

# Understanding the Family Impact of Policy: Historical Perspectives and Global Applications

A hand holding a globe of the Earth against a blue sky with clouds and a green field.

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# Family Impact Analysis Historical Perspective

- **1976 – Family Impact Seminar Created**
  - **Methodology tested in the private sector**
- **1980 – White House Conference on Families**
  - **Family Issues were considered volatile and too private**
  - **80% of delegates to the conference voted for Family Impact legislation as their highest recommendation**

(Ooms, 1995)



# Historical Perspectives

- **1996 – First Family Impact Statement is required at the state level**
- **By 2012, only 10 states had family impact statement requirements**
- **The political and economic climate of the United States continues to influence the utilization of the family impact statement.**

([familyimpactseminars.org](http://familyimpactseminars.org))



# United States Policy Process

- **Three levels of Government**
  - **Federal**
  - **State**
  - **Local**
- **Family Impact Seminar (Ooms, 1995)**
  - **“To promote a family perspective in public policy and programs and to build capacity for family-centered policymaking”**
  - **Creating a way of thinking that shapes policy, programs and services**



# Families are Once Again on the Policy Agenda

- The Family is in Transition
- Economic Change
  - The Vulnerable Family
  - Growing inequality
    - Work-family issues
- The New Familialism
- Perceived Failure of Existing Policies.
  - Reagan “The government declared war on Poverty and Poverty won”



# Family Policy

- **Policy dealing with the four functions of family:**
  - **Family creation (marriage, divorce, bear or adopt children, foster care)**
  - **Economic support**
  - **Childrearing**
  - **Family Caregiving**

(Bogenschneider, 2006)



# Family Perspective in Policy Making

- **A “Family Perspective in Policy Making”**
  - **Acknowledges the important role that family considerations can play in a broad range of policy issues**
  - **Analyzes the consequences of any policy or program, regardless of whether it is explicitly aimed at families, for its impact on family well-being**
  - **The process considers family stability, family relationships, and the families ability to carry out its responsibilities.**

(Bogenschneider, 2006)



# The Theory of Paradox

**“Two ideas or principles that seem, at first blush, irreconcilable with each other but prove on closer scrutiny, simultaneously valid”**

- **Individualism vs. Collectivism**
- **Autonomy vs. Family Support**
- **Government dependence vs. Family Welfare**
- **Preservation of biological family vs. child welfare**

(Bogenschneider, 2006)





# Legislative Examples

- **The Family Medical Leave Act of 1993**
- **The Childcare and Development Block Grant**
- **Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity ACT of 1996**
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C: Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities**
- **Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997**

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# Programs and Services

- **Targeted vs. Universal**
- **Coordinated Programs or One Program**
- **Examples:**
  - **Home Visiting Programs**
  - **Support Services for Aging Adults and Adults with Disabilities**



# Methodology

- **Family Impact Analysis**
  - **The study focused on the family impact of the state's implementation of the federal and state policy.**
- **Qualitative Case Study**
  - **Bounded system – Delaware, United States**
  - **Semi Structured Interviews/focus groups**
  - **Includes multiple sources of information – interviews, ematerials and policy information.**



# Methodology

- **Family Impact Checklist**
  - **Five Principles**
    - **Family Responsibility**
    - **Family Stability**
    - **Family Relationships**
    - **Family Diversity**
    - **Family Engagements**



# Results: Review of Implementation

- A sequential process was revealed.
- General themes arose from review of the process
  - Transparency
  - Value of “knowing someone”
  - Need for labels - distinctions by diagnosis
    - Issues of equity
  - Independence vs. family support
  - Bias toward institutional settings



# Results: Definitions of Family Impact Eligibility for Services

- a disabled person on social security and using home services does not marry a long term partner in order to keep eligibility.
- one of an elderly couple needs nursing home care is advised to divorce in order to conserve resources for the other member of the couple, after which the ill person can spend down assets to be eligible for Medicaid nursing home admission.
- a young disabled adult is advised to become "independent" of his parents and move out to a sheltered living facility in order to continue to be eligible for services.
- older adult disabled "child's" parents are urged to help move him/her to a groups home prior to parents' needing care as they age or perhaps died so it won't be so "hard" later



# Results: Policies Do Not Acknowledge Family Ties For All Family Types

- In an adult community or continuum of care facility, the disabled adult "child" may be excluded from living with parents.
- Some group homes focus on age groups and a disabled person can age out.
- When one person in the family is hospitalized, the others ability to age in place may be threatened.
- Retrofitting for continued living in place is more common for the elderly than the disabled. Although group home are supposed to be community based, it is difficult to get a government entity to accept a house as a gift when it has been an ordinary home not built to institutional specifications.
- Zoning may limit adding ramp and other adaptations that change the curbside look of the property.



# Select Implications

- **Definitions of family influence policy**
- **Policies and programs have encouraged family dissolution, not resiliency**
- **Issues related to caregiving parallel across the lifespan**
- **New considerations for the family development theory are needed**





# Applying Family Impact Analysis in a Global World

- **Begin with an understanding of the policy process**
  - **Government structure**
  - **Funding streams and sources**
- **Consider values and definitions of family within the context of the country and culture**
  - **Individualism vs. Collectivism**
  - **Power distance**
  - **Gender Roles**
  - **Uncertainty avoidance**
  - **Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation**

(Sussman, 2012)



# Applying Family Impact Analysis In a Global World

- What do we do differently?
- Qualitative research
  - Generalizability is not the primary goal
  - Case studies can inform future case studies
  - Provides a voice to the often underrepresented
  - Examines the human experience from multiple perspectives



**Thank you.**

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