

Research News You Can Use

Note from Nayda

Welcome to the Winter 2006 issue of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences research newsletter: Research News You Can Use. This helpful series shares up-to-date, reliable research in Family, Youth and Community Sciences with you for use in your programs.

Your input and suggestions make this newsletter better. Please let us know what you think.

Thank you to all faculty members who contributed this issue:

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Ethnic Differences in Correlates of Obesity Between Latin American and Black Women

Sanchez-Johnson, L.A., Fitzgibbon, M. L., Martinovich, Z., Stolley, M.R., Dyer, A. R. & Van Horn, L. (2004). *Obesity Research*, 12, 652-660.

Obesity in the United States is increasing at astounding rates. Children, adolescents, adults, men, women, and minority groups alike are experiencing obesity now more than another other period of history. Researchers have highlighted that among these groups, Latin American and Black women are at greatest risk for becoming obese. Current literature suggests that the main predictors for obesity among these groups are: (a) dietary intake, (b) physical activity, (c) body image.

The authors conducted the first investigation of a large sample of both Latin American and Black women of varying weights. Most current literature compares a sample of minority women with a sample of White women. Sanchez-Johnson, et. al., examined all three of the above variables with women who self-identified as Latin American or Black.

In order to measure these variables, the authors used the following methods:

- Translated instruments for participants who did not speak English
- Used an acculturation scale to measure influence of majority culture on Latin Americans
- Took weight and height measurements to calculate BMI
- Utilized figure drawings for women to choose current and ideal body shape
- Assessed dietary intake over 24-hour period
- Measure level and intensity of physical activity

The authors concluded that the two samples of women shared some similarities, but actually differed on most variables. The mean ages and income levels were similar, but the Latin American women had fewer years of education and were more likely to be married than were Black women.

As far as risk for obesity, this study suggested that Black women are more at risk for becoming obese than Latin American women. Black women in the study ate a diet consisting of a higher fat intake than any other group. The authors suggested that advertising and marketing in black neighborhoods (i.e., fast foods, convenience stores, etc) were partly to blame for the fatty diet. Latin American women, primarily due to lower levels of acculturation, maintained traditional dietary patterns that consisted of more fiber and whole grains. This type of diet contributes to less risk for obesity.

Questions of physical activity also maintained that Black women were more at risk than Latin American women were for obesity. The prevalence of obesity has been linked to certain sedentary activities, such as watching television. Black women report they watch more television and perform less physical activity than other women do.

Although the Latin American women were physically smaller and had lower BMIs than were the Black women, they reported the most dissatisfaction with their bodies. The Latin American women perceived their current weight as having the greatest discrepancy from their ideal weight. Black women reported being more satisfied with their weights, even those who were obese.

Implications for Extension Faculty

With the rise in obesity rates among all groups, especially the minority populations, it is important to focus on the variables outlined in this study.

According to the Florida department of Health (2002), 22.3 % of Florida residents are obese. Currently, we are experiencing increases in obesity among all racial and ethnic groups. Blacks (34.8%), Whites (21.4%), and Hispanics (18.6%) have BMIs of 30 or more, indicating high levels of obesity among all Florida residents.

County Extension faculty should consider the importance of dietary intake, physical activity, and body image when working with individuals and families around the state. Collaborate with parents, families, and schools in order to educate them on the importance of proper dietary intake and physical activity. Also recognizing which groups are at greater risk can lead to the development of more programs and outreach into certain communities.

Submitted by: [Dr. Eboni Baugh](#), Assistant Professor, Family Life

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Behavioral Risk Factor Data. Percentages of adults who are obese. (2002). Florida Department of Health.

Boards Behaving Badly: Observations from the Field.

(Summer 2005). The Nonprofit Quarterly. Pages 58- 62. Written by Owen Heiserman

Heiserman discusses community action agencies that receive public funding. He points out that because of this board of directors frequently fail to establish adequate policies and procedures for handling public money. This kind of protocol is most frequently required when there is a contract or grant in place. The conclusion was that the passivity of the board and access to public money were linked. Many organizations have the same executive director and board of directors in place for years without ever questioning or evaluating the service of the members or the achievements of the board. It is quite common for executive directors and board members to stay "on" for many years after the organization was founded.

This article presents the results of a study by Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA) on the crisis intervention services to community action agencies. The following factors were instrumental in the intervention by the MICA consultant group when they were called on to help stabilize the community action agencies. The loss of monetary control was the factor cited most often that required help from outside experts. This was followed by the departure of long serving individuals or the need for their departure. Community action agencies, like most nonprofits have seen increases in their budgets over the years. The increase in funding has not been followed by and increase in oversight or compliance with policies and procedures that have been implemented by the IRS or by state governments.

This study describes 23 community action agencies that experienced a breakdown of governing board oversight. A list of 26 warning signs of a board that might be in trouble was devised by Mel Gill (2001) and cited by Heiserman as the signs of boards that are in trouble. Gill's warning signs of a board in trouble are shown below with the items under each category heading indicating a sign of trouble. The signs of an effective board are not given in the article reviewed although they have been studied and documented elsewhere.

