

The Family and Consumer Sciences Body of Knowledge and the Cultural Kaleidoscope: Research Opportunities and Challenges

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As a profession established during the Progressive Era when industrialization, immigration, urbanization, and other social forces were prevalent, family and consumer sciences is once again faced with similar social, economic, and technological societal conditions. This article addresses how family and consumer sciences, through its body of knowledge, is positioned to address the social changes of the 21st century. In particular, the article examines the family and consumer sciences body of knowledge in light of the growth in diversity or the cultural kaleidoscope by (a) providing a historical context for the body of knowledge for the profession, (b) presenting the current body of knowledge for family and consumer sciences and highlighting related research, and (c) discussing opportunities and challenges for applications in the body of knowledge for broadening the scope of research and practice to embrace the cultural kaleidoscope. The article not only contributes to the intellectual foundations of the field but also makes recommendations and identifies implications for research and practice.

Keywords: *body of knowledge; cultural diversity; family and consumer sciences practice; family and consumer sciences research*

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Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal, Vol. 37, No. 3, March 2009 266-283

DOI: 10.1177/1077727X08329561

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As the field of home economics evolved during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the body of knowledge for home economics was shaped through scholarship, discussion, and debate (Lake Placid Conferences, 1899-1909). The conditions at that time included industrialization, immigration, and urbanization, resulting in social strife, economic inequities, political discord, and health concerns, among many others. Reformers led efforts to address these problems during the Progressive Era (Chambers, 2000; Diner, 1998; Schneider & Schneider, 1993). Those in the newly established field of home economics, along with other professions, were motivated by a sense of mission to bring about necessary social change to improve living standards for individuals, families, and communities. Yet, as we have entered the 21st century, our society is once again faced with many conditions similar to those of earlier years. Furthermore, one could argue that current society reflects a "cultural kaleidoscope" with both opportunities and challenges that diversity, in its broadest sense, brings.

How is family and consumer sciences keeping pace with these changes? Historically as well as currently, family and consumer sciences has served diverse individuals, families, and communities. Yet the profession has been criticized for being a predominantly woman's field, for failing to be at the forefront of the civil rights movement, and for not proactively adopting change (Brown, 1984; Ralston, 1978; Stage & Vincenti, 1997). Thus, it behooves those in the profession to constantly conduct internal examinations to ensure that as a field we are developing and using a body of knowledge that is relevant to contemporary society, is future oriented to encompass emerging conditions, and has the broadest possible applications, including research and practice.

The purposes of this article are to (a) provide a historical context for the body of knowledge for the profession, (b) present the current body of knowledge for family and consumer sciences and highlight related research, and (c) discuss opportunities and challenges for applications in the body of knowledge for broadening the scope of research and practice to embrace the cultural kaleidoscope.

The metaphor *cultural kaleidoscope* is used to describe the vibrant, dynamic patterns that characterize the population of the United States in the early years of the 21st century. A kaleidoscope is an optical instrument in which pieces of colored glass are held loosely between plates of glass and mirrors at the end of a tube (Kaleidoscope, n.d.). The name kaleidoscope, based on the Greek word *kalos* meaning beautiful, was given by its inventor, Sir David Brewster, to connote the possibility of viewing beautiful forms within the instrument. Although diversity in the United States has been described variously as a "melting pot" (groups assimilate into mainstream culture by giving up their distinctive customs) or "salad bowl" (where groups mix together in a commonly shared environment but retain their identity), kaleidoscope is an appropriate metaphor for current reality. For example, Hodgkinson (2000/2001) points out that in the United States diversity is not distributed evenly because of clusters within certain geographic areas where cultural traditions and customs are maintained. Furthermore, time adds another dimension to diversity with groups such as recent immigrants often differing from those who are first- or second-generation immigrants. Thus, diversity in the United States is dynamic and complex. And, like the movement of the kaleidoscope, diversity offers different patterns at any given time. Thus, shifts in race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, place of residence, and immigration status,

among others, provide a kaleidoscope of constantly changing views of American society.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

New waves of immigrants enrich but also complicate life. Children of native-born Americans go to school with first-generation Americans from 10 or 15 different countries. Though the cities attract people by the millions, they repel others, who long to exchange the cities' mix of ethnic groups and economic classes for homogeneity, the teeming streets for quiet lanes, crowds for privacy. Families are living in difficult as well as interesting, changing times. (Adapted from Schneider & Schneider, 1993)

Is this a description of the United States of America in the first decade of the 21st century? No, it is not. It describes the United States at the turn of the 20th century. The similarities now and then are striking. Diversity increased exponentially in the early 1900s just as it is increasing today. According to a recent report from the U.S. Census Bureau, one out of every three persons living in the United States today is a member of a minority group (Bernstein, 2007).

