Non-Academic Career Promotions in Family Science: Advancement and Potential

CAROLYN J. LOVE

Family science achieved slow yet impressive stature in the 1980s. One major, yet largely unrealized dimension of this growth is the undergraduate and graduate family science majors who are looking beyond academia in order to fulfill their career goals (NCFR Task Force on the Development of the Family Discipline, 1985).

The major focus of this article is the investigation of advancement criteria in non-academic careers for family professionals. Five specific topics will be addressed: the increasing awareness of need for family scientists outside of academia, the kinds of expertise most in demand, motives of family science professionals, marketing family science, and family science career education. Its main target audience is family science professionals who are presently employed by non-academic institutions, are desiring employment in such institutions, and/or are educating others about career opportunities in this arena. Emphasis will be placed on those individuals who have already acquired one or more non-academic positions in their career field.

The scope of the non-academic arena in family science encompasses professional and managerial work in for-profit businesses, including companies, private practice, and entrepreneurship activities; non-profit organizations including social service agencies, health service organizations, and religious organizations; and the government and military. All of these environments operate as businesses which carry responsibilities operationally, administratively, and politically, whether large or small, profit-making or non-profit, private or public. For ease of readability throughout this material the term "institution" will be used to refer to all of the above-mentioned working environments.

AWARENESS OF NEED FOR FAMILY SCIENTISTS OUTSIDE OF ACADEMIA

Whenever a new field is establishing itself--gaining an identity and developing a set of guiding parameters--the projected career opportunities have a major impact on the ambition and level of success enjoyed by the new field. If opportunity is not sensed, the achievements will be depressed. This potential is most germane for family science because of its present early stage of development.

The family science field was warned of the impending problem of minimal program development in non-traditional careers in 1983.

* Carolyn J. Love is Marketing Acquisitions Manager, South-Western Publishing Co., 5101 Madison Road, Cincinnati, OH 45227.
The main reason it is important to get organized is because it has direct implications for the career options that are and will be available to graduates of the family relations (etc.) programs. The graduates of these programs have an adequate identity and they have adequate career options if their emphasis in academia or therapy, but they are in difficulty if they want other emphases. These programs are not expanding other career options fast enough, and it would help greatly if their field was more unified in its identity and more effectively organized (Burr, 1983).

Today more aggressive job seeking behavior in the social sciences is evident. Nationally, the strong emphasis on self development is linked to the stronger emphasis on family health and stability. Society's movement from a manufacturing base to a technological/service based has strengthened the awareness and increased the need for carefully written family policy at local, state, national, and international levels. The very struggle for the family in rapidly changing times has helped to undergird and reinforce its basic strengths and importance, as well as the need for a sound family science academic discipline.

In recent years fewer graduate students have assumed academic positions. Overall the proportion of non-academic jobs is increasing, especially in service sectors, business, and industry. A portion of these students are family science graduates who are turning to a wide diversity of non-academic, yet family-related careers. As the NCFR Task Force on the Development of the Family Discipline (1985) noted,

Positions in business, industry, and government settings are increasing. Many agencies and companies have found that someone with expertise about families can help them to be profitable and more effective. For example... personnel offices and research and design divisions in corporations have also begun to discover that employees who have expertise in the family area can make valuable contributions to their companies. Many governmental agencies, such as those that deal with population, health, education, economic behavior, impact analyses, recreation, etc. find that dealing with families or family issues is an important part of their work. They are involving an increasing number of family scientists (NCFR Task Force on the Development of the Family Discipline, 1985).

Indeed, the family is the focal point of a large array of products and services developed by many different sectors of society. Family science professionals help to ensure the quality of these products and services. Theoretical and research knowledge, coupled with tangible skills, can provide not only substantive jobs but full-fledged careers for family science professionals.

Family science majors are among the best qualified applicants for many of the family product- and service-centered positions available today. These professionals possess indepth knowledge about structural and functional characteristics of the family, the changing natures of families over time, e.g., the unique needs of single parent families or families with violent/abusive/crisis behaviors.

