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What's missing in introductory family science textbooks? Where is the theory, methods, and application?

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ABSTRACT.

One of the central purposes of an introductory family science textbook is to introduce students to the theory and research methods that are commonly used in the discipline and to the applications of research to practical issues confronting families. We examined seventeen textbooks published between 2012-2019 regarding the amount of content devoted to theory, research methods, and application. The authors systematically coded content in the textbooks based on an examination of the Tables of Contents and the Subject Index. The results indicate that most introductory textbooks include limited content about theory and research methods. Also, despite the emphasis of the profession on the translation of research, introductory textbooks did not include much information about family life education or family therapy. There was more coverage of family policy, but the authors rarely included a discussion of the policy process or how research can inform policy. These results can assist instructors in selecting textbooks for courses and assist authors in the development of future textbooks.

Keywords: introductory courses, textbooks, translational family science, undergraduate curriculum, family science

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What's missing in introductory family science textbooks? Where is the theory, methods, and application?

One of the central purposes of introductory courses and textbooks about marriage and families is to introduce students to the fundamental ideas and practices that shape the field. The authors of the introductory textbooks must sift through the vast scientific literature to identify the most significant ideas, methods, and findings that will prepare students to think scientifically about marriage and families. Glenn (1997) argued forcefully for the need to have high-quality, accurate, and evidence-driven textbooks—noting “students are unlikely to be exposed to theories, data, and interpretations of evidence not discussed in the books” (p. 197).

Introductory courses in family science have often focused on providing “students with skills and knowledge that will enhance the quality of their family lives and those persons with whom they have family relations” (Glenn, 1997; p. 198). However, these courses also provide the foundation for family science majors who are preparing for careers in family life education, family therapy, and roles in family policy decision-making. The extent to which these courses address these applications of family science is also a critical aspect of introductory courses.

Gaps in Textbook Content

Over the past several decades, there have been a variety of reviews of marriage and family textbooks to examine the extent to which these books included various types of content. For example, Coleman and Ganong examined the inclusion of information about stepfamilies in textbooks (Coleman, Ganong, & Goodwin, 1994; Nolan, Coleman, & Ganong, 1984). In this case, they examined the primary textbooks at that time and coded the textbooks for stepfamily content. Over the decade, they found that the authors increased the amount and quality of coverage of stepfamilies and remarriage, but still found some weaknesses in the coverage.

Other authors have explored issues in introductory textbooks. Stolley and Hall (1994) examined the presentation of abortion and adoption in textbooks. They found that adoption was only discussed at the micro-level of analysis, whereas abortion was examined at both the micro and macro levels of analysis. Another shortcoming with marriage and family textbooks has been how older families have been presented in these textbooks. Stolley and Hill (1996) note that older family members are often separated from other family issues and receive only limited inclusion. More recently, Larson and Hickman (2004) examined the degree to which books covered the primary predictors of marital quality. They found that, on average, only about two-thirds of the predictors of marital quality were included in the leading textbooks. Glenn's (1997) review of family textbooks notes insufficient attention to child-related topics. For example, he highlights the lack of attention to child abuse, juvenile delinquency, and the effects of changing family structure on children. In a follow-up review (Glenn, 2009), he reports little change in the coverage of these topics and still criticized the textbooks for being too adult-focused in their presentation of families.

More significant attention has been paid to how family textbooks have handled ethnic minority families and diversity issues. The first examination was conducted by Bryant and Coleman (1988), who examined 25 textbooks published in the 1980s. They found that the inclusion of Black families ranged from 2 pages to 2 chapters and noted many of the textbooks portrayed families from a deficit perspective. In an updated analysis and expansion, Shaw-Taylor and Benokraitis (1995) examined the inclusion of a broader range of minority families. They found that less than 3% of introductory textbooks were devoted to minority families. More recently, Dunham and colleagues (Dunham, Cannon, & Dietz, 2004) explored how White and minority families were handled in introductory textbooks. They

found that although White families were rarely included in the index of textbooks, they were often included in textbooks by contrasting their experiences as compared to ethnic minority families. These reviews have highlighted the overall gaps in topic areas within the introductory books.

Missing Disciplinary Fundamentals

In addition to topical gaps, there are excellent reasons to consider more fundamental limitations in regard to how introductory books establish the foundation for family science. In general, the primary scientific disciplinary fundamentals include family theories, research methods, and the application of family science.

Theory and Research Methods

An important consideration is how students are introduced to the primary theoretical and research methodologies of the discipline. Over two decades ago, Greenwood and Cassidy (1986, 1990) examined the presentation of theory and research in marriage and family textbooks. Their purpose was to present guidance to faculty in selecting textbooks for courses. They found limited amounts of information about theory and research methods. They note, “Although most of the texts provide descriptions of theory, only two discuss what theory is and how theories are constructed or verified” (Greenwood & Cassidy, 1990, p. 542). Their analysis also revealed that many textbooks do not include research methods. In the 20 textbooks, they reviewed only one book that included a chapter on research methods, and many books were judged as inadequate. They reported, “Most texts have little or no mention of methodology. A brief discussion of 2-5 pages is the extent of an explicit discussion about methods...” (Greenwood & Cassidy, 1986, p. 298). They concluded their review with recommendations that more attention to theory and research methods would prepare students for more analytic and critical thinking about marriage and family issues.

