

Gatekeeping in Family Science Programs

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ABSTRACT. Family science programs strive to graduate students who are academically and personally competent to work effectively with families; however, little has been empirically documented about how students' academic and personal competencies are assessed and supported. Guided by Ecological Systems Theory, this study examined the gatekeeping practices of fifty undergraduate and graduate family science programs in the United States. Study findings indicated that the majority of family science programs support and assess their students' academic competencies, whereas fewer programs address students' personal competencies. It will be important for family science programs to consider the entire ecological system of their students to ensure their competence for future clients, institution, family science profession, and society.

Keywords: gatekeeper, student assessment, internship, program assessment

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Family science programs strive to graduate students who are academically and personally competent to work effectively with individuals and families. Through their hard work, faculty and students generally achieve this goal as newly minted graduates join the profession. However, now and again, there may be a lack of congruence between students' chosen fields of study and their academic or personal competence.

Within the helping professions of social work, psychology, and counseling there has been ongoing adherence to and consideration of a "gatekeeping" role in preparing and assessing the personal and professional competence of students prior to internship or graduation (Bodner, 2012; Leighninger, 2000; Sowbel, 2012; Vacha-Haase, Davenport, & Kerewsky, 2004). The term "gatekeeping" generally refers to assessment, remediation, support, and/or dismissal of students prior to internship or graduation. The purpose of gatekeeping is to benefit students, protect future clients, and uphold standards of the respective profession (Homrich, 2009; Lafrance, Gray, & Herbert, 2004; Ziomek-Daigle, 2010). Similarly, family science scholars adhere to the goal of promoting growth and development of individuals for enhancement of family well-being. Since the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) mission is "to provide an educational forum for family researchers, educators, and practitioners to share in the development and dissemination of knowledge about families and family relationships, establish professional standards, and work to promote family well-being" (NCFR, 2008), family scientists have a clearly established gatekeeper role in preparing students. Our expectation for students is to master content about families; however, students' personal competence, which includes possession of traits that enable them to work effectively with families, is of equal importance.

Although graduate programs in family science may provide feedback and mediation to students about their academic and personal practice, the gatekeeper role of the family science profession arguably begins at the undergraduate level. Since many undergraduate students are employed in family life education settings and/or work with at-risk families and vulnerable populations, it is imperative that they have knowledge and skills to serve these populations competently. Family science scholars have considered how undergraduate family science programs identify explicit criteria for, and measurement of, students' academic and employment competencies within family life education settings (NCFR, n.d.). However, there is little documentation about how students' personal competencies are assessed and supported for all family science students. Internships may be viewed as a form of gatekeeping depending on how students are assessed prior to placement and internship evaluations may influence final grades, which may be viewed as a form of gatekeeping (Ballard & Carroll, 2005). However, placing a student with academic or personal challenges may not benefit the student, does not protect clients, and may damage relationships with community agencies. Since ensuring protection of students and future clients is one of the goals of family science faculty, this paper examines in what ways family science programs define their gatekeeping role and ensure competence of their students for future clients, institutions, the family science profession, and society.

Theoretical Foundation

To support human development, the Ecological Systems Theory requires us to consider the entire ecological system in which a person lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1973). Urie Bronfenbrenner identified five socially organized, interconnected systems that support and guide human behavior and suggested that human development takes place through progressively complex and reciprocal interactions between the person and these systems. Bronfenbrenner suggested these systems may interact to support and nurture human development or they may stifle and negatively influence human development.

The first system that influences an individual's development is the microsystem that includes the interaction s/he has with the immediate environment (e.g., parents, neighborhood, school). When two or more microsystems interact, they are linked within the mesosystem. Exosystems are those external systems that influence development of the individual, even though the person may not reside in them (e.g., parent's workplace, school system). The macrosystem is defined as the greater socio-cultural context or the "cultural blueprint" in which the developing person interacts. Finally, the chronosystem is the passage of time that influences the four systems and, ultimately, development of the person.

The Ecological Systems Theory fits the discussion of a gatekeeping model because it considers a student's personal history and the various microsystems that may have influenced the student's academic abilities, personal values, and professional goals. The goals of the undergraduate program and interaction with faculty likewise influence the student's development as part of the exosystem. The macrosystem (e.g., values of the university, expectations of college graduates, goals of the family science profession) are aspects of the greater socio-cultural context that influence a student. Finally, a review of the gatekeeping literature and the evolution of gatekeeping practices within counseling, social work, and other helping professions (Bodner, 2012; Lafrance et al., 2004; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999; Vacha-Haase et al., 2004) suggest it is appropriate to consider gatekeeping processes within family science at this "time" (chronosystem). The family science field defined its Code of Ethics to "inspire and encourage family scientists to act ethically; provide ethical guidance in areas that family scientists may overlook; provide guidance in dealing with often complex ethical issues; and enhance the professional image and status of family scientists by increasing the level of professional consciousness" (NCFR, 1998; 2012). As we consider ways to enhance the professional image and status of family scientists, it seems appropriate to examine how we support students during their initial entry into the field.