Human Resources

- Difficulty recruiting credible board members

Financial and Organizational Performance

- Chronic unplanned or unmanaged deficits
- Call for outside audit/operational review by funders
- Persistent failure to meet individual or organizational performance targets
- Role confusion between board and CEO

Meetings

- Low attendance at board, committee meetings
- Low level of participation in discussions at meetings
- Poor meeting management: Lack of focus, no agendas, unprepared members

Board Culture

- Underground communication
- Poor communication between CEO, Chair, Full board
- Unresolved conflicts within the board
- Members feel removed from “What’s going on”
- Board divided into competing factions
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Decision Making

- “Rubber Stamping” of CEO recommendations
- Focus on operational detail not big picture
- Poor communication with funders, key stakeholders
- Decision deadlock or paralysis
- Members ignoring, circumventing organizational policies and procedures
- CEO ignoring, circumventing organization policies and procedures (p. 59).

These warning signs often manifest in factions and deadlock among board members and they are not exclusive to Community Action Agencies. Rather they represent an all too common phenomenon in community nonprofit organizations that receive funds from the public or from selected donors.

The author makes recommendations for working with boards of agencies in crisis. These recommendations also serve for agencies and organizations that are not in a state of crisis but want to insure that their boards are functioning effectively.

Select and socialize board members for the mission of the organization. Boards too often act as a collection of individuals/constituencies, unless they are educated and supported in their functions and responsibilities as a group. The executive and leadership staff in a nonprofit of any size must take responsibility to nurture and support their board. (p. 60).

The author goes on to suggest that the middle of a crisis is not the time to begin board recruitment, development or change. The people who started the trouble or were the cause of it cannot usually deal with the crisis enough to make the problem go away. The author, citing the crisis intervention team, noted that the largest hurdle is for the executive and the board to understand that there is a crisis, the nature and severity of it and the options for resolving it.

Board members can and should understand their legal responsibilities and those defined in the bylaws of the organization. Executive officers should realize that board members need training and constant education to perform to their best ability that will serve the mission of the organization and the community.

Implications

This article has implications for any Extension county faculty that works with nonprofit boards, advisory committees, voluntary boards, executive officers, trustees or any of the many and varied leadership positions in community-based organizations that serve Florida citizens. The board is the leadership nerve center of the organization, no matter how large or small. The board hires the chief executive officer and although the executive may have wide leeway in terms of authority and responsibility, the quality and implementation of those decisions affects the board.

In small nonprofits, the board may actually carry out all the functions of the organization. The same principles apply. It is important to note that board development is available as Extension training through the Focus Team 5.5: Nonprofit Organizations in Community Settings. Board development and other training appropriate for work with community-based organizations are available through the annual Extension in service trainings programs.

Submitted by: [Dr. Elizabeth Bolton](#), Professor, Community Development

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The works of Mel Gill as cited by Owen Heiserman include:

“Governance in the Voluntary Sector: Summary of Case Study Findings.”
The Institute on Governance, 2001, <http://www.iog.ca>.

Community Volunteers: The Front Line of Disaster Response

Brennan, M.A., C. Flint, and R. Barnett. 2005. "Community Volunteers: The Front Line of Disaster Response". *Journal of Volunteer Administration*. 23(4): 52-56.

Overview

The dramatic and tragic events of Hurricane Katrina have highlighted the need for coordinated community based volunteer efforts to prepare for, and respond to, natural and other disasters. The recent hurricanes in the Gulf States underscore the problems and shortcomings associated with coordinating outside logistics and show a clear need for local volunteers to serve as the first line of response to such catastrophes. Such disasters are likely to occur again. When disasters do occur, citizen groups and coordinated local volunteers will again be the first responders and can act to lessen impacts. This article identifies and suggests methods for linking local organizations, recruiting volunteers, and implementing coordinated action plans prior to, and after, the impact of natural disasters.

Implications for Research and Extension

Local volunteers and community level action is essential to effective natural disaster preparation and response. They are particularly important in that these citizens are in many cases the first responders and have the greatest chance to save lives and provide support in the hours and days immediately after disaster occurrences. Certainly, an effective community response would have diminished some, no matter how small, of the suffering and loss that occurred during and after the recent hurricanes. An organized community and volunteer response could have helped in a number of ways before, during, and immediately after the recent disasters. They may have been able to:

- Coordinate a more successful evacuation and transportation effort,
- Provide some structure and order
- Aid in organizing resources for distribution before and after the hurricane,
- Decrease some of the isolation and sense of abandonment that quickly engulfed victims in the affected areas.

Community and volunteer coordinators have an obligation to help facilitate community organization and preparation to aid fellow citizens in times of such great need. The only thing that is certain in these times is that local residents will be the first capable of responding. These disaster settings present local volunteers and community organizations with an unprecedented opportunity to make a measurable impact on the human condition. The quality and extent of this response may hold the key to minimizing disaster effects, maintaining order, increasing hope, and maximizing recovery efforts.