Since the late 1990s, there have been significant advancements in theory development and research methods (Adamsons, Few-Demo, Proulx, & Roy, 2022). For example, gender and ethnic scholars have pushed the theoretical boundaries in regard to thinking about same-sex relationships (Oswald, 2016), transfamily relationships (Lenne, Sun, & Klawetter, 2023; McGuire, Kovalanka, Catalpa, & Toomey, 2016), and stress in minority families (Rivas-Koehl, M., Rivas-Koehl, D., & McNeil Smith, S. (2023).

In addition to advances in theoretical perspectives, there have also been significant developments in research methods (e.g., McHale, Amato, & Booth, 2014). Family scientists are engaged in the use of new technologies that include biological and neurological measures. Likewise, detailed video-based methodologies provide insights into the dynamics of couple relationships, and smartphone technologies allow for ecological momentary assessments (Smyth & Heron, 2014). There have also been significant advancements in data analysis in both qualitative and quantitative approaches to studying families (McHale et al., 2014; Sutor & Gilligan, 2022).

Translational Family Science

Another essential aspect of introductory courses is the application of scientific knowledge in family science. As noted in recent summaries of the field of family science, applying research to human and family problems has been a hallmark of the field since its inception (Hamon & Smith, 2017). Frequently, textbook authors have included information in introductory textbooks that were designed to help students navigate their own romantic and family relationships. Greenwood and Cassidy (1986) wrote, “An applied focus attempts to provide students with knowledge directly relevant to them as well as other insights useful for personal decisions or growth” (p. 295). Although providing family science

information for personal development is one aspect of translating family science, students who are preparing for careers in family life education, family therapy, or family policy need introductory textbooks with overviews of the state-of-the-art programs and discussions of the evidence about their effectiveness. Over the past several decades, there have been significant advancements in the development of prevention and family life programs (Walcheski & Reinke, 2015).

There have also been significant developments in the practice of family therapy, including the incorporation of family therapy into medical settings (McDaniel, Doherty, & Hepworth, 2014), advancements in research on family therapy effectiveness (Sprenkle & Piercy, 2005), and the integration of therapeutic practices (Lebow, 2014). In the 21st century, there has been significant development of a coherent framework for family policymaking (See Bogenschneider, 2014; Secombe, 2002; Zimmerman, 2001). These authors have outlined how to apply theory and research to policymaking and developed methods of policy analysis. Introducing students to the full range of translational family science, family life education, family therapy, and family policy are all integral to an understanding of the discipline.

Current Study

The lack of any recent examination of the content of introductory marriage and family textbooks led us to focus on the status of these books. Although there are many dimensions to address, we examine the scope and topics of theory and research methods in these books. These topics are foundational in terms of helping students think about family science. Additionally, we examine the applied aspects of family studies—family life education, family therapy, and family policy. Here we are interested in the extent to which books introduce students to how family science information can be used to help family members and influence the development of society in ways that are supportive of families. We were interested in answering two questions: 1) how much coverage do each of these books devote to theory, research methods, family life education, family therapy, and family policy, and 2) what specific topics within each of these broad disciplinary domains are included in introductory textbooks?

Methods

In order to conduct this study, we identified current introductory family science textbooks. Then, we developed a coding scheme and procedures for systematically reviewing the contents of the books and created descriptive summaries of the extent to which the textbooks included theories, research methods, and applications.

Identifying the Textbooks

In order to identify the current introductory family science textbooks, we examined the publisher's websites, professional scholarly publications for advertisements, and many other informal scholarly materials. As a result of these searches, we identified 17 textbooks published between 2012-2019. We did not simply select textbooks that were written by family scientists as we wanted to examine the full range of textbooks that might be used in introductory family courses in family science, sociology, psychology, or other interdisciplinary programs. In all cases, if there was more than one edition in this time period, we only coded the most recent edition of the textbooks. Appendix A provides the complete reference citation to all the textbooks we reviewed. In comparison to other textbook reviews, eight of these textbooks were also included in Glenn's 1997 review, and 12 books he reviewed are no longer being published. Only one book that was included in Greenwood and Cassidy's review is still being published. In the current review, about half (47%) of the textbooks were published between 2017-2019.

Coding Procedures

First, we noted the date of publication, the edition of each textbook, the number of authors, and the disciplinary background of the authors. This information is presented in Table B1. Ten of the textbooks are written by sociologists, four textbooks include at least one family scientist, one textbook is authored by a psychologist, and two textbooks include other disciplines.