The challenges and opportunities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries gave birth to the profession of home economics and others, such as social work and public administration (E. Miller, 2004; Stage & Vincenti, 1997; Stivers, 2000). Given the conditions of the time, the newly founded American Home Economics Association (AHEA) was motivated by a sense of social mission, as well as the need to identify the courses and topics germane to the field. AHEA's stated purpose was the improvement of living conditions in the home, the institutional household, and the community (AHEA, 1909). At a later juncture and based on an analysis of the writings of Ellen H. Richards, Marion Talbot, and Caroline Hunt recorded in the Lake Placid Conference Proceedings and elsewhere, Brown and Paolucci (1979) developed the following mission statement for home economics:

The mission of home economics is to enable families, both as individual units and generally as a social institution, to build and maintain systems of action which lead (1) to maturing in individual self-formation and (2) to enlightened, cooperative participation in the critique and formulation of social goals and means for accomplishing them. (p. 23)

A professional field not only needs a mission but also the content—the knowledge base—for accomplishing that mission. Research is the vital mechanism through which the body of knowledge is replenished and codified. A body of knowledge reveals the collective knowledge of a particular profession at a specific point in time (Usability Professionals' Association, 2005) that may distinguish it from the body of knowledge of another (Waite & Skinner, 2003) and establishes boundaries and the place of the profession or discipline in epistemological schemata (Bourque, Dupuis, Abran, Moore, & Tripp, 2001). Such boundaries are important because they provide the intellectual foundation for communication and successful practice (American Chamber of Commerce Executives, 2005) and help maintain the identity and cohesion of a profession (Canabal & Winchip, 2004).

Throughout the history of the profession, family and consumer sciences professionals have discussed, often debated, what should be included in the body of knowledge for the field.¹ The current body of knowledge for the profession

evolved from the Scottsdale, Arizona, meeting in October 1993 that was held to consider the position of the profession in the 21st century. Prior to this meeting, the profession was known largely as “home economics” in the United States. The attendees chose “family and consumer sciences” as the new name for the profession, and professional organizations adopted this name, including the AHEA, which became the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS; Simerly, Ralston, Harriman, & Taylor, 2000). The unifying purpose of the profession that emerged from Scottsdale states that family and consumer sciences uses an integrative approach to the relationships among individuals, families, and communities and the environments in which they function (AHEA, 1994). This statement bears similarities to the Fourth Lake Placid statement with its emphasis on integration, relationships, and environments. Basic professional beliefs including critical science and ecosystems theory highlighted in the conceptual framework are congruent with historical statements of professional emphasis.

The current body of knowledge model provides the final set of parameters for professional focus and practice in this article. The quest to revise the body of knowledge for the profession began in the last decade of the 20th century with the appointment of a task force in 1999 by the AAFCS Board of Directors to establish a forward-looking framework (Baugher et al., 2000). The group of family and consumer professionals developed a model of the body of knowledge depicted with a cube at its core with crosscutting topics. In 2001, Anderson and Nickols (2001) revised the model in conjunction with the Commemorative Lecture, “The Essence of Our Being.” This was followed in 2002-2003 with a series of articles in the *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences* on elements of the body of knowledge.² In 2003, a subsequent task force was appointed to further develop, refine, and disseminate the model (Anderson et al., 2006; Nickols et al., 2007). The refined model (Figure 1) is similar to the 2000 model but provides a greater sense of fluidity and interaction, with circles connoting the perennial nature of professional practice.

BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

The body of knowledge model (Figure 1) for family and consumer sciences presents three categories of concepts: integrative elements, core concepts, and cross-cutting themes. The body of knowledge model is designed not only to present the concepts but also to demonstrate their interrelationships, synergy, and interaction. The focus of this article is to present the core concepts of the model: basic human needs, individual well-being, family strengths, and community vitality. To provide theoretical context, the integrative elements that undergird the body of knowledge—life course development and human ecosystems—are discussed briefly. To complete the presentation of the model, the cross-cutting themes are presented at the end of this section. Examples of related research for each concept in the body of knowledge model, primarily from published articles in the *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal* in the past 10 years, are included to demonstrate current applications of the BOK in relation to the cultural kaleidoscope. These research illustrations show how the body of knowledge model can be used in total or in part to frame research projects.

