Research on Family Life Education Programs in Korea: A Content Analysis of Themes and Theories[1]

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Abstract : A conceptual framework, based on a curriculum model of family life education content, and on a schema for analyzing explicit use of theory, was developed to discern the substantive themes of programs and the role of theories in publications on programs for families in the Korean family studies literature. Seventy two journal articles published between 1990 and 2002 were analyzed. The results revealed that the Korean family life education programs dealt with the breadth of topics, but most particularly internal family dynamics and interpersonal relationships, and utilized theoretical concepts as input and output in a different level: explicit, implicit, or no use of theories. Implications for future research and practice in Korean family life education are discussed, including gaps in the substantive foci of programs, and aligning programs more closely with theory.

Key Words : family life education, ten areas in family life education, theories, level of theory use

I. Introduction

During the decade of the 1990's, there was an increasing interest in developing prevention and intervention programs for diverse Korean families, with the goal of strengthening family resilience while diminishing risk factors (Korean Association of Family Relations, 1993, 1998). However, the scarcity of appropriate and culturally relevant theoretical and methodological guidelines required to develop and evaluate family life education programs in Korea remains an obstacle (Chung, 1998, 2002; Korean Association of Family Relations; Yoo & Oh, 1998). This issue includes the needs of (a) organizing basic theoretical frameworks, assumptions, definitions, and program concepts, (b) developing Korean-specific theory for Korean family life education programs, (c) applying appropriate theory to program development and evaluation, and (d) designing sophisticated program research to capture prevention and intervention effects. Family scientists and family program practitioners in Korea are paying more attention and intention to the importance of developing and applying theories in program development and evaluation (Chung; You & Oh). Our analysis adds to understanding next steps in developing and evaluating programs.

The family studies literature recommends a closer link between theory, research, and practice (Small, 2005), and the evaluation science literature calls for a more

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thorough use of theories of change, as well as for program approaches that specify clear desired results (Mancini, Huebner, McCollum, & Marek, 2005). In spite of a strong argument on the important role of theory in guiding practice, there is very little research on this issue (Small). By the same token, practice-informed theory and research is lacking. In Korea, assessing the effects of family life education programs on participants based on theoretical guidance, as well as systematic development of program theory is also required as a starting point to develop family life education programs that can be evaluated and improved. Perhaps most importantly, this enhanced theoretical lens helps program professionals and researchers to better understand prevention and intervention processes.

The purpose of this study is to explore the use of theory in Korean family life education, as evidenced in published articles. In the course of accomplishing that purpose, we also display the major content foci of programs. Our approach is grounded in two frameworks, one focusing on family life education content, and the other on classifying theory utilization.

II. Conceptual Framework

1. Contents of family life education program

We first describe our framework for categorizing the content of published articles on family life education, and then describe the theory use framework. Ten categories of family life education program content were used to initially categorize the data, and were based on the Family Life Education Curriculum Guidelines of the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR): families in society; internal dynamics of families; human growth and development; human sexuality; interpersonal relationships; family resource management; parent education and guidance; family, law, and public policy; ethics; and family life education methodology (see the NCFR website, section on FLE Substance Areas) (see Bredehoft & Walcheski, 2003, for an extended discussion of the categories of family life education). This NCFR framework provides the guidance for the Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) program, and is the most comprehensive content-oriented framework for program development. The following descriptions of the ten content categories are paraphrased from the NCFR website. We used these descriptions to guide categorizing the published literature.

• *Families in Society* focuses on understanding families and their relationships within a social context. This topic includes family structures and functions; cultural variations in families (family heritage, social class, geography, ethnicity, race, religion, and cross-cultural family life styles); dating, courtship, and marital choices; kinship; gender roles; families' ecological relationships (work-family relationships, reciprocal societal relationships with major social institutions); and historical or demographical issues at the educational, governmental, religious, and occupational institution levels in society.