As a case in point, if a new product or service is introduced into the marketplace, the family science professional has an excellent handle on the best fit between the family's needs and desires, and the particular merits of the product or service. Other professionals will have much to offer also, but they will not possess the sensitivities to the audience's complicated needs and desires, a primary requirement in business, as well as the family's needs whenever a family-related product is introduced.
as the family science professional. This competitive edge needs to be maximized whenever a new position or promotion is available.

Past the Starting Point

Once one's first major position has been secured, opportunities normally begin to evolve for other more advanced positions as a function of time and expertise. In family science, as in other fields, the employee gains stronger self- and field-identification, knowledge, and professional integrity during job tenure. New challenges are ever-present and test the strength of the aspiring employee. The potential benefits, such as greater control, autonomy, and integrity may be sensed more intensely in family science than in traditional subject areas because the achievement of non-academic career promotions in family science represents such a unique accomplishment. Once one promotion is achieved others are desired also. A positive strategy becomes easier once one has achieved a promotion -- professional work goals solidify, a career track becomes more evident, and self-confidence increases.

Near the beginning of one's career the type and level of the degree(s) play a major role in securing and maintaining positions. New and more finely developed skills and knowledge result with each succeeding promotion. Such skills and knowledge are built in unison with growing allegiance to the particular institution's unique goals. This growing foundation begins to play a more important role in succeeding promotions than the previous degrees held.

As one advances from a specialist position to an increasingly generalist position the scope of responsibility, supervision, and management encompass greater and greater dimension. Job titles may encompass the terms of manager, director, supervisor, or specialist. Family science can always remain the cornerstone upon which the career is built; knowledge and skills which allow this degree(s) to expand are needed in order for advancement to become a reality.

EXPERTISE IN DEMAND

The general areas of expertise required for non-academic positions in family science need careful scrutiny. The following randomly ordered 15 areas are necessary for major advancement; a lack of attention will result in career stagnation.

Changes in job evaluation criteria are happening rapidly. Peters and Waterman's (1982) now famous study of the attributes of excellent, innovative companies has had unparalleled impact throughout the world. Particularly noteworthy in the following 15 areas for family science professionals are six of their related attributes: bias for action, being close to the customer, autonomy and entrepreneurship, productivity through people, hands-on and value-driven principles, and simultaneous loose-knit properties. Clearly, excellent pay and benefits are not all the factors that make for companies. Levering, Moskowitz, and Katz (1987) found that the best companies have managers who play as team members with their employers, thereby minimizing rank distinction among and between management and non-management levels. These managers also foster open communication and make in-house promotions as prevalent as possible.

Non-academic promotion is influenced and determined by many complicated factors. Maximum benefit will be gained if each of the 15 areas can be developed in liaison with each other. Since this article's major emphasis is placed on expertise needed
for advanced positions once initial position(s) have been obtained, the expertise described will be noted in this context. Many times the scope of the area will reach beyond family science per se.

1. **Previous work experience.** The aspiring employee should possess the necessary experience from prior positions in order to competently assume the new position.

2. **Subject matter knowledge.** Highly developed knowledge, or expertise, refers to both the comprehension of and the ability to apply a group of principles or facts. The skill or proficiency in performing learned tasks should be tied to a variety of the most relevant theory and knowledge bases in family science. While too numerous to discuss individually, the following list of knowledge and skill bases reflects the range of expertise obtainable in unison with family science.

   - accounting
   - advertising
   - biology
   - business administration
   - communications
   - computer science; info. systems
   - consumer economics
   - counseling
   - demography
   - economics
   - education
   - finance; budget management
   - human relations
   - industrial relations
   - journalism
   - law
   - leadership development
   - management
   - marketing
   - medicine
   - organizational development
   - organizational psychology
   - planning and development
   - political science
   - program administration
   - public affairs
   - public policy
   - public relations
   - recreation
   - research design and method
   - statistics
   - theology
   - training and development

3. **Responsibility.** Responsibility includes general supervision—delegating responsibility, prioritizing tasks for others, scheduling employee's time, and supervising others in their work. It also encompasses independent authority in developing long-term strategic planning, developing policy, and committing resources (employees, materials, finances, and time).

