

ANALYSIS OF THE JOURNAL OF FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES EDUCATION, 1995-1998

**Ginny Felstehausen and Sue Couch
Texas Tech University**

Volumes 13-16 of the Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences Education were reviewed to determine the types of articles published, the research problems addressed, the research methodologies utilized, the degree to which research and theory interact, the extent of graduate student involvement in published research, and the extent and nature of collaborative and interdisciplinary research efforts. Eighty-nine percent of the articles published between 1995 and 1998 were based on original research. Research topics related primarily to professional issues in the field and programming in specific content areas. Of the 77 authors, 53% were family and consumer sciences educators and only 5 were identified as graduate students. More than three-fourths of the research-based articles were categorized as empirical-analytical; most used descriptive methodology. Thirty-seven percent of the articles incorporated a strong theoretical or conceptual framework and/or utilized theory-building statistics; however there was little evidence of real interaction between research and theory. The results are compared to earlier reviews of Volumes 1-12.

Since the Journal of Vocational Home Economics Education (JVHEE) was first published in 1983, it has served as a major outlet for the dissemination of research in the field. The status of research as published in JVHEE was documented by Clawson and Morgan (1988) in a review of Volumes 1 through 6 and Couch and Felstehausen (1994) in an analysis of Volumes 7 through 12. Three research paradigms, based on the purpose of the research, were used as the framework for both reviews: empirical/analytical, interpretive, and critical inquiry.

The aims of empirical/analytical research are “to describe, explain and predict in ways which are observable or measurable empirically” (Way, 1989, p. 2). Clawson and Morgan (1988) reported that 93% of the research-based articles published between 1983 and 1988 utilized empirical/analytical methodology. By contrast, the percentage of empirical/analytical studies in Volumes 7-12 declined to 74% (Couch & Felstehausen, 1994). The intent of the interpretive research framework is to understand human experience “from the perspective of those living through the experience” (Hultgren, 1989, p. 41). Interpretive research published in JVHEE more than doubled from 1988 to 1994, from 6% to 20%. Research using critical inquiry, which integrates the empirical and interpretive approaches (Morgaine, 1992), was published infrequently in the first twelve volumes, with only 1 article published during each six-year period (Couch & Felstehausen, 1994).

Other results of the earlier analyses revealed a heavy reliance on survey data collection methods and descriptive statistical procedures, limited research designed to build or test theory, and, in Volumes 7-12, increased use of qualitative methodology (Clawson & Morgan, 1988; Couch & Felstehausen, 1994). Couch and Felstehausen (1994) made the following recommendations for a future research agenda:

- (1) Strengthen the interaction between theory and research;

- (2) Continue use of alternative methodologies, including the interpretive framework, critical inquiry, and qualitative methods;
- (3) Expand opportunities for graduate student involvement in research and publication; and,
- (4) Continue collaboration and increase interdisciplinary research efforts.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this paper is to review the status of research in family and consumer sciences education as reflected in manuscripts published in the Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences Education (JFCSE), formerly JVHEE, Volumes 13-16, 1995-1998. Content analysis procedures were used to identify the types of articles published, the research problems addressed, the research methodologies utilized, the degree to which research utilizes theory, the extent of graduate student involvement in published research, and the extent and nature of collaborative and interdisciplinary research efforts.

The three research paradigms previously described formed the basis for classifying published research by purpose. In addition, a classification system proposed by Gay and Airasian (2000) was used to further describe research methodology in terms of specific procedures. Gay and Airasian (2000) have classified research based on method, including traditional quantitative methods, e.g. descriptive and experimental; qualitative methods, that is, collection and analysis of extensive narrative data in a naturalistic setting; and historical methods, which may have both quantitative and qualitative components.

Results

Forty-six refereed articles, 15 Book Briefs, 11 Praxis articles, and one invited historical manuscript were published in the Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences Education (JFCSE) between 1995-1998. This time period covers the editorship of Marilyn Martin Rossmann with Jan Phlihal serving as the associate editor. The 100 JFCSE authors who wrote articles published in the time frame covered in this review represented 40 colleges and universities, a number of secondary schools, various state governmental agencies, and private consulting firms.