Scope of Disciplinary Content Coding

For our content coding, we adapted the procedures developed by Griggs & Jackson (2013) for conducting a similar analysis of introductory psychology textbooks. Initially, we conducted our content coding with a review of the Tables of Contents to identify chapters and/or sections focused on each of our five major disciplinary issues: theory, research methodology, family life education, marriage, and family therapy, and family policy. This coding was done by identifying chapters and sections in the book that were labeled with these headings. After identifying the chapters and/or sections, we counted the pages that covered these topics. Based on our initial coding, we found that many books did not include identifiable sections on one or more of the five broad topics in the Table of Contents. Some authors integrated these topics into chapters or did not include a detailed Table of Contents that allowed us to identify the coverage of these topics.

In order to not underestimate the scope of coverage of these topics in the textbooks, we used the Subject Index to supplement our Table of Contents analysis of these books. To code the subject index, we reviewed the Subject Indexes of the books and developed a list of all the terms that might be associated with the five broad disciplinary topics. For example, for terms related to “theory,” we examined the books for terms for specific theoretical perspectives such as systems theory, social exchange theory, and conflict theory. The coding outline included thirty-five different terms coded for theory. For research methodology, we examined the books for terms such as data collection, quantitative data collection, interview, observation methodology, and ethnography. For these to be coded as “research methodology,” the textbook description needed to define or explain the term or methodology, not just use the term in a general description of a research finding.

Twenty-two research topics were coded. For family life education, terms such as sex education, premarital education, parent education, and sometimes specific marriage preparation programs (e.g., ENRICH/PREPARE, PREP) were coded. The coding outline included thirteen family life education topics. For family therapy, we coded textbooks for any mention of marriage or family therapy, counseling, and mediation, resulting in eight coding therapy topics. Among the family policy topics that were coded, there were discussions of specific issues such as family leave policies (Family and Medical Leave Act), reproductive issues including court decisions (Roe v. Wade, 1973), discussions of political views that lead to policy differences, values influencing policy and the policymaking process. Forty-two family policy terms were part of our final coding document. A complete list of all the terms used in coding is available from the authors by request.

Counting Pages to Estimate the Scope of Coverage

After identifying all the disciplinary content in the textbook through the coding of the Table of Contents and the Subject Index, we applied Griggs & Jackson’s (2013) methods for counting pages. Since there was some overlap between the material identified in the Table of Contents and the Subject Index reviews, we made sure that we only counted the content one time. We counted whole pages regardless of the use of illustrations, tables, figures, or pull-out sections. If chapters or sections started or ended in less than a page, we counted partial pages in increments of one-fourth of a page. A single

sentence on a topic was counted as one-fourth of a page. This page-counting method was more likely to overestimate the amount of content on a topic rather than undercount the amount of content.

Topical Disciplinary Content Coding

In addition to counting pages in order to estimate the “scope” or amount of the disciplinary content regarding theory, research, family life education, family therapy, and family policy in each book, we were interested in identifying specific content or topics that were covered by these introductory textbooks. In this analysis, we were not interested in how many pages were devoted to the topics; rather, we were interested in what specific topical issues were covered in the textbook. Using the topical disciplinary coding of the Subject index in each book described above, we recorded a simple, yes or no for each topic within the five broad disciplinary domains for each textbook. For example, within the theory domain, one of the topics was family systems theory; we noted whether each textbook covered this topic. This type of coding in each of the disciplinary domains allowed us to summarize the range of topics covered in each domain.

Coding Checks

All the textbooks were coded by two of the authors. At the beginning of the coding process, codes were compared to refine and standardize the process. After the initial refinements and practice coding, two of the authors coded each book with 90% agreement on the initial coding. All the codes were compared between the two coders, and discrepancies between coders were resolved by mutual agreement.

Results

The results answer two questions about introductory family science textbooks: 1) how much coverage (scope) do each of these textbooks devote to theory, research methods, family life education, family therapy, and family policy, and 2) what specific topics within each of these broad disciplinary domains are included in introductory textbooks?

Scope of Coverage of Disciplinary Domains

In Table B2, the number of pages and percentages of each textbook that focused on theory, research methods, and application (family life education, family therapy, and family policy) are presented. The mean amount of content about theory was about 2.2% (range = .5 – 4.3%), research methods 1.1% (range 0 – 2.6%), family life education .5% (range = 0 – 1.2%), family therapy about .5% (range = 0 – 2%), and family policy 3% (range = .5 – 8.1%).

Topical Content

Theoretical Topics

Table B3 shows the results of the primary theoretical topics that were included in each book. The theoretical topics are organized from the oldest theoretical perspectives to the most recent. Most of the textbooks included the major historical theories from symbolic interaction to social exchange theory (1918 – 1970). Among more current theories, human ecological and feminist theories were the most represented (emerging in the late 1970s and 1980s). Social construction, queer theory, and family strengths were the least likely theories to be included in textbooks. The median number of theories included in the textbooks was 7 to 8 different perspectives.

