



**KI**  
**FORUM**

**Making  
Community**

**Volume 10, Number 2**



# KAPPA OMICRON NU FORUM

Volume 10, Number 2

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## **Kappa Omicron Nu FORUM Joins the Online Publishing Revolution**

Kappa Omicron Nu is pleased to announce that beginning with Volume 11, portions of *Kappa Omicron Nu FORUM* will be available on the Web. The *FORUM* publication as a membership benefit will not become an exclusive Internet publication in the near future, but other publications of Kappa Omicron Nu will undoubtedly make that transition in the next few years. Although the costs of publishing and mailing make online publishing attractive, access of our scholarly publications beyond the membership is also a motivating factor. Then, too, a recent prediction is that by 2003, almost 70% of the households will be online; Kappa Omicron Nu has a responsibility to keep up with reasonable expectations for instant information.

### **Available April 15, 1999**

Because it is so relevant, Volume 11, Number 1, featuring the theme of **"Advanced Information Infrastructures: Realizing their Potential,"** will be our first entry into the online publication business. This online version will be available considerably in advance of the hard-copy version. As most of you already know—keeping up (with technology) is hard to do. So this advanced access to technical information may be helpful to those of you interested in learning about the impact of technology on the field of family and consumer sciences and in how you might benefit from the experience of others.

### **Online at [www.kon.org](http://www.kon.org)**

**Step 1** - On the Home Page of the Kappa Omicron Nu Web site, ([www.kon.org](http://www.kon.org)) select the "publication" volume.

**Step 2** - Select the "Forum" link, and choose the article you wish to view and/or print.

**Step 3** - Enjoy the instant access.

### **Feedback Invitation**

Kappa Omicron Nu will appreciate hearing from you about your interests and concerns regarding our publications. We believe that our publications are valued as a member benefit, and we intend to maintain their quality and timeliness. We'll be glad to hear from you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yvonne S. Gentzler'.

Executive Director and Editor

## **Making Community**

### **Guest Editor's Message Yvonne S. Gentzler**

Building community was explored in a recent issue of *FORUM* [Vol. 8(2), 1995] by a number of scholars in family and consumer sciences. It was necessary to lay out the concepts and issues surrounding this fundamental element of our professional mission and practice. Throughout the process we continued to seek clarification and understanding. We wrestled with the competing ideas of "building" or "making" a community. Each of the articles included in that issue provided fundamentals of theory which undergird the notion of community. Theory alone, however, will not suffice in a profession that seeks to create individual and social change. We decided, therefore, to publish another edition of *FORUM* that would focus on applying the theories presented in the first issue. Structuring social, personal, or professional communities calls for synthesizing and applying the principles set forth in the theory. Operationalizing theory is a step toward accomplishing our professional mission.

The articles included in this edition of *FORUM* address the need to reconnect our professional community as well as to provide examples of how community can be established in educational settings. Finally, the editors agreed that a reprint of an article exploring the university's role in community building might provide an incentive for us to explore possible collaborations. And a reprint of an article describing study circles provides the rationale for this process of making community.

Drawing from Baldwin's assertion in the first issue of *FORUM* dealing with community, McGregor justifies a need for family and consumer science professionals to build an efficient, sustainable professional community. She begins by reflecting on what the international professional community has done and is doing. As she examines the professional community from the perspective of revitalization, she proposes three categories of stressors inhibiting our progress toward a sustainable community. Included in the three categories are our (a) philosophies, values, and belief systems which are linked to the (b) theory and content of our profession. All are intertwined with (c) our modes of practice. These categories are elaborated by five stages which form tasks and strategies for revitalizing the professional community. The result, according to the author, empowers us as professionals to envision and express a new way of providing leadership within our professional domain.

The next three articles focus on various projects and methods of encouraging a sense of community within the educational setting.

Using service learning as a tool for involving students in community, Leach outlines a process of using a service learning project in a consumer resources management class. She proposes a direct relationship between service learning and community involvement which can be enhanced through the curriculum. By offering preservice preparation, seminars, group discussions, and the like, she is able to set the stage for students to differentiate between volunteerism and reciprocity. Volunteering could be interpreted to be one-sided—the volunteer giving time and resources to a worthy cause. This differs from the knowledge and understanding that can be gained through reciprocity where both parties gain empathy for the other through shared language, common interests, and a two-way interaction. Although results of this process can be documented in higher test scores and a sense of pride, the true measure of individual satisfaction in establishing interdependent relationships and understanding will be captured in the reflections and experiences of those who participated in her project.

In the next article, Gentzler describes a method for establishing a sense of community and interdependence using dialogue and cooperative learning groups in the college classroom to address issues facing families. By placing the students in simulated family settings, she structures a classroom environment that encourages mutual dependence which ultimately contributes to their sense of community. Selected strategies, coupled with cooperative learning groups, assist the students in seeing that the decisions they make as individuals and families have consequences for the larger society. In this way, she illustrates the need for dialogue and collaboration when seeking solutions to societal conditions. Moreover, Gentzler provides evidence that students focused more on their ability to contribute to the class (society) than to remain passive recipients of information. Her classroom model can be adapted to other situations to encourage social responsibility within the educational arena.

The previous articles are followed by an exposition of The Young Spartan Program at Michigan State University which illustrates a program model designed to enhance student learning and a sense of community. The program was developed in response to a question raised concerning how individuals cultivate skills to become community leaders. Should/could these skills be taught and strengthened through field experiences? According to the results of this program, the answer is yes. Students who participated in the program demonstrated a heightened awareness of their own horizons and boundaries, an ability to clarify their purpose, how to create relationships and community connections, and an appreciation for perceiving the community as a system. Keith et al. maintain that providing authentic field opportunities for university students in community making is vital to strong societal communities.

Corrigan proposed an affiliation between what is done in universities and the neighborhoods and society that surround them. He suggests that education is the most influential method for creating social change. However, he criticizes educational leaders who appear to have little relationship to the great problems of our time. He contends that the university must assume a partnership in an effort to build communities. Further, he claims that a “new generation of interprofessionally oriented university leaders” must emerge to “convince the public and policy makers that knowledge and scholarship are as critical to the moral and social development of a nation as they are to scientific and economic development” (p. 59). Accordingly, he declares that universities must be reinvented to respond to the needs of a changing society. At present, professors who go into the community to help are viewed as experts and often have “predetermined frameworks” that categorize problems and situations (p. 62). In turn, they have a difficult time empathizing with the needs and situations their subjects face. This problem is compounded by a disregard for the “needs of the whole child, the whole family, or the whole community and society” (p. 63). He proposes that the work done by researchers in academia is important but must ultimately be examined to see if it “helps to solve the problems of clients” (p. 65). Drawing from Boyer’s (1990) work, he claims that we have to find ways to use the knowledge we have to “improve the quality of life” (p. 65). Corrigan’s rationale coincides with our professional mission which seeks to create “systems of action and means for accomplishing them” (Brown & Paolucci, 1979).

Finally, McCoy speaks eloquently about the means for making community through civic engagement in study circles. Instead of decrying the state of affairs, she puts a proactive spin on creating community.

Each article contained herein emphasizes elements which contribute to making and strengthening a community. General themes support the premise that collaborative structures between preprofessional education and practitioners need to be encouraged to promote positive social change. In addition, each author supports the notion that skills central to community making can be learned and cultivated through experiences in a community. Exploring these concepts and ways to operationalize them will further enhance our effectiveness as family and consumer sciences professionals in accomplishing our collective mission.

## References

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- Brown M. M., & Paolucci, B. (1979). *Home economics: A definition*. Washington, DC: American Home Economics Association.

## **Reconnecting our Professional Community: A Revitalization Perspective**

**Dr. Sue L. T. McGregor**

*Family and consumer scientists, who are concerned about the human condition, should become involved in building community both within the profession and in the wider society (Baldwin, 1995). Brown (1993) reminded us that historically we have seen ourselves as a professional community that endorses certain professional practices and that collectively interacts to formulate and interpret a professional purpose. Unfortunately, our growing disconnectedness as a professional community challenges our responsibility to continually ensure that our philosophy, knowledge base, and practice meet the needs of our changing clients and society. Widespread participation in dialogue and collective action is at the core of determining the health of a professional community (Gentzler, 1995). We need to reconnect and build a stronger, sustainable professional community.*

*Practitioners from around the world have been questioning the relevancy of how we practice given the demands faced by today's families, communities, and societies. They often frame this reflection as repositioning or reconceptualizing family and consumer sciences, home economics, or human ecology. In the spirit of the theme of this issue, this process is referred to as "reconnecting our professional community." The discussion begins by profiling some international efforts to reflect on the health of our professional practice followed by the application of the revitalization perspective to better understand this dynamic and ongoing process.<sup>1</sup>*

### **Reflections on Reconnection from the International Professional Community**

This section will highlight initiatives in several countries that are intended to facilitate the process of dialogue and reflections about the future of the profession.

#### **United States**

At the 1993 Scottsdale Conference, United States repositioned and renamed its profession "Family and Consumer Sciences" and now call practitioners 'family and consumer scientists' rather than

*Dr. McGregor is Professor, Family and Consumer Studies and Policy, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia and owner, McGregor Consulting Group*

home economists. Kappa Omicron Nu (KON) has adopted this new perspective. In the first issue that embraced this new position, Mitstifer (1995b) noted that one objective of our professional community was to “generate new visions for our field” (p.4). KON recently devoted an entire issue of this journal to exploring the concept of “Building Community” by addressing issues related to fostering reconnection. The theme of this issue is “making community,” the word make taken to convey the dynamic process of reconfiguring an ever-changing professional community in light of new information, energy, and events (Mitstifer, 1995c).

In this spirit, there was an Open Summit on the future of family and consumer sciences in higher education in the United States, in Arlington, TX, February 3-6, 1999. The objective was to make an investment in the future of the profession and to address critical issues with the intent to develop a unified direction as a professional community. The Summit created a broad blueprint for educational renewal so that professionals can chart the course of alignment for the future destiny of the profession. Those interested in obtaining additional information regarding this event can do so at <http://www.kon.org/summit.html>.

### ***United Kingdom***

The same reflection and action toward community making is occurring in other countries but in varying degrees. Coppack (1996) recently expressed the need for increased scholarly research in the United Kingdom, especially towards a comprehensive theory of home economics. He challenged British home economists, as experts on family and community issues, to band together and take direction from the 1992 recommendations suggested by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). In its review of consumer studies and home economics degrees, the CNAA suggested that the home economics profession undertake research and publish works on the future development of the profession. In 1997 the members of the UK home economics profession decided to change the name of the profession to “consumer studies.” Harvey (1997) confirms that, although the name home economics is gone, they are still strongly committed to the holistic view and practical, interdisciplinary approach that home economics used to represent. In fact the four major professional bodies in the UK have received a grant to work toward a model for the unification of these four bodies under the rubric of consumer studies. The UK seems to be on the road to reconceptualization.

### ***Canada***

The situation in Canada is not as encouraging although there are visionaries who see the need for reconnecting the professional community. On the down side, calls for the formation of a new practice group, “Research and Reflection on Practice” (McGregor, 1996b) have gone unheeded by the Canadian Home Economics Association (CHEA). Ironically, in a recent issue, the Canadian Journal of Home Economics Education published an article entitled “Envisioning Our Collective Journey into the Next Millennium” (McGregor, 1997a). Another venue for a collective voice has been lost at a time when it is really needed. In the recent call for papers for the fifth “Canadian Symposium for Issues and Directions for Home Economics/Family Studies Education” in secondary and university settings, the following issues were targeted: the relentless changes and closures in university programs and the resultant inability to meet demands for teachers plus the need for innovative strategies to enhance enrollments (Annabell Slocum, personal communication, October 1, 1998). While grappling with the direction the profession should take, the academics in the field put off making a final decision to rename the Canadian Association for Research in Home Economics (CARHE) to “human ecology” arguing that more dialogue is needed about the desired future direction of the profession and role of academics in that process. McGregor and Humble (1997) address the issue of a collective role within academia arguing that forming a collaborative link among professors is a first step towards a consistent focus for home economics.

On a positive note, a working paper on the home economics profession in Canada was shared and discussed at the 1998 CHEA conference as a means to begin a dialogue towards a common, shared vision of the future of the profession (Kieren, Badir, & Peterat, 1998). This working paper is a follow-up to an earlier paper drafted by Kieren and Badir (1997) who were tasked with developing a document that would facilitate consensus to guide the profession in the immediate future. A third draft of this document is expected to be presented at the 1999 CHEA Board meeting (note that there is no conference planned for 1999 so the membership will be somewhat out of the loop) and will reflect discussions held on-line during 1998. In December, 1994, CHEA formalized a three year partnership with the Home Economics Association of Africa (HEAA) to contribute to the reconceptualization of the African home economics profession and, by association, that in Canada (Engberg, 1995a). A collection of Canadian scholars at the University of British



Columbia is publishing a series on *People and Reflective Practice*, under the designation of PIPHE (see Vaines, 1988, 1992). This collection of visionary initiatives provide an exciting beginning for the reconnection process in Canada provided it is managed properly.

### **Forum Australia**

In 1995, Australia held a seminal conference on "Home Economists in Public Policy: Shaping the Future". Vincent (1995) deals with the history, philosophy, and new direction for Australian home economists; Burke and Pendergast (1995) discuss present realities and future prospects for home economics in Australia; Peacock (1995) focuses on what is missing in the national home economics curriculum. Australian scholars all draw heavily on the direction being advocated by North American practitioners as published in the *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences* (formerly *Journal of Home Economics*) and the *Canadian Home Economics Journal* (Lyn Peacock and Alison Vincent, personal communications, January 15, 1995). The Home Economics Institute of Australia published an article in its professional journal about the impact of paradigm shifts on home economics practice (McGregor, 1997b). Australia released a book, written by home economists, that strives to provide a reinterpretation of the place and nature of home economics in secondary schools (Pendergast, 1997). This book is called *Home Economics in Secondary Schools* and was released in 1996. Recent contributions to the body of knowledge about home economics theory (Pendergast, personal communication, October 7, 1998) may extend the dialogue beyond Brown (1981, 1993). Changes at Queensland University of Technology have mirrored other changes in university settings (e.g., losses or downsizing of programs in Canada and the United States). This is a discouraging development but Australia seems to have identified the need to reflect on the relevancy of their theory, research, and practice, a positive sign in the process of reconnecting as a professional community.

