

W We The People: Renewing Comm

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It is the great American experiment . . . a democratic society . . . of the people, by the people, for the people. It is the gift of a way of life that was launched with informed thought and paid for in blood. It is a gift that continues through word, deed, and yes, through more bloodshed of American citizens. It is a gift that will keep on giving only as long as American citizens consider civic, or democratic, engagement

important. Indeed, to sustain a democratic society, it is a must.

The family and consumer sciences profession (FCS), with its focus on families as the basic socio-economic unit of a democracy and on individuals as consumers, has the potential for contributing to the sustainability of society. There are roles to be played both collectively, as a professional associa-



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Commitment To Civic Engagement

There is a fundamental linkage between democracy and human development.

tion, and individually to fulfill the organization's mission to be a source and voice for families. The intent of this article is to help renew commitment to democratic engagement among members of the FCS profession. The article reminds readers of the legacies of both the early founders of this nation and the FCS profession; reviews current thinking about civic, or democratic engagement; and suggests tangible roles for all FCS professionals.

Democracy, Individuals and Families

No society can remain vital or even survive without a reasonable base of shared values – and such values are not established by edict from lofty levels of the society. They are generated chiefly in the family, school, church, and other intimate settings in which people deal with one another face to face.

John W. Gardner
Community, 1991

John Gardner wrote about the vital link between shared values and survival of freedom, and the role of interpersonal interaction within social units as a means of protecting and nurturing democracy. Strong, resilient families and supportive communities are the first line of homeland defense and development of those values.

This link between democracy and human development within families was the topic of Brown's classic publication, *Philosophical Studies of Home Economics in the United States* (1985). Brown pointed out that democracy directs our social and political thought and action. Those who

are democratic seek to create a government and a set of procedures that will be consistent with the principles of the *ideal democracy*. Ideal democracy is concerned with the creation of conditions in which the development and use of the potentialities of each person are maximized. Thus, Brown concluded that there is a fundamental linkage between democracy and human development.

In the late 1990s, Robert Theobald, a futurist, encouraged the FCS profession to be at the vanguard of change in the face of overwhelming challenges facing humankind at the start of the 21st century. He saw the profession as a potential contributor to a *compassionate era* (Theobald, 1997). Braun (1998) termed it a *human ecological era*, in which our nation might achieve, in the arena of human well-being, the equivalent of what was achieved during the agricultural, industrial, and informational eras.

According to Theobald (1997), the future is too important to be left to experts alone; it must be created by citizens engaged in exploring common ground. One means of engaging citizens is through the connection to their children and grandchildren because, as Garbarino (1988) said, it is through family that we understand the future—*as if it mattered*.

The family is key to civic engagement. Barbara Roberts, an Oregon State Representative, contends that when people are personally involved in a public issue, they will actively participate in policy actions related to the issue. Issues of family concerns are personal. "You are only one cause, one concern, one tragedy, one moral indignation, one economic crisis away from political involvement" (Family Community Leadership, 1986, One step away leader guide, p. 1).

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Threat as Opportunity

Recent downturns in the economy and the aftermath of the attacks of September 11th reminded Americans how quickly events in one part of the nation, and world, affect the home. Immediate responses included non-partisan cooperation in Congress, patriotic pride and volunteerism, and thought-probing and insightful news media coverage. Movie-goers filled theatres to see a variety of war movies while military action involving Americans was back on the evening news. But is this kind of activity likely to sustain a democracy?

The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation (2002) polled over 1,000 people and concluded that Americans do not think that patriotic feelings are a replacement for substance in politics and action in civic life. In fact, citizens think civic responsibility and political conduct are more than just waving the flag, singing patriotic songs and giving blood or donating funds. The Harwood Institute concluded that it is time to give Americans a way to convert their expressions of hope and love of country into a true commitment to positive political change. What might be the catalyst that will reengage private citizens and professionals in the public work of making policy?