4. **Accountability.** The potential amount of impact or effect that can be exercised in final decisions increases with job advancement. The degree to which an institution can be successful is related to the degree to which its employees can be held accountable for their collective and individual contributions.

5. **Critical thinking skills.** This factor measures the degree to which mature judgment and analysis are exercised in goal setting, decision making, problem anticipation, problem solving, risk taking, trend analysis, and trend interpretation. This somewhat nebulous area of “smart thinking” or quality thought coupled with common sense is being given increased attention as tantamount to job success in career applications beyond the theory and research parameters of family science.

   Limited information upon which to base actions is typical in many non-academic family science positions. The employee is expected to make wise moves by doing well with the information, however meager, currently available. In doing so, the employee must investigate the full scope of the problem, consider all alternative plans for development, and be flexible in performance.

Consistent with the high degree of job-related family science knowledge that is currently being stipulated, the criteria for success must be modified because employment today is no longer in a field or setting where one person can be successful. There is an interdependence among people that should be kept in mind.

6. **Communication.** Particular emphasis is placed on the areas of written and oral communication. Realization of the difficulties that can result from miscommunication cannot be overestimated.

7. **Outsider.** Employment is increasingly dependent upon and mediated by the performance of employees and skills related to the knowledge needed to exercise professional judgment in non-academic and cooperative settings. Maximum efficiency and dispatch are expected in the development of the employee, which is a realistic possibility.

8. **Training and development.** A major emphasis is placed on the importance of self-improvement in the development of the employee, to be exercised in both formal and informal situations.

9. **Interpersonal skills.** The interpersonal skills of the individual employee are a major factor in an adequate team development.
plans of action, evaluate all alternative plans, choose one viable course, and finally
develop an action strategy. This step-wise process and its potential for refinement
and improvement as job experience develops is difficult to measure. Past
performance is one of the few valid indexes.

Consider two candidates vying for a promotion. Each possess a family science
degree(s), an impressive professional background, and is currently employed in a
family science-related position. Candidate A excels in many general criteria, but
is cautious about taking even well-calculated risks. Candidate B excels in general
criteria, but also has a history of job behavior which is marked by smart and
efficient decision making where there is limited information. Would the supervisor
be more likely to promote Candidate A or B? Candidate B should be promoted
because the opportunity and the potential for exceeding goals, e.g., a higher revenue
or stronger corporate image, over the long term is greater. Wise management
should recognize critical thinking skills and act accordingly.

6. *Communication skills.* Proficiency in written communication—reports, letters, and
memos, and in oral communication skills is one of the most well-recognized skill
areas in family science. Articulate communication, particularly when explaining
difficult concepts, is a decisive factor in job promotion. Many people do not fully
realize what a tremendously important impact, positive or negative, communication
can make. Many also believe that they have more effective communication skills
than they in fact possess, particularly in the area of accurate listening.
Therefore, there is often a lack of perceived recognition, rather than ability, to
improve in this skill area.

7. *Outside professional work.* Roles such as board member, officer, committee
member, or simply participant in professional associations bring career preparation
and growth opportunities, and individual visibility which can strengthen job
performance and advancement potential at any stage in one's career. Knowledge
and skills in program development, public policy formation and influence, public
relations, trend determination, trend analysis, and interdisciplinary research
knowledge are just a few of the many areas to be exchanged through outside
professional work in both family science professional associations and in
non-academic professional associations. Skill is learned in how to collaborate and
cooperate with organizations which have similar purposes when the directive is to
maximize the potential impact on any particular issue. The ability to work well with
disparate groups, making progress on parallel lines of activity, is tested. The
development of reference groups and professional contacts for future career
possibilities frequently occurs as well.