### **Europe and Scandinavia**

A dynamic 1998 conference in Helsinki, Finland focused on new approaches to the study of everyday life (home economics) (Turkki, 1998). One of the three themes of this conference was "Man, Mind, and Reflective Practice." Presentations under this theme included such topics as the following: Is home economics "economics"? What is the essence of home economics as a phenomena? What is the role of home economics teachers in the

future? Is critical reflection necessary for all home economists? What are the problems involved with reorienting and modernizing home economics? Is there a paradigm shift occurring? What is the home? What are the new perspectives at our disposal as we approach the study of everyday life? The main thrust of this thinking and reflecting stemmed from European and Scandinavian scholars and practitioners. They, too, are considering the strength and future direction of their professional community. They are sensing, as is the UK, a real need to strengthen their scholarly activities and see this as a way to take the professional community in new directions.

### **International Federation of Home Economics**

The International Federation of Home Economics (IFHE) published a book on new directions for family resource management and practice based on a set of new principles and approaches (Engberg, Varjonen, & Steinmuller, 1996). Because IFHE is the umbrella organization for country associations, this initiative is taken as evidence of a growing world-wide acceptance of the necessity of reconnecting as a professional community and embracing a new vision, knowledge base, and practice in a changing, global context. The 2000 IFHE Congress in Ghana is driven by the theme, "A New Century—Focus on the Future: The Expanding Role of Home Economics." In the call for papers, one of the topic areas recognized as relevant to this theme is theories, methodologies, and philosophies (see the IFHE web site <http://www.ifhe.org>), a topic that is central to the future of any profession.

### **Examining our Professional Community from a Revitalization Perspective**

Indeed, most of these international initiatives have been prompted by suggestions from the professional community that there is a lack of congruency between what we say we should be doing and what we are actually doing, how we are doing it and how we are thinking and knowing (Baldwin, 1991; Engberg, 1993, 1995b; Istre & Self, 1990; Smith, 1993; Vaines & Wilson, 1986; Vincenti, 1982). To regain a sense of connectedness, we need to manage progressively the relationships between the three components of our professional community (or system): (a) philosophy, (b) theory/content, and (c) practice (Kieren, Vaines & Badir, 1984). This equilibrium may be more attainable if we conceive of family and consumer sciences, home economics, and human ecology as a professional community that is capable of being revitalized.

Wallace (1969) defined revitalization as a “deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture” (pp. 31-32). Embracing the premise of his revitalization model, this paper suggests that unmanaged stress within a disconnected professional community has to be constructively dealt with so that the stress is not detrimental to the members and benefactors of the system leading to a stronger sense of disconnectedness. This paper applies his model to our professional community which is arguably under stress on at least three fronts: central values and belief system, knowledge base, and modes of practice. See Table 1, drawn from an analysis of Arcus (1980, 1985), Badir (1991), Baldwin (1991), Brown (1981, 1984), Horn (1981), Horn and East (1982), Istre and Self (1990), Kieren, Vaines, & Badir, 1984), McGregor (1995), McMullers (1988), Vickers (1985), Vaines (1990), and Vincenti (1982), among others.

**Table 1 - Perceived stressors on our professional community**

**Philosophy, values, and belief system**

- ◆ incongruent personal and professional philosophical orientations or belief systems (values, mission, goals, ideologies)
- ◆ incongruence between definition of home economics and actual practice (what we say we are versus what we do)
- ◆ controversy over definition of family - our client
- ◆ controversy over merits of perceiving practice from a human ecological perspective
- ◆ delayed adoption of global, humanistic perspective of families and societies

**Theory, content, and knowledge base**

- ◆ overreliance on the positivistic, scientific, ego-centered paradigm versus a contextual, ecocentered paradigm (knowledge base)
- ◆ lack of a theory of home economics (too much borrowing from other disciplines and too little exportation of our own theories)
- ◆ curricula are developed and delivered from a technical perspective (how to “do” approach) rather than from a critical or interpretative approach (think and feel)

**Modes of practice**

- ◆ divergence between professional image and public sanction of our authority (image problem and name challenge)
- ◆ lack of collective adoption of the three systems of action, moral value reasoning, and critical reflective approaches to practice
- ◆ inadequacies of involvement in and commitment to public policy
- ◆ insufficient but growing concern for ethical delivery of services
- ◆ hesitation to move to role of transforming actor (change value premises of social institutions) in addition to that of change management agent (coping and adapting to change)
- ◆ struggle with perceiving family as a social institution relative to other institutions

The following text will outline an adaptation of the five stages of revitalization (see Table 2), allowing us to bring a new perspective to building professional community. This perspective helps us appreciate that stress within the community, causing a sense of disconnectedness, can be consciously reduced and managed.

This planned strategy will lead to a more effective, competent, relevant, and adaptive profession—a reconnected, sustainable professional community.

**Table 2 - Stages involved in revitalizing our professional community (adapted from Wallace, 1969)**

**Stage 1** recognized steady, connected state within professional community as regards relationship between philosophy, theory, and practice.

**Stage 2** period of increased individual practitioner stress, due to real or perceived imbalance and lack of connectedness in the professional community.

**Stage 3** period of collective disorientation within the entire professional community.

**Stage 4** revitalization of professional community resulting from a deliberate, organized six step process:

- ★ **Task one** - conceptualization of a new vision, paradigm, or guide to action for the professional community.
- ★ **Task two** - communication of this vision by a few earnest people to practitioners in the professional community.
- ★ **Task three** - organization of converts and followers by political leaders within the professional community.
- ★ **Task four** - manage internal and external resistance to new vision and directions.
- ★ **Task five** - manage actual reconfiguration and transformation of professional community as it embraces and internalizes the new vision.
- ★ **Task six** - maintain new internalized professional philosophy and resultant changes to knowledge and practice.

**Stage 5** the majority flourish in a viable, reconnected professional community. Balance is restored between philosophy, theory, and practice leading to service which is relevant and responsive to changing personal, professional, familial, community, and societal needs.

**1. A Connected Professional Community**

In a steady state, the stress within the home economics community is within tolerable limit. There is relative balance between philosophy, theory/content, and practice; that is, our belief system or philosophy, our knowledge base, and our actual practice are meeting and adaptive to the current needs of our clients and our profession. Furthermore, steps taken to relieve stress in one subsystem do not create or ignore areas of stress in the other professional subsystems or in families; we work and thrive within a connected, sustainable professional community.

**2. A Period of Increased Individual Stress**

There may come a point when the stress in our professional community reaches unsettling and, eventually, intolerable limits,



necessitating stress reduction and management techniques. In the event that these measures are inefficient, or simply not undertaken, individual stress could increase to severe levels. There could be a continual decrease in efficiency of the ability of the community to satisfy professional and client needs. This could result in a threat to the integrity of one's perception of the profession, and of one's self within the profession, as well as a real threat that the entire profession is perceived as, or actually becomes, inadequate for the changing needs of families and society. There will likely be anxiety resulting from having to change habitual personal and professional behavior, patterns, and labels in order to address the building stress within one's self and the profession.

### 3. A Period of Collective Community Disorientation

The combination of prolonged stress within the community, failure or absence of individual or professional stress management measures, and anxiety over the prospect of changing personal behavior patterns, practice, and labels could lead to disorientation within the entire home economics community—that is, what we believe, what we need to know, how we need to think, and how we need to practice. This disorientation, or worse total ambivalence, will be dealt with differently by each practitioner. Although some will tolerate the stress, others will engage in systematic adaptive changes in their own perceptions, while still exercising concern for clients and society at large. Some will try to actually change (transform) families, communities, and society while others may resort to depression, self reproach, apathy, and passiveness. Several results could be possible: (a) irresponsible and unethical practice, (b) factional disputes nibbling away at the professional population, and (c) a decline of the professional population to the point of extinction. All of these stress coping mechanisms and results have been recognized and debated in the professional literature (see Table 1).

### 4. Revitalization of the Professional Community (Six Tasks)

On a more positive note, this professional disorientation can be postponed, and hopefully forestalled, via the six-step process of revitalization leading to a reconnected community. In the beginning, the home economics profession had no comprehensive paradigm or coherent theoretical framework for conceptualizing crucial problems and developing a guiding collective action. Consequently, many claim that the profession did not achieve the success it envisaged (e.g., Baldwin, 1991). Therefore, the first revitalizing task involves reformulating our perception of the

purpose and direction for the professional community. This entails **conceptualizing a new vision** or guide to action that will drive and shape future belief systems, knowledge base, and practice. This vision often occurs in the mind of one person or a few earnest people, rather than in the entire group of professionals. It is the result of insight, revelation, and inspiration and is expressed as a vision or new paradigm for the profession (Baldwin, 1991; Wallace, 1969). The challenge is to get the rest of the community to recognize, debate, and embrace the new way of practice.

To facilitate the articulation and debate of this new vision, the doctrine has to be **communicated** by the leaders and their followers to fellow professional community members, either by rational argument or by a sense of expediency and opportunity. This communication process can occur either en masse or on a one-to-one basis. Once the visionaries have spoken and articulated the proposed philosophical changes, the political leadership takes over (unless they are one in the same). This third task of revitalizing the community entails the **organization of new converts** (followers). The leaders, in consultation with other community members, collectively need to develop and administer a plan of action whereby a process is put in place to facilitate continued dialogue and debate on the proposed new directions. This activity should be conducted by the local, regional, national, and international home economics professional associations and university program faculty (Bateman-Ellison & McGregor, 1996; Wallace, 1969).

Since all change initiatives encounter resistance, both internally and externally, the fourth task, adaptation, entails **dealing with resistance** to revitalizing our professional community. This strategy could entail using feedback from the consultation and information process leading to (a) the modification of the initial doctrine and philosophy such that it is more acceptable to skeptical or ambivalent practitioners, specializations, or facets within the professional community as well as external special interest groups; (b) the development of steps to ensure a better fit to professional personality patterns and to perceptions of the correct name for the profession; and (c) identification of changes in the general milieu to be incorporated and accommodated in the strategic plan to manage change (Bateman-Ellison & McGregor, 1996; Wallace, 1969) (e.g., family types, societal values, economic realities, political shifts, technological challenges, and ecological threats).

This reconfiguration of the family and consumer sciences philosophy (belief system) should lead to explicit changes in the knowledge base (curricula, textbooks, scholarly pieces, conferences, in-

“

*Approaching family and consumer sciences from a revitalization perspective empowers us to (a) collectively conceptualize, articulate, and adopt a new way of thinking, knowing, and doing and (b) take steps to ensure its continued relevance in times of profound and relentless change.*

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servicing, and upgrading) and modes of practice. As more practitioners embrace the new vision or collective guide to action, professional community transformation should transpire, leading to reconnectedness. The fifth task of **managing the reconfiguration and transformation** should lead to reduced stress on and within the community, to extensive professional and personal changes, and to an enthusiastic embarkation on an organized program of collective action leading to a new way of practice.

Pragmatically, this rejuvenation task is susceptible to reality, to the adaptability and receptiveness of the professional group, and to in situ circumstances (e.g., personal, political, economic, legal, and social challenges impacting the strategic plan to affect change). Surmounting these obstacles, however difficult, should lead to the sixth and final task of revitalization, **internalization of the new vision** by all members of the professional community, not just the visionaries. As community transformation occurs, the new guiding vision gradually becomes routinized, normal professional behavior with strategies entrenched to maintain this new group sanctioned mode and approach to professional practice (Bateman-Ellison & McGregor, 1996).

### 5. A Reconnected Community

Ultimately, the fifth and final stage of revitalization is attainment of a new, viable, **reconnected professional community** wherein philosophy, theory, and practice are in equilibrium and agreed to and practiced by the majority. This common philosophy would be more conducive and responsive to the needs of professionals, families, and society. It would direct the generation and delivery of knowledge and content necessary to practice in a rapidly changing context.

Vigilance is then the order of the day to ensure that future adjustments are made in time to offset minor misalignments in philosophy, content, and practice. It is essential that we stay connected.

### A New Itinerary for our Professional Community

Revitalization involves the development and articulation of a new way of life by the individuals within the community (Wallace, 1969). By extension, we generate a practice that meets the divergent and rapidly changing needs of ourselves, our clients, and society. From a revitalization perspective, Table 1 seems to suggest that, in general, the home economics professional community is currently experiencing restrictive individual

stress and community disorientation (stages two and three), with appreciation that some countries are more advanced in this process than others. However, the international initiatives set out in the introduction and the widespread contentions of a few ardent visionaries, portrayed in Table 3, provide compelling evidence that intuitive practitioners are conceptualizing and communicating a new vision.

In brief, the components of our future professional community include: eco-centered, contextual, global, holistic, human ecological, practical problem solving, moral value reasoning, and humanistic perspectives. This philosophical shift needs to occur in conjunction with leadership from a reflective human action perspective as well as the adoption of a comprehensive, functional definition of families, systems of action approach to service delivery, and ethical, integrative, critical, reflective practice (see Table 3, drawn from an analysis of several scholars (Baldwin, 1991; Bubolz, 1990; Bubolz & Sontag, 1988, 1993; Engberg, 1993, 1995b; Engberg, Varjonen, & Steinmuller, 1996; Istre & Self, 1990; McGregor, 1996a; Mitstifer, 1995d; Vaines, 1980, 1988, 1990, 1992; Vincenti, 1982)).