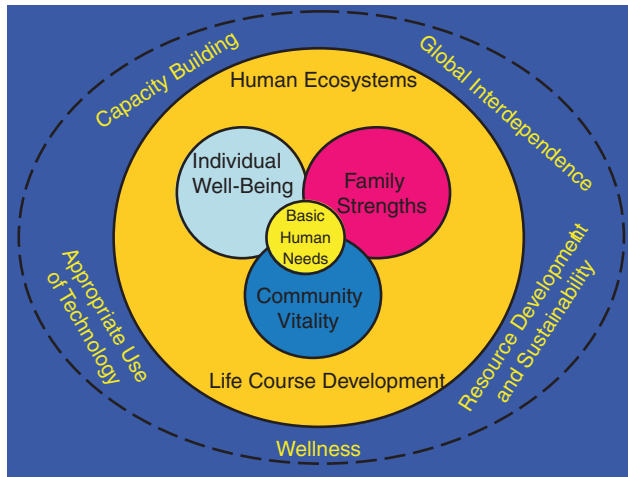


Figure 1: Body of knowledge model.

Integrative Elements

Life course development. Life course development refers to changes in individuals and families (and other social units) over historical time. Life course development has two central concepts: (a) people develop biologically and socially across their life spans in ways that influence and change their interactions with each other and with social institutions and (b) social institutions create transition points for individuals as they develop (Elder, 1998). Because of the interplay between historical circumstances and personal experiences, the development of individuals and families differs across historical time periods, resulting in the “cohort effect” (Demo, Aquilino, & Fine, 2005).

Time and change in the form of “transitions and trajectories” (Bianchi & Casper, 2005) are key factors in understanding the life course perspective. Each individual has a life trajectory consisting of the sequence of events and transitions from birth through death. These personal events and transitions are interconnected with the trajectories of others, especially parents, spouses, and children, thus converging into the collective experience of “family.” Families are strongly influenced by particular events, such as geopolitical and economic changes and technology (Price, McKenry, & Murphy, 2000). When aggregated across the families of a given historical period whose members were born in a certain time and place, and shared particular experiences, demographers are able to describe and explain family change (Bianchi & Casper, 2005). Important concepts in understanding life course development include (a) continuity (developmental stages of individuals and families; Bengtson & Allen, 1993; Price et al., 2000), (b) timing (family-related events that may be early, on time, delayed, late, or ill-timed; Demo et al., 2005), and (c) developmental history (periods of change as well as stability; Price et al., 2000).

Recent research reported in the *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal* has been framed within the concept of life course development. For example, Murry and Ponzetti (1997) analyzed American Indian adolescent female sexual behavior in the context of life course experience. Two additional studies are examples of cohort diversity as a variable in the research design: housing arrangements

of aging adults (Sherman & Combs, 1997) and cohort perceptions of self-neglect by older persons (San Filippo, Reiboldt, White, & Hails, 2007).

Human ecosystems. The human ecosystems model examines individuals and families in relation to their environments, providing a comprehensive (or holistic) understanding of relationships among individuals, families, and communities and their natural (physical), human-built, and social/behavioral environments. This model fosters the ability to understand the integrative and synergistic nature of systems through identifying the points of intersection, interdependent and reciprocal actions, and flows of energy, matter, information, and culture (Bulbolz, Eicher, & Sontag, 1994; Bulbolz & Sontag, 1993).

The human ecosystems model recognizes that different “lenses” can be used to study various elements of the model. The “microenvironment” consists of the complex of interrelations (e.g., the closest physical, psychological, and social relationships and contexts) within the immediate setting—the near environment—whereas the “macroenvironment” consists of those systems in the broader environment including the biosphere and the overarching patterns of ideology and organization of the institutions common to a particular culture (e.g., public policy, sociocultural, technological, global economy; Bulbolz et al., 1994; Deacon & Firebaugh, 1981; W. J. Lewis & Jay, 2000). The relationship between the micro- and the macrosystems, as well as intermediate systems, has been described as a nested structure, such as a set of Russian dolls (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Families are affected by factors in the macroenvironment, which may necessitate change in their microenvironment, and they affect the macroenvironment through their decision making and interaction with the elements of the more distant environments (Bulbolz et al., 1994).