Research Methods Topics

Table B4 shows the results of the research methods topics that were included in the textbooks. The most common topics were general family research methods and research design. However, the design coding is somewhat misleading as it includes a range of design methods, including experimental design, cohort design, and longitudinal design. In terms of data collection methods, interviews, surveys, case studies, questionnaires, and naturalistic observations were described in about half of the textbooks. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were described in about half the textbooks. Only two of the textbooks described laboratory/video observational methods despite their increasing use in studies of family interaction research. Also, statistical methodology, either for demographic data or quantitative data analysis, was only described in two textbooks.

Family Life Education Topics

Table B5 shows the topical content included in each book regarding family life education. On average, less than 1% of introductory textbooks included coverage of family life education. When the topic was included, sex education was the most commonly discussed (64% of the books). Four books did not include any information about family life education. The books by Howe (2012) and Olson, DeFrain, and Skogrand (2019) included all five topics that we coded.

Family Therapy Topics

Table B6 shows the topical content in each book regarding marriage and family therapy. Much like family life education, introductory books devoted little attention to this topic (e.g., less than 1% of the book). Six books did not include any information on this topic. Marital therapy (47%) and divorce counseling (53%) were the most commonly discussed therapy topics.

Family Policy Topics

Table B7 shows the topical content in each book regarding family policy. Compared to other applied topics, family policy was more likely to be included in introductory textbooks. In part, this is because many books discuss specific legislative and judicial decisions that shaped marriage and families in the United States. For example, reproductive issues, especially the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* (1973), were commonly discussed. Six books (Baca-Zinn et al., 2016; Cherlin, 2017; Cohen, 2018; Karraker & Grochowski, 2012; Secombe, 2015; Secombe, 2016) include chapters on family policy, and five other books include a series of policy briefs on 10 to 15 different policy issues. Despite the coverage of work-life, reproductive, marriage/marriage/equality, and poverty/inequality issues, most textbooks included minimal discussion of the policymaking process or the role of research in the formation of policy options.

Discussion

The results of this analysis of the inclusion of theory, research methodology, and application in introductory family science textbooks indicate that many of the books had minimal amounts of information about these disciplinary fundamentals. Most books included only limited discussion of theory and research methods. The coverage of these issues in textbooks may not prepare undergraduate students with the necessary scientific tools to develop scientific reasoning skills for examining the evidence about important marriage and family issues. The lack of attention to research methods is especially worrisome. Over 30 years ago, Greenwood & Cassidy (1986) reported this problem with introductory family textbooks, and it seems as if almost nothing has changed. Very few of the advanced methodological approaches are included in these textbooks, making it appear as if the only research

methods are self-report approaches such as interviews and surveys. This representation of family science methodology does not represent the state of the field (e.g., McHale et al., 2014). Other social science fields include much more content on research methodology. For example, a recent analysis of the content of introductory psychology textbooks found that about 5% of the textbook contents were focused on research methods (Griggs & Jackson, 2013), which compares to the mere 1% we found in the family science textbooks. Moreover, recent recommendations by the American Psychological Association propose more emphasis on scientific reasoning and foundations for scientific practice, including laboratory experiences as a fundamental part of the introductory courses (Gurung, Hackathorn, Enns, Frantz, Cacioppo, Loop, & Freeman, 2016). By failing to discuss theory development and research methodology, the textbooks do not support instructors' efforts to provide students with the means to engage in critical thinking and scientific reasoning regarding family science content.

The inclusion of applied content focusing on family life education, family therapy, and family policy was also minimal. The lack of inclusion of family life education and family therapy was especially notable. In part, these results are probably due to the authors, who are mostly from sociology, and their books are most likely used in sociology of the family courses with few examples of family life education or family therapy. However, in examining the four textbooks that included family science authors, there was only minimal coverage of family life education and family therapy (less than 1% coverage in these books). Despite claims that family science is, at its core, a translational science, this is not evident in many of these introductory textbooks. Not only is there limited coverage of the essential topics, but there is also almost no discussion on how these applications are designed or evaluated using research evidence and rigorous scientific methodologies. Given this limited treatment in these textbooks, it would be surprising if most students had any idea that there were professionals who engage in family life education, family therapy, and family policy. For students majoring in the field of family science, this content provides some career exploration ideas, and for students in other fields, this content provides a broader understanding of the ways that professionals can support and educate families.

Of the applied topics, family science textbooks included more family policy content. Nevertheless, there were still significant gaps in this material. Most books did not define what is meant by family policy and how this would be different from policies that focus on individuals. Likewise, most of the discussion topics and examples focus on national issues and do not include examples of policymaking at the local and state government levels. The most significant oversight is that there is little or no attention to how research can be used to inform policymaking, from applying basic research to using research in the implementation and evaluation of policies. For example, authors can include roles that people can play in policymaking, including differences between education and advocacy roles (See Bogenschneider, 2014, for example.)