**Table 3** - Components of new vision articulated for and by our professional community

◆ holistic, integrative, and interdisciplinary approach	◆ humanistic perspective
◆ eco-centered, global approach	◆ leadership from reflective human action perspective
◆ community development perspective	◆ comprehensive, functional definition of families
◆ contextual perspective	◆ value and advocate for families as a social institution
◆ human ecological perspective	◆ management of issues (symptoms) and social change (transform values of society and institutions causing the symptoms)
◆ practical problem approach	◆ influence of private and public policy impacting individuals, families, and communities
◆ systems of action approach	
◆ ethical approach to practice	
◆ critical reflective practice approach	
◆ moral value reasoning perspective	

There is no doubt that a new vision is being articulated by members of our professional community. From a revitalization perspective, what remains to be done is for individual practitioners to acknowledge and debate the proposed new direction and for the leaders to take up the "cause" and move through the rest of the tasks in stage four onto stage five: organize and recruit new followers and deal with resistance while managing and maintaining the transition to a new philosophical stance (Bateman-Ellison & McGregor, 1996; Wallace, 1969). To that end, Baldwin (1991) has suggested that we

establish and manage a network of practitioners to ensure integration of philosophy, theory, and practice using education to counter the anticipated resistance thereby assuring mutual respect and sanction of the refocused and repositioned professional community.

## Conclusions

DeMerchant and Johnson (1995) recognized that the professional community of today is experiencing as much transformation as the founders of the profession did 100 years ago. They advise that we will need a collective community voice to deal with external as well as internal challenges. This paper has demonstrated, from a revitalization perspective, that we need collectively to clarify our voices and convictions, repackage them, as we reshape our philosophy, curricula, and professional inservice and practice. Thus can the extraordinary potential of a reconnected professional community be harnessed, developed, and released.

Approaching family and consumer sciences from a revitalization perspective empowers us to (a) collectively conceptualize, articulate, and adopt a new way of thinking, knowing, and doing and (b) take steps to ensure its continued relevance in times of profound and relentless change. Functioning within a reconnected, sustainable professional community better enables us to assume leadership for the betterment of ourselves, the profession, families, and society (Brown, 1993, 1995; Fahm, 1995; Mitstifer, 1995a). This can come about through widespread dialogue and collective action (Gentzler, 1995), a process now better appreciated from the revitalization perspective.

<sup>1</sup>Following conventions suggested by Mitstifer (1995b), this discussion will use the term home economics to refer to the past and to countries which use this name and family and consumer sciences to refer to United States and to the future.

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## Teaching Resource Management While Modeling Community: An Experience of Service Learning in a Family and Consumer Sciences Course

**Lauren J. Leach, Ph.D.**

*This article discusses service learning as a tool for involving students in community. Community is characterized through its shared sociocultural institutions, shared language, and participatory nature using Brown's (1995) framework. An example of a service learning project used in a consumer resource management course illustrates the structure and short-term effects of service learning on students and the community.*

Societal distress about the condition and role of community may be as old as civilization itself. A classics professor, for example, could draw parallels between classical Greek debates on community and today's concerns about community (Rosen, 1994). From the development of the polytechnic college and land-grant universities, to the adaptation of colleges to civil rights concerns in the 1960s, American colleges have striven to address societal needs (Boyer, 1994).

Today's society worries that community is eroding. Social critics cite increasing violence, poverty, drug use, and urban decay as examples of eroding community. Common among these concerns is the fear, described by Mary Stanley (1993), of a society held together not by unexpressed norms which bind the heart and give peace to the soul, but of a society without any obligations beyond that of an ever-more refined and oppressive law maintained by an ever-more Centurion police force patrolling the "thin blue line."

The set of academic specializations known as family and consumer sciences involves itself with the relationship between the family and the community. Baldwin (1995) states that home economists should help to build communities which foster widespread democratic participation in nurturing human autonomy and healthy family life—home economists could generate a family rights movement, thereby involving the profession in the wider political struggle toward human freedom.

In Deacon and Firebaugh's (1988) resource management model, community, the family's more immediate external environment, serves as a source of material and emotional support for families. Conversely, families not in dire need may contribute time,

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money, and other resources to the community. A more complete model of community in family and consumer sciences is brought forth by Brown (1995), who emphasizes components of the lifeworld and the communicative nature of community. In this model, the community is a body of people with common organization and interests. As such, they have a shared language, a shared stock of knowledge including customs and social institutions, and a common definition of the public good to establish and refine. The community is defined by its form of participatory involvement, which must foster rational discourse and equal opportunities for decision-making. Freedoms, both internal and external, must be balanced with responsibility to the community.

Concerns about eroding community in family and consumer sciences invariably translate to the question: How do we, as academics in our discipline, prepare our students to involve themselves actively in their community while maintaining quality standards for the content of our classes? One approach is to combine student involvement in communities with conventional instruction in an approach called "service learning." Service learning is a type of community involvement program that serves as an educational tool (Kendall, 1990). Service learning promotes learning about the wider contexts of the lifeworld (historical, cultural, sociological, and political) beyond the human needs addressed within the service opportunity. To do this, a structure must be provided in the curriculum to support active learning from service experiences. Elements of this class structure include pre-service preparation, seminars, group discussions, journals, readings, and other methods. Service learning differs from simple volunteerism in this learning component and in its emphasis on reciprocity—students not only give time, money, and effort, but they receive resources in terms of knowledge and understanding gained. In Brown's (1995) language, they also gain some understanding of the common interests and shared language of the community through two-way interaction. Furthermore, through participation in the wider forum of the community, they help to shape the community.

Given the interactive focus of family and consumer sciences—the existence of the family within its physical and cultural environments—some courses within this discipline may be uniquely suited for service learning opportunities. As an assistant professor at a four-year state college, I have developed and revised a consumer resource management class to include service learning experiences. The rest of this paper will be devoted to a description and evaluation of this experience.

## The Service Learning Opportunity: A Resource Management Class

### Background

The mission statement of the State University of New York College at Oneonta (SUCO) explicitly mentions public service and building community (Mission Statement, 1990). In response to student-resident tensions in the community (Richardson, 1991), the college founded The Center for Social Responsibility and Community with funding from a \$70,000 grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (Federlain, 1994; Miller, 1994). The center supports individual internships and service projects and provides a resource for professors to include service learning in their curricula.

### Development of a Service Learning Project in Consumer Resource Management

The consumer resource management class I taught at SUCO emphasized the family resource management system model featured in Deacon and Firebaugh (1988) (See Figure 1 for Deacon-Firebaugh model). In this model, families and individuals plan for and implement resource use to meet goals and to deal with unexpected events.

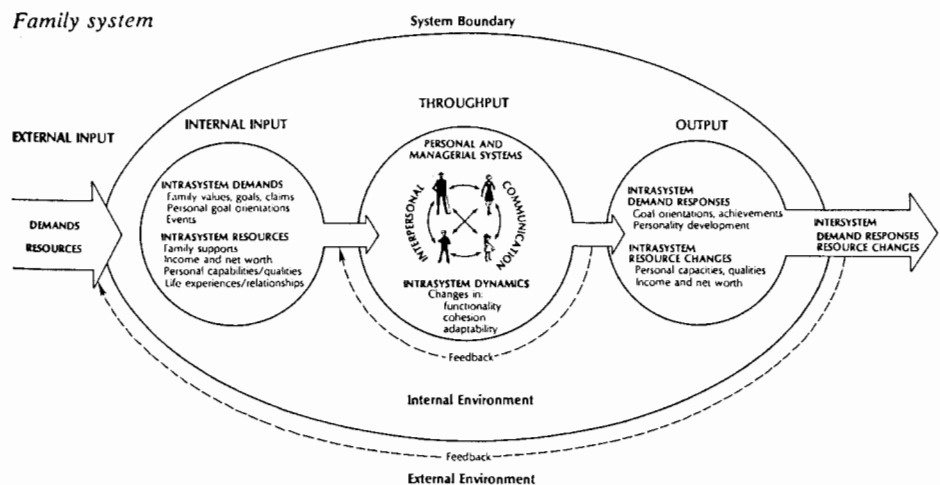


Figure 1. From Deacon, R. E. and Firebaugh, F. M., Family Resource Management: Principles and Applications. Copyright © 1985 by Allyn and Bacon. Reprinted by permission.

In my first year of teaching, I grew frustrated at students' inability to apply the model to real-life situations. Students easily could define a phrase like "resource assessment," but many could not describe how families determined whether resources were adequate to meet a goal. I realized, as many new professors do, that my teaching methods were almost entirely lecture-based. As a result, the resource management model had not become real to students. Thus, I had to change my teaching methods to help students understand, rather than memorize, the resource management model. I suspected that I needed to create a class structure where students applied the resource management model.

At the same time, I noticed that my students did not understand the sociocultural and economic environment of their town. When asked to identify resources available to local residents in an emergency, most could not answer. Furthermore, many students remarked upon prejudices held by full-time residents against college students which kept them apart from the community. Because many of my students came from New York City and its suburbs, I suspected they were not only unacquainted with small communities, but may not have developed the sense of living in community. In terms of Brown's (1995) model, the students had not learned the social norms of the community, nor had they learned its "participatory language" with which to adapt—and adapt—those norms. I felt that teaching the meaning of community and its reliance on two-way interactions with families and individuals was at least as important as teaching the model by which they could understand family resource allocation decisions.

Thus, I had two challenges in revising my resource management course. The first challenge was to develop a class structure where students learned the resource management model through application. The second challenge was to emphasize the interdependent and interactive nature of the individual/household/community relationship. To meet both challenges, I developed a class project for a consumer resource management class which utilized a service learning component. In this semester-long project assignment, small groups of students plan, implement, and evaluate a community service project.

In the first stage of the project, the Coordinator of Community Services for the Center for Social Responsibility and Community (CSRC) visited the resource management classes. (This could be replaced at other colleges by a volunteer services coordinator or other community services personnel.) She explained how to identify needs within the community, how to develop a plan, how to pinpoint potential problems with the plan, and how to write a

proposal. The CSRC (or community center) then acted as a resource through which students could research community groups and agencies and their needs. Student groups of three to four members then assess their available and potential resources, develop a plan, and write a tentative proposal. Through review and discussion in groups, student groups receive critiques of the clarity and practicality of their plans. Groups pass to the next stage of the project only if their plans are approved both by myself and by the CSRC.

In the next stage, student groups work with community groups and agencies to implement their plans. This necessitates two-way interaction between the student groups and the wider community, an interaction that may not have happened were it not for the assignment. As implementation progresses, student groups are encouraged to discuss problems and experiences as examples to illustrate class concepts. For example, a group who was asked by an agency to present their project two weeks sooner than originally planned could discuss how plans may need to be adjusted because of events.

In the final stage, student groups are invited to reflect on their experiences in community service, an exercise suggested by Cherie Krug, Coordinator of Community Services of the CSRC. Each group then writes an analysis of their project using the Deacon-Firebaugh resource management model as a framework (See Table 1 for summary of final paper requirements). Students submit the final paper with any supporting materials they feel appropriate and with individual evaluations of themselves and other group members.

**Table 1.** Summary of Final Paper Required for Resource Management Service Learning Project

<b>Parts of Project: Write-up Required for Student Groups</b>	
<b>The Plan</b>	
◆	Overview: statement of objectives and justification
◆	Quality and quantity standards, sequence of action
◆	List of materials needed for project and sources
◆	Summary of human and other resources used
◆	Revision of plan after review by professor, Center for Social Responsibility personnel; reasons for revisions
<b>Implementation</b>	
◆	Description of activities, presentations, etc. implemented (actual results)
◆	Feedback resulting in revision of implementation
<b>Evaluation</b>	
◆	Resource changes to recipients' and group's human resources
◆	Changes group would make to plan
◆	Satisfaction with aspects of project
◆	Overall satisfaction

The project is graded on the following criteria: appropriateness and usefulness to the community; creativity and originality of the plan; clarity, flexibility, and reality of the plan; quality of the implementation; ability of the group to analyze their management process and to make suggestions for improvement; quality of the final paper; and ability of individuals in the group to work together (See Table 2 for breakdown of grading criteria). Although not directly measured in the grading, ability to interact with community members and develop some shared context of community becomes a vital factor in making the project successful.

**Table 2:** Sections of Service Learning Project Portfolio, Evaluation Criteria, and Point Value of Grades

**Section of Project - Major Evaluation Criteria - Point value**

**Tentative plan (25)**

- ◆ Appropriateness/usefulness to community
- ◆ Creativity and originality
- ◆ Clarity, flexibility, and reality

**Final report (75)**

- ◆ Ability of group to analyze management process
- ◆ Ability to make suggestions for improvement
- ◆ Quality of the final paper

**Group participation (25)**

- ◆ Ability for individuals in group to work together

**Quality of planning/implementation (40)**

- ◆ Clarity, flexibility, and reality
- ◆ Quality of implementation

Group participation is evaluated from class attendance and written evaluations. Quality of planning and implementation is a holistic evaluation judged from final report, supplementary materials, and evaluations by recipients of the program.

**Service Learning Projects in Action**

In the fall of 1994, the resource management service learning project was developed and tested on a small scale with one local agency, the Head Start program in Oneonta. Students were required to plan and implement a one-hour program for either the three- and four-year-old children of Head Start or for their parents. Although students at first seemed intimidated by the requirements of the project, most student groups presented high quality, well thought-out programs. Students were surprised and often delighted with what they learned from the project. Many students found their preconceived notions about their community recipients challenged. One student, for example, talked to a teen mother in the Head Start program and received an opportunity to debunk some common myths about college students. "We don't all have cars," the student explained, "and many of us have to work our way through school." The mother invited the student to "come again and visit sometime."

Head Start instructors whose classrooms were visited responded in an overwhelmingly positive manner. One Head Start instructor commented that she would like to see student group presentations in her classroom every semester. The Spring 1995 resource management classes were the first to work with the Center for Social Responsibility and Community on their service learning group projects. Because students had a much wider set of potential community groups and agencies to work with and a huge number of potential opportunities, they needed stricter guidelines for the project. Projects had to involve at least 20 hours of work per student. In addition, projects had to be completed by the end of the semester, either through closure of the project or by creating a mechanism which would sustain the project in the future.