Submitted by: [Dr. Mark Brennan](#), Assistant Professor, Community Development

The Effects of the Florida 4-H Residential Camping Program on Participants' Level of Environmental Sensitivity

Amy Lohrer, MS(1), Gerald Culen, PhD(1), Rosemary Barnett, PhD(1), and Glenn Israel, PhD(2) (1)Department of Family, Youth & Community Sciences (2)Department of Agricultural Education & Communication

Purpose/Significance

This study determined the effectiveness of the Florida 4-H residential camping experience in developing the environmental sensitivity (ES) of participants ages 12-18. Specifically, the study examined how repeated participation in the Florida 4-H residential camping program affects the level of ES and the effects of the Florida 4-H residential camping program on the level of ecological knowledge of the program's participants.

Methodology

The study design used in this research was a modified cross-sectional design. Participants in the study group were those individuals who participated in a Florida 4-H residential camp session that included environmental activities during summer 2003. All study participants must have previously attended or must have been currently attending a minimum of one (1) five-day session of Florida 4-H residential camp. Three groups of study participants were established: Group 1 – first time participants; Group 2 – participants who had attended one previous session of a five-day Florida 4-H residential camp; and Group 3 – participants who had attended a five-day session of Florida 4-H residential camping program two or more times in the past. A total of 125 surveys were gathered. The control group, (Group 1) consisted of 58 participants. The repeated camper groups (Groups 2 & 3) consisted of 58 campers.

Two surveys were used: 1) An adaptation of the "Survey of Environmentally Concerned Students" (Sivek, 2003) to assess various influences on ES; and 2) the ecological knowledge portion of the "Middle School Environmental Literacy Instrument" (8th edition, 1996) to assess the participants' ecological knowledge.

Results

Environmental Sensitivity Levels

Participants were presented with a definition of ES and asked to evaluate their own level on a five point Likert scale with the following options: "Very Low", "Low", "Moderate", "High", and "Very High." The mean ES level of pre-camp respondents was 3.34 (SD=0.95). Forty-six percent of pre-camp respondents (n=118) self-reported a moderate ES level. Thirty-one percent of pre-camp respondents self-reported a high ES level. Ten percent of respondents believed they had a very high ES level.

Respondents who completed the post-camp survey (n=76) recorded a mean ES level of 3.47 (SD=0.95). Fifty-three percent of respondents felt they had a moderate level of ES. Over 25% of participants felt they had a high level of ES and almost 16% of participants believed they had a very high level of ES after participating in the Florida 4-H residential camping program.

A statistically significant difference in participants' ES level was found between first time campers and campers who had attended two or more times previously. No difference was found between first time campers and campers who attended one time previously. However, campers who had attended camp one time previously scored lower than those who attended camp two or more times previously.

The ES differences were analyzed between each group. The Mann-Whitney independent sample test was performed to determine if the groups differed in any way. The results did not yield any statistical significant differences between the three groups.

Correlations/Regression/Variance

In part two of the pre-camp survey, respondents were asked to rate various general influences on their ES using a 7-point Likert-type scale. The categories included the following: "Not at all", "Slightly Important", "Fairly Important", "Very Important", "Extremely Important", "Don't Know", and "Did Not Experience". Surveys in which the participant marked "Don't Know" or "Did Not Experience" were excluded from this analysis.

A Spearman's rho correlation analysis was run to compare the following variables: experience with camping; the influence of media; the influence of personality; experience with animals; negative experiences with the environment; the amount of time spent outdoors; the influence of role models; and participant's level of ES.

ES appears to be associated with five out of the seven variables tested - experience with camp, media influence, experience with wild animals, the influence of negative experiences, and the influence of time spent outdoors.

The influence of media appears to have relationships with multiple other influences. Data showed media had significant correlations ranging from 0.216 to 0.456, with six out of the seven variables tested. These six variables included experience with camp ($r=0.220$, $p<0.05$), personality ($r=0.456$, $p<0.01$), negative experiences ($r=0.246$, $p<0.05$), time spent outdoors ($r=0.216$, $p<0.05$), role models ($r=0.234$, $p<0.01$), and pre-camp ES level ($r=0.295$, $p<0.01$). One could infer that the media has somewhat of an impact on the reported perceived influences on ES (i.e. experience with camp, personality, experience with animals, negative experiences, time spent outdoors, and role models).

Multiple regression analyses were used to examine the effects of the influences reported in other studies to be influential in the development of ES. Stepwise multiple regression analysis regressed the variables that were reported to be influential in the development of ES by previous studies. Media influence ($R^2 = 0.183$) and the influence of time spent outdoors ($R^2 = 0.090$) together explain 27% ($R^2 = 0.273$) of the variance in the differences in ES scores.

Ecological Knowledge

This research question was analyzed by comparing the participants' pre-camp and post-camp survey responses to the ecological knowledge portion of the pre-camp and post-camp surveys and the number of years they have participated in the Florida 4-H residential camping program. Only those participants who completed both the pre-camp survey and the post-camp survey were included in this analysis. From the results of this test, it appears there are no significant differences between any groups in relation to ecological knowledge gained relative to repeat attendance. However, the largest difference in the level of ecological knowledge was between Group 1 and Group 3.

Conclusions/Discussion

The data indicate that the Florida 4-H residential camping program does have some influence on its participants' level of ES as shown by an increase in the mean ES score of camp participants who previously attended one time in the past (pre-camp $M = 3.38$, post-camp $M = 3.63$). However, the n-size was relatively small.