Examples from family and consumer sciences research are illustrative of using the human ecosystem framework. Gillespie and Gillespie (2007) analyzed family food decision making as a function of the family’s decisions regarding food events and eating goals and priorities in the context of micro- (the family itself) or macroenvironments (e.g., economic, technological, sociocultural environments). In a study of African American adults and children, Simons and colleagues include characteristics of the macroenvironment—the neighborhood (social cohesion, religiosity, discrimination, and crime)—in examining family processes (parenting practices and family values) and children’s behavior (R. L. Simons, Simons, Burt, Brody, & Cultrona, 2005; L. G. Simons, Simons, Conger, & Brody, 2004). Kang and Kim (1998) studied clothing purchase decisions of Asian American consumers by determining the macroenvironment factors of marketing and advertising as well as within-group differences among Asian Americans.

The link between human ecosystems and life course development is made by Bengtson and Allen (1993), “the family is a microsocial group within a macrosocial context, a collection of individuals with a shared history who interact within ever-changing social contexts across ever-increasing time and space” (p. 470). Family and consumer sciences research supports the linkage between these theoretical approaches. For example, a study of generational differences between Hispanic immigrant parents and their U.S.-born children regarding food preparation and food preferences highlights the role of environmental factors affecting changes in food habits (McArthur, Anguiano, & Nocetti, 2001). Children’s exposure to nontraditional foods in school lunches, food sources (fresh food markets

vs. supermarkets), and cultural perceptions of time were influential factors in both the changes and maintenance of Hispanic family food behaviors.

Core Concepts

Basic human needs. The concepts and principles of basic human needs are central in the teaching and practice of family and consumer sciences and are derived from research conducted in family and consumer sciences and related disciplines (Anderson & Nickols, 2001). Basic human needs are defined as components of human existence that must be satisfied for individuals to develop their human capacity for personal well-being and interpersonal relationships that support social institutions and culture. There are both quantitative and qualitative thresholds that determine when basic human needs are met or not met.

Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs, a widely used framework, identifies basic human needs as physiological (e.g., food and shelter), safety, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. A more recent, large-scale empirically based study of basic human needs sponsored by the World Bank provides a universally applicable and comprehensive compilation (Narayan, Chambers, Shah, & Petesch, 2000) that broadens the dimensions of human well-being that meet basic human needs: (a) material well-being, including enough food, assets, and work; (b) bodily well-being and appearing well in health, appearance, and physical environment; (c) social well-being as in being able to care for, bring up, marry, and settle children; self-respect and dignity; and peace, harmony, and good relations with family and community; (d) security, as in civil peace, a physically safe and secure environment, lawfulness and access to justice, security in old age, confidence in the future; (e) freedom of choice and action; and (f) psychological well-being, including peace of mind, happiness, a spiritual life, and religious observance (Narayan et al., 2000).

Meeting basic human needs is undertaken by individuals, families, and communities. When basic human needs are not met, individuals, families, and communities suffer. The achievement of basic human needs can be measured by at least three concepts: quality of life (which is relative and can be perceived as the level of satisfaction with one's conditions and relationships), standard of living (which is a quantitative measure of expenditure on goods and services and is also understood to be a way of life to which members of a group or society are accustomed), and well-being (which is multidimensional, including economic security, physical, social, and emotional well-being and may include environmental, political, and spiritual dimensions as well; Alkire, 2002; McGregor & Goldsmith, 1998).

The field of family and consumer sciences is a major contributor to basic human needs research. Historically, researchers in home economics departments were pioneers in nutrition research where they played a key role in identifying the essential nutrients and establishing standards for dietary health. Today, they continue to contribute to periodic updating of the recommended dietary allowances and the identification of other standards for various populations prone to nutrition-related diseases (e.g., higher incidence of cardiovascular disease and diabetes among African Americans; Schlenker, 2001). Research in housing and resource management has contributed to the knowledge base on basic human needs of diverse groups, including perception of housing (e.g., expectations, satisfaction, and deficits), housing for older adults and special users (e.g., homeless, persons with disabilities), and ethnic differences in expenditure patterns (Beamish, Ahn, & Selling, 2001; Fan, 1998).