• *Internal Dynamics of Families* addresses issues on family strengths and weaknesses and how family members are related to each other. For example, the issues related to family stress and crises (divorce, remarriage, death, economic uncertainty, violence, and substance abuse); couple and parent-child communication patterns and problems; decision-making and conflict management; and special needs in families (adoption, fostering, migrant, low-income, military, and disable family member care) are discusses in this area.

• *Human Growth and Development over the Life Span* focuses the physical, emotional, cognitive, social, moral, and personality related developmental changes of individuals in families through the life span. It deals with the subject matter across four general age levels: children, adolescents, adults, and older adults.

• *Human Sexuality* addresses the issues of physiological, psychological, and social aspects of sexual development throughout the life span in order to achieve

healthy sexual adjustment. Reproduction and family planning; emotional and psychological sexual involvement and its effect on interpersonal relationships; sexual behaviors; physiological and psychological sexual responses; and sexual dysfunction are the examples of this section.

• *Interpersonal Relationships* focuses on assisting families in forming, maintaining, and ending interpersonal relationships. Understanding of self and others; communication skills (listening, empathy, self-disclosure, decision making, and problem solving); intimacy, love, and romance; respect, sincerity, and responsibility in relationships with others are the topics discussed in this area.

• *Family Resource Management* supports individuals and families to be conscious about their decision-making about developing and allocating resources including time, money, material assets, energy, friends, neighbors, and space in order to meet their goals. Issues of goal setting and decision making, development and allocation of resources, social environmental influences, life cycle and family structure influences and consumer issues and decisions are included in the area.

• *Parent Education and Guidance* focuses on facilitating parents to effectively fulfill their parental roles. In order to support parents to teach, guide, and influence children and adolescents effectively, this area deals with the issues of parenting rights and responsibilities; parenting practices and processes; parent-child relationships; variations in parenting solutions; and changing parenting roles over the life cycles.

• *Family, Law, and Public Policy* focuses on understanding of the legal definition of the family and laws that affect the status of the family. The topics in this area include laws related to marriage, divorce, family support, child custody, child protection and rights, and family planning; family social services; education; economy; religion; and policy related tax, civil rights, social security, economic support laws and regulations.

• *Ethics* discusses the character and quality of human social conduct, and the ability of critical thinking

regarding ethical questions. For example, formation and examination of social attitudes and values; appreciation of diverse values; social consequences of value choices; ethical implications of social and technological changes; and ethics of professional practice are discussed in this section.

• *Family Life Education Methodology* intends to understand the general philosophy and principles of family life education, as well as the ability to plan, implement, and evaluate programs. Materials, strategies, and outcomes regarding program development, implementation, and evaluation; education techniques; and sensitivity to others and community concerns are the examples of this area.

2. Level of theory use

A second part of our framework enables us to understand the intentional role of theory in Korean publications focused on family life education. All the theories used in these program development and evaluation articles were examined according to Lavee and Dollahite's (1991) schema of utilizing theory in empirical research (this same schema was recently utilized by Taylor and Bagd (2005) in an analysis of articles published in *Journal of Marriage and the Family*). In the process of producing scientific knowledge via scientific publication, Lavee and Dollahite argue that there exists three ways of utilizing theory in the input process (using theory in guiding research hypotheses, research design, and analysis related to a specific research problem) and in the output process (discussing how findings may support, reject, revise, and/or extend family theories). These theory inputs and outputs may be explicit, implicit, or the use of theory may be not be evident (no theory use). With these three levels of utilizing theory in a program development and evaluation input and output, program articles are classified into nine cells (3 levels of theory use as input × 3 levels of theory use as output). The following cell information is paraphrased from Lavee and Dollahite.

• *Explicit use of theory as an input* indicates that researchers explicitly identify underlying theories and explain how these theories guide their program development and evaluation in the introduction section which includes the introduction, literature review, and/or theoretical framework. *Explicit use of theory as an output*, meanwhile, refers to discussing program implications and empirical findings of evaluation in terms of support, reject, or modification of underlying theories in the discussion or conclusion section. That is, explicit theory usage in output indicates that organization and interpretation of developed programs and program evaluation results are strongly based on theories.