Reengagement Implies Previous Disengagement

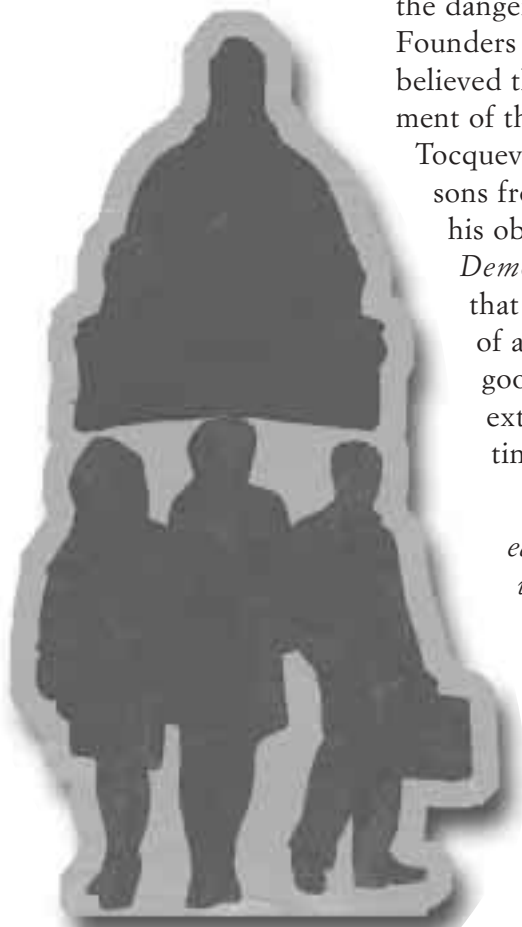
Before the catalyst can be identified, it is important to understand the danger of disengagement and its prevalence in American society. Founders of this nation, such as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, believed that democracy could be preserved through active involvement of the citizenry in public decision-making. Alexis de

Tocqueville, who toured the new nation to observe and learn lessons from the first 50 years of its existence, originally published his observations and conclusions in 1835 and 1840 in *Democracy in America* (de Tocqueville, 1969). He believed that mores, or habits of the heart, were the key to maintenance of a democracy. He noted the tension between the common good and the individual good and warned that, taken to an extreme, the individualism of Americans could lead to forgetting ancestors, peers and descendants.

Individualism is a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself.

de Tocqueville

One hundred and fifty years after de Tocqueville, another social sciences observer and his colleagues reported their observations of American society in *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). Bellah and associates conducted their research based upon the belief that



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“a free society needs constantly to consider and discuss its present reality in the light of its past traditions and where it wants to go” (Bellah et al., p. 307). They concluded that “the individual and society are not in a zero-sum situation: that a strong group that respects individual differences will strengthen autonomy as well as solidarity: that it is not in groups but in isolation that people are most apt to be homogenized” (Bellah et al., p. 307).

In 2000, another sociologist, Robert Putnam, writing in *Bowling Alone*, described the ebbing of community over the last several decades and challenged Americans to adopt an agenda for recreating social capital. Putnam demonstrated that fewer and fewer contemporary Americans are doing much of anything collectively—voting, rallying around shared causes, inviting each other into their homes or discussing issues of common concern. When Americans do occasionally gather, it is more often only an excuse to focus on themselves in the presence of an audience. According to his research, just as de Tocqueville warned, growing individualism or *atomization*, poses a grave threat to the nation’s welfare.

Democracy relies on financial capital, labor and natural resources for smooth functioning. It also relies on social capital to foster cooperation, trust, and a sense of shared stewardship of the common good. Deficiencies in social capital can lead to political disorganization, poverty, crime, neglect of children’s education and welfare, and widespread loneliness and depression. Indicators of these conditions in America are numerous. Taken to their extreme, these deficiencies could destroy the fabric of American society. Putnam argued that the time has come to reweave the fabric of our communities as a step in strengthening American democracy.

