

## **Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) Exam Notes** **From *Family Life Education: Integrating Theory and Practice***

Bredehoft, D., & Walcheski, M. (2009). *Family Life Education. Integrating Theory and Practice*. National Council on Family Relations. ISBN: 0-916174-69-7. ([Purchase online](#))

Following are notes from this publication collected by Adrienne Riegle in July of 2013. She was a candidate for the Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) Exam at the time. She has agreed to share these notes with other candidates.

While this book and these notes cover many of the topics included in the Certified Family Life Educator exam, there is no guarantee that review of this information will result in successful completion of the exam.

### **1. Families and Individuals in Societal Contexts (Roy and MacDermid)**

p. 113 many people are uncomfortable with the notion that policies shape family life – our dominant culture in the US maintains a stance of governmental “non-intervention” yet social institutions and families have a very influential reciprocal relationship

p. 114 – Using the ecological perspective (Bronfrenbrenner), Families are mediators between social change and individual lives and therefore have been targets for social policy, media, and other efforts to change human behavior.

p. 115 – Life course perspective example, though there have been some local moves to year-round schooling to reflect the nature and needs of modern (post-industrial) family life, we still primarily follow an agrarian calendar and a typical 9-5 workday that reflects “mostly white, mostly married, and mostly male workforce” which ignores the needs of families in the global economy. This reflects a time lag in social institutions to reform to be in sync with family life.

-Although a large demographic shift has been women’s workforce entry, low-income women and women of color have always participated in large numbers. The largest, relatively recent change is the high participation of mothers of preschool aged children.

p. 116 employed and at-home mothers have reduced time spent on housework and both mothers and fathers now spend more time with children than 40 years ago.

Workers, particularly highly skilled and highly paid are becoming more vocal about the need for family-friendly work place policies, yet overall % of workers with such policies are small.

\*\*\*FLEs may find it useful to have students investigate where and by whom they were cared for, why and how their parents feel about those choices, have students check out local employee policies, etc.

p. 117 – social institutions in the US primarily rely on parents to social their children to work (Rosenbaum, 2001)

p. 118 (later adulthood) rise of stepfamilies places older adults in complex network of blended families

- increased (mainly women) in “sandwich generation”
- media has given attention to the divide in public support of aging vs. children but gap between blacks and whites in health and financial support is less visible.

Tips for FLEs

- Have learners discuss the extent of the “flexibility” of social institutions
- How have institutions responded (or not) to needs of “shared years” “sandwiched” etc.?

remember:

- life experiences redefine opportunities in social institution
- lives and social institutions are moving targets
- systems interact with each other, with families, and with individuals in important ways.

## **2. Internal Dynamics of Families (Walcheski & Bredehoft)**

p. 123 - Internal processes; Curriculum Guidelines (NCFR, 1984) outline the significance of the social processes present in families, specifically those related to cooperation and conflict

- communication
- stress and conflict mgmt.
- decision making & goal setting
  - needed during times of normal stress & crises

p. 124 focus on family dynamics provides an explanation for the movements within the family system and the appropriate level of involvement by FLEs (Doherty, 1999)

p. 127 FLEs can work prescriptively to alleviate stress occurring from predictable stressors and empower families to change as agents of their own determination

FLEs need to :

- understand each fam has own unique strengths and challenges
- appreciate the problems and contexts that accompany different family forms
- be aware and sensitive to new fam forms and their particular dynamics
- step back from their own fam of origin and not use it as template for how families should be

-be proficient in one model of family systems and proficient in applying it to families which will become a baseline for understanding fam dynamics you encounter over time

### **3. Human Growth and Devel. Across the Life Span (Bredehoft, Eckhoff & Gesme)**

p. 133 Development is a building block process; devel. Theory advocates that every human develops in a predictable way over time; FLE framework includes physical, emotional, cognitive, social, moral, and personality devel patterns

-New discoveries in brain development

-importance of parenting and early experiences on brain wiring

-FLEs should alert families to expected developmental milestones within a range

-Not every family member is on the same timeline for the journey

-FLEs may have to devise strategies to help family members accept their own limitations in cognitive and moral development

-Recommended resources,

Brazelton's Touchpoints;

Loevinger, J (1976) Ego Development

- "ready or not"

-i.e. even if adolescents' identity issues are not resolved at the conclusion of adolescence, they are still required to function at the next stage; but not resolving a previous stage causes difficulty and even pain in current stage