Adding Laboratory Experiences to Introductory Texts and Courses

In recent years, both the American Sociological Association and the American Psychological Association have commissioned study groups to conduct a comprehensive analysis of their core curriculum with special attention to issues of application. In sociology, this effort focused on identifying the core content that should be the basis of the sociology curriculum (Ballantine et al., 2016; Ferguson, 2016; Pike et al., 2017). In these reports, sociologists are also working to identify content within sociology to prepare students for careers and the application of sociology to issues and problems in the public arena. The Sociological Literacy Framework described by Ferguson outlines core areas of knowledge (e.g., social structure, socialization), sociological tools (e.g., theory and research methods), and the application of sociology to real-world problems and policies.

In a similar effort, psychologists have also recently reviewed their curriculum and introductory textbooks to develop a new model for introductory psychology courses (Gurung, Hackathorn, Enns, Frantz, Cacioppo, Loop, & Freeman, 2016). Interestingly, a significant recommendation is strengthening the research methods taught in introductory courses. This recommendation includes ideas for adding a laboratory component to these beginning courses. Another feature of the new model is to include applications of psychological principles throughout the course and extend these applications beyond traditional clinical applications to include everyday problems and concerns.

A possible way to strengthen introductory textbooks and courses in family science would be to build on the analyses of other social sciences and add laboratory experiences. For example, this might include reading, analyzing, and summarizing recent original research studies in order to understand the ways data are collected, analyzed, and reported. Textbooks could include activities for students to practice collecting basic quantitative and qualitative data. Beyond these specific research activities, students could be given basic research findings in particular research areas, such as family violence, and asked to develop written, audio, and/or video family life education materials based on these findings. There could also be the development and application of family policy ideas based on current issues in the news or legislature. Explorations of family therapy could also be part of the laboratory portfolio. These laboratory experiences would give both students majoring in the field as well as non-majors some concrete experience with research and application that would increase their understanding of the practice of family science and the application of this science to contemporary family issues.

Application in Family Science

Although NCFR has focused much attention on the curriculum for Certified Family Life Educators, the future of family science would be enhanced by broadening the scope of the curriculum recommendations about how we prepare undergraduates generally in family science. A recent issue in *Family Relations* asserts that translational family science has been important throughout the history of the field (Hamon & Smith, 2017), but the results of this study indicate that these ideas have not been incorporated into our introductory textbooks and may not be well represented in our undergraduate curriculums. This examination of introductory family science textbooks does not reflect the assertion that “family science’s evolution and continuing identity is marked by its focus on application” (Hamon & Smith, 2017).

Recommendations to Authors and Instructors

This content analysis provides important information for instructors and authors about content regarding theory, research methods, and application.

For Authors

We have asserted that an important feature of introductory textbooks about families is that it is imperative for students to develop critical and scientific thinking in regard to questions about family life. As we noted, prior analyses of content in theory and research were limited in textbooks over 30 years ago, and our analysis suggests this is still limited in current textbooks. Our view is that this is a serious limitation. Most students have their own anecdotal theories about family life based on their life experiences. Without giving them the tools to think about how to scientifically test those ideas and giving through theory development and research methods, they are likely to assume that the textbook content on family life is merely an author’s opinion about family life rather than information that is based on theoretical principles and empirical evidence. By understanding these basic scientific tools, they can begin to critically evaluate information that they read or gather from a variety of sources about

family life. For students to understand family science, it is not sufficient to merely report the empirical evidence from scientific studies; it is imperative to explain how family scientists have discovered this evidence. This is achieved by clearly explaining the development of theories and research methodologies, including the incomplete understandings from the past and limitations of some research approaches. Instructors who may now have to supplement these textbooks with other materials to include these ideas would benefit from textbook authors' inclusion of this material.

These introductory textbooks about families are used in a variety of courses, including family science departments, sociology departments, and many other interdisciplinary units. The application of family research may vary depending on the types of courses and the type of department. A focus on family policy may be an emphasis in some courses, while family life education or family therapy may be a focus in others. In each area of application, we recommend that authors emphasize how research evidence can be used to inform education, therapy, and policy. Additionally, we think that there should be an emphasis on how to examine the effectiveness of education, therapy, and policy. Even authors who want to emphasize policy applications can effectively integrate education and therapeutic examples by carefully selecting examples such as policies regarding sex education in school, marriage education requirements for a marriage license, or intervention options for cases of child abuse or domestic violence.