8. *Training skills.* Most employees possess general educational skill and specific subject
matter expertise. Other skills, such as the ability to foster a stimulating learning
environment or to train colleagues in financial management techniques, may need
development. The ability and willingness to design programs and to conduct in-
house and out-of-house training in areas of expertise the employee holds should
be exercised. Participation in seminars led by others, whether by in-house experts
or outside consultants, is valued also.

9. *Interpersonal relations.* This factor encompasses a variety of skill areas such as tact,
negotiation, and cooperation. These areas are typically measured in terms of both
the importance and the frequency of the contact. When an employee moves into
an advanced position the ability to work with different colleagues and become a
team player is invariably tested. The employee needs to be able to adjust easily to
different work and social networks—maintaining harmonious working relationships and open communication channels, and facilitating pertinent feedback. The ability to work well with disparate groups, making progress on parallel lines of activity, is important here also, as it is in area #7, outside professional work.

10. **Willingness to assume additional duties.** While the ability to assume additional duties may be present, so must be the willingness. Duties which extend beyond one’s typical job description may include task force or committee work, or miscellaneous and sporadic client communication. When such roles or ideas are initiated by the employee, this factor will be viewed more favorably than if requested by the employer.

11. **Recognizable progress.** Achievements, particularly unique achievements, help to measure what the employee can do, and is capable of doing in the future. Achieving important goals and objectives helps the employee to assume greater responsibility.

12. **Leadership skills.** The umbrella term “leadership” refers to any of the following specific actions: motivating, persuading, and guiding others; helping diverse groups to work together in cooperative efforts; managing conflict; negotiating, bargaining, arbitrating, and mediating; developing rapport; and demonstrating, promoting, and selling ideas, products, and services.

13. **Professional ethics.** A strong sense of professionalism and ethical behavior is integral to success because it enhances management capabilities and personal integrity. Professional ethics training is on the rise in most disciplines, particularly in family science where difficult decision making on human and family issues is the norm.

14. **Public policy work.** Taking action on critical issues at local, state, national, and international levels will make not only an impact on the solution to social, legal, and economic problems, it will also provide evidence of the employee’s dedication to making a difference in policy formation and outcome. Legislative initiatives toward new regulations or laws typically begin at the ‘grassroots’ level.

15. **Creativity.** While challenging to measure, creativity includes developing innovative ideas which hold unique possibilities -- seeing relationships between apparently unrelated elements, thinking both vertically and horizontally.

**Additional Job Criteria**

The following job-related criteria should also be met in order for advancement to occur.

1. **Open to relocation.** Being open to geographical movement will often expand one’s career opportunities. The corporate world in particular may require its employees to move to a regional or home office if they desire to move up the career ladder.

2. **No gaps of unemployment.** Continual, uninterrupted work is evidence of dependability and commitment. Large gaps of time with sound explanations, such as military duty or school, should not work against an employee’s promotion possibilities.

3. **Minimum instrumental physical strength and job and task adaptability.** Those successful will make the leap to a fast track.

The structured disciplines in family science careers were once considered to be a career opportunity for the merely geographical mover. With the professional career make the leap to a fast track, the intrinsic and extrinsic factors are more important. Notwithstanding, the employee who will make the leap to a fast track is the commonplace individual who is willing and capable of intrinsic goals.

Many non-family science professionals, otherwise and eventually, become members of the family of contract and public family therapists. If one’s skills are not directed toward the third and final level of the clinical ladder, a position may be felt as a dead end.

The advancement to the third and final level of the clinical ladder, the potential and value of the employee’s work is different now than in the past. As with the non-family science professionals, the employee’s skills not only need to be considered but also the position allocated. The employee must take action, leading the thinking and practice of family therapy, research, and practice.

Such advancement is similar to an individual who has identified a need and area of expertise, has questioned and explored, and decided to alter a position that was not complete with their needs.

When advancement is desired, the candidate’s needs and levels of development in the discipline should be explored.
3. **Minimal job hopping.** Moving from position to position, both within and across institutions, can be interpreted as an indication of inability to concentrate on one job and confront its unique challenges head-on despite unusual barriers.

Those family scientists who measure highly in these areas are more likely to be successful within the institutional structure in which they are operating. They ride "the fast track," gaining momentum on their own professional cycle.