-Cohen's 4 stages of Maturity (2005)

Phase I – Midlife reevaluation, exploration, transition (mid-30s to mid 60s, usually early 40s to late 50s)

Phase II – Liberation – experimentation, innovation (mid 50s to mid 70s, usually late 50s to early 70s)

Phase III – Recapitulation (Summing up), resolution, and contribution (late 60s to 90s, usually late 60s to 80s)

-share personal wisdom

-desire to find meaning in life shape plans an actions

-uses both sides of brain for autobiographical expression

-attend to unfinished business or unresolved conflicts

Phase IV – Continuation (Encore), reflection, celebration

"Potholes" along developmental journey

-*Developmental Milestones* – normal

-individual and family, each has a set of tasks to be accomplished

-FLEs can education families about both types and help reduce family stress associated with them

-*Episodic Crises*

- distinctive emotionally significant event

- like ABC-X model, family's ability to cope depends on resources, etc.

- FLEs can develop programs (support groups, grief counseling) and assist with decision-making and resource management
- Simultaneous Multigenerational Developmental Crises (SMDCs)*
- adds to complexity*
- teen daughter identity crisis, dad midlife crisis, grandpa feeling life was failure*

#### **4. Human Sexuality (Darling and Howard)**

**P 141** -individuals and families struggle to sort out conflicting/competing messages about sexuality (i.e. entertainment/music industry vs. adults saying “just say no” or saying nothing at all, values, religion, etc.)

-sexuality is a lifelong process of developing a strong foundation for sexual health by acquiring information and forming attitudes, beliefs, and values

-sexuality not only carries potential to create new life but is part of how we see ourselves and can foster intimacy, bonding, and shared pleasures in relationships (Satcher, 2001)

-tied to both mental and physical health

-myriad of sexual theories represent the warranted interdisciplinarity of the field (see special theory )issue of The Journal of Sex Research

\*p. 142 – in teaching/educating in a group

Parag. 2: “Theoretical clarification can evolve from discussions of boundaries and distance regulation related to parental, sibling, relational or personal subsystems, i.e. what, when, and why are certain doors closed in the home and what boundaries do family members have related to their own bodies? A discussion of family stories, rituals, and rules related to sexuality can also provide understanding and meaning.”

*\*FLEs can use analogy of chocolate chip cookies to illustrate idea of developmental influences. Most students have had one and know the basic recipe, but as the process of making them is discussed they examine the variation (baking times, ingredients, etc) and the outcome varies in flavor, texture, appearance, etc. Using this analogy, FLE can discuss*

- prenatal development
- sexual differentiation
- early childhood experiences
- adolescent changes
- adult development
- family socialization experiences

using life span approach, it becomes clear that sexuality remains important through each stage, it’s natural from birth to death

#### Childhood

– frame yours and students learning with own memories and feelings about learning about sexuality and early experiences.

- capacity for sexual response is present from birth

- children engage in a variety of sexual play experiences when very young, but these become increasingly covert as they become aware of norms, activity becomes segregated from rest of experiences
- when children are taught not to talk about sex they turn to peers for info
- if positive physical contact/attachment is stable, secure, and satisfying in infancy, can lead to positive emotional attachment in adulthood
- children are curious about bodies at early age
- \*\*\*important to deal with children's questions as they arise, never put off responding, \*\*\*become and "askable" parent/educator
- \*\*\*this communication is even more crucial when we remember children become increasingly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse when they do not receive the necessary age-appropriate information about sexuality
  - tell truth in brief, factual manner,
  - answer as much as child desires and no more,
  - check child's understanding,
  - clarify if misinterpretation occurs
- finding children's picture books about anatomical topics, etc. in other countries can be a meaningful resource about cultural differences in sexual socialization

