improve the technological skills found in Family and Consumer Sciences. This trend should be maintained and strengthened so that FCS professionals will be leaders rather than followers in the dissemination of digital information.

Additionally, FCS educators may be able to use the vast resources of the Internet and the opportunities it provides for long-distance networking to increase their influence on public policy issues. FCS educators have a long history of influencing public policy in this country (Saunders, 2000), and the Internet provides an ideal medium for policy-shaping activities such as research, discourse, and monitoring of government activities.

A call to FCS teacher educators for “innovative, state-of-the-art programs” to increase the appeal and significance of Family and Consumer Sciences (Smith, Hall, Jones, Cory, & Ethridge, 1998) should also include the incorporation of technology into the curriculum whenever possible. Professionals should also be made aware of the vast array of materials and tools available on the Internet for life management activities such as financial management, price comparisons, and product reviews, since these particular types of resources on the Internet are especially useful in Family and Consumer Sciences. FCS educators can help allay consumers’ fears regarding the security of on-line financial transactions and teach them the criteria for judging the quality and integrity of the websites they visit. Also, by becoming more familiar with Internet resources, professionals will be able to help guide future development of FCS Internet materials and tools. FCS educators should also be made aware of grant opportunities available for technologically advancing the discipline, such as the United States Department of Agriculture’s Higher Education Challenge Grant program (<http://faeis.tamu.edu/hep/menus/msgc~1.htm>).

In order to put solutions in place to remedy deficiencies in computer literacy, the discipline must clarify which skills are most important in the field of Family and Consumer Sciences. However, there is some debate as to what constitutes computer literacy. Essentially, as technology keeps improving the user-friendliness of computer applications, skills such as programming become less important for the average education or business user. Four areas in computer technology have been identified as the most important and basic skills that students should learn: word processing, e-mail, mailing lists, and the World Wide Web (Evans, 1999). This survey found that the majority of FCS professionals, especially FCS educators, are familiar with the Internet and its communication capabilities. In order to maintain this technological vitality in Family and Consumer Sciences, these four areas should represent the minimum included in FCS education. Also, given the finding from a previous study of FCS undergraduates that students seem to prefer using the Internet instead of the library but don’t know how to properly cite Internet sources (Sweaney, Manley, & Meeks, 1999), FCS educators should emphasize Internet research skills and proper usage of Internet resources in their work. FCS educators need to become part of the educational explosion, as there are great opportunities for the FCS field to become experts in the area of training consumers on using the Internet and the tools it provides for managing daily life activities such as shopping, budgeting, education,

entertainment, and information gathering. FCS educators must be prepared for the new educational model based on an e-learning society” (Von Holzen, 2000).

A Call for Future Research

Critical to our future as FCS professionals and educators is the integration of computer technology within the FCS curriculum. One important step is to determine the “state of computer literacy” among FCS professionals and educators nationally. After trends in literacy are determined, mechanisms for addressing educational gaps through trainings and workshop opportunities nationwide can be developed. A simple strategy such as developing a concise one-page comprehensive survey on computer and Internet skills and distributing it at the AAFCS annual meeting, state level affiliate meetings, or by mailing the survey with annual dues reminders could be easily implemented with a minimum of cost and effort. A one-page survey should not add to the original or return postage costs, thereby creating a cost-effective, yet thorough survey of FCS professionals. Other strategies such as placing a survey on the AAFCS or state level affiliate websites could provide insight into the Internet and computer behaviors of members who are already actively on-line. Additionally, if leaders in the profession remained committed to distributing the survey over time, trends in technological literacy within the discipline could be determined. A collective effort would reap great rewards in the future for the profession. The survey reported in this article is but a beginning. Other state-level affiliates of AAFCS are also encouraged to share information regarding the technological experience of their members to add to the base of knowledge in the discipline.

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MEETING THE FUTURE NEED FOR FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCE EDUCATORS IN CONNECTICUT

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The shortage of practicing family and consumer science teachers (FCS) and the lack of a teacher preparation program in Connecticut have created a growing crisis. During the next 15 years, 77% of the family and consumer science (FCS) workforce in Connecticut will retire. During 1996-97, 1,772 students were turned away from FCS K-12 programs due to a lack of certified teachers. Is there a future for the 78,315 K-12 Family and Consumer Science students in the state? A survey of 312 middle and secondary school educators representing 192 schools provided baseline data for discussions with the University of Connecticut. A coordinated and collaborative effort was used to build linkages and to involve multiple partners to develop a FCS teacher education program. The synergy is building with the anticipation that a teacher education program will be in place soon.