• In program development and evaluation using theory implicitly, issues and findings are also discussed by using some theoretical concepts, but utilization of theories are not as systematic nor clear as in studies using theory explicitly. More specifically, *implicit use of theory as an input* indicates that researchers often refer to several key concepts of the existing theories as a guidance of their program development and evaluation, but do not clearly identify exactly what particular theories are used for their research. Or researchers may name the theories that they are using, but they are vague about a linkage between them and the study they are reporting on. Therefore, readers must decide what underlying theories are used and how theories guide their program development and evaluation. In the research *output, implicit use of theory* is identified by empirical generalizations and theoretical implications that are not clearly linked to specific theories.

• Finally, program articles that do not state any underlying theories and have no evidence of using any types of theories nor theoretical concepts are categorized as *no use of theory.* Researchers primarily use a review of previous research about the program development and evaluation issues *as an input* in the introduction section. No theoretical implications in the discussion section indicates *no use of theory as an output* in program articles. These articles do less to contribute to a

systematic understanding of families, or to a systematic understanding of program processes.

III. Analyses

To identify core meanings and program characteristics of recent family life education program articles, content analysis is employed. The principle benefit of content analysis is that it involves quantifying and tallying the presence of the chosen concepts for examination (Neuendorf, 2002). It allows us to examine trends and patterns in documents and provides an empirical basis for monitoring shifts in research (Stemler, 2001).

1. Article selection

The data sources for this study include 72 family life education program articles published in the following three journals: *Journal of the Korean Home Economics Association, Journal of the Korean Home Management Association, Journal of the Korean Association of Family Relations.* All these articles were published between 1990 and 2002. Thirty two of the 72 articles (44.4%) were published in *Journal of the Korean Home Economics Association.* Twenty three articles (31.9%) were published in *Journal of the Korean Home Management Association,* and 17 articles (23.6%) were in *Journal of the Korean Association of Family Relations.* All the articles that addressed program development or evaluation issues related to home economics and family related issues, such as family relations, family development, social welfare service, public policy, and family resource management, were included in this study. However, program development articles that did not provide concrete program implementation plans were excluded. For example, preliminary needs assessment or conceptual articles for future program development were not included in this review (e.g., Ok, Lee, & Lee, 1994). All of the articles included developed program modules and/or empirical outcome evaluations.

2. Categorization

After selecting the articles according to the criteria described above, a two-step *a priori* coding approach (Stemler, 2001) was used. Ten categories of family life education and nine categories of level of theory use were established prior to the analysis based on the NCFR guidelines (Bredehoft, 1997, 2001; Bredehoft & Cassidy, 1995; Bredehoft & Walcheski, 2003) and the Lavee and Dollahite (1991) article. First, each article was sorted into one of the ten family life education categories. In order to specify substance areas to which each program belonged, we focused on program goals rather program objectives. A program goal is a general and abstract statement of desired results that a program wants to reach while program objectives are more specific and operationalizable statements dealing with program outcomes (Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). That is, a goal statement can consist of several program objectives. When program objectives are met, the program goal is seen as accomplished. Although researchers specified multiple program objectives in the articles we reviewed, for the purpose of our analysis it was more efficient to classify according to the overarching program goals. For example, Chung, Yoo, Lim, Jun, and Cheon (2000) developed and evaluated a remarriage preparation program. They identified 10 program objectives consisting of 4 sessions, such as understanding the characteristics of remarried families, recovering self-esteem, learning effective couple communication skills, and developing positive attitudes toward step-parenting. However, the researchers clearly stated that the ultimate goal of this program was to support remarriage by providing opportunities for discussing possible problems and barriers in remarriage. Therefore, this program was classified into *Internal Dynamics of Families.*

One challenge in conducting our analysis pertained to conceptual clarity and mutual exclusivity. Because our data were provided by the authors of the articles, we were only only able to accept at face value how they described their work. Therefore, in some cases, labeling

programs as *Internal Dynamics of Families* or *Interpersonal Relationships* was not clear. However, based on Olson & Olson (2003), couple communication programs, premarital or marital relationship enrichment programs, and programs related to parent-adult children relationship issues were classified into *Interpersonal Relationships.* Programs focused more on family transitions over the family life cycle, and family stressors, such as divorce and remarriage programs and family violence, were classified as *Internal Dynamics of Families* (Walcheski & Bredehoft, 2003). We recognize that other authors might have chosen a varied classification approach, however, we desired to align our approach as closely as possible to the published literature on 10 substance areas.