Sociologists are not alone in addressing the worth of community. A group of foundation executives met for several years to explore both how a civil society functions and the problems that undermine a democratic civil order (Kettering Foundation, 1999). At first, their discussions focused on the disconnect between individuals and government. Their initial view was that individuals

and governments are two distinctly different and isolated entities that could be conceptualized as two separate boxes. As discussions progressed, the participants concluded that something very important exists between government and individuals—community. And, it is in this third entity, community, that the important public work of problem-solving and opportunity-creation exists.

Figure 1 depicts the concept of civil society with many more individuals than governments connected by community. In this model, community includes non-governmental organizations and a large number of informal associations. Civic associations and networks serve a variety of social problem-solving functions that draw on the social relationships that people form.

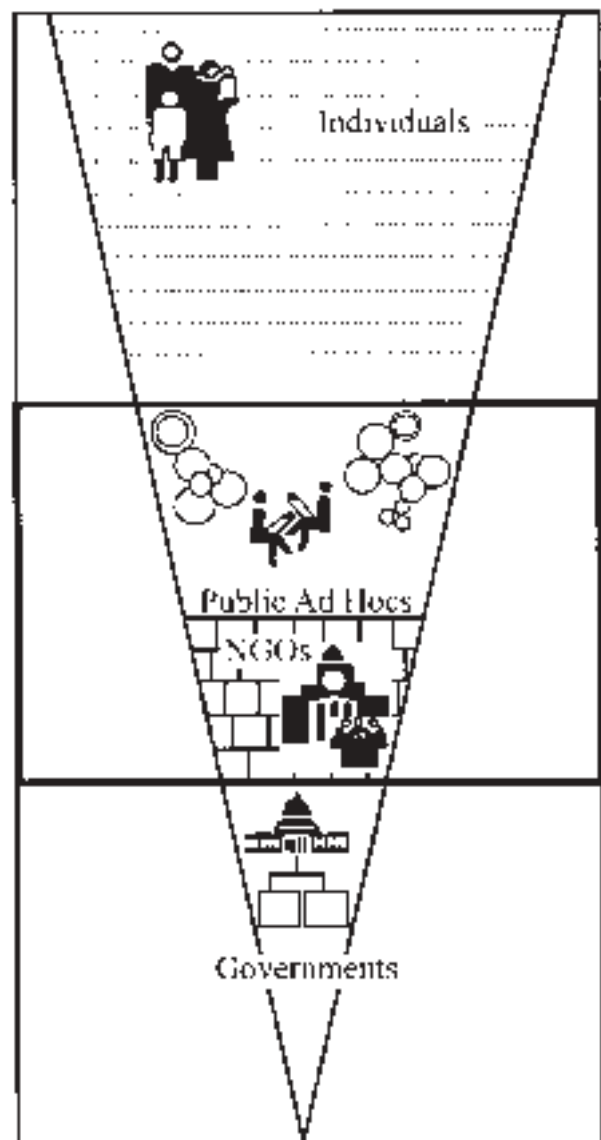


Figure 1. Concept of Civil Society.

All communities have leaders, but the leaders in a community in which civil society is strong are of a different sort.

Characteristics of Healthy Civil Societies

Yankelovich (1991) suggested that to make democracy work, *the people* must be actively involved in making public judgments. In short, he suggested that to preserve American democracy there is something for everyone to do—average citizens, institutions, people in positions of leadership, experts, government officials, the media. Yankelovich concluded that involvement of a wide range of individuals and groups is the way things get done in a healthy democracy. Mathews (1999, p.1) defines *the people* or *the public* as: “a diverse body of citizens jointed together in ever-changing alliances to make choices about how to advance their common well-being.”

Healthy civil societies, or communities with a strong public life, are distinctive in several ways, according to the Kettering Foundation. They have a different approach to problem-solving—an approach that involves many people. People in such societies are voracious learners—often adapting but seldom imitating. They benefit from lateral citizen-to-citizen action that might be called public action or public work. This public action serves to supplement and reinforce official action. Citizens in a healthy civil society are prone to be critical of government, but they are not alienated. Agencies of government may be regarded as less important because people are not dependent upon them. All communities have leaders, but the leaders in a community in which civil society is strong are of a different sort. These community leaders are not so much gatekeepers as door-openers.