Review of the Gatekeeper Role

Counseling and Mental Health Programs

Gatekeeping within psychology, social work, and counseling has been reinforced through requirements established by professional associations, ethical codes of conduct, state licensure, and university policy. In mental health and social work graduate programs, the overarching goal of the gatekeeper's role is to protect future clients (Bodner, 2012; Lafrance et al., 2004; Lamb, Presser, Pfof, Baum, Jackson, & Jarvis, 1987; Lumadue & Duffey, 1999; Vacha-Haase et al.,

2004). It is assumed that senior faculty members assess the student's academic ability and clinical/personal competencies, endorsing the student for professional practice only after thorough evaluation (Wilkerson, 2006; Ziomek-Daigle, 2010). However, defining personal and professional competence is a subjective and challenging task. The mental health literature reflects this lack of clarity: students with diminished professional functioning have been alluded to as "deficient", "bad", "troublesome", "impaired", "problematic" and "unsuitable" (Forrest, Elman, & Miller, 2008), or identified as experiencing difficulties with alcohol abuse, anxiety and depression, or personality disorders (Huprich & Rudd, 2004).

In their review of 14 studies on gatekeeping in counseling professions, Brear, Dorrian, and Luscri (2008) noted that concerns about intrapersonal and interpersonal skills were consistent across all studies. The findings were significant for two reasons: (a) the ability of counselors to relate to and develop a rapport with their clients is paramount because experiencing difficulties with these skills compromises a counselor's future effectiveness; and (b) it is incumbent upon professionals in the field to identify and assess students' abilities to perform core personal competencies (Brear et al.).

Social Work Programs

The social work literature has been consistently clear about the responsibility graduate programs have to safeguard the profession, future clients, and society in general (Barlow & Coleman, 2003; Cole & Lewis, 1993; Lafrance et al., 2004; Leighninger, 2000; Moore & Urwin, 1990; Sowbel, 2012). Accreditation requirements have substantially influenced the role of gatekeeping within baccalaureate programs since the mid-1970s; the requirements exhort social work programs to "not avoid the difficult issue of failing inadequate students" (Cowburn, Nelson, & Williams, 2000, p. 635). Faculty and field instructors are encouraged to assist students who are unsuited for social work to consider other career options and to hold back those students who need to work further on personal issues (Dudek et al., 2005; Gibbs, 1994; Miller & Koerin, 2001).

However, academically borderline students with strong practice abilities or academically outstanding students with unsatisfactory field performance present a gatekeeping dilemma (Gibbs, 1992). Gibbs's review of baccalaureate social work programs found that "nonconformity to social work values and ethics, obvious emotional/mental problems, and inability to accept and respect human diversity" (pp. 122-123) were primary reasons for counseling students out of a program. In a survey of social work graduate programs, 66 of 82 programs identified specific behaviors and situations warranting termination for non-academic reasons: unethical behavior, mental/emotional problems, criminal activities, and inappropriate field and classroom behavior (Koerin & Miller, 1995).

There will be uncertainty in imperfect processes, and those processes will be facilitated by imperfect faculty members in imperfect systems. And yet educators must develop means of gatekeeping that will be as fair as possible to students while also protecting clients. (Sowbel, 2012, p. 39)

Family Science Programs

To date, no empirical research on specific gatekeeping practices of family science programs exists. Although content that is important for inclusion in family science programs has been discussed at NCFR and specified for the Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) program, expectations for intrapersonal and interpersonal skills have yet to be documented for those students not pursuing CFLE. The NCFR and CFLE Code of Ethics implicitly assume gatekeeping of students. For example, the primary purpose of NCFR's Code of Ethics is to guide family scientists when working with students, clients, research, colleagues, organizations or agencies (NCFR, 2012). Principle VIII specifically states that family scientists will teach students to follow NCFR Ethical Guidelines in their professional roles. Therefore, the implication is that family science programs have ethical obligations to identify and assess students' professional skills and competencies, and to ensure students understand and abide by the family science field's ethical guidelines. Certified family life educators also have a Code of Ethics that provides ethical guidelines for practitioners working with parents and families, children and youth, colleagues, and community agencies (NCFR, 2012). This implies that family science programs have responsibility to verify that their students, particularly those interested in becoming family life educators, are meeting these expectations.