Next, articles were coded for existence of theories or theoretical concepts in the introduction and/or discussion sections. Our first category was "no theory use." Some articles had a section called theoretical background at the beginning of the paper, but in fact they only reviewed past or current studies related to their program topic. These articles were not considered as using theories as input into the study they were conducting. In the discussion or implication section, if authors only repeated the name of theories or theoretical concepts that they used in program development and evaluation or did not mention any information about theories or theoretical concepts, these articles were considered as "no theory use" with regard to output. To summarize, if it appeared that the introductory material in the article or the discussion material in the article did not use theory to either inform or explain findings, "no theory use" was the classification.

If theories or theoretical concepts were used in an article, we determined whether they were explicitly or implicitly used either as input (in the introduction section) or output (in the conclusions and discussion section). Articles that mentioned theoretical concepts in the introduction section (for example, self-esteem or social support) without detailed information about how they would utilize those concepts in program develop-

ment and evaluation, were categorized into "implicit theory use as input." Articles that mentioned theories or theoretical concepts in the discussion section but did not clearly link them with the study findings were considered as "implicit use of theory as an output." When researchers clearly identified theories or theoretical concepts and provided systematic information about how those theories informed their programs in the introduction section of the paper, articles were categorized into "explicit use of theory as input". Finally, when researchers clearly used theories or theoretical concepts to explain and interpret their findings in the discussion section, articles were identified as "explicit theory use as output." Hyun (2002) and S. Lee (2002) were good examples of explicit theory use as input and output. In order to attempt to limit the subjectivity, the first author first coded the articles based on the consolidated checklist and the second and the third authors independently verified the coding.

IV. Results

All of the 72 program articles were distributed to nine family life education substance areas, which have traditionally been considered as core areas of family life education (see <Table 1>). The only exception is that we were not able to find appropriate program articles to fit in the area of *Ethics*. About 31 % of the program articles dealt with the issues related to *Interpersonal Relationships*. The second most frequently discussed issue was *Internal Dynamics of Families* (18 articles, 25.0%). These two areas together included more than half of the program articles. The areas of *Families in Society* (2 articles, 2.8%) and *Family, Law and Public Policy* (1 article, 1.4%), as well as *Ethics* (0 articles) were the least prominent family life education areas. *Family Resource Management* had also the same amount of articles as in the area of *Families in Societies* (2 articles, 2.8%). However, five out of six articles in the *Family Life Education Methodology* area dealt with issues in *Family*

Resource Management, showing that this area was not underemphasized in Korean family life education program. A total of six program articles (8.3%) were included in *Family Life Education Methodology*. Although the contents of these six articles overlapped with those in other areas (the numbers in parentheses in the methodology section in Table 1 indicate the content areas that these six articles dealt with: #6 *Family Resource Management,* #7 *Parent Education and Guidance,* and #8 *Family, Law, and Public Policy*), they mainly focused on developing new teaching techniques and strategies in program implementation. Three out of six articles discussed developing computer software programs in order to improve the effectiveness of program delivery in terms of dissemination and goal achievement. The other three articles provided university-level curriculums in order to support college students in family related areas to become competent family life educators. Therefore, we intentionally included these six articles in the methodology section rather than categorizing them based on their contents.

