

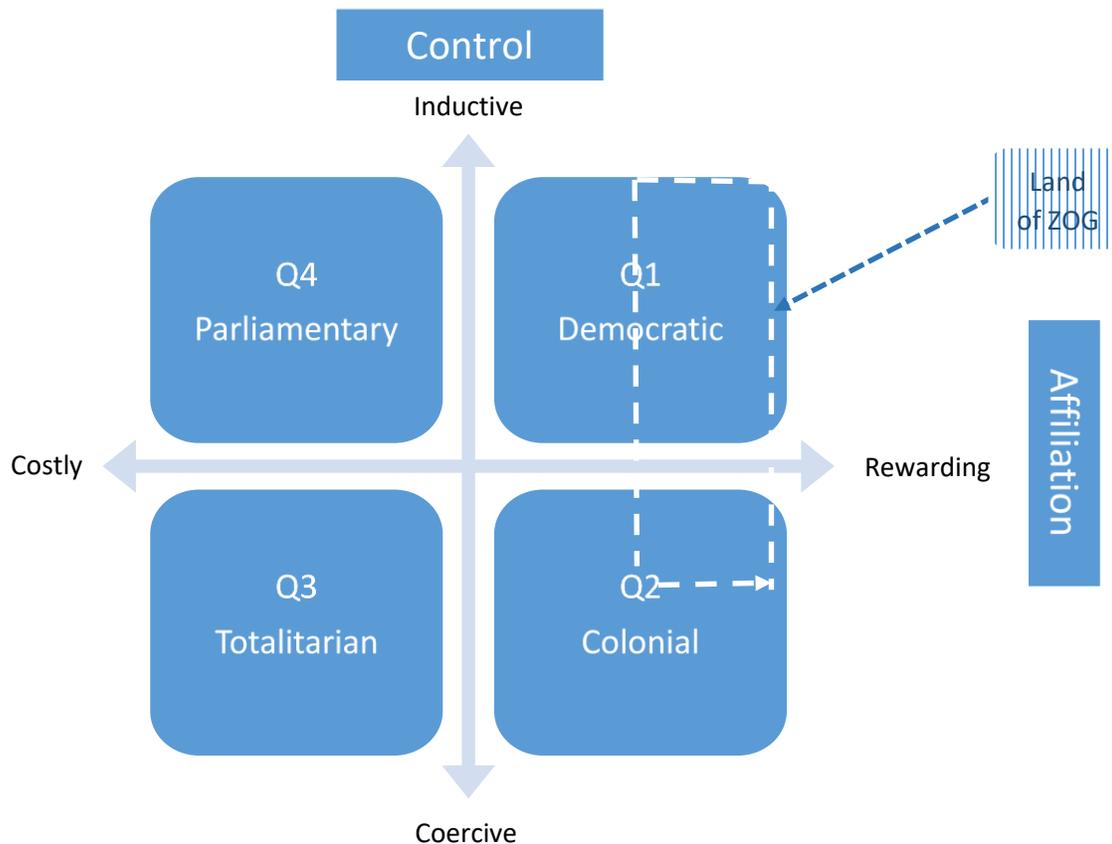
Enhancing Family Health:

Jerome Taylor, PhD

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QUALITY OF FAMILY HEALTH at the moment and in future times may depend on local neighborhood and human services support of four actionable items.

1. **Help Families Live in the Zone.** More than sixty years of lab and field studies confirm the importance of affiliative and control dimensions which characterize parenting and adult relationships within families (Martin, 1975; Pincus, 2015; Schaefer, 1959, 1961; Valdez, 2016). In adult relationships, these dimensions are sometimes labelled 'cohesion' (close to distant) and 'adaptability' (open or creative to closed or rigid)—see Olson et al. (2013). Relatedly, drawing from our work with families, we've routinely utilized the following taxonomy of relationships (Taylor, in preparation):



On the Affiliation dimension, relationships can be Costly (*e.g.*, abrasive) to Rewarding (*e.g.*, warm), and on the Control dimension Coercive (*e.g.*, demanding) to Inductive (*e.g.*, dialogical). Relationships that tend to be Rewarding and Inductive are characterized as Democratic and those Rewarding and Coercive as Colonial, Costly and Inductive relationships are referred to as Parliamentary and Costly and Coercive relationships as Totalitarian. In general, our intervention objective is to help parents and parent surrogates as well as children and siblings move to what we refer to as the Zone of Optimum Growth ZOG denoted here by the rectangular space outlined with dotted lines. More than 60 years of research indicate that relations falling in ZOG are promotive of personal, dyadic, mental, and physical health. These studies therefore support intervention strategies designed to move relationships outside ZOG toward ZOG. Toward this end we have noticed over

the years that two types of events waylay or undermine passage toward ZOG. First, things outside the family undermine quality relationships within the family. Second, things inside the family undermine quality relationships within the family. As well, we've found that when relationship quality plummets for reasons within or outside the family that relationships outside the family are also jeopardized (*e.g.*, parent's performance on the job or student's grades in school). The challenge of ZOG-minded interventions, then, must help family members cope with internal and external events that undermine safe passage to ZOG. Event Processing Interventions, expressly designed for this purpose, help clients to (a) become aware of sources of internal or external stress that unsettle relationships within the family; (b) identify and implement adaptive strategies that relieve the internal or external source of stress affecting relationships within the family; (c) repair and reconcile broken relationships within the family caused by internal or external sources of stress; and (d) discover new ways and means of enabling safe passage to the nurturing and protective Land of ZOG—our New 21st Century Frontier.