One could infer from this data that participants of the Florida 4-H residential camping program benefit from the exposure to the environment and related topics that may be addressed at the camps. These results are also supported by Palmberg and Kuru, 2000; Tanner, 1980; Palmer, 1993; Shepard & Speelman, 1986.

Children who attend the Florida 4-H residential camping program are exposed continuously to the natural environment as they participate in daily activities. Camp administration should inform stakeholders of the impact exposure to the environment has on the participants of the program. Camp administration should also strive to increase retention of current campers, in order to increase the amount of exposure to the outdoors for campers, and therefore, increase ES.

Results also indicate that media and time spent outdoors are very important in the development of ES. The best fit regression model indicates that these two elements (time spent outdoors and the influence of media) have a strong influence on a person's perceived level of ES.

The influence of media appears to be related to multiple other influences. One could infer that the media has an impact on the reported perceived influences on ES (i.e. experience with camp, personality, experience with animals, negative experiences, time spent outdoors, and role models). This means that what children read or see on television influences how they feel about their experiences at camp, their view of spending time outdoors, and their experiences with animals.

The amount of time spent outdoors may be a key indication of a person's ES. Shepard and Speelman (1986) found that first time participants visiting an outdoor setting had to adjust to the environment before learning could occur. As the participants visited the outdoor site more, they were able to learn about things within the environment because they were not spending time worrying about foreign/unfamiliar things around them. Other studies have also indicated exposure to the outdoors or time spent outdoors had an impact on ES (Tanner, 1980; Peterson, 1982; Palmer, 1993; Sward, 1996; Sivek, 2002).

Submitted by: [Dr. Jerry Culen](#), Associate Professor, Youth Development

Work/Family Balance of Extension Faculty

Cooperative Extension faculty, as part of the land grant university system, provides educational services in areas such as agriculture, communities, family and consumer sciences, and youth development to every county in the United States. Extension faculty are expected to fill multiple roles in their careers and family life – roles that demand lots of time and energy.

None of this is news to any of us! As much as the topic of balancing work and family life comes up in general conversation, there are few available research studies on the work and family life of Extension agents (Martin & Morris, 2005). However, a recent study on the work and family life of county Extension agents provides some interesting insights.

Participants

In this study, 298 county Extension agents from a Southeastern state (not Florida!) completed a mail out questionnaire (55% response rate). Of the 298 participants:

- 30.4% were Agricultural Extension faculty
- 11.5% were in Family and Consumer Sciences
- 23% were in 4-H Youth Development
- 12.1% combined Agriculture/4-H Youth Development
- 11.1% combined 4-H Youth Development/Family and Consumer Sciences
- 2% in Expanded Food-Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)
- 9.8% in an "other" category consisting of administrators and specialists.

About twenty-two percent (21.8%) were Extension Agent I (had generally worked less than 8 years in Extension), thirteen percent (12.8%) Extension Agent II (8-15 years in Extension), 33.2% Extension Agent III or IV (15 or more years in Extension), 18.5% State Specialists, 9.1% County/District Specialists, and 2.7% District/State Administrators. Participants reported working an average of 49 hours a week, had been in their present position on average nearly 10 years (9.53 years), had spent a mean of 15 years in the Cooperative Extension Service, and were an average age of 43 years-old.

Fifty-six percent of the sample was male (44% female), and 93% of the sample was white American, with 6% African-American and .3% Hispanic American, and .3% "other". Although some measures pertained to marriage and family life, all Extension faculty were included in the study regardless of whether they were (married, single, divorced, widowed, or "other").

Mentionable Measures

Measures of the following variables were included in the survey. Only three measures will be mentioned here – namely, those, which distinguished male from female agents and on which Extension faculty, differed according to their specialty area.

Relational Equity

The Relational Equity Index (REI) is a measure of the discrepancy between a spouse's expectations or ideals for marriage and his or her actual experiences or reality (see Sabatelli, et al., 1985). The degree of fairness a person perceives in a relationship, defined by how much a spouse perceives both parties as contributing to a relationship or whether there is an unfair balance is the main emphasis of the REI. The REI contains 10 items measured on a 5 point, Likert-type scale. Reported internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the REI in this reviewed study was .95.

Marital Conflict

The Kansas Marital Conflict Scale (KMCS) (see Eggeman, Moxley, & Schumm, 1985) is composed of 27 items broken down into three subscales: Agenda Building; Arguing; and Negotiation. The KMCS is also on a 5-point Likert-type format and Cronbach's alpha on the three subscales was found to be: Agenda Building (.90); Arguing (.92); and Negotiation (.92) in this reviewed study.

Effect of Job on Family Life Satisfaction

The Effect of Job on Family Life Scale (EJFLS) has 24 items and is in a 6-point Likert-type format ranging from "It affects my life very negatively" to "It affects my family life very positively" (see St. Pierre, 1984 and Lepley, 2003). Internal consistency reliability or Cronbach's alpha was .90 in the study reviewed.