Gatekeeping in Academia and Legal Rulings

Although the mental health and social work professions recognize and advocate for a gatekeeper role, the literature raises concerns about ethical and legal mandates (Cobb, 1994; Cole, Christ & Light, 1995; GlenMaye & Bolin, 2007; Madden & Cobb, 2000; Wayne, 2004). Some concerns and legal rulings addressed discrimination, subjectivity, faculty liability, and institutional policy. In general, the literature documents that the courts allow greater discretion in education programs in which the safety of clients is critical or where high moral standards and good interpersonal relationships are significant to professional practice (Cobb, 1994; Haski-Leventhal, Gelles & Cnaan, 2010; Wayne, 2004; *Woody v. Burns*, 1966). Legal options confirm that faculty has the responsibility and duty to ascertain professional competence, and that course grades alone cannot measure professional skills (Moore & Urwin, 1991; *Sofair v. State University of New York*, 1976). Although subjective judgments are allowed, interpretations must be clear, nondiscriminatory, and non-arbitrary (*Phelps v. Washburn University of Topeka*, 1986) and due process must be assured (Kaplan, 1985; Madden & Cobb, 2000; Wayne, 2004). Kaplin (1985) warned specifically that institutions were vulnerable where there were "no written rules at all or where the rules provide no standard to guide conduct" (p. 294). Overall, the social science and legal literature were consistent in recommending that any and all required screening processes must be shared with students so they know the expected criteria for field work and graduation (Moore & Urwin, 1990).

Cobb and Jordan (1989) reviewed legal precedents that affect higher education, particularly those that determine gatekeeping practices within social work programs. Several court cases supported the idea that professional behavior, especially in clinical and practice settings, is a significant academic requirement that is not separate from the professional program's educational component. They noted court decisions indicating that student "conduct, character, and psychological fitness" can be considered in academic evaluation (Cobb & Jordan, 1989, p. 91). Finally, the authors recommended students recognize that professional academic performance extends beyond classroom performance and attendance, and includes "ethical

behavior and psychological well-being sufficient to interact positively and instructively with clients" (p. 94).

Termination of unsuitable students has also been considered in case law. Madden (1993; 2000) examined student dismissals due to clinical incompetency. After reviewing relevant legal rulings, Madden (1993) suggested that "absent ill will, tortious conduct, or illegal discrimination, courts have deferred to the expert judgment of faculty and institutions to make dismissals based on a student's failure to meet academic standards, including clinical competency" (p. 20). Finally, legal opinion confirmed that faculty of one social work program have the responsibility and expertise to make legitimate decisions concerning who should enter the profession since this is required by the code of ethics to which social work practitioners must adhere. As long as decisions are made on the basis of social work knowledge, values, and skills and not on the basis of race, gender, disability, or age, the program is legally protected (Moore & Urwin, 1991). Legal rulings reinforce recommendations noted in the social science literature: for a gatekeeping process to be codified, three factors need to be evident: faculty and student participation is of equal importance, measurable criteria are identified and evaluated within a defined framework, and protection of the profession is the ultimate goal (Brear et al., 2008).

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore the gatekeeping practices of family science programs across the United States. Specifically, this paper answers four research questions that ask how family science programs practice gatekeeping through (a) program objectives or learning outcomes; (b) internships or field experience placement; (c) formal assessments; and (d) referral to university and community resources.

Methodology

In spring 2013, 116 undergraduate and graduate family science programs in the United States were identified through the NCFR website database. NCFR maintains a complete list of all family science programs in the United States and Canada, including those that are CFLE-approved. Each program received an initial email inviting the department chairs or other program administrators to participate in an electronic survey (see Appendix A for the email cover letter). The electronic survey consisted of nineteen questions that asked about gatekeeping through (a) program objectives or learning outcomes, (b) internship or field experience placement, and (c) formal assessment of students' personal and professional competencies before graduation (See Appendix B for survey questions). Two additional emails were sent to invite participation from programs that had not yet completed surveys. Surveys were collected for one month.

Fifty family science undergraduate and graduate programs responded to the gatekeeping survey, resulting in a 43% response rate. Of the 50 programs that responded, 42 (84%) were CFLE-approved programs. There was no collection of additional demographic information regarding the programs, such as program size and level (undergraduate and/or graduate). To answer study research questions, frequencies and percentages of survey responses were analyzed and are presented in the results section below.

Results

Gatekeeping through Program Objectives or Learning Outcomes

Table 1 presents program responses to gatekeeping practices through program objectives or learning outcomes. Of the 50 programs responding, the majority reported having program objectives/learning outcomes. The three most common ways that programs share their program objectives with their students were program website, advisor contact, or in an introductory course.