The attitudes, norms, and political culture of a healthy civil society are also distinctive. People in such a society are in the habit of owning their problems rather than blaming others, and they take a greater degree of responsibility for their future—they are engaged.

This kind of engaged, learning society, fits the concepts advanced by the founders of America. In 1765, John Adams said, “Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people . . .” (Bartlett, 1980, p. 380).

Thus, public education was considered a key to the American democratic experiment. Another key was the active involvement of an educated citizenry in public policy.

The early history of land-grant universities, and particularly of Cooperative Extension, was grounded in the education of the common folks. According to Peters (1996), the land-grant idea carried an important democratic promise consciously linking education, work and citizenship. Peters described the early work of Extension in which citizens and agents of government met around a common council table systematically discussing problems and needs. This kind of collective processing by people can be understood as *public work*—where things of value are created for the local community, the state, the country and the world (Boyte & Kari, 1996).

Civic or Democratic Engagement

Civic engagement is currently a popular term in academic, community development and political circles. The meaning of the term varies. How civic engagement is



practiced also varies. For this article, the concept is called *democratic engagement*. Democratic engagement describes a process of participating in public decisions developed through collective, reasoned arguments oriented toward mutual understanding (Benhabib, 1996; Bohman, 1998; Cohen, 1997; Elster, 1998; Gastil, 2000). This kind of engagement, whether among individuals, experts or both, is an antidote to citizen ignorance and alienation from politics, as well as to political processes that appear to sacrifice the public good (e.g., well-being of children and families) to short-term or narrow interests. Democratic engagement requires that people: 1) interact peacefully; 2) share knowledge and perspectives on issues; and, 3) organize to act publicly on these issues.

Putnam (2002) conducted a nationwide survey of 500 Americans after the tragedy of September 11th. He concluded that the level of political consciousness was substantially higher than it was during the previous year. However, he found a gap between attitudes and behaviors that suggests the potential for renewed civic engagement. He calls this potential *civic solidarity*. Civic solidarity is a moral resource, a social good. Unlike a material resource, civic solidarity increases with use and diminishes with disuse. In the aftermath of September 11th, the window of opportunity opened for a sort of civic renewal resulting in civic solidarity. This occurs only once or twice in a century.

Public Policy through Engagement

One arena for action by citizens during this window of opportunity is involvement in public policy. Public policy is an agreed upon course of action, guiding principle, or procedure considered to be expedient, prudent or advantageous—a settled course of action adopted and followed by the public (House & Young, 1988). The political science field describes public policy in a more formal and limited manner as an intentional course of action followed by a government institution or official resolving an issue of public concern. According to this definition, public policy is expressed in laws, public statements, official regulations, or widely accepted and publicly visible patterns of behavior.

The term *public policy* may make people think public decision-making is such a formal process that they could not become involved in a mean-

ingful way. This simply is not true. Public policy is a set of principles that direct action. Public policy takes many forms: laws, rules, program priorities, funding decisions, even customs and traditions.

Consider customs and traditions as public policy. How often has the comment been heard—“But that is the way we have always done it?” Interested and concerned citizens and professionals have the power to change tradition (prevailing policy) in a positive way to better serve the people. Also the absence of laws or regulations does not mean there is no policy. Instead, it means that, for the specific issue, the policy is to do nothing as a governing body (Williams & Sanders, 1995).

FCS and Democratic Engagement

What more important public work can there be than that of the development and strengthening of families as the basic unit of democracy? Leading the focus on families as decisions are made in the public arena is the challenge to members of the FCS profession and the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS). The federal government allows non-profit associations to receive special tax benefits with the expectation that they will provide services for the common good of the citizenry.

Engaging in public work, and especially public policy, is an element of our professional heritage. The early history of our association is filled with evidence of engagement by FCS professionals in federal, state and local policy-making (Pundt, 1980). FCS professionals understand the necessity of speaking out for, and working on, public policies that could improve individual, family, and community well-being. They have contributed to numerous pieces of legislation that indirectly affect individuals and families; for example, through establishment and funding of entities such as Cooperative Extension and Agricultural Experiment Station research and vocational education. FCS professionals also have contributed directly to individuals and families through legislation affecting food, clothing, housing, and numerous other areas of human and built environments.