One of the challenges of adding more content to these textbooks may be the overall length of these books. Our view is that theory, research methods, and application are fundamental to the preparation of students who are taking these courses. These tools introduce important scientific and critical thinking skills that will apply to family life issues. There are many ways this material could be integrated into current textbooks without adding 3-5 new chapters. Within current chapters, authors can explore a particular theory, research procedure, or application as they describe the more general findings. For example, survey methodology can be discussed when discussing changes in attitudes about mothers working outside the home, mediation programs could be included in a discussion of domestic violence, and family systems theory can be included in a discussion about couple interaction. Lastly, it should be noted that the average length of the family textbooks we reviewed was over 200 pages shorter than the average introductory psychology textbooks that were summarized by Griggs and Jackson (2013). This difference in length seems quite large and suggests that authors and/or publishers may need to examine the length of these family textbooks.

For Instructors

This review provides instructors with information about the extent of coverage of theory, research methods, and applications, which can guide them in their selection of textbooks. As noted, most of the textbooks have limited coverage of all these topics. For instructors who want to provide more in-depth coverage regarding theory and research, instructors could add readings or lecture materials to supplement the textbooks. This information could be integrated into the discussion of substantive topics. For example, family systems theory and Gottman and colleagues' use of video recordings of couple interactions could be paired with chapters on marriage (Gottman, n.d.; Gottman, Markham, & Notarius, 1977). Additionally, instructors can expand the discussions of particular studies to include information about theory and/or research methodology in conjunction with a discussion of the findings that were discussed in the textbook.

Regarding application, instructors who want to include family policy have more choices and opportunities to select textbooks that include this material. Six of the textbooks have chapters devoted to public policy, and several others include sections that focus on specific family policy issues. Instructors

who are interested in including family life education or family therapy have a much more limited set of textbooks to consider. Even the four textbooks that include family scientists as authors have very limited coverage of these topics. The Olson and colleagues' textbook (2019) includes the most extensive coverage, with six pages about family life education and eight pages about family therapy. Instructors can integrate material on these topics into many topical areas. For example, in a lecture on parenting, there could be discussions of parent education programs. Topics of divorce, family violence, and child abuse could include intervention programs as well as marriage and family therapy approaches. Also, there are a variety of online family life education programs and videos that demonstrate family therapy techniques, as well as interviews with therapists about family intervention techniques that could be used as supplemental material.

Conclusion

Overall, this review of introductory family science textbooks suggests that most textbooks on their own do not adequately introduce the disciplinary fundamentals, including basic theory and research methods. Additionally, the application of family science through education, therapy, and policy is generally overlooked in many of these textbooks. To develop influential translational family scientists and practitioners, new attention needs to be paid to these introductory textbooks and the courses that they support.

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Appendix A: Introductory Family Science Textbooks Published between 2012-2019

- Baca Zinn, M., Eitzen, D. S., & Wells, B. (2016). *Diversity in families* (10th ed.). Pearson.
- Benokraitis, N. V. (2015). *Marriages and families* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Cherlin, A. (2017). *Public & private families*. McGraw-Hill.
- Cohen, P. N. (2018). *The family: Diversity, inequality, and social change* (2nd ed.). Norton.
- Howe, T. (2012). *Marriages & families in the 21st century*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Karraker, M. W., & Grochowski, J. R. (2012). *Families with futures: Family studies into the 21st century* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Knox, D. (2018). *M & F 4: Marriage and family*. Cengage.
- Knox, D., & Schacht, C. (2013). *Choices in relationships: An introduction to marriage and the family* (12th ed.). Cengage.
- Lamanna, M A., Riedmann, A., & Stewart, S. (2018). *Marriages, families, and relationships: Making choices in a diverse society* (13th ed.) Cengage
- Laurer, R. H., & Lauer, J. C. (2012). *Marriage and family: The quest for intimacy* (8th ed.). McGraw Hill.
- Olson, D. H., DeFrain, J., & Skogrand, L. (2019). *Marriages and families: Intimacy, diversity, & strengths* (9th ed.). McGraw Hill.
- Schwartz, M. A., & Scott, B. M. (2012). *Marriages & families: Diversity and change* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Secombe, K. (2015). *Exploring marriages & families* (2nd ed.). Pearson
- Secombe, K. (2016). *Families and their social worlds* (3rd ed.). Pearson.
- Stinnett, N., Stinnett, N., Degenova, M. K., & Rice, F. P. (2017). *Intimate relationships, marriages and families* (9th ed.). Oxford U. Press.
- Strong, B., Cohen, T. (2017). *Marriage and family experience*. (13th ed.). Cengage.
- Williams, B. K., Sawyer, S. C., & Wahlstrom, C. M. (2017). *Marriages, families, and intimate relationships*. (4th ed.). Pearson.