A total of 77 different authors wrote the refereed articles. Slightly more than 50% (n = 41) of the authors of the refereed articles were family and consumer sciences educators, either at the high school or college level. The 36 authors (47%) who were not family and consumer sciences educators included professionals in related content areas, educators in fields other than family and consumer sciences, and other professionals employed in education related positions. Two-thirds of these 36 individuals co-authored articles with family and consumer sciences educators. Five authors were identified as being graduate students at the time the articles were published. Fifteen percent of the research-based manuscripts (11 articles) were single-authored; 12 individuals authored or co-authored more than one article during this four-year period.

Book Briefs, the book review section of JFCSE as it is now titled, was expanded in 1996 to include a broader range of publications. Book Briefs published between 1995 and 1998 included reviews of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, Education and Technology Division Yearbooks, Volumes 15-18. Two of the reviews featured books highlighted the history and philosophy of our profession. These were *Rethinking Home Economics: Women and the History of a Profession* edited by Sarah Stage and Virginia Vincenti, published in 1997, and *Philosophical Studies of Home Economics in the United States, Basic Ideas by Which Home Economists Understand Themselves* by Marjorie Brown, published in

1993. Other book reviews focused on publications related to issues such as school and education reform; work and family issues; family values; and school, violence and society. Fifteen authors wrote the Book Briefs; all were single authored.

A new section called Praxis was introduced in Volume 14. The JFCSE Editorial Board authorized this new section to encourage authors to “write in a reflective and thoughtful way about future actions in the field of family and consumer sciences education.” The intent of these articles was to “incorporate short, non-refereed articles which focus on the practice of family and consumer science educators” (Rossmann, 1996, p.1). Eleven Praxis articles were published in the JFCSE volumes included in this review. Of these, eight (73%) were single authored. Sixteen individuals authored the eleven manuscripts that focused on topics such as the vision and mission of family and consumer sciences, innovative programs in our field, parenting, aging, and new teacher education programs.

Types of Articles

Of the 46 refereed articles, 41 (89%) were categorized as research publications, that is, they were based on original research. The remaining five refereed articles addressed education-related topics including models of teaching, an examination of literature available to teach ethics, and a cooperative learning approach to a family relations course.

Research Problems Addressed

The outline used in the last review of research published in JVHEE (Couch & Felstehausen, 1994) was based on the 1996 American Home Economics Association Teacher Education Yearbook, Review and Synthesis of Research in Home Economics Education. The same outline was followed for the current analysis.

Research Design in Family and Consumer Sciences Education. Two of the 41 research-based articles fit into this category. The first was an article describing the use of focus groups to determine secondary teachers’ in-service needs. The article explained focus groups procedures and provided an example of a focus group study that had been conducted in Nebraska. The second article presented a “Perceptions of Change” instrument developed to help clarify theories of change and provide contexts within which to examine change.

The Field of Family and Consumer Sciences Education. Seventeen (42%) of the research-based articles were classified as being in this category, however, no one topic was dominant. Published articles included topics such as supply and demand of teachers and future professional needs (three); beginning teachers and the mastery of teaching (three); career development (three); curriculum change/reform (two); and leadership (two).

Programming in Family and Consumer Sciences Education. The 20 articles in this category represented nearly one-half of the total research based articles (49%) published in the JFCSE issues included in the analysis. The articles included studies in traditional family and consumer content areas such as parenting, families, food and nutrition, and child care. Other articles included those focusing on ethical concerns, teen theft in schools, intercultural issues, integrating parenting and language arts, and assessment of nutrition education.

Priority Issues in Family and Consumer Sciences Education. There were very few research articles related to the priority issues identified in the 1996 Teacher Education Yearbook. One article focused on work and family issues, another addressed employability skills required in child care programs, and a third addressed the relationship between FHA/HERO Chapter Advisors’ perceived job satisfaction and chapter success. Microcomputer adoption was

addressed in one article; however, it was examined from an historical viewpoint rather than a current issue perspective. Basic skills, higher order thinking skills, gender equity, youth and families at risk, entrepreneurship, and middle/junior high school programs were not addressed in the volumes analyzed in this study.