2. **Help Families Exemplify Life-Affirming Values.** Our Values for Life Interventions, introduced and described under our educational and social justice initiatives, are designed to promote the behavioral expression of seven values identified for successful living by parents, teachers, and clerics: *love and respect, interpersonal skills, learning orientation, self-confidence, self-persistence, self-esteem, and self-reliance*. We will not reexamine evidence cited previously in support of Values for Life. Rather, we explore here how these interventions intersect with four norms linked to *justice* (equity) and *freedom* (fair access to structural and service opportunities enabling the 'pursuit of happiness').
 - 2.1. **Allocentric Worldview.** *I am my brothers' and sisters' keeper* is the heart of an allocentric worldview. It affirms our essential connectedness which affirms ancient African cosmology, Judeo-Christian teachings, and current research. The constructs of love and respect and interpersonal skills are directly related to this norm. Self-reliance as the capacity to say 'no' when most are saying 'yes' (or vice versa) is also an important attribute in the march toward justice.
 - 2.2. **Spiritual Integration.** Sense of *hope* (vs. despair), *connection* (vs. disconnection), and *transcendence* (vs. conformity) are primary markers here. By planfully utilizing recent to historical documents that speak to prior accomplishments, Values for Life bridges past with present (*connection*) as a source of optimism for the future (*hope*). By excavating and examining heroic and triumphant themes expressed in poetry, literature, and music, Values for Life makes the case for resistance over conformity—for viability over capitulation (*transcendence*).
 - 2.3. **Cultural Emancipation.** Extrusion of chattel slavery stereotypes that blacks are 'animals' which 'explains' why they are 'physically gifted' and 'mentally defective'. Unfortunately, these stereotype are still alive in more than 80 percent of whites and nearly 50 percent of blacks. Values for Life utilizes African and African Diasporan icons, proverbs, literature, music, drama, heroes, and heroines that unsettle and diminish identifications with chattel slavery stereotypes.
 - 2.4. **Homeothermic-Type Adaptation.** Refers to animals that maintain a constant body temperature across environments characterized by widely varying ambient temperatures. The analogous question here is whether it is possible to produce just outcomes (*e.g.*, educational equity) in unjust environments (*e.g.*, high poverty neighborhoods)? Based on evidence cited in our Educational Justice Initiative, the answer is 'yes' as Values for Life played a critical role in accelerating gap closures in unjust places.

Our basic argument here is that identified values intersect with norms linked to justice and freedom. Jerome Taylor, the designer of Event Processing and Values for Life interventions along with corresponding assessment instruments, has received an international award recognizing this work from the Association of Black Psychologists that issues one such award per year.

3. **Help Families Defeat Dehumanizing ‘isms.’** This would include racism and sexism. Over the years we have studied effects of internalized racism (chattel slavery stereotypes about blacks) on the African Continent, in several Caribbean nations, and in America. Consistently, we have found that internalized racism is consequential as it is linked to increasing risks of depression, anxiety, stress, hostility and alcohol consumption, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and black-on-black crime; to decreasing quality of relationships in parenting and with intimate other and social acquaintances; and to structural evidence of underachievement—lower levels of educational, income, and occupational attainment. Finally, we note that Internalized sexism can inform behavioral choices that lead to negative personal and social outcomes for adolescents. At the Center for Family Excellence, our Male Coalition and Girls Talk initiatives have been successful in combating and defusing both of these dehumanizing ‘isms.’
4. **Help Families Prepare for Future Times**
 - 4.1. **Examine Family Life Historically.** Examine values underlying black family formation on the Continent and in the Diaspora, *i.e.*, the role of family as responsibility center for raising children, meeting economic needs including wealth development, and assuring social security.
 - 1.1. **Examine Family Life Currently.** In 25 years, if current trends continue, there will be no traditional newly married black families in America, *i.e.*, 25 years from now would be the birth year marking the end of black married life we’ve known for centuries past in African and its Diasporan communities. Discussion warranted?
 - 1.2. **From 3.1 and 3.2, Identify and Institute Changes** in family life now that in future times would maximize life in the zone, promote values for living, and defeat dehumanizing ‘isms.’

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