<Table 2> presents a summary of the types of theories and related theoretical models or concepts used in each program article. Our general categorizations parallel those used by Taylor and Bagd (2005), however, we add further specificity to these categorizations (for example, we note 19 particular types of human developmental theory). The theories used in these articles were very diverse, including theories in family science, consumer science, education, and therapy. A total of 168 theoretical models or concepts from 13 major theories were used. Program developers and researchers often used more than one theory from multiple disciplines. The most frequently discussed theoretical perspectives focused on elements of family relationships. Thirty eight out of 168 theoretical models or concepts (22.6%) were employed in order to discuss human development over time and their developmental tasks, including cognitive development, self-esteem, parent-child relationships, marital relationships, and age appropriate developmental processes. The other three theoretical perspectives most

<Table 1> Distribution of empirical korean family life education articles across family life education content areas (N = 72)

Categories	Contents	Numbers of Articles
1. Families in Society	Local Community Elderly Welfare Programs	1
	Community welfare center	1
	Subtotal	2 (2.8%)
2.Internal Dynamics of Families	Aging parent care	3
	Divorce/Single parent family	4
	Dual earner family role strain coping strategy	1
	Family violence-spouse/child abuse	5
	Remarriage preparation	2
	Substance abuse	3
	Subtotal	18 (25.0%)
3. Human Growth and Development over the Life Span	Child development (after school programs, Emotional Quotient, self-growth program, & children in shelters)	4
	Adolescent development (residential care, delinquency, & self-esteem)	4
	Adult development (married women's autonomy and quality of life)	2
	Older adult development (general aging issues)	1
	Subtotal	11 (15.3%)
4. Human Sexuality	Adolescent pregnancy	3
	Sexuality education (young adolescent & college students)	2
	Subtotal	5 (6.9%)
5. Interpersonal Relationships	Communication skills (couple & parent-adolescent children)	4
	Dating relationships	1
	In-law relationships (mother-in-law and daughter-in law)	3
	Marital conflict coping strategy	1
	Marriage enrichment (intimacy & equal relationships)	7
	Parent-child relationship	1
	Premarital education	5
	Subtotal	22 (30.6%)
6. Family Resource Management	Consumer education (children's money management)	1
	Family life planning	1
	Subtotal	2 (2.8%)
7. Parent Education and Guidance	Parent Effectiveness Training	2
	Parenthood preparation	1
	Parent education (parents with young children, pre adolescents, and/or adolescents)	2
	Subtotal	5 (6.9%)
8. Family, Law, and Public Policy	Family counseling service and policy	1
	Subtotal	1 (1.4%)
9. Ethics	Subtotal	0
10. Family Life Education Methodology	Computer software development – Family time (Area 6) – Household consumption (Area 6) – Pre-parenthood (Area 7)	3
	Curriculum development – Family business (Area 6) – Establishment of institutional household manager system (Area 6) – Food service systems management (Area 8)	3
	Subtotal	6 (8.3)
Total		72 (100.0%)

<Table 2> Types of theoretical concepts used in korean family life education programs (N = 168)

Theories	Theoretical Models and Concepts	Numbers
Human development theory	Child development 　– Cognitive development 　– Social-emotional development 　– Emotional Quotient 　– Parent-child relationship	 2 2 1 1
	Adolescent development 　– Self-esteem 　– General developmental changes 　– Parent-adolescent child relationship 　– Sexuality development 　– Career development	 4 3 2 2 2
	Young adult development 　– Marital expectation 　– Successful marriage 　– Gender differences 　– Self-esteem	 1 1 1 1
	Middle-aged adult development 　– Self-esteem 　– Jung's & Levinson's theories in middle age development & aging 　– Parent-adolescent child relationship 　– intimacy 　– Sexuality development	 4 3 3 2 1
	Older adult development 　– Developmental characteristics among elderly	 2
	Subtotal	38 (22.6)
Family therapy theory	Cognitive-behavioral therapy	8
	Satir's family therapy	4
	Berne's transactional theory	3
	Glasser's reality therapy	3
	Self-Growth	2
	Bowen's family therapy	2
	Jung's theory & Myers Brigg Type Indicator (MBTI)	2
	Ellis' rational emotional behavioral therapy (REBT)	2
	Insight models in family violence treatment	2
	Pathological substance abuse treatment	1
	Psychodrama therapy	1
	Solution-focused model	1
	Subtotal	31 (18.5)
Family stress and coping theory	Stress management & coping strategies	8
	Communication skills	4
	Emotional Stress and Well-being	4
	Social support	3
	Adult caregiver stress	2
	Double ABCX model	2
	Divorce & Remarriiage 　– Burns & Whiteman's Grieving Process 　– Thompson's care & justice perspectives	 1 1
	Subtotal	25 (14.9)
Family program theory	Healthy family/life	6
	– Parent Effectiveness Training (PET)	5
	– Couple Communication Program (CCP)	4
	– Family enrichment	4
	– Systematic Training for Effective Parenting	2
	Dreikurs' Adlerian parenting education	2
	Ginott's humanistic model for parent education	1
	Subtotal	24 (14.3)