#### Adolescence

- whether or not they engage in sexual interaction, very sexual people
- \*\*\* for FLEs when attempting to portray positive paradigm of sexuality with students or parents, ask them to develop "sex positive" statements about adolescent sexuality/behavior
- have them identify what is healthy/positive expression during teen years
- -issues surrounding puberty demand so much attention since many teens experience confusion, turmoil, excitement, and unavoidable dread
- STATS (CDC, 2005)
- Approx. ½ of students in 9-12 grade reported having intercourse (45.7% of females and 46.7% of males)
- 6.2% of them had first intercourse before 13
- 14.3% had intercourse with more than 4 persons
- \*\*\*Using sexual (social) scripting perspective can provide insight for teens, the who, what, when, where, and why of sexual relationships
- \*\*\*learning refusal skills is a good teaching strategy
- youth need assistance from FLEs and sexuality educators in developing insights about relationships and understating obligations and responsibilities to themselves and others
- Media influence is a challenge for parents and FLEs. People who watch media content (where attractive characters rarely suffer negative consequences) are more likely to engage in sex
- Teens are more likely to delay first intercourse and use contraception when active if adults and teens talk in family
- However, parental control can be associated with negative effects if it's excessive or coercive

- \*\*\*it's the job of FLEs that regardless if we agree with today's youth's actions, beliefs, or attitudes, we can't ignore the variety of behaviors with range of results and consequences.
- Youth need to be equipped with:
  - Accurate information
  - values clarification
  - parental guidance
  - in order to help them in decision-making

### Adulthood

- sexual satisfaction can become a focus of sexuality during adult years
  - this is an elusive concept, perceived discrepancy between level of aspiration and achievement, ranging from perception of fulfillment to perception of deprivation
    - consequently, it's a highly personal experience influenced by
      - past experiences
      - current expectations
      - future aspirations
- adults are interested in learning about a variety of topics (i.e. physiological and interpersonal dimensions)
- since popular press articles aren't always researched based a good activity for students could be reading and critiquing a popular press article and then finding research to enhance, refute, support claims...

### Older Adulthood

p. 145

- women generally experience little loss of sexual capacity
  - changes in shape, flexibility, and lubrication of vagina due to lower estrogen levels after menopause
  - men experience andropause, decline of androgen and testosterone
  - variation between men in erections, ejaculate etc.
- need for education and communication about alter adulthood sexuality in order for ageism to reduce
- the aging often misunderstand their own physical and sexual changes
- “secrecy generation” they have a right to education, health care, and opportunities for socialization and expression

### **5. Interpersonal Relationships (Olson-Sigg & Olson)**

p. 153 – supportive interpersonal relationships and marriage have been linked to a variety of positive health outcomes

- unhealthy relationships can contribute to stress/illness
- in power terms, inequality in relationships is association with poorer psychological health in adults and in adolescent relationships
- a close interpersonal relationships is main resource for emotional support

p. 154 – key property of healthy relationships, good communication, attentive listening, problem-solving and decision making skills, assertiveness and flexibility

**\*\*FLE and relationship skill-building can build stronger and healthier relationships**

### Childhood

- studies consistently show parental involvement is correlated with how children learn, develop, interact
- i.e. children of more securely attached mothers during first years show better social development at age 3
- the earlier family involvement begins in child's relationship skills process, the more powerful the effects
- quality out-of-home care and ECE can also improve cognitive and social skills
- chief factor is presence of warm, sensitive, and responsive interactions with caregiver
- Head Start – education, social-emotional development, physical and mental health and nutrition
- children in higher quality child care programs perform better on many dimensions
- lack of programs for parents/children during middle childhood years

### Adolescents

- p. 155 – critical to reinforce positive self-image and respect for others
- risk when teaching only intellectual development, it's important to teach inherent worth, should help develop own perceptions, priorities, and values instead of reacting to environment
- should allow and encourage autonomy over conformity

### Adulthood

- p. 157 passage from adolescence to adulthood is more gradual and complex
- finishing school, leaving home, financial independence, getting married, having a child
- the currently longer transition time allows for social institutions (i.e. college, church, military, work) to be part of transformation
- road to self-sufficiency is more about interdependence
- premarital interventions have been shown to increase participants' communication skills, conflict management, and general relationship quality (Stanley et al, 2006)
- text lists lots of available programs/resources

### Later Adulthood

- social support important, providing it may be even more important than receiving
- following retirement; reconnect with old friends and developing new networks is important to take the place of lost work relationships
- by 2030 20% of US population will be ≥ 65
- nearly 25% of households are providing care to older family members
- families spend as many years in eldercare as caring for kids
- \*\*\*FLEs should be familiar with caregiving phenomena
  - recognize caregiver strain
  - be able to reference community resources for elder and respite for caregiver