When asked how students are informed about their progress in the program, the majority of the 50 programs responding indicated that students receive information about their progress in the program primarily through academic means such as grades, instructor communication, or advisor feedback (see Table 1). Fewer programs use volunteer/intern evaluations, portfolios, comprehensive exams, or formal review processes. Furthermore, most programs gather data on the preparation of their students from graduation statistics or surveys of graduates. Fewer programs survey employers, utilize certification/licensure data, or utilize professional/organizational memberships to assess preparation of their graduates. Approximately 20% of programs gather no data on the preparation of students for the professional field.

Gatekeeping through Internship or Field Experience Placement

Most of the programs that responded to the survey reported having internships or requiring internships for their students (see Table 2). The most common requirements of students prior to registering for internships include meetings with faculty, applications for the internship, and academic requirements including GPA. Fewer programs (a) require background checks prior to internships, (b) meet with students having GPA, behavioral, or health issues, and (c) review NCFR's Code of Ethics with students prior to registration for internships.

Gatekeeping through Formal Assessment

Table 3 presents responses from programs about their formal assessments of students using the "gatekeeper" definition defined in this study. Most of the 50 programs report having formal assessments of students. Assessments specifically relate to students' academic performances and concerns about classroom behavior. Fewer programs reported concerns about students' general behaviors (e.g., general affect, impairments, interpersonal skills). With regard to timing of formal assessments, most programs reported assessing students one semester prior to internships; fewer programs reported assessing students as soon as evidence of concerns emerged.

Table 3 also shows that follow-up meetings occur with most of the 31 family science programs that have formal assessments of students. Few programs report meeting one-on-one with students, gathering additional information about students, sending students letters that expectations, or involving Deans of Students or other administrators. The 31 programs that reported having formal assessments of their students also responded to a question about alternatives to placing students in internships (see Table 3). Responses include advising students to enroll in another program, substituting coursework, and withdrawing/expelling students.

Fewer programs allow students to remain in their programs or graduate student without internships.

Gatekeeping through Referral to University and Community Resources

Table 4 presents family science program responses to the option of referring students to university and community resources. The majority of programs indicate they have the option to involve Deans of Students and/or mental health counseling services. Beyond these resources, fewer programs reported having the option to involve health care providers and other professional resources.

Discussion

Guided by Ecological Systems Theory, this is the first study to examine gatekeeping practices of family science undergraduate and graduate programs in the United States. Study findings provide understanding of the strengths of current gatekeeping practices as well as potential avenues for improvement in these practices. Specifically, this study indicates that most family science programs support and assess students' academic competencies, whereas fewer programs address students' personal competencies. To ensure that family science students are prepared to work with a variety of individuals and families, it will be important for family science programs to consider the entire ecological systems of their students.

Study findings supported the strength of family science programs in assessing students' academic abilities and preparation for internships. Faculty members were actively involved in this process, supporting students with feedback on assignments as well as through advisement and internship placement. This was similar to findings in previous research on other helping professions and to NCFR documentation on rigor of curriculum, sequence of courses, and course requirements as forms of gatekeeping (Gibbs, 1992; NCFR, n.d.; Ziomek-Daigle, 2010). According to study findings, most family science programs have program objectives or learning outcomes, but few programs share them explicitly with their students. It is possible that family science programs could strengthen their students' understanding of academic expectations by being more purposeful about sharing program objectives or learning outcomes with students (e.g., present in an introductory course). This could help students better understand what areas of knowledge and skills are expected of family science professionals and assess how well they are meeting these expectations academically.

Fewer family studies programs have assessed and supported students' intrapersonal and interpersonal skills prior to graduation. This contradicts the literature within other helping professions that has documented the need to protect future clients, the profession, and society by assessing students' personal skills and abilities for a career in the helping professions (Bodner, 2012; Cole & Lewis, 1993; Lafrance et al., 2004; Sowel, 2012). Study findings suggested that a few ways to address this limitation before students' internships and graduation could include requiring student self-assessments, demonstrating NCFR's Code of Ethics, and checking the backgrounds of all students. The current study also suggests that while most family science programs have support from their Deans of Students, counseling services, and other health resources in assessing and supporting students' personal competencies, few programs used these

resources to assist students with intrapersonal or interpersonal issues. This is a problem despite strong documentation that family science programs have legal support for assessing students' personal skills and abilities (Cobb, 1994; Cobb & Jordon, 1989; Madden, 1993; *Sofair v. State University of New York*, 1976). These findings suggest that while family science programs have resources available to support students' personal competencies, the programs may need to be more purposeful about assessing these competencies.