<Table 2> Continued

Theories	Theoretical Models and Concepts	Numbers
Family development theory	Family life span/cycle	4
	Family cohesion	1
	Family life structure	1

	Divorce & Remarriage
	  – Bohannan's 6 stations of divorce
	  – Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation (FIRO) Model
	  – Pepernow's stepfamily development
		1
		1
		1

	Subtotal	9 (5.4)
Educational approach	Program theory	1

	Curriculum development
	  – Life-long education
	  – Knowles' andragogical approach
	  – Collaborative approach or specialty focus
	  – Competence-based education
	  – Tyler's curriculum theory
		2
		2
		1
		1
		1

	Subtotal	8 (4.8)
Systems theory	Family systems theory	5
	Family welfare	1
	Subtotal	6 (3.6)
Ecology theory	Subtotal	5 (3.0)
Role theory	Role strain	3
	Gender role equality	2
	Subtotal	5 (3.0)
Consumer science theory	Family resource management	2
	Consumer socialization	1
	Family finance/economics	1
	Subtotal	4 (2.4)
Feminist theory	Subtotal	4 (2.4)
Social learning theory	Subtotal	3 (1.8)
Others	Constructionism	1

	Korean specific approaches
	  – Confucianism
	  – Values in family and parenthood
	  – Tae-Gyo
		1
		1
		1

	Computer programming
	  – Expert System
	  – Hypermedia-aided learning system (HALS)
		1
		1

	Subtotal	6 (3.6)
Total		168 (100.0)

frequently discussed were family therapy perspectives (31 theoretical models or concepts, 18.5%) and family stress and coping theories (25 theoretical models or concepts, 14.9%). Some articles employed well-known program models as their theoretical framework in parenting and couple education program development and evaluation, including Parent Effective Training (PET), Adlerian parenting education, Humanistic parent

education, and Couple Communication Program (CCP) (24 theoretical models or concepts, 14.3%). Researchers also used family development theories (5.4%), systems theories (3.4%), ecology theories (3.0%), role theories (3.0%), feminist theories (2.4%), and social learning theories (1.8%). In addition to traditional theories in family sciences mentioned above, theories in consumer science (2.4%) and education (3.8%) were often adapted

<Table 3> Level of theory use (N = 72)

Research Output	Research Input			Total
	Explicit identification of theory	Implicit identification of theory	No Theory	
Explicit linkage	15 (20.8%)	0	0	15 (20.8%)
Implicit linkage	21 (29.2%)	12 (16.7%)	1 (1.4%)	34 (47.2%)
No linkage	10 (13.9%)	7 (9.7%)	6 (8.3%)	23 (31.9%)
Total	46 (63.9%)	19 (26.4%)	7 (9.7%)	72 (100.0%)

in program development and evaluation. Finally, six unique theoretical concepts and models (3.6%) were employed in five program articles. For example, J. Y. Lee (2002) developed and evaluated a program for improving relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in law. She employed Confucianism in order to explain positive cognitive development and the effects of cognitive changes on in-law relationships. Koh, Ok, Choi, and Hong (1998) developed a pre-parent education program software by employing a specific computer programming theory, Hypermedia-Aided Learning System (HALS).