Work Satisfaction

Job satisfaction and degree to which the job environment is pleasant was measured by the Work Satisfaction Scale (WSS) (See Blanding, 1995). The WSS is on a 4-point Likert-type format from "not satisfied at all" to "very satisfied" and has 3 items. Cronbach's alpha in this study was calculated at .71 in the study.

Research Question / Hypotheses

The goal of the study was to examine the relationship between work and family life among Extension faculty, particularly with respect to gender, job responsibility area (such as FCS/4-H), and job title.

Hypotheses regard whether:

- 1) Male and female agents differ with respect to...
- 2) Job responsibility or specialty area affects an Extension faculty member's...
- 3) Whether job title affects an Extension faculty member's... work satisfaction, parent-child relationship quality, life satisfaction, marital satisfaction, marital conflict, relational equity, and effect of job on family life satisfaction.

Results

Hypothesis 1: Males and females only differed in one family relationship area.

Female Extension faculty's scores of relationship equity (measured by the REI) were significantly lower than males' (Mann-Whitney non parametric t-test, $p < .000$). The researchers note that this finding points to female Extension faculty perceiving less equity or fairness in their marital relationship than do male Extension faculty (Martin & Morris, 2005).

Hypothesis 2: Extension faculty differed significantly by specialty or employment responsibility in the following areas: relationship equity ($F = 3.57$, $p < .002$); marital conflict ($F = 2.18$, $p < .045$); and effect of job on family life satisfaction ($F = 4.45$, $p < .000$). Family and Consumer Science agents had significantly lower levels of marital conflict than those with dual appointments in Agriculture/4-H Youth or Family and Consumer Sciences/4-H Youth. Family and Consumer Science Agents also perceived significantly higher levels of marital equity than Agriculture/4-H Youth agents. 4-H Youth Development faculty had a significantly more positive view of the effect of their work on family life than Agricultural Extension faculty and combined Family and Consumer Sciences/4-H Youth Extension faculty. It is unknown whether these differences are a function of the job responsibilities involved in each specialty area (e.g., dual responsibilities versus one area of concentration) and/or the background in family life and youth development that Family and Consumer Science as well as 4-H Youth Development faculty have been exposed to.

Hypothesis 3: A noteworthy finding is that District/State Administrator Extension faculty differed significantly in their work satisfaction from Extension Agents I ($F = 2.44$, $p < .002$); Extension Agents II ($F = 3.14$, $p < .000$), and Extension Agents III or IV ($F = 2.24$, $p < .002$). This finding makes sense in light of high turnover rates among early career Extension faculty (usually within 3-5 years). District/State Administrators are expected to be more invested and committed to Cooperative Extension as compared to career entry Extension faculty. However, it is less easy to explain the differences between District/State Administrators and Extension faculty who have been in their careers from 8-15 or more years.

According to the researchers (Martin & Morris, 2005), the results were as expected, particularly when comparing Extension faculty on their specialized areas; a number of prior studies support differences among agents on work and family life satisfaction by employment responsibility. Martin and Morris (2005) suggest using multi-method studies, for example, qualitative interviewing combined with quantitative methodology (mail surveys), as well as higher order quantitative analyses (structural equation modeling), to tap into reasons for these differences among Extension faculty by gender, specialty area, and position or title.

Limitations

A limitation in the study, according to the authors, is that respondents largely represent rural areas (Martin & Morris, 2005). Moreover, the sample is limited in terms of ethnic diversity. Cultural influences on commitment to family life and relationships outside work may provide new insights and findings. Work culture or climate is also an area to study with respect to how such climate differs by employment or specialty area. Although Extension faculty from a diversity of family forms were represented in the sample (single parents, divorced, widowed, single),

there was an emphasis on characteristics of the marital (perhaps extending to premarital) relationship as a representation of family life. Including additional measures of family commitment and relationships as they are affected by the work environment would more appropriately characterize a diversity of family forms. Moreover, collecting data from the spouses (or significant others/family members) of county Extension faculty will increase the comprehension of results, particularly with respect to perceptions of marital equity (Martin & Morris, 2005).

Implications

What might these findings mean for Cooperative Extension in Florida, the Southeast, and the United States?

- Encouraging family life education professionals (usually FCS Agents) to conduct workshops serving Extension faculty in other specialty areas on relationship education (Martin & Morris, 2005), as well as other community audiences.
- Having youth development educators facilitate workshops with Extension faculty in other disciplines (e.g., Agriculture/4-H) on how to address the developmental needs of youth at the programmatic and personal/familial level
- Creating supportive, family-friendly work environments at the organizational level, with the input of family life educators. (Martin & Morris, 2005)
- Offering new faculty workshops on stress and time management. More seasoned county faculty - those in the field seven or more years - can help educate newer employees during these workshops by generating discussion and providing illustrated examples. Outside of the workshop setting, more experienced faculty can mentor new Extension faculty.

From: Martin, A.B., & Morris, M.L. (November, 2005). Work/family variable relationships of county Extension agents. Unpublished manuscript presented at the National Council on Family Relations annual conference, Phoenix, AZ.