Implications for Intervention and Practice, Research, and Policy

Implications for Administering Family Science Programs

The "helping profession" literature provides ample evidence that family science scholars have an explicit responsibility and an implicit need to discuss our roles as gatekeepers for the well-being of our profession, institutions, and students (Bodner, 2012; Leighninger, 2000; Sowbel, 2012; Vacha-Haase et al., 2004; Ziomek-Daigle, 2010). Engaging in an intentional discussion about our roles of gatekeeping should include consideration of macro and micro factors that reflect legal, institutional, and academic issues and policies, as well as the need for specific resources including personnel, time, and financial support. An ecological model would suggest that institutional and legal "buy in" would be critical to establish at the macro level, and prior to developing specific gatekeeping processes. For example, the increasing emphasis on graduation, retention, and attrition rates in universities likely affects gatekeeping processes. Deans of Students, legal personnel, academic deans, and department chairs need to be consulted to review the range of costs and benefits of creating a gatekeeping model. Department members would benefit from thorough discussion of macro level issues, in addition to micro level considerations of time, personnel, and long term commitment required for establishing and maintaining a gatekeeping process.

In particular, explicit consideration of reasons why faculty may be reticent to participate in a gatekeeping process is critical. The mental health, social work, and counseling literature notes that these reasons include but are not limited to resources, qualifications, and dual roles/boundaries (Bodner, 2012; Dudek, Marks, and Regehr, 2005; Lafrance et al., 2004; Sowbel, 2012). Resources generally include faculty time and energy: departments have too few faculty members with too many other commitments; faculty have unconscious/conscious desires not to "see" student behaviors because of the recognition of the time, energy, and documentation it will take to respond to and hold students accountable, and faculty prefer to focus on teaching content, not on monitoring student behaviors. The issue of qualifications highlights that faculty do not "see" unhealthy student behaviors because they have been trained to not see it; faculty may be unsure of what behaviors to observe/document; faculty may lack ability to assess evidence of mental health issues versus other kinds of behaviors; faculty have a sense of helplessness or lack of direction in knowing what to do once they observe student behaviors that concern them, and faculty may assume that student behaviors are occurring only in their courses or assume that behaviors are occurring in isolation. Finally, "dual roles/boundaries" of faculty identify concerns about lack of clarity regarding professional/personal boundaries. Faculty do not want to be viewed as "bad guys" or be seen as whistle-blowers among students; faculty enjoy having supportive relationships with students and do not want these relationships to become uncomfortable. Only after identifying and discussing these issues in the context of our responsibility to our profession, institution, and community can we proceed to create gatekeeping processes that fit our departments and universities.

For a gatekeeper process to be successful, that process needs to be clearly stated, easy to administer, and to use the time and energy of student and faculty efficiently. Utilization of NCFR's values, ethical standards, and code of conduct guidelines for the helping profession is a starting point for defining preferred student personal and professional behaviors. Discussion among faculty about programmatic "end goals" and student outcomes helps establish a clear picture of the rationale and desired outcome for a gatekeeping process and gives faculty time to commit to the process. Creation of a clear, easy to use assessment tool for students and faculty should be based on preferred values and behaviors for students. Once developed, the review process needs to be described to students as soon as they enter the program.

Implications for Research

Considering the diversity of universities and family science programs, it is important for future research to examine whether university and program characteristics and dynamics influence gatekeeping practices. First, the type of institution (i.e., private versus public), size of university and program, number of faculty in program, and specializations or types of degrees offered might contribute to whether and how family science programs engage in gatekeeping. Second, prior to establishing a gatekeeping process, researchers should examine issues that arise in undergraduate or graduate family science classrooms (e.g., ethical issues, mental health, alcohol and other drug addictions, low affect). This could provide a foundation for the need for a gatekeeping role and help identify the types of training that would be helpful for faculty. Finally, a review of assessment tools that specifically examine interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies for family science students would be a valuable addition to the family science gatekeeping literature.

Implications for Policy

Policies generally reflect the will and values of the population who create them. At the macro level, specific university policies that exist relative to a gatekeeper role need to be reviewed and clearly defined. A gatekeeping process can succeed only when faculty, staff, and students have confidence in the university's recognition and support of a gatekeeper role. University policies need to be explicit and overt in definition and application of gatekeeping responsibilities. NCFR's mission statement opens the door for creating a forum to discuss the need for gatekeeping in our profession and on our campuses. As a result of such discussion, clarification and application of NCFR's Code of Ethics regarding the role of gatekeeping may be a natural outcome. University policy might be guided by NCFR policy and support of a gatekeeper role in family science programs.