Individual well-being. Although articulated in slightly different ways throughout the years, individual well-being has been a central tenet of family and consumer sciences. The Lake Placid conferences definition of home economics, for example, focused on the relationship of “man” to his environment and did not include the word “family” although it was implied:

Home Economics in its most comprehensive sense is the study of the laws, conditions, principles and ideals which are concerned on the one hand with man’s immediate physical environment and on the other hand with his nature as a social being, and it is the study specially of the relations between these two factors. (Lake Placid Conference on Home Economics, 1902, pp. 70-71)

Brown and Paolucci (1979) highlight, in their mission of home economics, the building and maintaining of systems of action that lead to the “maturing in individual self formation” (p. 23). Thus, individuals and their well-being are seen as an important principle in family and consumer sciences.

The integrative elements of the body of knowledge model highlight the importance of individual well-being. For example, life course development examines the individual through developmental processes or stages. Yet human development requires social interaction processes. Dannefer and Uhlenberg (1999) argue that without social interaction and social structure, “human organisms do not become human beings and there is no life course at all” (p. 322). This need for social interaction in human development is highlighted in the human ecosystems model, which focuses on the interaction of the individual within the broader environment, including the immediate setting (e.g., family, community) and the larger social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Family and consumer sciences practice focuses on individual well-being as a clear outcome of work in the field. Stronger families or more viable communities cannot be developed without individuals “maturing in self-formation” (Brown & Paolucci, 1979). In fact, bringing about change in families and communities is often reaching “one individual at a time.” For example, research highlights the impact of nutrition education on food insecurity among Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program graduates and those who terminated, demonstrating that food selection management skills can be related to decrease in the risk of food insecurity (Dollahite, Olson, & Scott-Pierce, 2003). Another study shows that the level of financial satisfaction can distinguish those who have thought about divorce from those who have not (Grable, Britt, & Cantrell, 2007). As a final example, research on the work situations of mothers shows that those in more preferred situations experience fewer negative emotions and more positive emotions (Jacob, 2008), pointing out the importance of family and consumer sciences in instructing youth about personal development and preparation for work.

Family strengths. Family strengths include the resilient characteristics of families regardless of the family structure, how they interact with each other and with others outside the family unit, and the application of a variety of strategies to cope with situations in daily life. The strengths in the individual members of a family help families to endure for decades and centuries by resisting forces that otherwise destroy the family. The family resiliency research (McCubbin, McCubbin, Thompson, Han, & Allen, 1997; Stinnett & DeFrain, 1985) has identified protective factors that enable families to deal with stressors and transitions throughout the

family life course and the characteristics that facilitate families' recovery from crises. Based on a family systems model, the McCubbin team identified 10 general resiliency traits, defined as protective and recovery factors: (a) family problem-solving communication (emphasis on affirming style of communication vs. incendiary), (b) equality (self-reliance and independence grounded in equality), (c) spirituality (finding meaning in beliefs and practices), (d) flexibility (ability to change patterns of functioning), (e) truthfulness (within the family system and from external sources), (f) hope (wishes or desires that are accompanied by a confident expectation of fulfillment), (g) family hardiness (ability to rally collective strength to maintain integrity and purpose), (h) family time and routines (patterns that create predictability and balance), (i) social support (extant and newly created sources of support that foster the ability to change), and (j) health (physical and emotional well-being).

With the changing cultural kaleidoscope, the definition of family itself has changed over time. By the 1990s, family diversity was considered normative, and the notion of a singular definition of the family had nearly disappeared having been replaced by inclusive pluralistic patterns and relationships (Emery & Lloyd, 2001). There also was a shift in the examination of race and ethnicity in family studies from simple demographic categories of race and the assumption of deficiencies and dysfunction toward recognition of sociohistorical context and the resilience and adaptiveness of families of color (Taylor, 2000, cited in Emery & Lloyd, 2001). Gender diversity also became more prominent in family research with parent education broadening to include men as well as women (Grant, 1997).