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Community Connections: Employee Volunteering

Volunteers from the Workplace

The workplace is an excellent place to promote volunteerism and recruit volunteers. Whether it is a small, local business, or large, national corporation, their employees can be a source of “volunteer power” in the community. Employee volunteers may be equipped with specialized skills, information, and a fresh perspective to help address community issues and challenges (Lautenschlager, 1993). There can be benefits to the individual employee, to the employer, the corporation and the community.

What is Employee Volunteering?

As a relatively new and growing field, the terms related to volunteering through one’s workplace have not been firmly established. The terms employee volunteering, corporate volunteering, employer-supported volunteering, and workplace volunteering are used simultaneously. While some authors identify differences, the basic idea is that “employees perform work in the community with some form of support and/or encouragement from their employer” (Graff, 2004).

Motives for Employee Volunteers

Motives for volunteering have been classified by various researchers. The following model (Peterson, 2004) uses six categories of volunteer motives, with corresponding strategies to recruit volunteers within corporations (Table 1). Volunteer program directors can adopt several strategies that will influence various motives of their employees.

TABLE 1

Six commonly cited motives for volunteering matched with six commonly used recruitment strategies in corporate volunteer programs

Motives for Volunteering	Employee Volunteer Recruitment Strategies
1. Altruistic – motivated by the desire to be useful, helpful to those in need, or to contribute to society	1. Publicizing information concerning community needs and the opportunity to volunteer
2. Social relations – motivated by the desire to interact with others, socialize, or make new friends	2. Organizing team projects in which employees work together on a community project
3. Ideological – motivated by a specific cause the individual believes is highly important (e.g., fight against AIDS)	3. Offering an incentive program in which the company makes a financial donation to a cause chosen by employee(s) in return for a specified number of volunteer hours

	contributed by the employee(s)
4. Status reward – motivated by rewards, such as publicity, title, indirect goodwill, or status in the community	4. Recognizing employee volunteer contributions through articles, awards, and commendations, bulletin boards, etc.
5. Material reward – motivated by tangible benefits, such as prizes, free passes, awards or privileges	5. Encouraging participation in volunteer projects that develop job related skills or benefit the company; or acknowledge volunteer participation during job performance evaluation
6. Time – motivated because the individual either has or does not have sufficient time to participate in volunteer activities	6. Offering “release time” or hours off from work to participate in volunteer activities.

Source: Peterson, D.K. (2004)

Benefits of Employee Volunteers

Employee volunteer programs provide many benefits to the business, employee or retiree, non-profit organization, and the community.

Corporations benefit when their employees or retirees volunteer. Research shows that “one of the most effective methods of enhancing a corporation’s public image is through the contributions of time and talent from employees” (Peterson, 2004).

Benefits to the company include: improved relations with surrounding community; enhanced (socially responsible) corporate image; positive employee morale; and, increased ability to attract and retain high-quality employees.

Employees and retirees benefit because of representing their employer with pride; contributing to a community cause; interacting with the larger community; and increasing their personal awareness of community issues.

Extension programs benefit because corporations become sources of active, skilled volunteers who bring new talent, ideas, and energy to the program. An employee volunteer program also creates an opportunity to educate corporate employees about Extension’s mission. Community partnerships are stronger and the potential for financial contributions may increase.

Communities benefit because there are more resources available. Profit and non-profit partnerships decrease duplication of services and increase effective use of resources. When there is increased networking and resource management between corporations and University of Florida Extension programs, the quality of life in the community is enhanced.

Developing an Employee Volunteer Program

The corporation; the Extension faculty; or a partnership between the profit and not-for-profit sectors can initiate establishing an employee volunteer program. Every partner should understand the benefits of employee volunteers to him, specifically.

The Points of Light Foundation (1996), outlines the following steps to develop a successful employee volunteer program.

1. **Identify corporate values, goals and priorities** that could be addressed by a volunteer program. Company administrators need to see how employees can perpetuate the corporation's mission and goals in the community. Be prepared to justify how this can happen.
2. **Determine employee interests** through surveys to identify levels of volunteer experience and specific interests.
3. **Determine community needs** and consider how an employee volunteer program can address those issues. Business leaders want others to know that their corporate volunteers are helping to address real issues.
4. **Work with the corporation administration to plan a program** that encourages and facilitates employee participation at several levels. Suggest that an employee steering committee help establish the long-term program and short-term plan.
5. **Help a business develop written corporate policies** to support an employee volunteer program. Will there be an opportunity to volunteer during "company time?" ("Release time" for volunteering is a powerful incentive for employee participation in volunteer projects.) How much time will be allowed? Are there any restrictions? What arrangements need to be made? What needs to be communicated...and to whom...and under what circumstances? Will training be needed? What recognition will be given? When will recognition be given?
6. **Begin by selecting a specific volunteer project** that meets all the criteria above. Initiate an employee volunteer experience that enables employees, the business and the community to feel success. If the project is an ongoing effort, further develop details of the project as it grows for several months.
7. **Evaluate the employee volunteer program** to measure its impact on employees, the corporation, the not-for-profit organization, and community.
8. **Publicize the employee volunteer efforts and accomplishments** both internally and externally – to senior management, internal newsletters, via community media, Chamber of Commerce, and to partnering groups. Use success stories to share information. Provide a link on the company's website to Extension program websites, where employees can learn more about volunteer opportunities.
9. **Recognize volunteers** through awards, visibility and other appropriate benefits that encourage them to continue to volunteer. Always communicate employee volunteer names with the business they represent. Repeat the successes and benefits often.