In 1997, the Smithsonian honored the profession's early engagement with an exhibit in the American History Museum. The banner headline of the exhibit on family and consumer sciences

acknowledged the profession's role in "enlarging the circle of influence of the home, reforming of the home, school and government and forging women's powers into weapons of reform."

With that legacy and the call for engagement in communities and the many forces affecting families, isn't it time for family consumer sciences professionals to once again enlarge the circle of influence?

Roles of Engagement

Involvement can take numerous forms and roles. A review of the literature reveals consideration of appropriate roles (Mathews, 1999; Meszaros and Cummings, 1983; National Council on Family Relations, 2001; Vickers, 1985). The role most emphasized is that of educator—a role fulfilled by members as they conduct public issues education. However, in spite of the importance and vital nature of the educator's role, others might better fit the personal and professional style and expertise of individual members. Roles of the FCS public policy activist vary depending on the issue and context. Variables may include such aspects as timing, content of the issue, job responsibilities, civic duties, personal and professional skills and preferences.

Citizen Professional

The core role, and the one for all AAFCS members is that of being a responsible citizen (Williams, 2001). An FCS professional, in the citizen role, takes responsibility for engaging in civic work, making educated decisions and participating in the deliberative process. They also monitor democratic institutions and hold them accountable for providing a positive incentive structure and means for citizens to be actively engaged in democratic processes. During the 2000 presidential election, Americans became aware that every vote counts—or not—and were reminded of the civic duty and privilege to vote. They were further reminded that an institution, like voting, may itself need changing when it does not serve the people, or in this case, the electorate.

Voting is not the only way citizens become engaged in public policy. National elections and federal legislation is only one venue in which public policy is made. In states and communities, policy comes closer to home.

FCS citizen professionals can make their voices heard locally. They can express ideas and beliefs based on personal values regarding matters that affect individual and family life in local communities. Examples of how people make their voices heard might be: to testify at a school board meeting; write an op-ed piece for the local newspaper; invite neighbors to discuss an issue; circulate leaflets (Williams & Sanders, 1995). With so many ways to be heard and roles to play, no FCS professional should refrain from civic engagement.

Educator Professional

A role for members who are in formal and informal educational settings is that of a policy educator (Anderson & Miles, 1990). An FCS professional in the role of an educator can utilize research-based knowledge to build understanding and capacity in such a way that people are empowered to shape and influence public policy. The educator role can be fulfilled in secondary or university classrooms where historic and contemporary policy issues are part of the curriculum. Further, an educator role may exist in community-based adult and youth programming such as that conducted by community colleges. A volunteer educator working within community organizations can play a vital education role. Many retirees, as well as currently employed FCS professionals and students, serve important volunteer policy education roles.

Patton and Blaine (2001) suggest that public policy education requires that professionals function in two distinct types of roles: content expert and process expert. The content expert provides credible information critical to the public decision-making process, while the process expert helps to frame the issue in public terms and facilitates public deliberation.

Not every FCS professional is a skilled educator; however, those who are can participate via teaching and learning. Who can better combine the content of family and consumer sciences with the public policy arena in which policy decisions are made that affect the quality of life for families? Who can better help policy makers integrate research knowledge into policy deliberations?

Analyst Professional

Another role for members is that of analyst. Using research-based knowledge about families

and the dynamics of the family system, FCS professionals can conduct research and provide findings from those studies in a timely and useful manner. An FCS professional in the analyst role helps citizens and policy makers understand issues and options, using logic to examine the complexity of issues and potential impact on public policy decisions. FCS professionals can prepare statements of findings and apply the research to the situation, giving rise to issues and the eventual need for policy (Bogenschneider et al., 2000). FCS professionals can provide this analysis as issues and policies are emerging. After policies are in place, FCS professionals can analyze the intended and unintended outcomes and present the analysis in understandable formats, so that the information can be used to shape regulations. Eventually, this analysis leads to change in future policies.