Although not identified in the 1996 Yearbook, a topic that certainly merits designation as a priority issue in our profession is the nationwide shortage of qualified secondary family and consumer sciences teachers. As mentioned previously, three articles included in Volume 16 addressed this issue from different perspectives. One article examined irregular certification; another explored recruitment implications of career choice decisions for recent family and consumer sciences education graduates; and the third drew implications for teacher shortage, teacher education, and in-service education based on job satisfaction of current teachers.

Research Methodologies Utilized

Of the 41 published research reports, 33 (80%) were categorized as empirical/analytical, seven (17%) as interpretive, and one as both empirical/analytical and interpretive. There were no published research reports in these four volumes of JFCSE identified as having used the critical science mode of inquiry.

Using Gay and Airasian's classifications, the research articles were examined further to identify the methods used for data collection and analysis within each mode of inquiry. Thirty-two of the empirical/analytical studies used traditional quantitative methodology; including 31 using descriptive methods and one, a pre-test/post-test treatment group design, classified as pre-experimental. One empirical/analytical study used historical methods.

The survey was the most frequently used method of data collection for the 33 empirical/analytical studies. The one study classified as both empirical/analytical and interpretive also used survey methods. Thirty-one (94%) research reports indicated that data had been collected in this manner, including three studies that utilized the Delphi method. Only one study used telephone and face-to-face interviews. More than one method of data collection was reported for a number of research studies.

The interpretive studies ($n = 7$) utilized a variety of qualitative data collection procedures. The methods included focus groups (two), interviews (two), journaling, case study analysis, and visual analysis.

Analysis procedures were classified as quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative procedures were further categorized as (a) descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and percentages; (b) descriptive statistics and statistical tests such as t -tests, analysis of variance or covariance, and chi square; and (c) theory-building procedures such as regression and path analysis. Thirteen studies (32%) reported using descriptive statistics only. Sixteen research reports (39%), including the one empirical-analytical/interpretive study, utilized descriptive statistics and one or more statistical procedures; two of these studies combined statistical procedures with a qualitative component.

Five studies (12%) utilized theory-building statistics. These included four studies that used regression analysis and one that utilized path analysis procedures. The seven interpretive studies published in the volumes reviewed used qualitative analysis procedures exclusively.

Use of Theory

Twelve studies (29%) incorporated a strong theoretical or conceptual framework in the research design. This number includes two of the five studies previously identified as using

theory-building statistics, making a total of fifteen studies (37%) that utilized theory in some way. Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity provided the theoretical framework for one study. Another developed and tested a theoretical model to explain voluntary simplicity as a life process, and a third utilized the parent involvement literature to develop a model for predicting parent involvement practices of family and consumer sciences teachers. Other theoretical frameworks included Brown's interpretive and emancipatory thinking and action, Holland's theory of vocational choice, Fuller's model of teacher development, and Shulman's framework of teachers' content knowledge.

Summary and Discussion

Research-based articles published in JFCSE between 1995 and 1998 represented 89% of the refereed articles, an increase from the previous six years when only 72% were based on original research. Consistent with the 1994 recommendation for increased collaboration and interdisciplinary research efforts, the number of authors who were not family and consumer sciences educators increased from 12% in 1989 to 47% in 1994; most were co-authors with family and consumer sciences educators. In contrast, only five (7%) of the authors were identified as graduate students, a decrease from 18% in 1994. One factor, which may help to explain both of these findings, is the well-documented decline in the number of family and consumer sciences teacher education programs. Currently, the Family and Consumer Sciences Division of the Association for Career and Technology Education (formerly the American Vocational Association) lists 168 programs that prepare family and consumer sciences teachers, compared with 217 in 1994 (National Directory, 1995, 2000). And as the number of teacher educators dwindles, there may be less time for research and publication and fewer opportunities for graduate student involvement in research and publication. Support for this view is found in the AAFCS listings of thesis and dissertations completed in family and consumer sciences education which show a decline from 37 in 1995 to 25 in 1998 (Kennemer & Ownbey, 1999; Lee & Johnson, 1996).

Although the increasing collaboration among family and consumer sciences educators and researchers in related disciplines is a positive finding, the more limited authorship by FCSE researchers is somewhat troubling. We should, of course, continue to encourage interdisciplinary research efforts. However, it is equally important to ensure that JFCSE continues to publish research that is directly relevant to FCSE. This goal can be achieved only if researchers in the field submit publishable manuscripts and collaborate with others who have similar research interests.