**MOTIVES OF FAMILY SCIENCE PROFESSIONALS**

The strongest influences to pursue the general area of non-academic family science careers were ranked in one study (Holman and Vance, 1987) as follows: personal goals, career opportunities, career plans always outside academia, better pay in career position, geographical preference, and lack of academic job openings. Those individuals who may make the largest contributions to positions outside academia are indeed motivated by intrinsic and extrinsic goals which may have been set for some time. For example, notwithstanding that a company's foremost goal is to generate revenue, many employees will seek other goals. Once non-traditional family science career tracks become more commonplace and the success in obtaining first and additional positions is greater, intrinsic goals can be expected to increase likewise.

Many companies adhere to a hiring policy where new jobs are first posted or otherwise announced only within the company. The second round of exposure is the family of companies owned by the corporate body and the third round is the general public. If one is applying from the outside, therefore, that candidate would be in the third and final pool of applicants. This type of hiring policy may make the securing of a position more difficult for outside applicants.

The announcement of a new position usually does not provide a precise match with the potential employee's expectation. The position may encompass unfamiliar and different responsibilities, environment, equipment, and colleagues. The position is, nonetheless, a promotion. Should the prospective employee attempt it? Absolutely. One's skills, values, and goals which were groomed in attention to the previously mentioned 15 areas can be put into action to a more significant degree than the previous position allowed. Greater degrees of responsibility, autonomy, freedom of thought and action, leadership, power, and control can be asserted. One can apply family science theory, research, and skills in broader and more comprehensive ways.

Such action also means that a greater possibility exists of acquiring yet another position at a still higher level where similar or greater impacts may be possible as well as being a better match with the employee's goals. These positions would not have existed, and chances of securing them would have been slim, if the candidate had not decided to accept the first promotion, even though it was known that the position would not completely compliment the candidate's needs and desires.

**A MARKETING CAMPAIGN**

When a promotion is eminent and competition is keen, the supervisor and others involved in the final hiring decision should already have an understanding of the candidate's degree(s) and previous work experience in family science. This unique discipline should have played a major role in one's first position and should continue to
Table 1. Essential Elements in a Successful Marketing Campaign for Family Science.

1. Define family science in a few brief sentences with emphasis on knowledge and skills possessed. Longer definitions tend to become complex and confusing and therefore will detract from the focal point of the definition.

2. Share the definition of family science and a relevant application with fellow employees and other work cohorts during appropriate times, e.g., while discussing professional association work or in written communication.

3. Mention numbers of undergraduate and graduate students that family science serves nationally. This provides quantitative support and tangible reference points.

4. Note major schools which have well-developed family science programs and make occasional reference to them.

5. Provide examples of success in the family science field. Successes might include: legislation influenced by a family science coalition, the NCFR Family Life Educator certification program, the NCFR Family Resources Database, or family science professionals working in non-academic settings.

6. Invite supervisors and general management to accompany you to professional meetings.

7. Relabel yourself. Use the language of the employer. For example, rather than using the term "scholar," you might use the term "specialist." do so in a cumulative manner for subsequent positions. Explaining and showing evidence of this background is an ongoing process.

The use of a marketing campaign in order to strengthen professional identity and heighten the visibility of family science is strongly recommended. A successful campaign could be composed of the essential elements shown in Table 1.

Marketing must be an ongoing process. The human resource environment in almost every institution is constantly changing--new staff are entering who need to be acclimated to the family science discipline and others are simply confused. Since the family science discipline is relatively new and constantly changing, informing and updating others is essential.

The successful interface between family science professionals and the non-academic family science field will depend on the degree to which both areas learn to talk seriously with each other. In doing so, common values, goals, and tangible elements of job descriptions will surface.