The challenges for higher education are complex and range from leading academic transformation to responding to stakeholder needs (Penney, 1996). The 1996 American Association for Family and Consumer Science (AAFCS) resolution, which identified the shortage of teachers, became the catalyst for the Connecticut Affiliate to examine the current situation, develop new partnerships, and work to implement change.

Units at the University of Connecticut, relevant to this issue, include the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, which houses Nutritional Science and the School of Family Studies which focuses on human development and family relations. The University's School of Education had closed their home economics teacher education program in the late 1980s. The University's strategic plan called for a University program review needs assessment and evaluation process to include interdisciplinary programs. The strategic plan became the impetus for working across the University to build new partnerships. What is the future need for family and consumer science teachers and what should be the University's response to this need?

This situation is not unique. Since the Family and Consumer Science (FCS) profession has the unique focus of being the only profession exclusively focused on solving problems of the family in the context of a family, the Connecticut Affiliate needed to make its case to the University administration. The acting dean of the School of Family Studies requested that the Connecticut Affiliate of AAFCS work to establish baseline data to justify the need for FCS teacher education. A review of literature provided the basis.

Review of Literature

Schultz (1994) found that in recent years, the focus of consumer and homemaking programs had shifted to an increased emphasis in the areas of family relations and child development. The complexity of family issues with which teachers deal means that additional family life education would be required during teacher preparation.

Teacher attrition, age, and teacher involvement in recruitment affect the workforce demographics. Shen (1997) found that attrition was more prevalent early in the career and that regardless of race, teachers in urban districts had shorter teaching careers. The attrition rate was higher for young teachers during the early stages of the career and high again for older teachers approaching retirement. Secondary level teachers left the profession sooner than did elementary level teachers.

Rehm and Jackman (1995) found that the decline in home economics majors in higher education institutions did not parallel an equivalent decline in teaching positions. This critical need for teachers challenged the profession to reverse the trend. Teacher involvement in student recruitment was crucial to secondary students choosing family and consumer science careers. Hall and Miller (1989) found that if the supply of educators did not meet the demand for the program, the K-12 FCS program was often eliminated.

A study by Miller and Meszaros (1996) reported Connecticut had an undergraduate enrollment of three students with no data reported for a five-year forecast. In this same study, Maryland projected 95% of the state's new hires in FCS would come from out-of-state, and that 65% of the FCS workforce in Michigan would retire in the next five years. The authors projected that, in the next five years, 77% of all family and consumer science teaching positions could not be filled.

Home economics has historically been perceived as an integrated discipline (Collins, 1994). Bailey, Firebaugh, Haley, and Nickols (1993) reported that in order to survive in today's higher education environment, family and consumer science programs must contribute to the knowledge base, provide high quality instruction, attract outside resources, receive a fair share of university resources, and contribute to both the quality of life and the state's economic development.

In a study of baccalaureate degrees awarded in 1991-92 and in 1992-93, only two institutions (Texas Tech and Iowa State) awarded more than 20 degrees, with the University of Connecticut, one of seven institutions which awarded no degrees (Rehm and Jackman, 1995).

The School of Family Studies at the University of Connecticut and a home economics program at St. Joseph's College were the only two FCS programs in the state. The University of Massachusetts had a consumer science program without teacher education, and Framingham State (MA) prepared FCS teachers. The State of Connecticut required a Masters' degree prior to the completion of ten years of teaching. If a degree in FCS teacher education was not possible, what were the options? Would a graduate degree be an option? Were there certified teachers who would be interested in changing their area of emphasis to FCS?

Methodology

Beginning in July 1996, a small group of concerned FCS professionals, appointed by the AAFCS Connecticut Affiliate president, met to discuss the possibility of re-initiating a FCS teacher education program. The discussion focused on concerns identified by AAFCS for the nationwide teacher shortage and the need for advanced training of the current workforce. Other concerns were the fact that FCS courses were being taught by teachers not certified in the area and lack of understanding of K-12 administrators of the requirements for FCS certification.