Students also required orientation to the community before they could imagine possible community projects. This was accomplished through a beginning-of-semester homework assignment. In the assignment, students identified resources available to Oneonta residents through social service agencies, state and local political mechanisms, church and other social organizations, and the college itself. (Beginning Fall 1996, orientation also included readings on the theory of community.)

Like the trial project with Head Start, the full scale project enjoyed many successes. At first, students felt overwhelmed by the scale of the project, but they quickly managed the challenge. Some groups, in their idealism, found it difficult at first to design projects appropriate to the time constraints of the semester. Other groups discovered unforeseen problems in implementing their projects. Although most student groups received full cooperation from local agencies, a few groups faced difficulties in communication or cooperation. For example, a group soliciting local businesses for clothing donations to the local Head Start program discovered that most businesses were unwilling to provide donations, thus necessitating a change in their project. Student groups learned as much from their failures in managing their projects as from their successes.

The service learning projects were well-received by the community. One group created a booth for the local Earth Day celebration featuring a children's recycling game. Children and adults alike enjoyed the game. Other groups helped plan a women's nutrition and health fair, taught Head Start children about spring holidays and sign language, and educated students about alcohol abuse. As the professor for the class, I received many positive comments from townspeople about the projects.

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*In the long run . . . judge the success . . . [of service learning by whether it creates] genuine communities [that] have a healing power that changes lives forever.*

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## Summary: An Evaluation

How successful was the service learning project in meeting the goals of teaching the resource management model through application and emphasizing community student interdependence? I feel it was quite successful in accomplishing the first goal. Students benefited from applying the model to a real-life management experience, as shown by answers to exam and classroom questions.

As for the goal of teaching students the interactive and communicative nature of community, I can measure the success of the program thus far by using Brown's (1995) theoretical framework of community as a checklist. Students have had, as a result of their projects, participatory involvement in the community through their work with several community agencies including the school district, Head Start, Opportunities for Otsego, Cooperative Extension, and the Downtown Oneonta Improvement Task Force. These opportunities have included the hallmarks of public participation that define community: rational discourse, equal opportunities in decision-making, a balance of freedom and responsibility within their projects. Students reported a feeling of satisfaction from interaction with children and adults in the community. Agency personnel and townspeople have remarked that my students are creative, professional, and dedicated to the work at hand.

In the long run, however, I hope to judge the success of this project using Dorothy Mitstifer's (1995) definition of "genuine communities"—"Genuine communities have a healing power that changes lives forever." When my students come to refer to themselves as members of the Oneonta community and the local newspaper balances headlines about student-resident tensions with articles about their commonalities, I will feel more confident that I have accomplished my goal.

*The author thanks the following SUCO staff: Cherie Krug, Coordinator of Community Services, Center for Social Responsibility and Community; Pat Sherett, Provost's Office; and Dr. Loraine Tyler, Human Ecology Department.*

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## **Establishing a Collaborative Spirit in the College Classroom Using Cooperative Learning and Discussion Strategies**

*Yvonne S. Gentzler*

We are faced with having to learn again about interdependency and the need for rootedness after several centuries of having systematically—and proudly—dismantled our roots, ties, and traditions. We had grown so tall we thought we could afford to cut the roots that held us down, only to discover that the tallest trees need the most elaborate roots of all.

Paul L. Wachtel

One of the greatest challenges as we face the 21st Century is to recognize our interdependency and act accordingly. Baldwin called for family and consumer sciences professionals to help “build communities which foster widespread democratic participation in nurturing human autonomy and healthy family life” (1995, p. 21). How might this be accomplished? The purpose of this paper is to report the results from a college course that employed selected teaching strategies to encourage dialogue and a sense of community among its members.

Drawing from Partridge (1959) and Habermas (1984, 1987), Brown sought to clarify the definition and characteristics of community by examining the conceptual framework “which gives attention to the individual who is part of a community and to the social-cultural world in which she lives” (1995, p. 7). She wrote

... in each society, life is made possible by certain patterns of ideas and values by which members interpret objects, situations, and events as well as the symbols by which they communicate. Serving as a stock of knowledge, shared however imperfectly, reciprocal expectations in speech and action are made possible. These patterns of ideas and values (the lifeworld) are reproduced through communicative interaction in which language plays a central role. (p. 8)

As such, we learn and are socialized through communication with the various groups with which we identify. Baldwin noted several incidents where community could be encouraged and mentored including the family, classroom, workplace, and community subgroups. Each of these aid individuals in developing participatory skills (1995). Baldwin contends that

the nature of these experiences affects the individual’s ability to participate fully in community life; and if skills are not

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developed adequately, participation in community life may be difficult or avoided altogether. Ideally, participatory competence developed in other spheres continues to develop as the individual becomes involved in community life. (p. 28)

Her notion is that individuals need to be given opportunities to collaborate with one another and to participate in activities so that they will not be intimidated by the concept or the responsibility of community. As mentioned by Baldwin (1995), the classroom is a viable site to learn the importance and necessity of establishing relationships that contribute to community.

### Fostering Community in the Classroom

Drawing from Selznick (1992) Baldwin explicates seven key values necessary for establishing and nurturing community life including: historicity, identity, mutuality, plurality, autonomy, participation, and integration (1995, p. 25). The writer believes that these interacting variables, if established through various simulations and teaching methods in the college classroom, can provide an atmosphere that fosters community.

Several years ago, I was invited to develop and teach an upper level undergraduate course at the University of Maryland entitled "Issues for Daily Living." Open to all undergraduate students throughout the university as one of the core requirements for graduation, the focus of the course was to examine how individual, family, and societal factors interact as families make judgments about what to do regarding a variety of issues. Structured around a practical problem orientation which asks the question of what ought to be done regarding certain issues, the course was designed originally to present the student with a myriad of issues that individuals and families face on a daily

Table 1. Course Objectives

- ◆ Recognize how the family of orientation affects future family life.
- ◆ Demonstrate skills in interpersonal communication.
- ◆ Recognize the significance of the family as a social institution.
- ◆ Develop a sense of confidence regarding judgments of what to do in family affairs.
- ◆ Demonstrate critical awareness of social forces that affect families, their underlying ideas, and their consequences.
- ◆ Formulate value questions.
- ◆ Demonstrate critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills regarding family life related value questions.
- ◆ Demonstrate the ability to use the value reasoning process.

basis and encourage them to think critically when determining possible solutions (Hultgren, 1986). The primary purpose of the course was to help prepare the participants to make a positive impact on families in both their personal and professional lives. Moreover, the course was designed to simulate a mini-democracy to help students see that their actions and interactions would have direct and indirect consequences on their fellow classmates (Lappe & DuBois, 1994; Shaffer & Anundsen, 1993). Several objectives served as the organizational framework for the course as presented in Table 1.

### Establishing the Course

Key elements of structuring democratic classrooms that encourage a community spirit according to Lappe and DuBois (1994) include opportunities for students to appreciate diversity, understand relational self-interest and power, and interact with one another through face-to-face relationships. To accomplish these goals, traditional teaching methods of lecturing can be replaced with opportunities for discussion. This interaction is believed to encourage student-motivated learning. Working together, through the discussion, becomes imperative. The larger community becomes the text as problem solving goes beyond the pages of a book. In this model, (a) students gain a sense of the importance of their learning; (b) active citizenship skills are developed; (c) diversity and different perspectives are viewed as assets; (d) both the student and the instructor are responsible and accountable for learning; and finally, (e) attitudes such as caring and collaborative relationships among class members replace anonymity (Lappe & DuBois, 1994).

### Course Design

Initially when planning the syllabus for the class, issues were selected that were believed to be important as one progresses throughout the life cycle, such as the impact one's family of origin has on early childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. To capture the attention of traditional college age learners, the course was introduced with the nature of family structures and progressed to issues surrounding relationships, communication styles, sexuality, family violence, divorce, and death. Later lessons focused on strengthening the family within society. Although the content of the lessons was deemed significant, of major concern was how learners would take the knowledge gleaned from the assigned readings and class activities and apply that learning to their individual lives. Were they internalizing that which could be applied to improve the quality of their

“

*... the classroom is a viable site to learn the importance and necessity of establishing relationships that contribute to community.*

”

own lives? Was factual knowledge sufficient for students to be empowered to create favorable personal and/or societal change?

My task, as the educator, focused on creating a learning environment where students would have the opportunity to experience an interdependent system. I wanted them to be involved with a structure that demanded their participation for group success. The course was taught over four consecutive semesters and provided data regarding a number of teaching strategies that were tested each time the course was taught. After determining what the goals were for the course, it was possible to focus on creating a classroom environment where the students would play a substantial role in the process of our combined learning. The first few class periods were spent presenting a philosophy of education and learning, hoping to break through to persons who had been socialized through prior experience merely to attend class, get the notes, take the tests, and receive a grade. My goal as the instructor was to provide a structure in which students could and would assume responsibility for their own learning (Raffini, 1993).

Although the assignments and criteria for successful completion of the course were outlined, the students had to assume responsibility for active participation in their learning process. Several students gazed blankly for the first few class periods. I came to understand later, from their remarks and comments, that they fell into one of two categories. Either they were frustrated that I was not giving them a prescription for their learning complete with lecture notes and tests; or, they felt as if they could relax a bit from the lecture format so prevalent in their earlier educational experiences and "get into" the learning process. One of the course requirements specified that each student read the assignments regularly so that everyone attending class would come with a shared knowledge of the content and issues of the day. Although this may appear to be an expectation of most college classrooms, these students soon learned that they could not participate fully without being familiar with the concepts presented in the readings. The expectation to attend class and participate in class activities was required so that I would have an opportunity to evaluate their ability to address the issues at hand. I outlined verbally and on the syllabus the criteria for class discussion as outlined in Table 2. A student assistant recorded classroom interaction and tallied the number of times responses fell into one of the following categories. The class was informed, at the end of the period, where the major emphasis was regarding their discussions, which provided immediate feedback.

**Table 2.** Criteria for Class Discussion

**Content Mastery:** Evidence of understanding the facts, concepts and/or theories presented in the assigned readings. This ability forms the basis for higher level thinking skills and must be made evident by classroom participation and dialogue.

**Communication Skills:** An ability to inform others in an intelligent manner as to what has been learned through the assigned readings. Ideas should be communicated clearly. Communication skills include listening and responding appropriately by building on the ideas of others. Rambling discourses and class domination are discouraged.

**Synthesis/Integration:** Evidence that connections can be made between the material under consideration and other bodies of knowledge. Ideas should be combined from the class discussions and readings to produce new perspectives on issues.

**Creativity:** Demonstrate that the material has been mastered to the point where there is an ability to develop and support a rational insight. Simple repetition of ideas from the readings will not suffice, nor will the mere commenting on what others have said or written be considered sufficient.

**Valuing:** Ability to identify the values inherent in the readings. Participants should be able to state why something is appropriate or incorrect based on a hierarchy of values (Clarke, 1985).

## Course Methods and Teaching Strategies

### *Cooperative Learning*

How then, could one take 30 learners from diverse cultural, socioeconomic, religious, and ethnic backgrounds and get them to look at the values underlying their assumptions regarding family issues and concerns? More importantly, what could I do to establish a classroom climate that would provide a sense of the seven key values Selznick (1992) identified as pertinent to community life? We began by dividing into cooperative learning groups which took on the form of families. Those units provided an opportunity for students to belong to a core group that contributed to their individual well-being and the historicity described by Selznick. Each person was given an opportunity to play the role of a particular family member. These family groups were used as their primary learning centers—a place for sharing ideas within a smaller more understanding group (Johnson & Johnson, 1974).

The groups would determine what configuration best suited their particular interests. For example, one family, or cooperative learning group, might choose to have a single parent with a number of children; another might resemble a more traditional extended family configuration; still another might choose to have a group of single people living together.

Regardless of the configuration, they developed a sense of identity with their family which in turn was designed to promote group loyalty (Selznick, 1992). The groups would spend one class period getting to know one another while compiling their fictitious family structure. The time together proved beneficial in establishing what Selznick referred to as mutuality. Their interaction helped them to move toward empathetic understanding and trust. Moreover, it provided the time the group needed to brainstorm and focus on issues they most wanted to address as a group including such topics as health care, welfare, child care, drug and alcohol abuse, adolescent parenting, etc.

Group projects involved taking two to three issues of choice that a family may encounter and, by the end of the semester, showing how the family worked through the process of resolving the selected issues. This process provided an opportunity for the students to participate in the fulfillment of their social goals, another element outlined by Selznick (1992). The family units provided instant cooperative learning groups for a variety of activities that were used throughout the semester.

Class attendance and completion of assigned readings were of utmost importance. This was monitored by the students as they relied on the readings to engage in the discussion and resolve the issues they selected. This obligation on the part of the student was necessary to develop personal autonomy (Selznick, 1992). Individuals need to be responsible in order to contribute to a larger community.

One presumption of the course required that each student possess an individual set of value assumptions regarding any given issue. Those experiences would be grounded in the socialization of the individual. Socioeconomic backgrounds, geographic location, race, ethnicity, religion, and gender accounted for significant differences in response to the course; this provided an opportunity to experience plurality as an interdependent variable in the development of community (Selznick, 1992).

### ***Discussion as Discovery***

Although cooperative learning strategies were used throughout the semester, the primary teaching method selected for the course was discussion as discovery. It was assumed that through discussion the learners would come to see the course content from a variety of perspectives. This learning is difficult to assess because the "light bulb" goes off or comes on for individuals at different times throughout a discussion. Moreover, the learner draws from the discussion what he/she can by connecting to pre-

existing knowledge. As this process continues, discovery emerges for each individual. Yet, what is discovered is different for individual learners based on their unique situations and abilities (Arends, 1991). Discussion appears to be necessary to develop social participation and community (Vella, 1995).