Conclusion

The family science discipline has a gatekeeper role in preparing students to understand and strengthen families, but little is known about how family science programs fulfill this role. This paper examines the gatekeeping practices of family science programs across the United States, including definition of the gatekeeper role and data about how programs carry out this role in order to strengthen well-being of students, families, and society. The authors hope the

issues highlighted will serve as a springboard for discussion in family science departments, between faculty and community agencies, and within the NCFR.

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Table 1

Gatekeeping Through Program Objectives or Learning Outcomes

	n	%
Programs/majors with defined program objectives or learning outcomes?: (N = 50)	40	80.0
How program objectives/learning outcomes are shared with students (Check all that apply): (N = 40)		
Information on the program/major website	19	47.5
Meetings with an advisor	18	45.0
Introductory course	13	32.5
Other	13	32.5
Formal group advisement meetings/orientation	9	22.5
Program objectives/outcomes are not made explicit to students	7	17.5
Peer advisement/peer mentor process	2	5.0
Formal review process	2	5.0
Meeting with a committee	0	0.0
How students are notified of their progress in meeting program/major expectations. (Check all that apply): (N = 50)		
Grades for each course	42	84.0
Instructor feedback on assignments	38	76.0
Meeting with an advisor	34	68.0
Semester overall GPA	28	56.0
Volunteer/intern supervisor evaluations	23	46.0
Portfolio review	9	18.0
Comprehensive exams	8	16.0
Formal review process	4	8.0
Other	2	4.0
Data gathered by your university or program from graduates and/or employers to assess how well graduates are prepared for their employment in the field. (Check all that apply) (N = 50)		
Graduation statistics	28	56.0
Graduation follow-up survey	27	54.0
Placement/employment statistics	20	40.0
No data are gathered	10	20.0
Employer survey	8	16.0
Certifications/licensing statistics	7	14.0
Other	3	6.0
Professional/organizational memberships	2	4.0

Table 2

Gatekeeping through Internship or Field Experience Placement

	<i>n</i>	%
Programs/majors with an advanced (senior or graduate) level internship or field experience: (<i>N</i> = 50)	46	92.0
Program/major's internship required: (<i>N</i> = 46)	41	89.1
Total number of hours students are required to complete at their internship site: (<i>N</i> = 46)		
1-100	0	0.0
101-200	17	37.0
201-300	9	19.6
301-400	9	19.6
401-500	4	8.7
501-600	1	2.2
Other	6	13
Requirements of student prior to registering for internship credits (Check all that apply): (<i>N</i> = 46)		
Students meet with faculty prior to internship placement	37	80.4
Student must formally apply for internship	32	69.6
Students needing assistance/information/support meet with faculty	30	50.2
Grade requirements in certain courses must be met	23	50.0
Specific GPA in program/major	22	47.8
External feedback on student performance (reference/feedback from non-program faculty, volunteer coordinators, past employees, etc.) is gathered and reviewed by faculty	20	43.5
Student must formally apply for admittance into program/major	19	41.3
Background check	18	39.1
Students who have GPA, behavioral, or health issues meet with faculty	16	34.8
Review of NCFR's Code of Ethics	14	30.4
Other	11	23.9
Service learning	7	15.2
Volunteer hours	2	4.3
None of the above	0	0.0

Table 3

Gatekeeping Through Formal Assessment

	n	%
Formal assessment processes of students prior to internship placement or graduation relate to (Check all that apply): (<i>N</i> = 50)		
Faculty report concerns about student's academic performance	23	46.0
Faculty report concerns about student's classroom behavior (attendance, participation, attitude, involvement, etc.)	16	32.0
Faculty report concerns regarding student's behaviors (general affect, impairment, depressions, potential mental health issues)	14	28.0
Other	8	16.0
Students complete self-assessment of their academic performance, classroom behaviors, or personal behaviors	6	12.0
External feedback (from volunteer experiences, employers, etc.)	6	12.0
None of the above	17	34.0
The points that formal assessment prior to internship placement or graduation occurs within a Family Science program (Check all that apply): (<i>N</i> = 31)		
The semester prior to internship	15	48.4
As soon as there is evidence a concern exists	8	25.8
Other	4	12.9
Assessment is appropriate for Family Science graduate programs only	2	6.5
At specified time periods in the program/major	1	3.2
Types of follow-up that occurs if program does have an assessment of students prior to registering for intern placement or graduation (Check all that apply): (<i>N</i> = 31)		
Student's advisor meets with the student to discuss progress	16	51.6
Meetings are held with the student until they are placed in an internship or they change academic programs	5	16.1
Other	5	16.1
Committee of faculty meet with the student	3	9.7
Follow-up meeting is held with the student in a given amount of time	3	9.7
Follow-up information is gathered from faculty	3	9.7
Follow-up information is gathered from external sources (counselors, health care providers, etc.)	3	9.7
Letter is sent to student with statement of expectations, deadlines	2	6.5
Letter is sent to student and Dean of Students with statement of expectations	1	3.2
Follow-up meeting with student is coordinated by the Dean of Students/Dean/other Administrator	1	3.2
No follow-up occurs	0	0.0