When classified by research topic, two categories accounted for more than 90% of the articles in Volumes 13-16, "Programming in Family and Consumer Sciences Education" (49%) and "The Field of Family and Consumer Sciences Education" (42%). A noteworthy difference from the 1994 analysis is that only three articles (7%) related to the priority issues identified in the 1996 Yearbook, compared to 21 (39%) in the previous six volumes. This finding may suggest that research published in JFCSE is becoming more narrowly focused and/or that many of the priority issues identified in 1996 are no longer relevant. (It is noted that Praxis articles did address several of these priority issues, e.g., occupational preparation, youth and families at risk). The three articles in the current analysis related to the shortage of family and consumer sciences teachers addressed a critical issue identified by the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences in 1996 (AAFCS Senate, 1996).

Further comparison with the 1994 analysis revealed an increase in the percentage of empirical-analytical studies, 74% to 80%, and a slight decrease in the use of the interpretive framework, from 20% to 17%. The critical inquiry framework was not represented in Volumes 13-16. The current analysis suggests a renewed reliance on the empirical-analytical research paradigm. It appears that Couch and Felstehausen's 1994 recommendation for continued use of alternative methodologies has not materialized.

The primary methodology used in the empirical-analytical studies was descriptive, with only one of these studies classified as pre-experimental and one as historical. As in the previous six volumes, the survey was the most frequent method of data collection. Likewise, descriptive statistics and statistical tests including t-tests, analysis of variance, and chi square continue to be the major statistical procedures used.

The trend toward qualitative methodology, noted in the 1994 analysis, continued to be reflected in Volumes 13-16. All of the interpretive studies used qualitative data collection and analysis procedures, and several of the empirical-analytical studies had a qualitative component. Gay and Airasian (2000) have suggested that the growing enthusiasm for qualitative inquiry stems from dissatisfaction with using traditional methods to investigate problems that do not lend themselves to numerical analysis. The rationale supporting qualitative methods is the belief that human behavior is significantly influenced by the environment in which it occurs (Gay & Airasian, 2000), a view that seems particularly relevant for family and consumer sciences education.

There is evidence in Volumes 13-16 that Couch and Felstehausen's call to strengthen the interaction between theory and research has been heard. Fifteen studies (37%) utilized theory in the current analysis, compared to only 19% in the previous six years. These included five studies that utilized theory building statistics, the same number as in the earlier analysis. It should be noted that only two of the current studies using theory-building statistics demonstrated a real interaction between theory and research, that is, they used research to test, extend, or modify existing theories or used the research results to propose new theories, as suggested by Babbie (1989).

There are numerous challenges facing FCSE researchers in the new millennium. As FCSE programs are merged with other academic units and our numbers decrease, workloads become more demanding and little time is available for research and publication. This comes at a time when many colleges and universities are placing added emphasis on external grants and research productivity. These changes in the academic community reinforce the critical need for us to support and mentor new researchers as they enter the field. One way to accomplish this is to collaborate with graduate students and new faculty on research grants and ensure that they are encouraged to participate in publishing the results.

Action research, an emerging trend in educational research, offers another opportunity to expand the boundaries of FCSE research efforts. Action research is practical research done in the "real world" by practitioners to address their own needs, problems, and concerns (Gay and Airasian, 2000). As Peterat (1997) has suggested, action research allows us to "...reflect on our everyday professional practices, honour the inextricable connections between theory, research and action." (p. 122) Currently action research is seldom published in peer-reviewed journals. We suggest that the Praxis section of JFCSE could offer practitioners a forum for communicating action research results to a wider audience. If this were done, a change in editorial policy would be in order so that Praxis articles would undergo peer review.

Although JFCSE has served as a primary outlet for the publication of research in family and consumer sciences education for nearly two decades, FCSE researchers publish in a variety of journals. It would be useful to conduct similar analyses of publications, such as the *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, the *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, and the *Journal of Vocational Education Research*, to determine if the research published in JFCSE is representative of the field.

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About the Authors

Ginny Felstehausen and Sue Couch are Professors of Family and Consumer Sciences Education at Texas Tech University, Box 41162, Lubbock, Texas, 79409-1162.