

# Book Review

## Family Resource Management

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The authors of this book, Tami Moore and Sylvia Asay, are professors at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. Tami Moore teaches Family Resource Management and Sylvia Asay teaches Marriage and Family Relationships. Moore's work focuses on Diversity Development and Asay has a focus on International Family Strengths.

The book consists of five units and 14 chapters. Each unit and each chapter begin with a chart to summarize the focus of that unit or chapter. Each chapter also includes three special sections called "In the News," "Reality Check," and "Worldview." At the end of the book, there are case studies of five families and assignments that can be used with the case studies.

### **Unit 1: The Study of Family Resource Management**

Chapter 1 deals with the complexity of managing family resources. The authors explain that families are guided by culture, availability, and accessibility as they choose resources to meet their needs. One of their examples is a husband and wife who are currently living 1,200 miles apart because of their professional jobs. Another example is a military family who cope with separations caused by military deployments.

Chapter 2 is titled "Understanding Families." A highlight of this chapter is an explanation of eight theories that researchers use to understand how families function. The chapter also introduces qualitative and quantitative research methods. The authors note that family researchers use both quantitative and qualitative methodology to gain a better understanding of families.

Chapter 3, "The Management Process," provides a historical background for the evolution of both home and business management. Businesses evaluate their success in terms of financial gains, while families usually focus on less tangible measures such as relationships and health.

### **Unit 2: Discovering Family Needs**

Chapter 4 is about the "Categorization of Needs." The authors begin with an explanation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Then, they discuss the Consumer Resource Exchange model developed by Bristow and Mowen. In the questions at the end of the chapter, students are asked to compare the two models.

Chapter 5 is titled "Values, Attitudes, and Behaviors." This chapter introduces Kohlberg's Sequence of Moral Reasoning, Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action, and the Values and Life Styles (VALS) framework for classifying consumers by their values. The discussion questions ask students to explain how values and attitudes differ and how brand loyalty reflects consumer values and attitudes.

### **Unit 3: Understanding Resources**

Chapter 6 is about the identification of family resources. The authors discuss human resources, economic resources, and social resources. In the "Reality Check" section, they compare median earnings based on level of education. They close the chapter by discussing resource allocation.

Chapter 7 is titled "Families within the Economic Environment." The economic principles of supply and demand, pricing, income fluctuations, and changes in preference are

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explained. This chapter also provides examples of these concepts from the “In the News section.”

Chapter 8 discusses the impact of society on family decisions. The authors begin the chapter with an explanation of federal taxes and move on to Social Security and Medicare. Then, they discuss government agencies such as Health and Human Services, the Department of Agriculture, and the Food and Drug Administration. It concludes with a section on compulsory education. This is a very long chapter. I believe that the content should have been condensed or the chapter should have been divided into two chapters: (a) government services and (b) compulsory education.

#### **Unit 4: Making Choices**

Chapter 9 is titled “Making Choices.” This chapter contains three major topics: the planning process, family financial planning, and emergency action plans. I especially liked the inclusion of the chart on budget categories and average expenditures for each category. However, I thought that the chart on the family financial life cycle could have included more detail.

Chapter 10 is about communication within the decision-making process. This section focused on how families communicate and technology. I believe that students will enjoy discussing the pros and cons of how technology affects communication by family members and within society.

Chapter 11 is titled “The Individual within Family Decision Making.” The chapter includes a discussion of leadership, theories about leadership, leadership styles, and “groupthink.” One of the discussion questions asks students to explain how an effective leader in the family differs from a leader in other organizations. This should provoke an interesting discussion.

#### **Unit 5: Implementing and Evaluating Decisions**

Chapter 12 is titled “Making It Happen.” This chapter covers estate planning, family business succession, and insurance. I believe that it is difficult to thoroughly cover all of these topics in one chapter. I recommend two chapters: (a) insurance, and (b) estate planning and family business succession.

Chapter 13 is about defining success. The authors link these concepts---responsibility, sustainability, ethics, and wellness---with success. One of the discussion questions is particularly challenging---In what area of wellness does

the American family need help the most? Why?

Chapter 14 is titled “Current and Future Challenges.”

Topics discussed in this chapter include: diversity and immigration, aging population, and geographic location and housing. This chapter should lead to thoughtful discussions.

The text includes a glossary, a casebook with five cases that illustrate a variety of family structures, and a list of web resources. The authors also have developed 13 case application assignments that can be used to illustrate the focus of the chapters. The authors suggest that students could be assigned one specific family for the course term, and that students could participate in community groups where classmates represent the other four families. The authors explain that they have used this technique and found it to be an effective means of helping students make abstract information more realistic.

#### **Recommendations**

This is a textbook that is intended for undergraduate students, but it could also be used as a reference book for graduate students. I believe that Chapter 2 with its discussion of theories relating to family resource management will have special appeal to graduate students and instructors. Consumer educators will find the content helpful for providing a theoretical framework and practical application for their outreach. Financial counselors can use the information, especially the chapter on communication, to help counsel clients.

I believe that the inclusion of several theoretical frameworks is a real strength of the book. It is possible that undergraduate students do not receive enough exposure to theories and, therefore, they are less likely to realize that family resource management has a theoretical base.

I think that a teaching guide would be a good supplement for the textbook. I also think that instructors would benefit from a suggested course outline. At least two chapters (8 and 12) are long and cover a lot of material. It would be helpful to know how much time should be allowed for a thorough coverage of these two chapters.

Overall, I believe the authors have done an excellent job of making an abstract subject more comprehensible than reading several papers and attempting to understand the meaning of family resource management. Students and instructors who have studied this subject without a textbook will welcome the publication of this book.