Recent family research has continued to expand beyond the circumscribed middle-class and Euro-American approaches. In studies of parenting, for example, Fitzpatrick, Caldera, Pursley, and Wampler (1999) examined Hispanic mothers' and fathers' views of the fathering role and found that they identified fathering in a multifaceted way, including instrumental providers, disciplinarians, role models, teachers, participants, playmates, and emotional supporters. Galbraith and Schvaneveldt (2005) analyzed three leadership styles of parents (the father/mother "executive system") in an exploratory study of the relationship between leadership style (transformational, transactional, laissez-faire) to family outcome variables. Such studies expanded to diverse ethnic and socioeconomic groups will further develop our knowledge base regarding adult role behavior and family strengths.

Community vitality. A community is a group of persons living in a specific place or geographic region or "a group of people having common interests" (Houghton Mifflin, 2000). There are several types of communities. These may be distinguished by the roles they assume within society, the level of cohesion that exists within them, as well as the value that they add to the common good and morality of society as a whole (Etzioni, 2001). "Communities foster a sense of belonging and . . . support [the] well-being" of individuals and families (Baugher et al., 2000, p. 30). Vitality can be described as the capacity to live, grow, or develop. The concept of vitality has been connected with health in discussions of community vitality (see, e.g., Crabtree, 2001; Fain & Lewis, 2002).

The evidence is considerable that family and consumer sciences is working to make communities a vital part of our society. Master's and doctoral research listed in the *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal* frequently included community-focused topics such as aging, community analysis and planning, community education, community service involvement, community partnerships, and community

violence, among many others (Makela, 2004, 2005). Other family and consumer sciences research on community vitality has focused on rural retailers' level of satisfaction with their businesses (N. Miller, Kean, & Littrell, 1999a, 1999b), virtual community and aesthetic approaches (Rehm, 2000), and "sense of place" and "sense of loss" of older adults in changing communities (Cook, Martin, Yearns, & Damhorst, 2007). Yet research relating community vitality and diversity is less prevalent in the literature, although a few studies have examined immigrant populations in relation to coping strategies and intergenerational transfers (Reiboldt & Goldstein, 2000; D. Lewis, 2008). More research is needed that reflects diverse populations in communities and their contributions to community vitality.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Cross-cutting themes are trends and issues within society that may reflect contemporary realities as well as historical continuity (Anderson & Nickols, 2001). These themes provide recognition that the profession is practiced in the context of an ever-changing environment (Anderson & Nickols, 2001). The body of knowledge model includes five cross-cutting themes: capacity building, global interdependence, resource development and sustainability, technology (appropriate use), and wellness. Capacity building will be highlighted here as one example of a cross-cutting theme in relation to the cultural kaleidoscope.

In their Commemorative Lecture, Anderson and Nickols define capacity building as "acquiring and using knowledge and skills, building on assets and strengths, respecting diversity, responding to change, and creating the future" (as cited in Miles & Ralston, 2002, p. 11). Buck (2003) provides an operational definition of building capacity: "increasing internal and external leadership skills in order to move an individual, group or project forward" (p. 9).

Capacity building of family and consumer sciences teachers is particularly important, given their presence in thousands of classrooms and schools in an increasingly diverse society. Rehm and Allison (2006), in their study of practices used by family and consumer sciences teachers in teaching culturally diverse students in Florida, found that a majority of teachers adapted teaching strategies, instructions for assignments, student grouping patterns, and communication yet only a fifth adapted teaching goals, texts, or classroom rules, suggesting the need for preservice and in-service education. Further capacity building is related to identifying, recruiting, and retaining preprofessionals from diverse backgrounds for family and consumer sciences professionals. Eastman, Cummings, Petersen, and Van Leeuwen (2006) describe one successful program where one-on-one mentoring relationships were established between family and consumer sciences students from a comprehensive university and Hispanic mentees from a community college. The Hispanic mentees had significant increases in both cognitive and affective mean scores regarding teaching family and consumer sciences, their desired career path. Such models encourage building the capacity of diverse populations for future roles in the profession.

APPLICATIONS OF THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

This section discusses the opportunities and challenges of applying the body of knowledge in relation to the real world we seek to understand and in which we live and practice our profession. Considering the growth of diversity and yet the

profession's history of not keeping pace with societal change to the extent possible, this discussion provides guidance for both scholars and practitioners to make the family and consumer sciences body of knowledge universal, relevant, and future oriented. Specifically, three applications are discussed: strengthening theory development, addressing swiftness of change, and using the body of knowledge to frame both immediate and perennial problems.