Advocate Professional

When advocacy is mentioned, FCS professionals often respond that “they do not do that”—implying that advocacy is a part of policy best left to others. To overcome this barrier, consider advocacy in two ways: 1) as advocating for a specific piece of legislation or regulation or 2) as advocating for children, families, or communities based on principles such as economic and social well-being of families, adequate food and nutrition, and quality child care. An FCS advocate professional examines an issue, applies personal and professional knowledge and values, and argues for a specific strategy or legislation, or for a general concept or principle.

The FCS professional has the right and responsibility to study an issue and speak out as both an educated citizen and as an FCS professional who is arguing for a specific course of action. However, that same professional does not have the right to argue for a specific course of action in the name of AAFCS, or his or her employer.

The conceptual framework for the profession, adopted in 1994, states: “The profession provides leadership in . . . influencing the creation of policy and shaping societal change . . .” (AAFCS, 2002). As part of AAFCS’ program of work, the Public Policy Committee makes recommendations to the Board, which sets the direction for action of the association. Through resolutions, testaments and other means, both AAFCS staff and members advocate for fami-

lies and communities—on the basis of principles and research. The current AAFCS tag-line is an advocacy statement: *The Source and Voice for Families*. The “source” portion reflects the research base of the membership; and the “voice” portion refers to encouraging consideration of family needs and the impact on families in policy decisions. Since policy is a part of AAFCS, the tag-line calls upon members to serve as advocates for families.

FCS professionals can choose from a variety of roles. Not everybody needs to be engaged in the same way. Each professional must build on his or her strengths and find a comfortable role within the policy arena. To find that comfort zone, each professional needs to:

- Understand the unique characteristics of each role;
- Match the roles to personal and professional style, expertise, and strengths;
- Realize that issues evolve as a process; and
- Understand that appropriate actions vary depending on the stage

A Model of Analysis

No matter which role, or combination of roles, an FCS professional is fulfilling, tools are important for the task. FCS professionals can generate tools such as the one created by the lead author and her colleague, Dr. Jean Bauer, University of Minnesota. The two functioned first as analysts, then as educators, and finally as advocates of family well-being in creating and disseminating tools. Faced with a complicated federal policy that required state and local action, the two FCS professionals sought a means of presenting the policy so that citizens and policy-makers could respond knowledgeably. The result was a policy analysis organizing tool that takes the user through a logical thought process.¹ The five categories and related general questions are shown in Figure 2.

This analytic tool is useful to FCS professionals for self-study of policies or for educating citizens, county commissioners and other policy-makers. It can serve as a starting point for examining an existing policy and proposed policies. It can be used to advocate for family well-being. The tool

¹ The “Five I’s” Policy Analysis Organizing Tool is available at <http://www.aafcs.org/public/index.html>

Figure 2
Five U's Policy Analysis Organizing Tool

Category	General Questions
Information —Gather the facts about the situation: Legislation or existing proposal published; Letter to editor; Press release; Case study file	What information exists? What is needed? What useful information? Why is the information needed? Where is the information needed? In what media is the information needed? Who can obtain the information? At what cost? When?
Issues —Identify the issues involved in the situation	What issues have a history? What issues are emerging? Who agrees? Disagrees? Are the issues changing?
Impacts —Identify the likely consequences for the people	Who will be affected by the legislation? Internationally? Unintentionally? What are the short and long term effects?
Implications —Consider the possible effects on people and organizations	What might the legislation do as it is proposed, enacted? "Prognosticated"? Not targeted? Other federal, state and/or local legislation? Community non-profit and faith-based groups? Government agencies?
Imperatives —Identify the critical action program of the situation	What's the reason for the action? Why should we act in a timely manner? Why us? Why now? What might happen if no action is taken?

provides a common ground for study and examination.