According to Jones et al. (1979), there are several advantages to using discussion and discovery as one of the primary teaching methods in a college class. Because the student actively discovers the information, retention of the ideas is greater. Likewise, interaction helps students learn to follow the leads and clues provided by their classmates, thus assisting the students in handling future problematic situations. Students tend to develop more interest in what is being studied which encourages self-directed learning. The process is also said to encourage intuitive thinking as it provides opportunities for the learner to draw logical inferences.

Using discussion as the primary discovery method during class provided an opportunity for the students to share what they had read as well as to draw on prior experience. What happened as a result of the discussion was a comfort level which permitted students to seek support and engage in cooperative interaction to determine solutions to the issues they faced as a group. In effect, they were better able to see how their decisions affected the lives of others as they engaged in class discussion. As such, the learning environment became an experiential process rather than the students assuming a more passive posture. Because issues of family are rooted in tradition and human action, it was imperative to create an environment where students would be able to see that resolution of family issues could be achieved in cooperative interaction.

### **Course Requirements and Class Time**

It was made clear at the beginning of the semester that there would be no lectures; note taking was left to the discretion of the student. This created a multitude of fears as many students wanted to know what to study for the tests, which they assumed would be the sole criterion for their final grades. Assessment, however, was based on daily contributions to the discussion, contributions to group assignments, weekly journals, a term paper, and final exam. Many were so conditioned to be other-directed that this entire process seemed disconcerting. One method of allaying those fears was to provide continuous feedback regarding accomplishments. Journal entries were responded to weekly. Group assignments were assessed in class so that students would know exactly how they were doing. Discussions

were reviewed and analyzed at the end of the class so that students would know if they were simply restating the facts from the textbook or able to synthesize and integrate what they were reading and learning (see Table 2: Criteria for Class Discussion).

Class time was divided into three to four sections in which a variety of teaching and learning strategies were used. For example, at the beginning of each class, students were asked to draw an image that came to mind when they thought of a specific concept selected from the assigned readings (Davis, 1993). On 11x11 newsprint, each student spent approximately five to seven minutes creating their image using crayons. At first, not everyone felt comfortable drawing. In fact, some students went through lengthy explanations of why they could not draw and spent more time apologizing for their drawing than they did creating the image. However, those fears were soon alleviated as they saw that many of their classmates shared similar anxieties regarding their own drawing abilities.

Before long, the students got into the exercise and saw the activity as an opportunity to express one's self. It helped others visualize what each one was thinking regarding the issues. It helped the instructor to assess the students' understanding of the reading assignment. More importantly, it provided a springboard for discussion. Each student was asked to share the meaning of his/her drawing. As the images were shared, students volunteered comments which validated each other's perspectives. At the same time, they raised questions as new ideas were presented by their classmates. This activity provided a transition from assigned readings to the class experience. Following the drawing assignment, students were given an opportunity to introduce ideas or questions from the assigned readings. Depending on the topic at hand, this took as long as the majority of the period or as little as a comment from one or two students.

### **Student Participation**

The next phase of the class was designed to solicit discussion. This was done by asking questions which required synthesis and/or evaluation of the issues within the assigned readings (Resnick & Klopfer, 1989). Students were encouraged to respond to the questions without directing their comments to the instructor. Rather, they were encouraged to talk to each other—their fellow learners. Throughout the discussions a variety of interactions took place. Themes from the chapter and related readings were outlined by the instructor so that as the discussion progressed one could see what aspects of the issue were or were not addressed. As the discussion continued, the instructor listened for specific

aspects of the problem or issue to emerge. In most cases the students had no trouble getting the points out for discussion. However, there were a variety of questions interjected to elicit a response for key points.

As the discussion progressed, the instructor took notes. On occasion disagreement would develop. My first reaction as the instructor was to cut off the discussion, yet I soon learned that disagreement was productive. At the end of the discussion, I could bring closure to the process by summarizing the major points. Often students were asked to write a question that was uppermost in their minds which would help me to discern whether they understood the concept or the theory presented in the text and discussed during that particular class. These questions were then discussed during the following class period. Students were asked to describe, briefly, how their thinking had changed as a result of the discussion.

Even though the discussion could easily have continued for the duration of the class period, the class was invited to participate in a role play, a debate, a cooperative learning activity, or a family scenario to help assess whether they could apply what they have learned to a given experience. These activities were designed to emphasize a particular point and to focus on key concepts. For example, a value line (cooperative learning technique) was used to bring out student perceptions regarding certain controversial issues such as abortion or substance abuse. Three individuals on each end of the value line were invited to participate in a debate which helped illustrate key arguments on each side of the issue. At the end of the debate, roles were reversed and students were asked to assume the opposing side of the issue. This activity often revealed empathy for opposing viewpoints as well as provided an opportunity to explore the issue from various perspectives.

Another experience put students into their family units and asked them to role play situations in which a family may find itself including being homeless, without health care, or loss of employment. Through role playing students discovered meaning and gained insight into behaviors outlined in the readings. At the end of each class, the key points were outlined for the various sides of each issue addressed.

An important learning experience, and simultaneous assessment built into the course, involved keeping a journal throughout the semester. The main purpose for this assignment was to provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to read and reflect on information presented in the text. By sharing their perceptions in class, students had the opportunity to hear varied

points of view as expressed by their peers. Moreover, students were able to work through the process of defending or altering their perspectives as they entered into class discussion. These assignments provided an opportunity for students to demonstrate competence in the command and use of written language, and an opportunity for self-expression in a non-threatening situation. Having an opportunity to talk about a selected topic or subject with another person helped to clarify thinking regarding that topic. Likewise, the writing assignment helped to clarify thinking as an act of creation, clarification, and assessment. The assignments served as powerful tools to help students expand, modify, and create new mental structures. The discipline required in sorting through their respective journals became an effective means for students to communicate their thoughts to others.

### Course Evaluation

An assignment used by the instructor to evaluate the effectiveness of the course was submitted voluntarily after the final grades were determined. The device included a series of open-ended questions designed to encourage the learner to reflect on his or her experiences in the class. It asked students to judge whether key outcomes and course objectives were met. This activity provided the instructor with an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the course and selected teaching strategies. Throughout the four semesters in which the course was taught, no student expressed discontent with the teaching methods in writing or verbally. The following comments regarding the teaching methods used in the course were representative of the positive attitudes:

Before this class, I did not believe education was for everyone. For instance, I went through my college education as a miserably uninterested student. It is my opinion that I was uninterested because I was frustrated with the most common style of teaching—lecturing. My mind tends to drift off when a teacher just lectures. As such, I'm getting nothing out of the class and I become disinterested because I'm frustrated. However, this class maintained an interactive style of learning in that there was interaction between both the teacher and students and the students. I found this style of teaching to be refreshing and more importantly, compatible with my preferred style of learning (Senior, Male, Kinesiology Major).

I found the discussion/dialogue nature of the class to be enlightening. The opportunity to listen and discuss with fellow students of diverse backgrounds and opinions was invaluable. This class gave me a better understanding of people. (Although I have never mentioned this before, I feel it is appropriate to do so now.) Before this class, I never considered myself a racist. However, with the better understanding I acquired through our

daily dialogue, I started to look at people in a different way. Although my new "light" was a positive one, it made me realize my previous mindset, although unconscious, was prejudiced due to ignorance. Thus, each and every discussion was enlightening in that with each opinion I acquired a better appreciation for a particular culture, nationality, ethnic group, race, etc. (Senior, Male, Physical Education Major).

I found the discussion/dialogue nature of the class to be the high point of the class. Interaction between students with other students is a rare concept in classes at this University. Class is a great opportunity to voice an opinion without having to worry about a teacher's opinion. The method of teaching was appealing to me since I would enjoy sitting in class. This is one of the few classes I did not have to force myself to attend. (Senior, Male, Consumer Economics Major).

I found the discussion/dialogue nature of the class to be excellent. It gave all of us the chance to speak out, ask questions, and disagree. It also gave us the chance to get clarity from people's opinions of whom we did not understand. Finally, it gave us the opportunity to get to know a lot of the individuals on a more personal level, rather than by just a name. I feel that exams only measure your intelligence for the hour, but actual discussions like ours will carry on throughout our everyday lives (Junior, Female, Speech Communication Major).

I found the discussion/dialogue nature of the class to be quite refreshing. After years of highly structured education it was the most rewarding experience to be able to learn in a more relaxed atmosphere. I found that the absence of pressure allowed for me to easily digest the material and apply it to myself. I wholeheartedly believe that the nature of the class made it fun to come to while providing students with the type of material essential for many of life's experiences to come (Senior, Female, Government and Politics Major).

Students were also given an opportunity to critique their willingness to read the assignments and to attend class. When asked to respond anonymously to questions regarding the reading assignments, 80% of the students indicated that they read the assignments on a regular basis so that they would be able to participate in the class discussions which ensued during each class period. They also expressed a desire to read the materials because they viewed the assignments as providing pertinent information that had a direct impact on their daily lives. Class attendance records revealed few absences. Students appeared to make every effort to attend class, often claiming that they feared they would miss something if they did not attend. Others suggested that the course was one of the few places where they could engage in constructive discussions regarding issues that they found to be meaningful and relevant. Still others volunteered that the discussions led to class bonding and commitment

which caused them to feel that they did not want to let their classmates down by not participating. Whatever the reason, it was obvious that student involvement and commitment to the group were significant factors leading to the success of the course.

## Conclusion

As noted by Brown, communities are special forms of social organizations whose procedures are directed toward the general interest of humanity. Its members participate equally, freely, and responsibly in the organization's decision making. Community gives attention to moral ideas and issues and not merely material ones. Although the concern is for the general good, the orientation is also to the protection of individual integrity and the development of personal autonomy and personal excellencies in individuals. A community draws upon the diversity of views to inform public opinion but seeks to agree upon the most rationally compelling view in each concrete issue discussed. It is this method of rational public discourse which creates its solidarity (Brown, 1995).

Individuals, as members of families, are often called upon to make decisions about a variety of issues that affect their well-being. Certain decisions are likely to have consequences that affect the society at large. Likewise, societies may have established systems of action that affect the family in positive or negative ways. The purpose of this action research was to provide evidence to demonstrate how a sense of community could be established in the college classroom through the use of discussion and cooperative learning strategies.

Focusing on these two teaching strategies captured student interest and sustained student involvement. Moreover, it provided a safe environment for students to engage in critical debate and discussion as they explored what might be done in situations affecting family well-being. It was not uncommon for the families, in their assigned cooperative learning groups, to engage in collaborative action addressing issues such as welfare, literacy among athletes, or child abuse. Students claimed that the opportunity to explore these issues in depth and to interact with peers as they sorted their individual values, provided a sense of empowerment as they came together and agreed on alternative actions to improve the quality of life. In essence, reaching this point in the semester proved to be the most rewarding as students focused more on their ability to contribute in social groups rather than to remain passive recipients of knowledge.

Incorporating discussion and cooperative learning strategies into other college courses where the overall goal is to apply knowledge could enhance class participation and focus on the seven interdependent variables outlined by Selznick (1992). Although not all courses lend themselves to extensive use of these teaching methods, student response indicated willing participation in this learning process and substantial evidence of a community spirit. In addition, there is evidence to support Johnson and Johnson's (1989) proposition that students learn better when they work cooperatively.

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## The Young Spartan Program: A Parallel Vision for Community Enhancement and Student Learning

**Joanne Keith, Karen McKnight Casey, Sandy S. Adams, Kevin Simpson**

*This article proposes that designing and providing authentic field opportunities for university students in community building is vital to the making of strong communities. The Young Spartan Program at Michigan State University illustrates a program model designed to enhance two important visions: student learning and community building.*

Come let us put our minds together and see what we can do for our children.

*Dakota Indian Proverb*

Come let us put our minds together and see what we can do for our future leaders.

*Dakota Proverb Paraphrase*

Kevin entered the Young Spartan project office a naive freshman, hardly knowing how to get from one building to another; four years later he is a competent and confident young man ready to graduate—with both classroom and community-based knowledge and learning.

Teamwork. Initiative. Individual responsibility. Problem-solving. Effective communication. Organizational skills. Understanding of diversity. Collaborative experience. Facilitation skills. Leadership ability. Creativity. These skills are vital to the making of strong communities. But how do these skills develop in individual community members? Are they learned best by experience, only by default—or can they be designed? If they can be enhanced through intentional learning opportunities, then who in the community might provide opportunities for growth in these areas?

Universities design and provide academic support units for students—and rightly so. However, if universities are to develop young adults who can successfully work in communities, they also need to provide authentic field opportunities in which real success and failure can occur. The Young Spartan Program is designed to be one such opportunity for this university community.

According to a recent report completed by a Provost-empowered committee of faculty and administrators at Michigan State University, the key missions of the academy—. . . teaching,

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research, and service—are all different manifestations of a scholar's core concern" (Provost's Committee on University Outreach, 1993, as cited by Lerner & Simon, 1998). These three missions were translated into action when the Young Spartan Program was developed in 1993: service—to the community through university involvement in the learning of elementary students; teaching—university students how to build community and gain professional and personal skills; and research—understanding the impact of involvement in the Young Spartan Program on the development of both elementary and university students.

Research supports the position that many university students need more than lectures and library research; they also need active learning opportunities (Gardner, 1983; Kolb, 1984; Perkins & Miller, 1994). There is a need to "... create environments and experiences that bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves, to make students members of communities of learners that make discoveries and solutions to problems" (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p. 15). While some universities and faculty find it difficult to engage students in service learning, "... the process may be easier when the university has an investment, or stake, in the communities where its students serve" (Boyer, 1994, p. xx), and is willing to provide support for students to work in the community. Official university-community partnerships provide a means to develop active "hands-on" training grounds for university students (Keith et al., 1998). Moreover, "... academically-based community service focused on improving the quality of life in the local community [can benefit the university through] the integration of research, teaching, and service" (Harkavy & Puckett, 1994, p. 300).