Appendix B: Tables

Table B1

Basic Textbook Information

Authors	Textbook Title	Year of Publication	Edition	No. of Authors	Author's Discipline
Baca Zinn et al.	Diversity in Families	2016	10th	3	Sociology
Benokraitis	Marriages & Families: Changes, Choices & Constraints	2015	8th	1	Sociology
Cherlin	Public and Private Families: An Introduction	2017	8th	1	Sociology
Cohen	The Family: Diversity, Inequality & Social Change	2018	2nd	1	Sociology
Howe	Marriages & Families in the 21 st Century: A Bioecological Approach	2012	1st	1	Psychology
Karraker & Grochowski	Families with Futures: Family Studies in the 21 st Century	2012	2nd	2	Family Science, Sociology
Knox	M & F ⁴ : Marriage & Family	2018	1st	1	Sociology
Knox & Schacht	Choices in Relationships: An Introduction to Marriage & the Family	2013	12th	2	Sociology, Family Science
Lamanna et al.	Marriages, Families and Relationships: Making Choices in a Diverse Society	2018	13th	3	Sociology
Laurer & Laurer	Marriage & Family: The Quest for Intimacy	2012	8th	2	Sociology, Social History
Olson et al.	Marriages & Families: Intimacy, Diversity & Strengths	2019	9th	3	Family Science
Schwartz & Scott	Marriages & Families: Diversity & Change	2012	7 th	2	Sociology
Secombe	Exploring Marriages & Families	2015	2nd	1	Sociology
Secombe	Families and Their Social Worlds	2016	3rd	1	Sociology
Strong & Cohen	The Marriage Experience: Intimate Relationships in a Changing Society	2017	13th	2	Sociology
Stinnett et al.	Intimate Relationships, Marriages & Families	2017	9th	4	Family Science
Williams et al.	Marriages, Families & Intimate Relationships: A Practical Introduction	2017	4th	3	Communications, Sociology

Table B2

Number and Percent of Coverage of Family Science Textbook Topics

Authors	Publication Date	Theory		Research Methods		Family Life Ed		Family Therapy		Family Policy		Total # pages
		# of pages	%	# of pages	%	# of pages	%	# of pages	%	# of pages	%	
Baca Zinn et al.	2016	3.0	1.0	2	0.5	1.5	0.5	0	0	21	7	297
Benokraitis	2015	2.25	2.4	13	2.6	1	0.5	0	0	9	1.8	491
Cherlin	2017	6	1.4	5	1.2	0	0	0	0	33.5	8.1	413
Cohen	2018	16.5	3.2	6.25	1	6.75	1.0	0	0	25.5	5	507
Howe	2012	17	3.4	10	2	5.75	1	3.5	0.5	6	1	494
Karraker & Grochowski	2012	15.5	5.1	4	1.4	3.5	1.2	0	0	9.75	3.2	302
Knox	2018	4.5	1.0	1.75	0.5	2.25	0.5	2	0.5	0.75	0.5	307
Knox & Schacht	2013	5.5	0.5	2	0.5	2	0.5	6.5	1	13.75	3	481
Lamanna et al.	2018	17	3.9	7	1.6	5	1.1	3	0.5	7.75	1.7	441
Laurer & Laurer	2012	2.5	0.5	0	0	1.5	0.5	0	0	1.5	0.5	372
Olson et al.	2019	21.5	4.3	4.5	0.5	6.0	1.0	8.0	2.0	3.25	.6	484
Schwartz & Scott	2012	9	1.7	8	1.5	0.5	0.5	8	1.5	10	1.9	520
Secombe	2015	7.75	2.0	4.25	0.5	0	0	0.5	0.5	21	5	464
Secombe	2016	3.25	1.0	3	0.5	0	0	0	0	21.75	6.8	320
Strong & Cohen	2017	14.25	2.5	11.25	2	1.5	0.5	1	0.5	10.5	1.9	556
Stinnett et al.	2017	7.25	2.0	1.75	0.5	1.5	0.5	4	0.5	12.25	3	478
Williams et al.	2017	8.75	1.9	7	1.3	4.25	0.5	1.25	0.5	3.25	0.5	503
Means		9.5	2.2	5.4	1.1	2.5	0.5	2.2	0.5	12.4	3.0	437

Table B3

Theoretical Perspectives Included in Each Textbook

Textbook Authors	Pub Date	SI	SF	FD	FS	C	SE	HE	FT	SC	BPS	FStr	QT	IS	Total
Baca Zinn et al.	2016		x							x					2
Benokraitis	2015	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x				8
Cherlin	2017	x					x		x	x	x		x	x	7
Cohen	2018	x				x	x		x					x	5
Howe	2012		x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
Karraker & Grochowski	2012	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x					x	9
Knox	2018	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x				8
Knox & Schacht	2013	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x				9
Lamanna et al.	2018		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	10
Laurer & Laurer	2012	x		x	x	x	x			x					6
Olson et al.	2019		x		x			x	x			x			5
Schwartz & Scott	2012	x	x	x		x	x		x						6
Secombe	2015	x	x	x	x	x	x		x						7
Secombe	2016	x	x	x	x	x	x		x			x			8
Stinnett et al.	2017	x	x	x	x	x	x		x			x			8
Strong & Cohen	2017	x	x	x		x	x	x	x					x	8
Williams et al.	2017	x	x	x	x		x	x							6
Total		13	14	12	12	13	13	9	12	4	6	4	3	6	