What Does This Mean to Your Extension Program?

Whether you are responsible for nutrition education, youth development or horticulture, your Extension program can reach an even larger audience when you work effectively with and through volunteers. As you strengthen your role as “volunteer manager” you will spend more time providing orientation and training to ensure that each volunteer is prepared for success. Your role then is to provide good resources, ongoing support and recognition for their involvement.

Conclusion

Volunteer programs in the workplace are most successful when they are based on “integrating the priorities of the company, the interests of the employees, and the needs of the community” (Points of Light Foundation, 1996). These programs help businesses become leaders in their communities. While the needs of the community are being addressed, the number of volunteers within the community grows, and employee volunteers are feeling the rewards of community involvement that is supported by their employer.

For more information, go to EDIS publication: [“Employee Volunteering”](#)

Submitted By: [Dr. Marilyn K. Lesmeister](#), Assistant Professor,
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Homemade Dill Pickles May Pose Risk of Listeriosis

Listeriosis gained its fame after the first reported outbreak associated with coleslaw in Canada in 1981¹. The bacterium *Listeria monocytogenes*, which is widespread in the environment, causes Listeriosis. The pH range for the growth of *L. monocytogenes* was thought to be 5.6-9.6, but new research results show that the organism can grow in laboratory media at a pH as low as 4.4². New research results further revealed that *L. monocytogenes* can survive and grow in refrigerated foods with pH values of approximately 4.0-5.0 and salt concentrations of 3-4%; thus home-

fermented dill pickles fit this description.

Dill pickles by definition are fermented products of fresh cucumbers where the starter culture consists of the normal mixed surface flora of the cucumber surface. Cucumbers are one of the most commonly pickled foods in the US.

Home-fermented, refrigerator dill, cucumber pickles are the product of lactic acid fermentation. They are made by immersing the pickling cucumbers in brine solution and seasonings. Following this, the product typically ferments at room temperature for one week. The pickles are then stored in the refrigerator during the consumption period.

Since *L. monocytogenes* is widespread in the environment, contamination of this product with the organism can potentially cause serious problems because consumers do not normally heat the dill pickles prior to consumption. Newly published research by a team at the University of Georgia³ revealed that home-prepared dill pickles inoculated with *L. monocytogenes* tested presumptively positive for the organism for up to 49 days (in the internal tissue) and up to 91 days on the surface of the pickles with salt concentrations of 1.3, 3.8 or 7.6%.

Methodology:

The researchers examined the fate of *L. monocytogenes* on the surface and in the interior of cucumbers and in brines of different salt concentrations (1.3, 3.8 and 7.6%) during a typical process of making homemade dill pickles. They measured the pH, salt (NaCl) and titratable acidity percentage, and the total population of *Listeria*, and other microorganisms of pickles left at room temperature storage at 2, 4, and 7 days (the fermentation period). Once the fermentation process was complete, they monitored the aforementioned parameters weekly during refrigerated storage.

Major findings:

Some of the inoculated *L. monocytogenes* cells in the treatment with the highest salt concentration of 7.6% remained viable.

Take home message:

Past recommendations for this type of product stated that consumption of refrigerator dill pickles, would be typically considered safe anytime after 3 days of refrigerated storage. However, from this study because *L. monocytogenes* may still be viable this point, there is a food safety risk.

This study recommended that home-prepared dill pickles of this type should not be distributed.

To identify at-risk population for Listeriosis, read the Research News You Can Use Summer 2005 at <http://fyics.ifas.ufl.edu/newsletters/rnycufall05.pdf>

Submitted by: [Dr. Amy Simonne](#), Assistant Professor, Food Safety and Quality

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³ Kim, J.K., E.M. D'SA, M.A. Harrison, J.A. Harrison, and E. L. Andress. 2005. *Listeria monocytogenes* survival in refrigerator dill pickles. *J. Food Prot.* 68(11):2005, 2356-2361.

Are Families Dining Together?

When I was growing up, my family ate together almost every night. We came together at the end of a busy day to enjoy a meal and, especially, to share each other's company. It was a good time for my parents to check in on what was happening in school, activities, and friendships. During my active teenage years, the predictable family dinner was sometimes the only calm period of the day. It was a welcome relief from the pressures of high school life.

Today, research confirms that family meals can be an important time to develop strong family relationships. And, for teenagers, family mealtime is connected to positive behaviors. "Teens who regularly [and frequently] have meals with their family are less likely to get into fights, think about suicide, smoke, drink, [or] use drugs," (Child Trends, 2005, p. 1) and they are more likely to do better in school.

Yet, during adolescence, teens "tend to spend less time with the family and eat more meals away from home" (Child Trends, 2005, p.1). A recently released report from Child Trends found that in 2003, less than half of adolescents, 42%, ate a meal as a family 6-7 days a week.

A number of factors affect whether families dine together often.