Finally, we examined whether each of 72 program articles incorporated theories into their research explicitly, implicitly, or not at all <Table 3>. Sixty five out of 72 program articles either *explicitly* (46 articles, 63.9%) or *implicitly* (19 articles, 26.4%) identified theories or theoretical concepts that guided their studies in the introduction section (input). Fifteen of the 72 articles (20.8%) applied theories explicitly to both their rationales for program development and evaluation and theoretical implications of their findings (both input and output process levels). Thirty one program articles explicitly introduced theories or key theoretical constructs only in the input to develop and/or evaluate programs, but twenty one of these articles (29.2%) did not clearly show how their programs or evaluation results were linked to the theories in the discussion section. The other 10 articles (13.9%) did not inform any theoretical implications of the findings in their discussions at all.

In 26 program articles, theories were not identified explicitly either as an input (using theory in guiding

research hypotheses, research design, and analysis related to a specific research problem) or as an output (discussing how findings may support, reject, revise, and/or extend family theories). In the input process (introduction sections), nineteen of the 72 articles (26.4%) presented programs and their evaluations in a way that underlying theories were implied without any attempts to clearly link suggested key concepts to programs. Finally, six articles (8.3%) initiated program development and evaluation based only on the reviews of previous research or programs without any explicit or implicit linkage to theories as inputs and outputs.

V. Conclusions

Based on the publication years we examined, internal family dynamics and interpersonal relationships consume most of the interest of professionals who are developing and assessing family life education programs in Korea. There is also some interest in human development programming across the life span. The other seven areas identified by the NCFR framework receive relatively little attention, though we do realize that programs often contain content overlapping, and therefore programs primarily devoted to *Internal Family Dynamics* and *Interpersonal Relationships* may also contain elements of parent education, for example. In our analysis, however, we have tried to keep our categorizations and article assignments mutually exclusive.

In the matter of dominant theories used to support these programming efforts, we find a substantial array of

concepts that are included in the program development and assessment enterprise. It is more difficult to separate and categorize these many concepts, especially since a number of theories in the social and behavioral sciences share concepts. The data show that there is no one dominant theory in use, nor is there even one dominant category of theoretical concept in use. Theories related to human development, family therapy, family stress and coping, and family program theories receive about equal attention in this literature. There is still quite a number of empirical articles dealing with family life education programming and assessment that under-specify theoretical linkages, the backbone of advancing theory.

1. Implications for the focus of Korean family life education programs

The range of topics that Korean family life education program studies covered was broad (nine out of ten categories in the NCFR family life education guidelines). Several family life education substance areas need to be paid more attention in future program development and research. For example, the area of *Ethics* had no relevant program articles. Apparently, the areas of *Families in Society; Human Sexuality; Family Resource Management, Family, Law, and Public Policy; and Family Life Education Methodology* are also not salient to the interests of program developers. Parent education, couple relationships, and individual and family developmental issues were the main focuses. In order to acknowledge that family research and practice benefit a community and larger society, however, family professionals must pay more attention to *Families, Law, and Public Policy* and *Families in Society*. In order to prepare students to become competent family life educators and deliver programs effectively, family professionals must also focus on the area of *Family Life Education Methodology*. For the future of family life education, serious attempts must be made to redress the imbalance of academic interests within these content areas.

2. Implications for the choice of theories

A total of 168 theoretical concepts from 13 separate theories in multiple disciplines, including family science, family therapy, consumer science, educational research, and computer programming, were used. Studies typically incorporated one or more therapeutic approaches with theories from other disciplines in order to develop programs focusing on family relationships, stress, and human development. The content and structure of many programs were developed by adopting therapeutic strategies, which indicated that there existed vague boundaries between these two disciplines in theory usage. These findings show evidence that the philosophy and the pedagogy of Korean family life education have not been clearly identified nor differentiated from family therapy and family enrichment programs (Chung, 1998). There appears to be a substantial need to explicitly account for Korean culture as programs are developed and evaluated. We do recognize that some theories and program contents dealt with the unique needs of program targets and their families in Korea (e.g., Lee, J. Y., 2002). These program articles serve as examples of the merit of highlighting Korean-specific theories for family life education in order to be more sensitive to Korean families' unique needs and assets, to develop appropriate service delivery strategies, and to evaluate thoroughly the effectiveness of programs.