According to Jacoby (1996), "... higher education experts, government and business leaders, and society-at-large are more loudly and more frequently calling on higher education to sustain and increase its commitment to resolving social problems and meeting human needs and, at the same time, to focus more sharply on student learning and development" (p. xvi). The challenge now facing leaders in academia is how to nurture university/public school/community partnerships that can advance both of these agendas—i.e., community enhancement and student learning. The Young Spartan Program at Michigan State University is one example of a community partnership meeting this challenge.

### **The Young Spartan Program: Context and History**

The Young Spartan Program\* grew out of two visions for how a university could better serve the community: the vision of a university president who wanted to recapture the land-grant

mission and looked for innovative ways to invest in the surrounding community, and the vision of an elementary principal who saw ways in which the university could enhance learning in local urban public schools.

Combining these visions, a proposal was written by area elementary principals and an outreach representative from state government outlining an outreach program to be implemented in the schools. The university did not tell the schools what an educational collaboration might look like or how to create it, nor did the university assume it understood the issues that needed to be addressed—the university instead allowed itself to be led by the schools (Keith, Knox, Perkins, & Blackman, 1995).

The Young Spartan Program is a broad-based collaborative effort designed to enhance educational outcomes for elementary and higher education students. The principal partners in this effort are from a metropolitan area that includes the capital city of a large industrial state, Lansing, Michigan, with a population of approximately 150,000. Partners include: (a) eight elementary schools in Lansing, a public school district with approximately 19,000 students in kindergarten through 12th grade; (b) Michigan State University, a land-grant, research-intensive university with more than 40,000 students enrolled in 14 degree-granting colleges; (c) state government; and (d) the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce. The shared vision of this collaborative body is increased academic achievement and career awareness for elementary and higher education students.

To reach the above-noted objectives the Young Spartan Program creates opportunities for elementary school students to experience the community and its members as educators in a reciprocal exchange. For example, elementary students often come to the university for planned learning experiences. Likewise university faculty, staff, students, retirees, and other community members go to the school sites and share their expertise in a variety of ways.

While the main focus of this project is elementary students with leadership and service opportunities for university students, the benefits extend to other participants, including community volunteers and businesses, teachers and principals, university staff and faculty. This article focuses primarily on the benefits to university students, which consequently strengthen the community.

### **Why Community Partnerships?**

The design of the Young Spartan Program is grounded in a firm foundation of community partnership and service-learning theory. Successful collaborations are hard work and time

consuming; they require putting the needs of children, youth, and families above the needs of institutions. Communities able to accomplish this are making wise investments in the present and the future (Keith et al., 1993, p. 52). According to Sirotnik and Goodlad (1988), the idea of recognizing the value of formal and informal connections between individuals, groups, and/or organizations as a means of furthering the interests of one or more of the members is not new. However, the recent increase in the number of “partnerships” sprouting all over the educational landscape leads one to believe that the concept has recently been invented. There may be a variety of reasons accounting for this flurry of activity. Some believe it is in response to the changing economic, social, and political climate in the United States that many institutions of higher learning have entered into a collaborative/partnership model. Universities and public schools have sought this model not only for the mutual benefits, but also to invoke a system-wide and holistic improvement. Sirotnik and Goodlad state three reasons that may explain the recent influx of partnerships. First, “. . . the politics of educational reform have created the need for at least symbolic associations between educational stakeholders” (1988, p. vii). For example, businesses interested in showing their concern for public education create adopt-a-school partnerships, and colleges interested in demonstrating their connection to school practice have created school-university partnerships. Second, “. . . the relatively sudden transformation of our society from one dependent upon industry to one dependent on information and services has forced a raising of consciousness regarding institutional interdependency” (1988, p. vii). And third, there are some “. . . good theoretical and practical reasons for collaborative activities between institutions struggling with related aspects of common problems” (1988, p. vii)—i.e., public schools and their school districts; colleges or departments and their total university contexts.

Although in American society the collaborative approach is widely accepted and attempted, questions still remain as to how to “do” it. Working collaboratively with various organizations requires: (a) thinking in new ways, (b) knowing some of the difficult issues that can arise, (c) being aware that the process will probably require more time than expected, and (d) having tolerance for high levels of ambiguity (Keith, Knox, Perkins, & Blackman, 1995).

### **Why Service-Learning?**

Higher education is beginning to question its effectiveness at achieving one of its most fundamental goals: student learning.

There has been an abundance of articles and reports criticizing indifference in undergraduate teaching, overemphasis on esoteric research, lack of experiential opportunities designed to develop moral character and civic consciousness, and narrow focus on preparing graduates for the job market (Jacoby et al., 1996; Ehrlich, 1995; Hackney, 1994; Pew Higher Education Round Table, 1994; Wingspread Group on Higher Education, 1993). According to Kinsley and McPherson (1995), service-learning has its roots in experiential education. These authors provide interesting historical perspectives illustrating this theme in the educational philosophies of John Dewey, Ralph Tyler, and Hilda Taba. These philosophers all stressed the importance of integrating practical experience into the curriculum in order to provide students with a framework for classroom learning. They are echoed by Piaget, Coleman, and Kolb, who have long urged educators to teach through experiences. A more contemporary variation of this theme is constructivist theory, which suggests that “. . . people are not recorders of information, but builders of knowledge structures” (Resnick & Klopfer, 1989, p. 4).

Another aspect of service-learning is citizenship, and the key to good citizenship is doing it. Citizenship can't be learned in a direct and vital way by just reading books and listening to lectures. University students have to engage in it by working on problems in the community. Making and keeping commitments, learning to work with and to respect people of different backgrounds, working in teams, and solving problems to improve a community's quality of life—these are all important components of citizenship. In fact, the skills that make a good citizen are the same skills that make a productive worker (Wofford, 1997).

There is a wealth of empirical evidence documenting this trend in community involvement. According to Alexander Astin's research, more than 70 percent of his sample (students entering college the Fall of 1994) reported that they had performed volunteer work in high school (Astin, Korn, & Sax, 1994). A 1993 survey of nine thousand undergraduates conducted by Levin found that 64 percent of the subjects were involved in volunteer activities. Some of his most interesting findings indicated that this involvement occurs at all types of institutions in higher education: community colleges (59%), four year colleges (67%), and universities (68%). Both men (62%) and women (66%) are involved, as are both older (63%) and younger (65%) students. The percentages are high for white students (65%), as well as students of color (62%). And the trend is established in all regions of the country: the Northwest (62%), the South (64%), and the West (67%) (Levin, 1994, p. 4). Due

to this current trend of community involvement, it seems logical for universities and colleges to offer structured service learning opportunities for students.

It is important to understand what service-learning is considered to be before designing an experiential education program. Jacoby provides the following definition: "... service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development" (1996, p. 5). She also states that reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning. It is essential to understand that "... service-learning differs from other community service and volunteer experiences due to the intentional integration of service and learning and the reciprocal nature of both service and the learning among all parties in the relationship: students, the community, and the academy" (Jacoby, 1996, p. 5).

### What Learning Opportunities Are Provided by the Young Spartan Program?

The Young Spartan Program (YSP), a strong university-community partnership that focuses on service learning, is an educational and socially powerful intervention that holds great potential for enhancing the learning and development of college students. The YSP offers a wide spectrum of learning experiences designed for students at different levels of education and at various stages of development. These opportunities extend across a variety of academic majors and career paths; placements are not contingent on a major in education, but instead relate to a specific area of interest or career exploration. Each year more than 300 university students, with an average of approximately 140 per week, from more than 50 academic and non-academic units within the university, participate in the YSP. The breadth of campus units and community organizations involved in this outreach is illustrated by Figure 1 (adapted from Keith et al., 1998). The service delivery models fall into six categories: single event involvement, multiple event involvement, focused content area, course-related assignment, coordination of educational experiences and partnership administration. The benefits for university students vary depending on the level of student investment, structured learning, and time involvement (Keith et al., 1998).

#### Single Event and Multiple Event Program Experiences

One-time or short-term volunteer experiences give university students an opportunity to take their first steps into the commu-

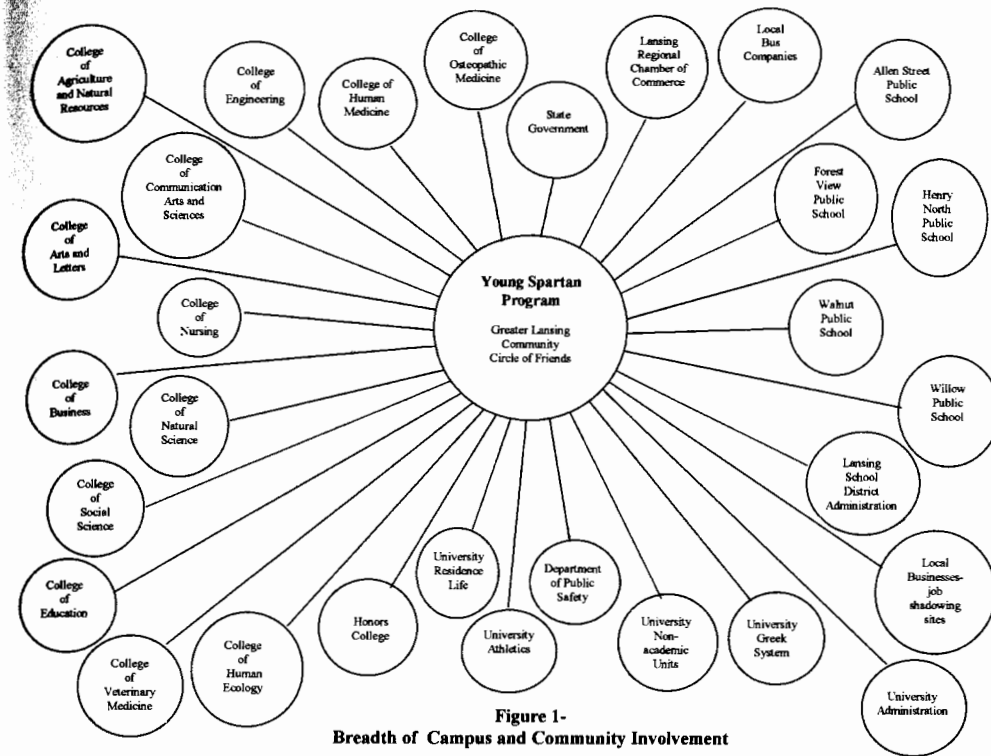


Figure 1- Breadth of Campus and Community Involvement

nity around campus. The Young Spartan Program recruits students through the residence halls, fraternities, sororities, and curriculum-related clubs to serve as chaperones and small group or site facilitators. These experiences provide an opportunity for the college student to engage in service within a short specified period, to interact with younger students, to gain documentable experience, and to achieve a sense of satisfaction for helping. For example, a history major may guide fourth graders through an exhibit at the university museum, or an animal science major may walk a group of children through the university farms. These students are not responsible for the program's success and no formalized method of reflection is provided. The multiple event program differs from the single event experience only in that the college student volunteers more than one time in unrelated activities (Keith et al., 1998).

These first two types of experiences can serve as a foundation for future service-learning. They provide students with opportunities to reinforce previous service experiences, explore the community in which the university resides, connect with other students to accomplish something worthwhile, and clarify which issues and service organizations are possibilities for ongoing

service learning commitments. Although the depth, intensity, and purpose of these experiences are limited, they can result in perceptual and attitudinal changes among participants and inspire their commitment to further service (McCarthy, 1996).

### ***Focused Content Area Experience***

The focused content area experience concentrates on a specific subject area—e.g., in math, science, computer, writing, language, basketball, school transition, and media clubs; co-implemented curriculum units; speech contests; and tutoring and mentoring projects. The clubs and co-implemented curriculum units allow for the active participation of the university student over an extended time period (6-8 weeks). While the idea for the project or volunteer placement may originate with a school, a teacher, or the program staff, its accomplishment becomes a joint venture and student investment is relatively high. The university students are responsible for planning the content of each lesson for the appropriate age level. They are able to take an area of particular interest to them and share it with elementary school children (Keith et al., 1998).

In any given year, elementary schools are offered the option of participating in many community, government, and business sponsored contests. Often principals and teachers do not have the time it takes to give to these contests; however, they can provide university students with an opportunity to take a leadership role in a short-term project. The students are required to follow the guidelines dictated by the sponsoring group, but at the same time they are free to be creative with the research, preparation, and practice for the competition (Keith et al., 1998). Coordinating these contests requires them to explore new roles, take risks, and meet challenges in non-traditional ways.

One-to-one support programs, like tutoring and mentoring, provide college students more intense, direct contact than other focused content area experiences. The university student may simply assist an elementary student who is struggling to take a single academic subject. Or the student may act as mentor for an elementary student whose classroom behavior is disruptive. The one-to-one mentoring is designed to motivate these students, who are often struggling academically. The mentor may use tutoring as a vehicle to build a trusting relationship. Mentors act as a sounding board while also providing consistent support (Keith et al., 1998). These university students also make connections between their experiences with children to the larger issues of the children's worlds.

### ***Course-Related Assignment Experience***

This type of involvement integrates service-learning into the course curriculum. For example, it can include students who work with the program in order to fulfill field experience course requirements for the College of Education and the College of Social Science, or experiential requirements for the behavioral sciences. Some students volunteer due to a service-learning option designed and integrated into a course by the instructor.

University students who take part in this type of experience often carry out the kinds of responsibilities and activities described above. For example, they may work within the elementary schools facilitating clubs and curriculum units, implementing contest programs, and serving as tutors and mentors. In addition, many students (especially education majors) make a commitment to work as a classroom assistant. This offers the university student an opportunity to pair up with a classroom teacher for one-half day a week and become part of the instructional team in a variety of subject areas. In this service-learning experience, university students are given a chance early in their academic training to try out teaching first hand.