Strengthening Theory Development

In applying the body of knowledge, a key opportunity for scholars in family and consumer sciences is to further develop theories that encompass diverse groups. Price et al. (2000), in discussing life course development, have argued that increasing diversity of family composition and roles necessitate alternative models. Alternative models incorporate divorce (Downs, Coleman, & Ganong, 2000), remarriage and formation of a blended family (Crosbie-Burnett & McClintic, 2000), and families living in poverty (Seccombe, 2000). Leigh (2000) argues for the need for a model that covers the development of cohabiting and never-married families across their life course. Finally, new models attempt to avoid the assumption of linearity evident in previous life cycle or life course models (Price et al., 2000).

In recent years, feminist theories have added new insights to the study of families and society, in particular how gender contributes to the design of research and the resulting conclusions and theories (Ferree, 1990; Fox & Murry, 2000; Withers & Thorne, 1993). A feminist theoretical approach provides a lens through which research can be conducted. For example, recent studies in medicine reveal that women's symptoms of heart disease and heart attack (the number one killer of women) were different from men's symptoms (American Heart Association, 2008). Klasen (2007) identified the large gender gaps in many indicators of well-being, including mortality, education, earnings, and safety, that persist across the world. Family and consumer sciences research needs to be broadened to use expanded theoretical approaches to frame forward-thinking studies that reflect the cultural kaleidoscope and enrich the body of knowledge.

There are many areas in which family and consumer sciences researchers can broaden the theories in the field and in related disciplines. Some questions around which theories might be developed include the following: What consumer values explain the increasing number of households purchasing energy-efficient appliances, adopting "green technology," adopting consumer behavior that supports locally produced products (such as community-supported agriculture), and even reducing consumption? Do these values and behaviors differ among families in the cultural kaleidoscope? What are the interrelationships between families, health care systems, and the legal system in relation to developments in reproductive technology? What internal family characteristics and what environmental factors influence adoption of advanced reproductive technology? Are there variations among families in the cultural kaleidoscope? Approaching such questions using the body of knowledge concepts to address issues of housing design, engineering technology, social space, reproductive technology, the changing economy, and other macroenvironment elements in relation to the core concepts of the body of knowledge could add to our understanding of these and other complex questions.

Addressing Swiftness of Change

Family and consumer sciences research will be challenged by the swiftness of change itself in U.S. as well as global society. The cultural kaleidoscope of the 21st

century suggests that individuals, families, and communities will become even more diverse than presently. As individuals, diverse factors such as age, race/ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, and/or place of residence add complexity, especially in relation to access to resources. Within families, consider the variety today: interracial and intercultural families, immigrant families, gay and lesbian families, grandparents raising grandchildren, single-parent families, military families with one or both parents on active duty, and individuals coming together to form a family relationship because of disasters such as terrorism or devastating weather events such as a tsunami or hurricane. Furthermore, there is fluidity in how communities are being comprised in many geographic areas. As a case in point, there are counties within current states where the minority is the majority (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Family and consumer sciences researchers and practitioners not only will need to be demographically savvy but also will need to keep pace with changes over time and to make sure that research reflects family strengths, resiliency, and effective interventions in addition to problem identification.

In addressing the challenge of the swiftness of change in the cultural kaleidoscope, family and consumer sciences researchers can use the strengths of the body of knowledge model in framing research. For example, with wellness as a cross-cutting theme and a key societal issue, family and consumer sciences can change the paradigm in framing studies from the disease approach to using the integrative human ecosystems framework. Public health, medicine, and other health disciplines are recognizing the importance of prevention and early intervention in addressing health of individuals, families, and communities. For example, at the 2007 American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Julie Gerberding, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, called for a shift in the way U.S. society approaches health. She outlined how too much emphasis is placed on care for people who have already developed disease with not enough attention to keeping people healthy and reducing vulnerabilities. She proposed a systemwide change to establish a "health system" rather than a "health care system" (Gerberding, 2007).