## Issues/Challenges for FLEs

- teach individuals to be proactive rather than reactive in relationships
- relationship skills need to be an ongoing part of our formal and informal educational processes throughout life cycle
- there's a lack of programs and outreach for young adulthood and later adulthood (i.e. relationship building in retirement)
- bridging across life cycle, encourage individuals to continue learning about interpersonal relationships as ongoing process

## 6. Family Resource Management (Rettig, K.)

p. 163 – dynamic managerial processes

- identifying and facing the practical problems of everyday life
- thinking about alternative strategies for resolving them
- mobilizing a combination of personal, social, economic, and natural resources that can assist in accomplishing the intended changes
- a problem is a challenge rather than something negative
- practical problems arise from generation to generation
- fundamentally connected to our human nature

p. 164 -the sources of family problems are (Liston, 1966)

- both external and internal and vary by
- their orientations (growth, preventive, remedial)
- comprehensiveness (technical, elemental, integrative)
- content (organization, allocation, policy, interaction)
- practical reasoning requires many kinds of resources
  - time, motivation, concentration, energy, alternating and simultaneous processes
- varying decision processes arise from any one practical problem
- economic decisions involve the presenting problem of too many goals and too few resources to accomplish them
- using multiple managerial approaches

p. 165 -\*\*\*Family resource mgmt. is the essence of FLE because it's a way of thinking about everyday life that involves

- dealing with problems, preventing problems, and developing potentials

(Arucs, 1993)

-FLEs can

-assist others in:

- taking initiative for facing problems
- identifying implicit values underlying beliefs in ethical decision situations
- verbalizing their value, goal, and role conflicts in social decision situation

p166 -actively contribute to increasing resource awareness

- brainstorming ideas to modify wasteful consumption patterns
- encourage conservation of natural resources
- model the explicit thinking processes as they teach in the other FLE areas

\*\*\*Family Resource Mgmt is an *integrative* subject matter

p. 168 \*\*\* Challenges for FLEs include:

- assisting family members in facing the interpersonal and ethical problems that arise
- learning to participate in shared decision-making and getting to a workable collaborative solution
- learning about the changing laws and policies that influence the lives of family members
- adjusting to the issues of global resource scarcity and sufficiency

### **Parent Education (PE) and Guidance (Armintha Jacobson)**

p. 173

PE – programs, support services, and resources for parents and caregivers designed to support them or increase capacity and confidence in raising health children

p. 174 Children learn about responsibilities of family members, caregiving, and different approaches to parenting by being parented.

- learning to parent is a process
- \*\*all FLE with adolescents should incorporate ethical code
- important topics to include for adults are parent-child communications, conflict-resolution, meeting devel. Needs of children, and child-rearing practices
- \*\*\*FLEs should assess parent needs, plan programs and curriculum, implement the education, and evaluate
- parents vary in their commitment and perception of their need for parenting education

p.175- success of programs including lots of cultural variation depends on sensitivity and commitment of FLEs

- curriculum development should involve parents as partners in planning

### **Family Law and Public Policy (Bogenschneider, K.)**

p. 182-policy shapes the environment in which families function, shapes human and family development, as well as the environment in which FLEs operate. FLEs' careers will be shaped by family policy

understanding:

- family policy = how legislation affecting families is developed and adopted
- family law = how statues are interpreted and applied

**FP** focuses on 4 main functions 1. Family creation, 2. Economic support, 3. Childrearing, and 4. Family caregiving

p. 183-FP inherently brings a life span orientation to policymaking because families encompass relationships from cradle to grave

p. 184

- family focus brings perspective to American policymaking that no other institution does as well – commitment to others
- has potential to counter the narrow, self-serving, individualistic agendas forwarded by advocates, special interest groups, and PACs
- serves as a reminder that inalienable rights come with responsibilities

-\*American policymakers' image of their client is disproportionately the individual with families relegated to the periphery of policy development

p. 185- \*\*FLEs can

-generate and disseminate policy-relevant, family-sensitive research and evaluations,

-conduct family impact analyses

-educate next generation of family policy professionals,

-engage community members

-encourage universities to be involved in policy outreach

### **Professional Ethics and Practice (Glen Palm)**

p. 191 CFLEs are expected to develop the skills for ethical thinking and practice

p. 192 realize you can do harm, especially as you move from giving information to addressing emotional family issues

Ethical decision-making process:

1. Id relationships
2. Apply principles
3. Id contradictions/tensions
4. Id possible solutions
5. Select action(s)