A meeting was held with the acting dean of the School of Family Studies to discuss the current FCS teacher shortage in K-12 and the University's priorities. The dean requested that the group conduct a survey to answer the following four questions:

1. What is the profile of the current Family and Consumer Science programs in the state in regards to courses offered, student enrollment, and characteristics of the current workforce?
2. What is the anticipated future profile of the FCS K-12 teaching workforce?
3. What professional development opportunities would be of interest to FCS teachers?
4. What strategies is a current FCS professional willing to employ to contribute to the development of a teacher preparation program?

A two-part instrument was developed and pilot tested. The first section, which assessed the current course offerings and the grade levels at which the courses were taught, was to be completed by the FCS department facilitator, chair, or teacher. The second section was to be completed by all FCS professionals and focused on the length of time they had taught, retirement issues, educational opportunities of interest, and AAFCS membership status. A drawing for two free state conference registrations was added as an incentive for a timely response.

The survey was funded by the Affiliate and was compiled for mailing by the retiree members. Using the State Department of Education's mailing list, the first mailing of the survey packet, including a cover letter, was sent to 248 schools. With a 60% response rate, a second mailing was sent to 98 non-respondents. The second mailing increased the response rate to 77% with a total of 312 individual teachers responding.

Ninety-three percent (n=312) of respondents were K-12 teachers. Of that number, 310 (92.5%) were currently teaching. Eight respondents (2.3%) were employed by the Cooperative Extension System, fourteen (4.2%) were employed in the business sector and one individual (<1%) was associated with teacher education at the university level. More than one-third of the respondents were members of AAFCS and 27.2% of respondents were interested in joining the Association.

Schools offering FCS programs during the 1996-97 school year included 18 elementary schools, 161 middle schools, 60 junior high schools and 156 senior high schools for a total of 192 schools responding. The FCS programs currently being offered in the K-12 school system included nutrition and food (197 courses taught in the state), fashion and textile technology (151), child development (148), family life (124), personal management (120), and living environment (58).

Courses offered only at the high school level included child care (51), early childhood (49), food service/culinary arts (42), food service management (37), family and human services (16), fashion and textile products and services (12), and other (19). The other category included consumerism, home planning, independent living, parenting, careers in home economics, and health occupations.

For the 1995-96 school year, there were a total of 74,412 students enrolled in a FCS class or program. For the 1996-97 school year, the number of students enrolled increased 5%. For the 1995-96 school year, a total of 1,613 students in the state were turned away from a FCS program for a lack of qualified teachers. In the 1996-97 school year, a total of 1,772 students were reported to have been turned away.

There were 307 people teaching FCS with 16 vacancies identified from the previous school year (1995-96). There were 16 positions filled during the 1996-97 school year with 3 (19%) non-certified teachers hired. A total of 45 people were identified who were interested in FCS certification.

Fifteen percent of the current workforce planned to retire in the next five years with an additional 29.5% retiring within ten years. By the year 2012, over 77% of the current workforce would retire.

When asked to identify strategies for maintaining the FCS workforce, 32% identified support for a FCS teacher education program, 14% identified a willingness to recruit students for teacher education, and 11.2% were willing to develop FCS recruitment and marketing materials. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents were interested in in-service workshops of which 37.2% were interested in credit courses and 28.2% in non-credit courses. FCS teachers recognized the loss of student teachers to both infuse the current teachers with new ideas and to support the heavy teaching load of the current workforce.

Next Steps

By the time the base line data were established, there were new deans in the School of Family Studies and the School of Education. An Alumni Society for the School of Family Studies was also initiated. This group appointed a committee to work on the teacher certification problem as well. A new state supervisor for FCS provided another new partner.

The results of the survey process provided a strong indication of the need for teacher preparation. The Alumni Society worked with the Family Studies dean to conduct a workshop for FCS teachers and Family Studies faculty members. This forum provided the basis for discussion on how home economics education had evolved into a strong orientation on family and child development and on food and nutrition. Convincing the faculty members of how far the profession had evolved in the last 15 years provided the impetus to take the next step.

The survey of FCS teachers was the first step in an on-going process to create a partnership with the University of Connecticut. The Family Studies Alumni Society has continued the conversation with the School and with Nutritional Science in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Since July 2000 one person has been focused on working through the details for a combined baccalaureate and master's degree program leading to certification. Financial support is needed for a teacher educator position. The synergy is building with the anticipation that a teacher education program will be in place soon. We can only hope it is not too late to impact the future of the FCS profession within the state.

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