3. Implications for explicit use of theories.

Most program articles incorporated theories into their program development and evaluation, either explicitly or implicitly. However, program articles based on explicit theories were more directed, organized, and coherent. These results reveal the needs of theory-based program development and evaluation. In order to improve program-oriented research, it is necessary to explicitly incorporate theoretical frameworks into program

development and evaluation. The results also suggest that careful assessments of program theories assist program developers and evaluators in measuring, analyzing, and interpreting program data (Birckmayer & Weiss, 2000). Ultimately theories can maximize the understanding of the effects of programs (Bogenschneider, 1996). Therefore, for future research on program development and evaluation, the explicit application of theories in order to provide systematic guidelines for program planning and improvement, knowledge development, and evaluation planning is required.

4. Implications for aligning theory, research, and practice

Behavioral and social scientists in many disciplines are concerned about an overall gap between research and practice, noting that each has a role in informing the other (Mancini, Marek, Byrne, & Huebner, 2004; Myers-Walls, 2000; Shonkoff, 2000). Generally, scientists argue that practitioners do not utilize scientific knowledge, potentially resulting in the reduced effectiveness of their practice, while practitioners argue that the scientific findings are not sufficiently practical. We suggest that both practitioners and scientists in the area of family studies pay more attention to the ways in which family research can be made more relevant to practice and how family practice can be grounded in sound research and theories (Small, 2005).

This study provides evidence that Korean family professionals have paid attention to bridging the gap between theories, research, and practice. The program articles showed that these family professionals utilized existing social science knowledge based on various theories and empirical research as sources for developing and evaluating programs. By using theoretical concepts as guides for practice, family practitioners and researchers can identify key problems, understand factors that contribute to family issues, and highlight useful strategies for delivering and evaluating programs

more effectively (Lee & Mancini, 2006). For future program development and evaluation, continuous efforts of applying theories to program development and evaluation is required in order to guide and support the logic of program design.

On the other hand, in order to link academic interests to practice, effective collaboration between researchers and practitioners is required. As contrasted with basic research, inquiry into programs is an ideal laboratory for bringing together research and program professionals around shared interests. Collaborative research allows researchers to gain insight into emerging issues through expertise that experienced family practitioners possess, as well as encouraging practitioners to enhance their ability to understand and apply research knowledge to practical situations through academic insights that family scientists possess (Mancini *et al.*, 2004; Rossi *et al.*, 1999; Small, 2005). While planning programs, delivery strategies, and evaluation methods, both practitioners and researchers can obtain more valid ideas and practices. For example, practitioners know which delivery strategies are suitable for their intended participants and researchers know how to design evaluation to examine program effectiveness and sustainability (Lee & Mancini, 2006).

In summary, our descriptive analysis shows that theory already permeates the development and assessment of family life education programs in Korea. However, it also shows that continuity of explicit use of theories at the input and output levels is lacking. Our findings also suggest program developers have selected theoretical concepts from the menu of theories in a wide range of disciplines. More sophisticated approaches in the selection process, that is, more selective use of theories and theoretical concepts is required. Our analysis of program foci reveals a clustering around a seemingly narrow band of family life education issues, but this band may contain the more substantive areas of family life education. We do argue for an increased focus on programs for under-resourced and under-served families.

We recognize we have only scratched the surface of these issues, and that more nuanced questions remain. For example, the next steps in analyzing published work on family life education in Korea would include a specific focus on theories of change, and to what degree they are articulated. Access to theory does not necessarily equate with validly positing what should be different as a result of prevention or intervention programs. That is, the thorough understanding of expected program effects may remain uninformed if the collection of theories and concepts are not oriented toward change.

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