Note: SI=Symbolic Interaction, SF=Structural Functionalism, FD=Family Development Theory, FS=Family Systems Theory, C=Conflict Theory, SE=(Social) Exchange Theory, HE=Human Ecological Theory, FT=Feminist Theory, SC=Social Construction Theory, BPS=Biopsychosocial Model, FS=Family Strengths Theory, QT=Queer Theory, IS=Intersectionality

Table B4

Research Methods Topics Included in Each Textbook

Textbook Authors	Pub. Date	Case Study	Family Research General	Interview	Lab/Video Observation	Naturalistic Observation	Research Design	Survey	Questionnaires	Quantitative/Qualitative	Statistics	Total
Baca Zinn et al.	2016											0
Benokraitis	2015	x	x				x	x	x	x		6
Cherlin	2017		x			x	x	x				4
Cohen	2018			x				x			x	3
Howe	2012						x			x		2
Karraker & Grochowski	2012	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	8
Knox	2018		x				x	x				3
Knox & Schacht	2013	x	x				x					3
Lamanna et al.	2018		x				x	x	x	x		5
Laurer & Laurer	2012											0
Olson et al.	2019		x	x	x		x		x	x		6
Schwartz & Scott	2012	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		8
Secombe	2015		x	x		x		x		x		5
Secombe	2016	x	x				x			x		4
Strong & Cohen	2017		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		8
Stinnett et al.	2017		x				x		x			3
Williams et al.	2017	x	x	x		x	x		x			6
Total		6	12	7	2	6	13	9	8	9	2	

Table B5

Family Life Education Topics Included in Textbooks

Textbook Authors	Publication Date	General Family Life Education	Sex Education	Premarital Education	Marriage Enrichment/Education	Parent Education	Total
Baca Zinn et al.	2016		x				1
Benokraitis	2015		x				1
Cherlin	2017						0
Cohen	2018		x			x	2
Howe	2012	x	x	x	x	x	5
Karraker & Grochowski	2012	x			x	x	3
Knox	2018		x	x			2
Knox & Schacht	2013	x	x	x	x		4
Lamanna et al.	2018		x				1
Laurer & Laurer	2012				x		1
Olson et al.	2019	x	x	x	x	x	5
Schwartz & Scott	2012						0
Secombe	2015						0
Secombe	2016						0
Strong & Cohen	2017		x	x	x		3
Stinnett et al.	2017		x	x	x	x	4
Williams et al.	2017		x				1
Total		4	11	6	7	5	

Table B6

Family Therapy Topics Included in Textbooks

Textbook Authors	Publication Date	Marriage Therapy	Family Therapy	Sex Therapy	Conciliation Counseling	Divorce Counseling/ Mediation	Total
Baca Zinn et al.	2016						0
Benokraitis	2015						0
Cherlin	2017						0
Cohen	2018						0
Howe	2012	x	x	x		x	4
Karraker & Grochowski	2012		x				1
Knox	2018	x				x	2
Knox & Schacht	2013	x	x			x	3
Lamanna et al.	2018	x	x			x	3
Laurer & Laurer	2012						0
Olson et al.	2019	x	x	x			3
Schwartz & Scott	2012	x	x	x	x	x	5
Secombe	2015					x	1
Secombe	2016						0
Stinnett et al.	2017	x			x	x	3
Strong & Cohen	2017					x	1
Williams et al.	2017	x	x		x	x	4
Total		8	7	3	3	9	

Table B7

Family Policy Topics Included in Textbooks

Textbook Authors	Publication Date	Work Life	Reproductive Issues	Marriage/ Marriage Equality	Poverty/ Inequality	Policy Making /Policy Process	Research in Policy Making	Values/ Political views	Chapter/ Section	Total
Baca Zinn et al.	2016	x	x	x	x	x		x	Chapter	6
Benokraitis	2015	x	x	x	x			x		5
Cherlin	2017	x	x	x	x			x	Chapter	5
Cohen	2018	x	x	x	x			x	Chapter	5
Howe	2012	x		x	x					3
Karraker & Grochowski	2012	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Chapter	7
Knox	2018		x	x						2
Knox & Schacht	2013	x	x	x					Briefs	3
Lamanna et al.	2018	x	x	x	x			x	Briefs	5
Laurer & Laurer	2012	x		x		x				3
Olson et al.	2019			x						1
Schwartz & Scott	2012	x	x	x	x				Briefs	4
Secombe	2015	x		x	x			x	Chapter	4
Secombe	2016	x	x	x	x			x	Chapter	5
Strong & Cohen	2017	x	x	x	x				Briefs	4
Stinnett et al.	2017	x	x		x				Briefs	3
Williams et al.	2017		x	x	x					3
Totals		14	13	16	13	3	1	8		