### ***Coordination of Educational Experiences***

The position of university student coordinator provides a more intensive level of involvement. There are seven of these paid positions, which require the university student to spend 12 to 15 hours a week performing a wide array of duties—arranging for classroom speakers and school assemblies, scheduling field trips, organizing noon-hour and after-school clubs, and facilitating volunteer and parent involvement. There is one in-school student coordinator based in each of the partnership's elementary schools, who serves as a liaison between the elementary school and the Young Spartan Program resources. Coordinators gain experience in working closely with the principal and classroom teachers by helping to identify school curriculum enrichment and career exploration experiences for elementary students. Coordinators new to the role often report the position to be much more challenging than they originally imagined it to be.

Coordinators also discover that ways of doing business in a university setting can be very different from those at an elementary school. They learn to communicate and team with a wide range of school personnel, organize and prioritize their time, create programs from a vague request, and assume project leadership.

Supervision and reflection sessions are integrated into the student coordinator experience by an academic outreach

specialist, who devotes approximately a third of his/her time to working with student coordinators. This person provides program orientation, an introduction to service-learning concepts and program planning, weekly group reflection sessions, individual consultations, and performance evaluation and goal setting. The academic outreach specialist encourages the coordinators to work with school personnel to assess school needs, and subsequently to develop and carry out a school project or program that is related to their academic major. Through all of these experiences, university student coordinators learn to accept responsibility for their accomplishments as well as their failures.

### ***Partnership Administration Experiences***

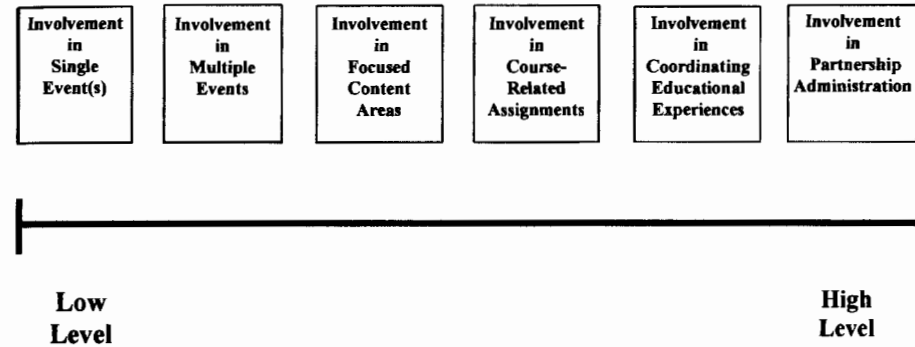
The most complex level of community building occurs for those university students who not only take responsibility for working with the partnership or collaboration as a system, but who also work with the other university students in their development. This level of involvement provides a myriad of experiences—interviewing, grant writing, administrative assistance, budget keeping, research, time management, program development, and creativity are but a few of the opportunities. Partnership administrators learn what it means to create and develop a mission and a vision, maintain and build contacts, and work out details. But the most important capacity is the commitment to the development of the students involved in the program, both university and elementary students. It can also mean carrying out research projects in collaboration with the school district.

For the Young Spartan Program, undergraduate and graduate students alike have participated at this level of involvement. It is clearly a professional role. Several have succeeded extremely well and have used these experiences to step into significant community roles and careers after graduation. Some have had less success and could not continue in this role.

### **Discussion**

All six opportunities for student involvement use experiential education as a core strategy for enhancing student learning. The learnings for the students, and also for the project administrators, have been intentional and serendipitous, positive and negative, idealistic and realistic. The intensity of an individual student's experience with each type of program activity varies across a continuum of student investment, time commitment, and structured reflection and learning (see Figure 2). The left end of the continuum illustrates a lower level in these three areas, the right end a higher level.

**Figure 2-  
Levels of Student Investment,  
Time Commitment, and  
Structured Reflection and Learning**



### **In What Ways Does the Young Spartan Program Enhance Community Building and Student Learning?**

From our data collection, formal and informal, over the past three years, we found some basic recurring themes. These themes, which illustrate the benefits to university students personally, also are essential to community building: expanding horizons and boundaries; clarifying one's purpose; building individual skills; creating relationships and community connections; and enhancing understanding of communities as systems. We would argue that these are skills needed not only in the present, but also for the future. Skills needed by adults for community building are skills that students can enhance during their university education.

This section highlights data gathered from portfolios, reflection papers, surveys, and telephone interviews with students involved in the program. We believe that their words confirm our ideas related to university service-learning.

### ***Expanding Horizons and Boundaries***

All too often life beyond the campus is an unknown world, life outside of one's cultural context unexplored, yet one of the most massive changes occurring is the expanding diversity and globalization of society. Students who work with the Young Spartan Program are given opportunities to experience diversity, new roles and interests, and different work cultures. They obtain first hand experience in working with people whose experiences and per-

spectives—values, socioeconomic status, race, gender roles, family structures—differ from their own. This process may begin with something as simple as learning to ride the bus:

Not every student has his/her own car. So at times public transportation must be taken. This would not seem like a big challenge but for two freshman, it was a very different story. Together they took the city bus; together they saw a person who seemed unsightly unkempt, a little frightening. One of the two students found a way to get beyond this challenge, the other gave up the opportunity—"I just can't ride the bus."

The work culture on a university campus differs quite a bit from the work culture in a public school system. Understanding this reality is considered important enough for the Young Spartan Program's academic outreach specialist to provide a discussion on the transition from university student to elementary school employee in orientation training. Students discover rather quickly the importance of accountability. The elementary school culture depends on its adults being where they are supposed to be, when they are scheduled to be there. If this system of operation breaks down, it creates problems for the principal, teachers, and the elementary students.

### ***Clarifying One's Purpose—For Career, and for Life Values***

The Young Spartan Program gives students opportunity to bring into focus more clearly some of the things they might want or not want in a career. It also provides opportunities to define life values. The following comment by a student is a clear example of how the Young Spartan Program helps in clarifying career choices and life values.

The Young Spartan Program has been a strong platform for me. It has been a strong influence on my personal and career growth; I am an engineer and have included this experience on my resume. It has allowed me to further enhance my abilities as a leader, effective communicator, and responsible initiator of valuable programs. This program has become a vehicle for me to give back to the community that I grew up in. I graduated from this school system and I take personal pride in the future of our schools.

Once a year, a job shadowing experience is planned for elementary students. Students focus on how some of the skills they are learning in school are used in a work setting. A university student who worked closely in developing and implementing the job shadowing experience for the elementary schools had this to say about his involvement:

I've been able to get out and see the different careers that I'm interested in. I have a clearer idea of what is involved. It's sort

of like Job Shadowing at the college level. It definitely has helped me get closer to my career goals.

Many students have commented in interviews and written in reflection papers that they see themselves continuing their commitment to the youth of the community after graduation:

I see that (community service) is very essential. Our society is so "I, me" and there is so much people can give. I remember the first time I did it (volunteered) in high school . . . I thought to myself "doing something for free?" Now I love volunteering.

University students who come from limited resource families also report that they develop an alliance with elementary kids who also come from similar environments. They begin to see their purpose in role modeling success. Working closely with these elementary students is like saying, "If I made it, you can make it too." One university student shared his desire to go back to his neighborhood school in Detroit to teach.

As a young black man, I'd like to go back to my community and give. Kids need to see people from their neighborhood who have become something, so they can realize that they can do it, too.

### ***Gaining a Spectrum of Individual Life Skills***

Individual skills that are important in community building range from teamwork to individual responsibility, from tending to details to seeing the big picture, from being extremely organized to working in the midst of disorganization, from careful time management to flexibility, from creativity to following rules. Community building means learning how to carry out responsibility as well as how to handle disappointment when plans fail. It also means knowing when to be persistent and when to stop. The learning of life skills comes by design and by default, by conscious and unconscious reflection and revision.

I came to the program expecting my involvement to be rather minimal, just another job. However, that primitive thinking changed within the first two weeks. I found that programming and innovative ideas were really encouraged and needed . . . . Being a coordinator allowed me to show my organization, communication, and leadership skills. I was serious about my dedication to the goals and vision of the program . . . I learned to stay on track with goals and plans . . . I found the most effective ways of communicating with teachers. I created a positive network within the school and with the Young Spartan office staff, especially the outreach specialist.

### ***Experiencing the Importance of Relationships and Community Connections***

The crucial role of communication with multiple levels of the community cannot be overestimated. Perhaps the most important



understanding and experience needed in community building is relationships—building and maintaining networks. This success or failure of community building may depend more upon relationships than any other single factor. The students involved in the Young Spartan Program build relationships with working adults including school administrators, teachers, parents, university faculty and staff, and community business people. These adults may serve as role models or mentors to the university students. Certainly there are also the relationships created with the elementary students, the opportunities for students to be mentors and role models.

The relationship that I have with my principal is very positive. This principal let me know up front what was expected of me. She taught me that when you get into the real world, employers look at the whole you and not just what they see on the surface. For this advice I thank her. The relationships I have with the teachers . . . with the fellow coordinators . . . these people have all been positive in my development . . . I have learned how to deal with people in a more professional setting. I know that in order to work with team members I must first become professional. I have also learned that if I get to know people, and not just by their outer appearances, I have been surprised as to what I find out about them. I have learned that when working with people there are times when I need to lend a listening ear to my team members.

### **Enhanced Understanding of Communities as Systems**

Perhaps this is the most complex learning about which students can gain experience and observation. Although such learning takes a lifetime, it is a skill needed desperately for building healthy communities. To see that the lack of a contract by the teachers' union affects what goes on inside the classroom; to see media impacts upon children's language and behavior in the playground, to see . . . These are all examples which our students have seen, discussed and tried to understand systemically.

### **Conclusion**

Baldwin (1995) states that ". . . we become who we are by participating in community life; personality is built and maintained through a process of social interaction" (pp. 24-25). She stresses that without adequate social support and interaction, the moral development of individuals is frustrated or distorted. Communities cannot develop and thrive without tapping into the unique talents and skills of individual members. Healthy communities demand the involvement of people who care about their community. Therefore, by making service-learning opportunities available to university students, an investment is made in the healthy communities of today and tomorrow.

Our experience with the Young Spartan Program leads us to conclude that community building can and should be taught by design, not only by default; it should be taught through planned experiences, not only through traditional modes of learning. We would argue that for students this learning would be best advanced in a community of learners where the responsibility is shared with master teachers in this field of community building.

Having an outreach specialist with expertise as a leader and counselor was tremendous. This was a huge benefit in my life; she had the ability to strengthen my weaknesses—supporting our work in the community as coordinator and supporting my personal growth.

Wanted are faculty members who have the academic and community building knowledge to lead such an educational experience. Wanted are students who can advance their leadership skills for community building. Wanted are community settings where university students can work with this goal for elementary students.

### **Footnote**

\*The name Young Spartan was selected because the Spartan of Greek mythology is the mascot of Michigan State University and the students and alumni are known as Spartans. The elementary students participating in the program were viewed as "young" Spartans to emphasize the role of education in their lives.

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## The Role of the University in Community Building\*

**Dean Corrigan**

In the face of mounting criticism regarding its relevance, almost every U.S. university is engaged in some reexamination of its missions. Very few, however, have given the conditions of children and their families a very high priority in these deliberations. This situation is difficult to reconcile in a country in which 1 of 5 children now live in poverty and thousands are homeless on any given night in the week (National Center for Health Statistics, 1997; Bassuk, 1991). Poverty is regarded as a problem primarily affecting the K-12 system with little recognition that universities prepare professionals who serve the poor and develop knowledge bases for explaining and overcoming poverty.

Universities seem to be disconnected from the neighborhoods as well as the society that surround them. Educational leaders pretend that higher education is an activity with no direct relationship to the great problems of our time. Too often they seek to maintain an illusion of neutrality. Higher education has become so focused on the means of education—e.g., credit hours, degrees, schedules, tests—and new technology—interactive television, the Internet, computers—that it has neglected the ends of education. Education in the United States is now and always has been the most powerful instrument for social progress.

We must develop new collaborative, community-based integrated-service systems and define the role of the university as a partner in community building. Deplorable conditions exist for many children and their families. We need a new generation of interprofessionally oriented university leaders who have the ability to convince the public and policy makers that knowledge and scholarship are as critical to the moral and social development of a nation as they are to scientific and economic development. In addition, we must reinvent the university to respond to the needs of a society in transition.

### Conditions of Children and Families

This nation's children and families face real and immediate crises. The issues are complex and inextricably linked to the entire scope of our educational system from pre-K-12 through postsecondary education to doctoral and professional degrees.

Children comprise the nation's poorest and fastest-growing poverty group (National Commission on Children, 1993). Conditions are now so bad that they can no longer be ignored (Children's Defense Fund, 1994). Since 1975, the increase in

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poverty has been particularly dramatic for the youngest children. In 1992, 25 percent of children under six years of age were poor, as were 27 percent of all children younger than three. African-American and Hispanic children are two to three times more likely to live in poverty than European-American children (National Commission on Children, 1993). However, the perception that most poor children in the United States are from inner-city minority families on welfare is a myth. In fact, only 10 percent of poor children are from the inner city (National Commission on Children, 1993). Furthermore, poverty is not restricted to minorities; among European Americans it rose from 9.7 percent in 1973 to 15.6 percent in 1992, the highest rate of increase for any racial group (National Center for Health Statistics, 1993).

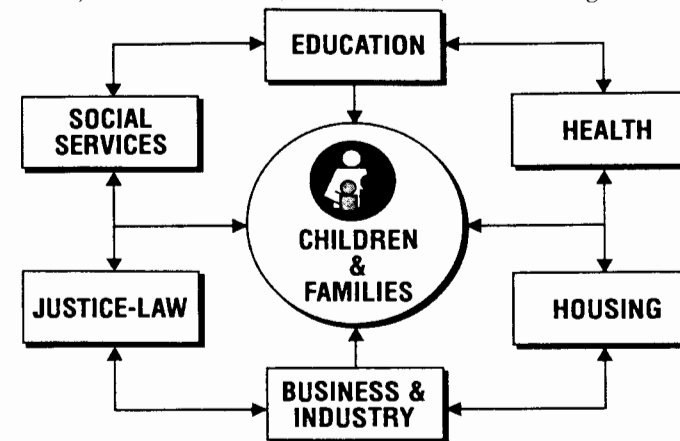
Schools see more and more children who are doomed to fail before they ever start. One out of three six-year-olds is not ready for formal education (Boyer, 1991). Once in school, untold numbers cannot learn adequately because they come to school hungry, suffer neglect or abuse at home, or have birth defects or illness. The children of poor families usually find themselves stuck at the bottom of the heap (Kozol, 1991; 1995).