Timing Engagement

Assuming an FCS professional understands multiple roles and is willing to fulfill one or more of them, how does the professional know which role to assume in the public policy process? One answer lies in timing—understanding where the policy is within an issues framework.

Public policy arises out of issues. Issues do not just happen; they evolve from a concern or from someone's vision of what could be. If other people share an identified concern, they begin their involvement through informal conversation. As more people become involved in the issue, communication becomes more complex. Eventually, the issue emerges on the public agenda. Issues may have political boundaries but they seldom are partisan. Discussion generates different ideas about what should be done to address an issue. Each solution has potential consequences—what will be gained or lost?—who will benefit?—who will lose?—how much difference will it make?—is it feasible?—what are the trade-offs? Eventually, a choice is made. This choice may be the result of legislative action at the national or state level, or

action of a city council or local committee. It also may simply be the result of history and tradition for how things are done. The choice could also be to forget the whole issue and maintain the status quo.

As policies are implemented, the work of the public policy activist is far from done. A law or regulation will not be effective unless it is enforced. The authorization process creates and shapes programs to implement public choices. The appropriations process provides funding. The processes of authorization and appropriations hold the power of life or death for a public choice. When the policy is implemented, the affected public(s) should be involved in the evaluation of the benefits and costs of the choice. Findings from the evaluation can lead to informative modifications and future choices. Issue evolution is a social process in which people who are affected discuss what the policy does and does not do (See Figure 3).

If some people perceive that the issue is not being resolved by the new policy, or that the new policy is creating fresh problems, their concern becomes a catalyst for renewing the early phases of evolution of the matter. Even when most people are satisfied with a policy, a vocal or powerful minority can renew the cycle with their concern and persistent involvement. In reality, many policies are in a continual state of change cycling through phases of evolution.

It is important to note that a concern or issue may die at any stage of the cycle. In addition, the length of any one stage is hard to predict. Public policy activists, operating in any of the roles discussed, can become engaged in the issue at any point during the evolutionary cycle. When entering, regardless of the role being played—citizen, educator, analyst, or advocate—the activist needs to know which evolutionary stage the issue is in at the time. The actions of the public policy activist will vary depending on the stage of issue evolution and the role being taken by the activist (Gratto, 1973; House & Young, 1988).

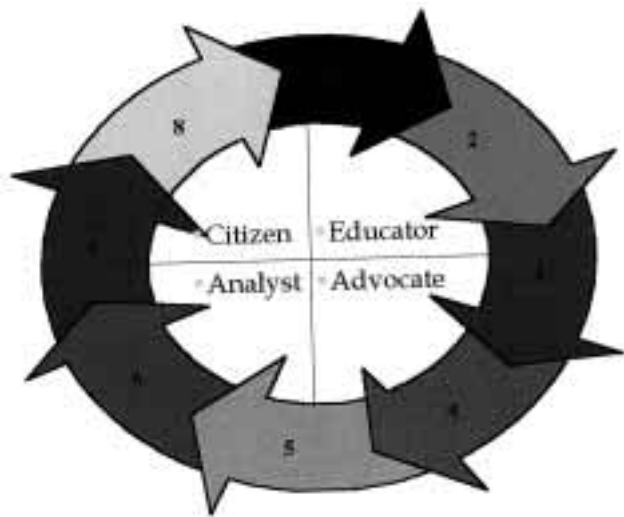


Figure 3

Engaging in Public Policy—A Recent Example

When Congress and the Administration decided to make changes in “welfare as we knew it,” members of AAFCS² contributed to the policy development process in all three roles beyond that of citizen professional (Braun & Benning, 2001). In 1995–96, during visits with every member of Congress, AAFCS members advocated for family considerations using a set of principles. When asked to respond to emerging legislation, FCS professionals analyzed the language based on the principles. Using a quickly convened “think tank,” a satellite downlink broadcast, a national conference and presentations at meetings, members of the public and other FCS professionals learned about the pending and final legislation. Because the legislation devolved decision-making to state and local communities, members developed teaching resources and conducted workshops to educate local citizens and policy makers about the federal legislation (Bauer & Braun, 1997).