(Table 3 Continues)

Table 3 (Continued)

	n	%
Available options at university if assessment of the student does not result in satisfactory outcome (Check all that apply): (<i>N</i> = 31)		
Advise student into another program/major	9	29.0
Other	8	25.8
Student substitutes other coursework for internship	7	22.6
Withdraw/expel student from program/major	5	16.1
No alternative options are available	3	9.7
Student remains in program/major with no change	2	6.5
Student completes program without internship	1	3.2

Table 4

Gatekeeping Through Referral to University and Community Resources

At any point during a student's progress through your program/major, do you have the option to involve the Dean of Students/Dean/other administrators? (<i>N</i> = 50)		
Yes	42	84.0
No	3	6.0
At any point during a student's progress through your program/major, do you have the option to involve mental health counseling? (<i>N</i> = 50)		
Yes	43	86.0
No	3	6.0
At any point during a student's progress through your program/major, do you have the option to involve assistance from health care providers? (<i>N</i> = 50)		
Yes	28	56.0
No	16	32.0
Are there any other professional resources who may be contacted at any point during a student's progress through your program? (<i>N</i> = 50)		
Yes	25	50.0
No	18	36

Appendix A – Gatekeeping Cover Letter

Consent to Participate in Approved Research Gatekeeping in Family Science Programs

Dear Family Science Program coordinator:

Nestled under the broad “helping profession” umbrella, psychology, social work and counseling have grappled with their professional “gatekeeping” role; that is, their responsibility for whom they admit and how they assess their students for practice in the field. As “gatekeepers”, faculty has a responsibility to their students, their institutions, their profession and future clients of their students. The ultimate goal of gatekeeping is to graduate students who are academically and personally competent.

Historically, the family science discipline has considered itself to be part of the “helping professions,” and therefore has a gatekeeper role in preparing students to understand and strengthen families. We hope students will master content about families; however, **of equal importance is students’ personal competence which includes possession of traits that enable them to work effectively with families.** Since many family science students are employed in family life education, with vulnerable populations and at-risk families, it is imperative they have knowledge and personal skills to serve these populations competently. Yet, an examination of the literature found no family science programs that identify explicit criteria for and measurement of students’ academic and personal competencies. The gatekeeping role is a responsibility of family science faculty to ensure protection of students, future clients, our institutions and our profession. **This survey is an attempt to identify what, if any, gatekeeping policies exist in undergraduate and graduate Family Science programs.**

This survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You are encouraged to be open about gatekeeping policies in your undergraduate and graduate family science programs. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. Should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, however, there is no way to identify your anonymous document after it has been turned into the investigator. Your name, program, or university will not be included on any documents. We do not believe you can be identified from any of this information.

There are no anticipated risks for participation in this study. Since there is no empirical research on gatekeeping practices among family science programs, and since the family science field considers itself to be among the helping profession, data about current gatekeeping practices will enable all programs to review their assessment practices for the benefit of their students and society at large.

This study has been reviewed and approved by Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact the Investigator. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator. By completing and submitting your survey, you

are agreeing to participate and share information. By submitting your survey, you are also helping to insure the results of the study truly represent gatekeeping in the family science field.

Statement of consent: By completing the following survey, you agree to participate in the project entitled, *Gatekeeping in Family Science Programs*.

The survey can be completed by clicking on the following link....

Thank you for your participation in this survey and for your contribution to the family science field.

Sincerely,

Appendix B – Gatekeeping Survey

Please complete the following questions:

1. Does your program/major offer an advanced (senior or graduate) level internship or field experience?
 - Yes (if yes, please continue with questions...)
 - No (if no, please skip to question...)