In sum, family science professionals will advance to the degree that they let others know who they are, what knowledge bases they hold, and where their skills lie. At first, the numbers and types of non-academic family science positions may not be as crucial to the success of a marketing campaign as the family science professional’s perseverance to sell him/herself in an existing position or in the creation and selling of an entirely new position.
ACTION NEEDED BY FAMILY SCIENCE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Attention to a number of key strategies will help to ensure the long-term penetration of family science professionals into the non-academic work force at the entry level and in advanced positions. Strategies which family science educators can adopt include:

1. Ask students to list expectations, goals, and objectives over both the short term, one-two years, and the long term, five-15 years. Some individuals also work well after setting daily, weekly, or monthly goals.

2. Ask students to analyze their career philosophy. Are their desirable positions in line with their long-term career aspirations?

3. Help students to determine their true interests and abilities. Encourage them to read widely in many professional fields.

4. Evaluate the students' career-related strengths and weaknesses, as well as their personal strengths and weaknesses. Develop strategies to overcome weaknesses.

5. Gain an awareness of the specific types of non-academic family science careers and positions, especially positions beyond the entry level where a career ladder is evident.

6. Brainstorm new positions needed, and how to sell them to employers. Concentrate on facts and draw valid conclusions. Be leery of opinions and traditions followed for tradition's sake, such as male dominance at the top tier of management.

7. Develop lesson plans which emphasize the characteristics necessary for job advancement.

8. Develop degree programs which contain a broad spectrum of non-academic family science skill areas. (See the section on subject matter knowledge presented on page 140.)

9. Teach the values and skills of entrepreneurship.

10. Teach students how to evaluate family science non-academic job descriptions, both entry level and advanced. Use the list of promotion factors described under "Expertise in Demand" presented earlier in this article as a guideline.

11. Help students to learn how to write resumes and job applications which are appropriate for non-academic family science positions. Family science subject matter should always be combined with tangible skills necessary for family-related careers.


13. Encourage academic family science professionals to broaden their family science roots by working in professional associations tied to various aspects of their work beyond family, e.g., medical and legal associations.

14. Develop internships in non-academic family science career areas.

May, 1989
Family Science Review
15. Help students to overcome barriers and general transitional phases between academia and the work force.

16. Conduct and publish research on the degree of employment success among non-academic family science graduates.

17. Encourage linkages between family science professionals in the field and students by:
   a. Inviting non-academic family science professionals into the classroom to talk with students about: (1) how they obtained their positions and (2) what aspects of their work are most important. Allow ample time for questions and answers.
   b. Encouraging non-academic family science professionals to become (or stay) active in family science professional associations such as NCFCR, American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, Family Service Association, American Sociological Association, American Home Economics Association, etc.
   c. Finding mentors. Mentors, as critical role models, can help to build the base of family science professionals in non-traditional careers. Two types of mentors are needed:
      1. General mentors who can help to sponsor a variety of family science professionals after they have passed the hurdle of securing their first position.
      2. Institution-specific mentors who can help to sponsor new family science professionals within the particulars of their own institution.

18. Be realistic about the marketplace.

19. Foster a positive attitude.

20. Remain open-minded.

Need for Progress

Family science has not yet developed a clear sense of direction in non-academic career fields. This void impedes planning for and the obtaining of non-academic advancement. In order for any employee, at any level, to achieve at maximum capacity, progression five, ten, and 15 years from the present must be sensed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Family science professionals can pursue significant new career dimensions in non-academic career fields, at both the entry level or in advanced positions. Uncertainties or barriers can be handled, if not overcome, by: (1) becoming more aware of the need for and motives of family scientists outside of academia, (2) developing appropriate expertise where otherwise lacking or minimal, (3) exercising a marketing campaign, and (4) helping fellow family science educators to take a more active role in grooming aspiring family science professionals.
The rewards of advancement in family science are rich ones—important promotions where the following qualities are particularly evident: strong self-image and self-discipline, political awareness of how to most appropriately utilize family science expertise, and the stamina to probe and seize all career opportunities.

Today, the well-respected management teams within business and industry, non-profit organizations, and the government are characterized by the ability to maximize these individual and institutional growth opportunities. This climate is particularly conducive to the ability to advance along a significant career track within all realms of family science.

REFERENCES