Realizing that the legislation did not require evaluation of the resulting policy and program changes, and that studies being done were focused on urban families, members organized

to conduct a multi-state study to analyze the impact of changes on rural, low-income families.³ There is great richness in the study’s ecological approach, data set and collaboration. The study is a unique, 15-state, 28-county, longitudinal study that brings together the expertise of faculty and students from five specialties within FSC to understand the well-being of rural, low-income mothers and their families in the context of welfare reform. The team is conducting an integrated research and extension initiative that is often cited as a strength of the profession. The study combines quantitative and qualitative data to better understand, at the micro-level, the challenges of making ends meet in rural areas. At a more macro-level, it is shedding light on the effects of community programs and local, state and federal policy on rural family well-being.

The 433 mothers in the study have messages for policy makers and program directors. The study team is committed to getting those messages out as they educate Congress, state legislators, county commissioners and citizens during the reauthorization process in 2002. Two policy briefs were released in early 2002; others will follow. Visits have been made to members of Congress. Findings have been, and continue to be, disseminated to advocates and professional associations. Over the course of this policy work, the team functions in all four roles: citizen, educator, analyst and advocate—for the well-being of these and other rural families.

Public Policy, AAFCS and You

At the June, 2001 Annual Meeting, the Public Policy Committee released a brochure announcing policy directions for the association. The brochure, *Engaging in Public Policy Decision Making: A Strategic Direction* can be found at www.aafcs.org. (Anderson & Braun, 2001). A theme for the next several years, **Sustainable Families—Supportive Communities**, captures the niche for AAFCS in developing and promoting strong families and supportive communities

²The number of members participating in this work is so extensive that a complete citation is not possible. The authors acknowledge and honor the work of these unnamed members who are engaging in public policy tied to welfare and public assistance for low-income families.

³ For more information, contact Bonnie Braun, research team member and Vice-Chair for Communications.

through public policy. The brochure identifies agreed upon AAFCS public policy priorities and encourages affiliates to establish priorities within a state or local community.

With this brochure, the Committee went on record with six actions or strategies for AAFCS and suggestions for state affiliates. Members of affiliates and the officers can study this publication and use it as a basis for planning a program of work. The three policy priority statements that support engagement in the areas of childcare, 21st century community learning centers and genetic engineering and biotechnology are also on the AAFCS website.

The AAFCS Public Policy Committee listed seven actions for building capacity among members. This article, written by two members of the committee, is part of that capacity building. Two tools for policy analysis and education are on the AAFCS website: 1) *The Five I's Policy Analysis Organizing Tool* and 2) *A Citizens' Guide to Child and Family Focused Public Policy*. These documents supplement the *AAFCS Policy Manual*, which is available for sale (Ley & Saunders, 1997).

Another way to expand capacity is to become a Chalkley-Fenn Visiting Public Policy Scholar. For the authors, this experience broadened understanding of federal policy-making and deepened appreciation for the work of AAFCS headquarters staff. Both of the authors applied their experiences to work in home states and institutions as well as to the work of the association. Applications for this scholarship, endowed by members of AAFCS, are due early in each calendar year.

The Public Policy Committee is actively working on projects to advance the public policy agenda of AAFCS. But the committee can only provide a vision and leadership. It's up to all members to:

- Overcome personal barriers to civic engagement;
- Help overcome institutional barriers to civic engagement;
- Seek opportunities for involvement that fit with expertise and interests;
- Choose roles that match personal comfort and skills; and

- Act upon the conviction that each person can and should engage in public policy.

AAFCS can be a key player in building the kind of democracy in which families are valued as the basic socio-economic unit and for their role in nurturing productive, contributing individuals. Through AAFCS, members can discover a balance between individual needs and wants and the work of the collective for the common good of the association and society. Through the Association, members can be in a supportive environment to learn and apply the skills for strengthening a civil society—where the well-being of families and communities is valued. Through AAFCS, members don't bowl alone, but rather in league with other FCS professionals—together learning and demonstrating commitment to democratic engagement.

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