2. Is your program/major's internship:
 - Required
 - Optional

3. Please check the number of internship credits for which the student is expected to register:
 - 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
 - other (please specify number of credits: _____)

4. Please check the total number of hours students are required to complete at their internship site:
 - 1-100 101-200 201-300 301-400 401-500 501-600
 - Other (please specify total number of hours to be completed: _____)

5. Prior to registering for internship credits, what is required by the student? Check all that apply: (if none exist, please skip to question...)
 - Student must formally apply for admittance into program/major
 - Student must formally apply for internship
 - Grade requirements in certain courses must be met
 - Specific GPA required in program/major
 - Background check required
 - Review of NCFR's Code of Ethics is required
 - Volunteer work (# of hours; # of locations required?) Please specify: _____
 - Service learning requirements must be met
 - Meet with all students prior to intern placement
 - Meet with specific students needing assistance/information/support prior to placement
 - Meet with students who have GPA, behavioral or health issues prior to placement
 - Gather external feedback on student performance (references/feedback from non-program faculty, volunteer coordinators, past employers, etc.)
 - Other

6. Applying the "gatekeeper" definition, does your program have any formal or informal assessment processes of students prior to internship placement relating to: (check all that apply. If none exist, please skip to question...)
 - Faculty report concerns about student's academic performance

- Faculty report concerns about student's classroom behavior (attendance, participation, attitude, involvement, etc.)
 Faculty report concerns regarding student's behaviors (general affect, impairment, depression, potential mental health issues)
 Students complete a self-assessment of their academic performance, classroom behaviors, or personal behaviors
 External feedback (from volunteer experiences, employers, etc.)
 Other (please describe _____)
7. At any point during a student's progress through your program/major, do you have the option to involve the Dean of Students/Dean/other administrators?
 Yes (Why? How? _____)
 No
8. At any point during a student's progress through your program/major, do you have the option to involve mental health counseling?
 Yes (Why? How? _____)
 No
9. At any point during a student's progress through your program/major, do you have the option to involve assistance from health care providers?
 Yes (Why? How? _____)
 No
10. Are there any other professional resources who may be contacted at any point during a student's progress through your program/major?
 Yes (If yes, who? Why? _____)
 No
11. If your program does have an assessment of students prior to registering for intern placement, what follow-up occurs with the student? (check all that apply)
 No follow-up occurs
 Letter is sent to student with statement of expectations; deadlines
 Letter is sent to student and Dean of Students with statement of expectations
 Student's advisor meets with the student to discuss progress
 Committee of faculty meet with the student
 Committee of fellow students meet with the student
 Follow-up meeting is held with the student within (state timeline _____)
 Follow-up information is gathered from faculty
 Follow-up information is gathered from external sources (counselors, health care providers, etc.)
 Follow-up meeting with student is coordinated by Dean of Students/Dean/other Administrator
 Meetings are held with the student until they are placed in an internship or they change academic programs
 Other _____

12. If follow-up with the student does not result in a satisfactory outcome, what options are available at your university?
- Advise student into another program/major
 - Withdraw/expel student from program/major
 - Student remains in program/major with no change
 - Student completes program without internship
 - Student substitutes other coursework for internship
 - There are no options
 - Other _____
13. If your program has no formal assessment of students prior to intern placement, what are the reasons? (check all that apply):
- Program/major has not considered the need for an assessment
 - Concern about legal ramifications
 - Conflict of interest
 - Lack of time and other resources
 - Academic requirements are all that are necessary
 - Dean of Student/Dean's office takes care of any student concerns
 - Student's personal skills are not the purview of faculty
 - Other _____
14. If assessment prior to an internship placement occurs within a Family Science program, at what point during the student's progress in the program does it occur?
- At specified time periods in the program/major (after all sophomore classes have been completed, for example)
 - The semester prior to an internship
 - Assessment is appropriate for Family Science graduate programs only
 - As soon as there is evidence a concern exists
 - Other _____
15. Does your program/major have defined program objectives or learning outcomes?
- Yes
 - No (*If no, please skip to question....*)
16. If yes, how are the program objectives/learning outcomes shared with students?
- Introductory course
 - Peer Advisement/Peer mentor process
 - Meetings with an advisor
 - Meet with a committee
 - Formal group advisement meetings/orientation
 - Information on the program/major website
 - Formal review process
 - Other _____

17. Please identify how students are notified of their progress in meeting program/major expectations. Check all that apply.

- Grades for each course
- Instructor feedback on assignments
- Semester and overall GPA
- Formal review process
- Meeting with an advisor
- Volunteer/Intern supervisor evaluations
- Comprehensive exams
- Portfolio review
- Other _____

18. If assessment prior to graduation occurs within your Family Science program/major, at what point during the student's progress in the program/major does it occur?

- At specified time periods in the program/major (after all sophomore classes have been completed, for example)
- The semester prior to an internship
- Assessment is appropriate for Family Science graduate programs only
- As soon as there is evidence a concern exists
- Other _____

19. What, if any, data does your university or program gather from graduates and/or employers to assess how well graduates are prepared for employment in the field?

- No data are gathered
- Graduation statistics
- Placement/employment statistics
- Employer survey
- Graduate follow-up survey
- Certifications/licensing statistics
- Professional/organizational memberships
- Other _____

Thank you for participating in our survey!