Furthermore, family and consumer sciences researchers can address the swiftness of change in the cultural kaleidoscope by taking the lead in ensuring that those in the field have a knowledge base that can enhance cultural competence. For example, Schlenker (2001) has noted that the need for culturally appropriate nutrition materials to address the concerns of individual groups will grow in importance as the U.S. population becomes more diverse in age, ethnicity, and health status. Similar to Paulin's (2001) work that examined the variations in intraethnic food purchase patterns among the various groups identified as "Hispanic," researchers in the field can go beyond a more homogeneous approach in studying diverse groups to examining within-group differences. This is particularly important with the increasing number of immigrant groups that has led to increased within-group diversity among Black Americans (e.g., native Black Americans, Caribbean Americans, African immigrants, among others) and Hispanics (e.g., Central America immigrants, Columbian Americans, Cuban Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Rican Americans, among others).

Finally, researchers can address the swiftness of change by examining needs related to embracing diversity. Rodman and Hildreth (2002) observed that appreciation of cultural heritage and ethnic diversity, as concepts related to family

strengths, can be conveyed through storybooks. In their study of children's storybooks over a 50-year time span, they found that stereotyped images of ethnic groups and family types remained common. Although multiple family types and ethnicities began to be portrayed, the trend was not sufficiently strong enough to achieve a statistically significant difference by the mid-1990s. This research has implications for what we teach in family and consumer sciences from middle school through graduate education.

Addressing Current and Perennial Problems

A final opportunity related to family and consumer sciences research is the need (and perhaps responsibility) to use the body of knowledge model to frame research that will address both immediate as well as perennial problems. For example, the cross-cutting theme of resource development and sustainability is reflected in the current crisis of foreclosures and mortgage defaults that is disproportionately affecting minority populations (Calem, Gillen, & Wachter, 2004; Pedersen & Delgado, 2007). Research is needed that focuses not only on the consumer perspective of this problem—especially the disproportionate nature of which consumers were possibly targeted and ultimately affected—but also the public policy and practices that allowed this crisis to occur. Furthermore, subprime lending and the crisis in mortgage defaults and foreclosures most likely will lead to adaptations in the theory of housing adjustment (Morris & Winter, 1978).

Research on current and perennial problems can be strengthened by critically examining existing literature on the cultural kaleidoscope and the body of knowledge in the field. In this article, we have highlighted some of this research, yet further work should be done to provide a more thorough and critical review. Of particular need are reviews that address qualitative indicators such as how well conceived the studies are, the appropriateness of design methods, the extent that findings are valid and reliable, and the importance of implications for public policy and practice in the field. Clearly, such reviews can provide the necessary foundation for the next phase of scholarship related to diversity and the body of knowledge.

But the awareness that scholarship in cultural diversity is not at the level it should be in family and consumer sciences is a perennial problem itself. Dilworth-Anderson (2005), in reflecting on implications of change in family science research, makes the following point: "In any discipline many factors encourage and sometimes demand that scientists practice their craft in a new or different manner. In American society, and some would argue globally, scientists are faced with the changing demographic landscape" (p. 15). She issues a call to action, stating that such changes "demand an examination, if not a revolution, in how [we] practice [our] science, from theory and methodology to interpretation of findings" (p. 15). In family and consumer sciences research, we need a similar revolution.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the family and consumer sciences body of knowledge in relation to the cultural kaleidoscope. Specifically, the article has provided a historical context for the body of knowledge, presented the latest model for the body of knowledge highlighting research examples, and discussed opportunities and

challenges of applications related to research and practice. As we go forward, the body of knowledge will need continued refinement and updating to keep it fresh and relevant. One of the criticisms of family and consumer sciences is that we perhaps do not keep our body of knowledge up-to-date and wait until there are critical issues before we begin to examine changes. A proactive stance is to predict change and, more important, create the future that we want. The family and consumer sciences body of knowledge can be used to influence this future.

NOTES

1. Twentieth century-based documents that emerged from such deliberations include “New Directions” (Scott et al., 1959), “New Directions II” (Bivens et al., 1975), *Home Economics: A Definition* (Brown & Paolucci, 1979), *Home Economics Concepts: A Base for Curriculum Development* (AHEA, 1989), “Conceptual Framework and the Proposed Name for the Profession” (AHEA, 1994), and the National Standards for Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences (Erickson, Fox, & Stewart, 2004).

2. See, for example, Andrews (2003), Atiles and Cude (2002), Buck (2003), Fain and Lewis (2002), Makela (2003), Meszaros (2002), Miles and Ralston (2002), Nickols (2003), Nickols-Richardson (2002), and Price and McKenry (2003).

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