One is nativity. Foreign-born adolescents are more likely than native-born teens to eat meals with their families 6-7 times a week (62% vs. 40%)

Another is ethnicity. Hispanic adolescents and children are more likely than white and black teens and children to eat together 6-7 times a week (54% vs. 40%).

Age is relevant: Older teens are less likely than younger teens and children to eat with their families.

Poverty and education also matter. Adolescents living in poverty are more likely than others to eat family meals 6-7 times a week. Teens whose parents have less than a high school degree are more likely to eat together as a family.

Although parents claim that busy schedules conflict with family meals, teenagers say it's not only conflicting schedules that keep them away from the dinner table, but also that they want to be independent, don't like the food, or are dissatisfied with family relations.

There are benefits for families dining together. So, if you want to bring your teenager back to the dinner table, consider involving them in meal planning and serving meals they like. Allow some meals away from home, with and without parents, but also plan for plenty of family meal times.

Finally, make meal times pleasant. Turn your attention to the family by turning off the television and cell phones; let the answering machine take telephone messages during the meal. Instead of arguing or reprimanding your children, use this time as a chance to enjoy family togetherness.

Discuss topics of interest to the whole family. Encourage discussion by asking each family member what he or she liked best during the day. Give each family member, even the youngest, a chance to contribute to the conversation, with everyone paying attention.

Submitted by: [Dr. Suzanna Smith](#), Associate Professor, Human Development

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Long Term Care Insurance Purchase: An Alternative Approach

Summary

The question of whether to buy long-term care insurance (LTCI) is similar to that of whether or not to pay off your home mortgage early. Both questions require a thorough analysis of financial goals, risk management strategies, long-term financial projections and longevity analysis. In fewer than 20 years, LTCI policies have grown from 200,000 to four million. The authors of this research believe that many people have been sold insurance rather than selecting to buy it. They think that there are alternatives to LTCI that should be explored.

First, not everyone can afford the premiums. For example in one study (Health and Retirement) of 700 respondents, only 23% had kept their LTCI policy. However, an industry report in 2004 stated that 7 out of 10 LTCI policies were still in force.

McNamara and Lee (2003) reported a 75% lapse rate. Many policyholders let their

policies lapse because they can't afford the premiums after they retire and are on fixed incomes. The price of LTCI policies is based on the assumption that many purchasers will drop out before incurring any claims. There are concerns about the industry. There is a lot of uncertainty about the future demand on the insuring companies. The National Association of Insurance Commission data reveal that LTCI policies paid out only 35% of premiums in 2001. Consumers Union, after reviewing 47 policies in 2003, considered, that for most people, long-term care insurance was too risky and too expensive.

Criteria for purchasing Long Term Care Insurance:

- Age 55 or older with a chronic medical condition
- Family history that indicates need for nursing home
- Assets of \$200,000 to \$1.5 million
- The desire to protect assets
- Capacity to absorb potentially high premium increases
- No family member who is willing to care for you.

Low income, low asset individuals simply cannot afford LTCI insurance and must rely on family, friends or Medicaid to pay for care. High income, high asset consumers have sufficient resources to self insure for costs of care. The people in the middle who fear a long stay in nursing home, depletion of their assets and impoverishing a spouse need guidance that has not been available to make this decision. Thus, this research presents an alternative decision making framework for funding long-term care based on the risk management principle of self-insurance. (Self-insure by investing the annual premium.)

Six alternatives to purchasing LTCI:

- 1) Risk avoidance (This option is not viable due to the aging process.)
- 2) Loss prevention and loss reduction. These alternatives deal with life style choices, i.e. diet, exercise, activities.
- 3) Risk transfer – pre arrange with family and make an agreement for care (family and friends are sole caregivers of 70% of the elderly) or Medicaid for low-income individuals. Women live longer than their spouse whom they care for. Long-term care is a woman's issue.
- 4) Risk assumption and
- 5) Self-insurance. May be effective tools but you must have resources to cover potential costs.

A plan to address potential needs should include multi strategies. If one self-insures, he/she needs to evaluate family history of longevity and chronic illnesses. The average age at which people enter a nursing home is 83. The average stay is 2.3 years at \$50,000 per year, which is \$115,000. One third of the nursing home stays is 90 days or less. However, nine percent of residents stay five or more years.

Advantages of self-insurance approach:

- Greater flexibility in use of financial resources
- No worries about having policy lapse from failure to pay premium

- No problems with policy restrictions, the money can be used to pay relatives who care for you or for other needs.
- No concern about insurance company insolvency
- Heirs can inherit the remainder of self-insurance fund not needed for care

Implications for Extension Programming

Given the critical nature of lengthening life span and the increasing need for long term care, conducting programs that will help clients determine how much long term care may cost and resources available to fund long term care would help focus the need on financial planning for the last stage of the life cycle. A speaker from the Florida Department of Financial Services and their booklet "Long-Term Care & Other Options for Seniors," would be appropriate.

Web sites that will be helpful:

www.ces.purdue.edu/retirement

www.financinglongtermcare.umn.edu

www.elderweb.com/default.php?PageID=2770

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¹ A study by Jean M. Lown and Lance Palmer in the Journal of the Association of Financial Counseling and Planning Education. Volume 15 (2), 2004.