Our schools are presently set up to produce winners and losers. Through inequities in financing and an outmoded organizational structure that emphasizes labeling, tracking, and ranking, our schools and society lock the poor into their poverty and then blame them for their lowered state. Boyer (1991, p. 3) charged that the United States is losing sight of its children: "In decisions made every day we are placing them at the very bottom of the agenda, with grave consequences for the future of the nation. It's simply intolerable that millions of children are physically and emotionally disadvantaged in ways that restrict their capacity to learn, especially when we know what a terrible price will be paid for such neglect, not just educationally, but in tragic human terms as well." Nelson (in Gleick, 1996, p. 33) added, "It may well be that the nation cannot survive—as a decent place to live, as a world class power or even as a democracy—with such high rates of children growing into adulthood unprepared to parent, unprepared to be productively employed, and unprepared to share in mainstream aspirations."

### Interrelationships

What is most important to recognize about these conditions is their implications for the future of children and their families, for community agencies, and for the professions and professional colleges that society sanctions to serve them (Corrigan & Udas 1996). Consequences can be visualized by placing children and families at the center of a complex system of community services

and examining the relationships of the data-interrelatedness of entities, information flows, and activities, as seen in figure 1.



Actions taken by one entity in the system influence the environment in which other entities exist and consequently the behavior and products of those entities. Orland (1990), for example, documented the relationships between the number of years that children spend in poverty and their academic success. Poor children are more likely than their nonpoor counterparts to be low academic achievers, repeat grades, and drop out of school (National Center for Children in Poverty, 1990). Dropping out influences future employment, level of income, and health (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1992). Dropouts are three-and-a-half times more likely than graduates to get arrested and six times more likely to become single parents (National Commission on Children, 1991). Children of unmarried teenage mothers are four times more likely than children in other families to be poor, and they are likely to remain poor for an extended period (National Commission on Children, 1991). Poverty, lack of education, and teen pregnancy relate to form a self-perpetuating cycle.

Degree of poverty, access to equal education, availability of family support, opportunity for health care, and incidence of violence interact in every community. They affect employment (Lewit, 1992), incarceration and crime (Levin & Bachman, 1972; Texas Education Agency, 1993), immunization rates, mortality rates, suicides, drug abuse, child abuse (Hamburg, 1992; National Center for Children in Poverty, 1990), enrollment in post secondary education (National Education Goals Panel, 1992), and the ability of the work force to compete in the global economy (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991; Corrigan, 1996).

### Calls to Put the Pieces Together

Until recently, the response of policy makers to the aforementioned conditions was to develop categorical programs. The

primary strategy for reform was to set up projects. As a result, most institutions suffered from projectitis (Gardner, 1994). Most of these projects continued only as long as the government or private funding lasted, or until their particular political advocate died or moved on to other priorities. Needless to say, this reform strategy did not succeed (Corrigan, 1992).

Education, health, and social-services concerns have expanded and grown in complexity, and it has become evident that many agencies serve the same clients (Hodgkinson, 1992) and that the professional responsibility for specific services are often uncoordinated and dysfunctional. An increasing number of federal and state policy makers and legislators now recognize that new organizational relationships at the family and community level must be developed among schools, universities, health agencies, and other human-service organizations; a systemic, collaborative approach is imperative. Indeed, 15 states have already passed legislation fostering collaboration across state agencies and local communities (Education Commission of the States, 1994).

The most vivid truth of this new age is that no single institution or profession can assume the full responsibility for resolving the complex problems facing children and their families. To respond adequately will take interinstitutional and interprofessional collaboration, public awareness and financial support, and a renewed commitment to the notion, as the African proverb reminds us, that *It takes a whole village to raise a child*. Universities for the 21st century must be partners in this effort.

### **The Role of Universities**

Feedback to the National Commission on Leadership in Inter-professional Education (Corrigan & Udas, 1996) from families and practitioners involved in community-based collaborative programs, and a review of more than 50 case descriptions of programs underway, identify certain factors that universities should consider in defining their particular role in the development of new community-based, integrated service systems. The degree to which leaders of new collaborative university/community ventures anticipate and plan for these factors will determine, in large measure, success or failure.

### **Track Record**

Based on past experience, clients and staff involved in community-based integrated service programs do not have much confidence in the university's long-term commitment to collaborative action. They see the university faculty as a separate, elite culture that wants to change other institutions while universities

remain the same. When professors come into the community to help, they come as experts. Worse yet, they may come with predetermined frameworks that immediately put the client's problems into categories. Professors sometimes cannot think outside of their own paradigms. They are frequently unable to empathize with the subjects they study or with the students they train. Most of the current paradigms and professional-preparation programs disregard the needs of the whole child, the whole family, or the whole community and society.

Successful involvement of universities seems to occur in situations in which the university is a partner in a community-based entity that takes the lead (Corrigan & Udas, 1996). Instead of the university faculty making a frontal attack as experts, they share their talents and participate with others in a collaborative system. They respond to needs and problems that clients have identified. They exert leadership by honestly participating with others in solving mutual problems facing communities.

### **Participatory Research and Program Development**

Because the research and evaluation of community-based collaborative systems is likely to have an impact on the support of programs and an influence on future public policy, there is a great deal of debate about appropriate research and evaluation designs and tools for data collection and dissemination. Perhaps most important is the debate about the purpose of research itself.

In new community-based collaboratives, participatory research is being considered as an alternative or a supplement to agency-centered research (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1993; Levin & Greene, 1994). Participatory design is an overarching organizational philosophy that is based on the democratization of living and work environments. The notion that all stakeholders in a system have a legitimate and moral claim to the opportunity to contribute to systems that affect their lives is central to participatory design.

Levin and Greene (1994) have developed a cogent argument for the use of participatory program evaluation for community-based programs. Participatory evaluation complements collaborative service development and delivery in both structure and philosophy and is consistent with democratic ideals associated with empowerment. Participatory design allows many diverse stakeholders to contribute to the system in a constructive, meaningful way. The information generated from research is fed back into the system for reflection and analysis. As feedback, the information is used for problem solving and program improvement rather than simply for summative evaluations, publication, and presentation. Beyond

the benefits of fostering group ownership, stakeholders help provide contextually rich information from multiple perspectives that increase the capacity of the system and improve the quality of decisions. Research is viewed as a *means*, not as an *end*.

This participatory approach is in sharp contrast to the way most university research is currently designed. Historically, university research has been defined rather narrowly, with the subjects limited to a passive role. Families and children in poverty are often involved as the subjects of research and evaluation, but are rarely involved beyond that. Ironically, practitioners and clients are likely to have the most direct access to data and are often the most qualified to interpret the data. Who knows more about why some children miss school than a child who has lived in several homeless shelters? Who can better estimate the effects of alcohol and substance abuse on employability, school attendance, and child abuse than those who live with those conditions?

Participatory programs operate from three of the most fundamental principles of change: (1) people who are expected to implement a plan must be involved in developing the plan, especially if they are going to feel a sense of ownership and implement it over an extended period; (2) a program cannot be transplanted from one community to another, but must emerge from the cultural setting in which it will operate; and (3) researchers must never do for others what they can do for themselves—people must be enabled to act on their own behalf. Adhering to these principles forces researchers to treat members of the population as what they are—irreplaceable resources who have more at stake than anybody else. Family members and children in poverty possess the most specific and extensive knowledge of how the various systems have failed them and why they are vulnerable.

In collaborative, *family-centered*, community-based programs, families often serve as the integrating force between the various professionals working with them as well as the connecting link to other families in need of help. Families also contribute to the improvement of the service-delivery system and the improvement of the training of service providers (Corrigan & Bishop, 1997).

### **Reward System**

One of the most difficult problems universities face as they get more involved in community-based programs is the development and acceptance of a reward system within the university that values a community-building mission. Often when faculty members become involved in real-life problems, their colleagues do not see these activities as being important to their departments.

The only way to protect and be fair to faculty participants engaged in collaborative efforts in the field is to make sure that, from the beginning, everyone who will have input into a faculty member's annual review for merit and promotion communicates and is committed to the community-building mission. Such early attention to the clarifying and sanctioning of faculty roles is essential.

Development of evaluation criteria, policies, and procedures to enhance participation in community-building activities must include faculty merit and tenure committees, department heads, deans, and provosts. Because peer review is part of the university process, it is not enough to get formal agreements only from administrators. At every level, university participants must be evaluated for promotion, tenure, and merit pay on the quality of their performance in roles defined in terms of a particular collaborative mission rather than unrelated criteria used to evaluate traditional forms of university scholarship.

Diverse definitions of the term *professor* will have to be developed to accommodate such multiple missions and roles. Each collaborative community-based system must define its own policies, roles, expectations, and reward systems, then assist faculty participants in getting their universities to accept these conditions as part of the contract that formalizes the faculty members' and institution's participation.

In community-based systems, the primary purpose of research and evaluation is to improve services to clients. It is fine if someone publishes an article or a book explaining such services, but the quality of the research undertaken is ultimately judged by how much it helps to solve the problems of clients.

The most important knowledge needed today is knowledge of how to use knowledge to improve the quality of life. As Boyer (1990) noted, in addition to the scholarship of *discovery*, the university must enhance and reward the scholarship of *integration*, *application*, and *teaching*. Communities need scholars who can act on thinking—scholars whose espoused theory matches their *theory in use*. The academy must value and reward these scholars.

### **Class Conflict**

Perhaps the most difficult factor in community building is that the neediest clients are often the poorest, possessing the least amount of power. The challenge for all of the partners involved is to cut across wealthy suburbs and inner cities, to get wealthy suburbanites to take seriously the problems of the city they may have fled or to get a small rural community to admit that it has

hungry and homeless children and families who are in need of services. As Hodgkinson (1992) argued, it is difficult to get economic classes to work together. Places exist where people of many races live together in peace and harmony, but places where rich and poor people live together harmoniously are rare. Much of what appears to be a problem between races is actually a problem between classes.

Community building, like everything else that is important, is a question of values. Problems of changing organizational patterns, providing adequate monetary resources, and preparing interprofessionally oriented personnel are formidable. Yet the greatest challenge for leaders in education, health, and human-service agencies is to convince this generation that to achieve a sense of human connectedness they must accept responsibility for ensuring the human rights of others as well as themselves.

### **Reinventing the University**

Major ideas are required to match the enormity of the problems facing children and their families today. Nothing less than a comprehensive, long-term strategy for reinventing the university is required.

#### ***A Comprehensive Strategy for Change***

Such a comprehensive model for change already exists and is very compatible with the collaborative, community-based, integrated-services movement. The land-grant research-teaching-service-extension loop is a change model to emulate; it takes into consideration the aforementioned concerns of practitioners and clients.

The Morrill Act of 1862 subsidized a new type of institution in each state by granting federal lands. The act institutionalized Jefferson's concept of the university as defined in the charter of the University of Virginia a half a century before. Jefferson envisioned his state's university offering every branch of useful knowledge taught in its highest degree. The Morrill Act sought to enrich liberal education with practical education, requiring each land-grant college to offer programs in agricultural science, the machine arts (engineering), and military science and ushering in fields such as forestry, home economics, business administration, education, journalism, and architecture.

Land-grant institutions spawned new organizational inventions that soon proved to be extraordinarily valuable: experimental farms and orchards, state experiment stations, and the unique collaboration between counties and the federal government that we now know as cooperative extension. The land-grant campus

placed new emphasis on applied, as well as basic, research by insisting that the best minds on campus join the search for answers to common problems.

Successful farmers, convinced by results of collaborative efforts with university researchers, became strong advocates and co-teachers who extended the new "best practice" to other farmers. They built a productive combination that brought real-life problems to researchers and delivered the fruits of applied and basic research back to the farms. The program fostered the organization of knowledge around problems rather than disciplines and highlighted the integration of ideas and the application of knowledge as legitimate missions of the university, shortening considerably the distance between thought and action.

Enarson (1989) described the uniqueness of the land-grant approach to research and development as responding to the "people's problems." He noted that the tripartite mission of teaching, research, and extension made the land-grant university unique. Old forms of organization had to be adapted to accommodate the new reality of a university that combined, in a single institution, teaching, research, and extension—the explicit obligation to deliver new knowledge where it could be used. This model of a comprehensive, national/state collaborative system, based on a proven change strategy and accompanied by local, state, and national policies and a financial structure to facilitate it, must now be expanded and put to work in all colleges and all higher education institutions in the United States to address contemporary problems within the social, health, and education arenas.

#### ***Implementing the Community-Building Mission***

A few university systems are breaking the mold and moving in this direction. They are building comprehensive plans for university/community partnerships. The Texas A&M University System in September 1995 approved a new Community Collaboration Policy that makes clear the system's dedication to an ongoing plan for addressing the state's family, social, health, environmental, economic, and educational issues. A database network of community-building programs is being developed for easy access by all universities in the system and the Texas communities that link with them. Two additional provisions in the system policy include the development of a system-wide community-development team and local community-advisory groups (Manson, 1995). The system community collaboration shall:

- ◆ establish a model for collaborative initiatives and strategies to be used by the system and the communities it serves. Pilot programs will be designed and initiated to determine the best model for implementation;
- ◆ institutionalize the community-collaboration policy and programs at each system component;
- ◆ develop community-resource strategies to ensure collaborative initiatives with the various groups and individuals representing the respective communities;
- ◆ develop a transformational-leadership model to prepare community leaders to work together collaboratively and holistically;
- ◆ integrate the system's community collaboration policy into the curriculum, research, and service areas of each system component's activities; and
- ◆ bring community groups from across the state together at least once a year to discuss and collaborate on ideas, program concepts, activities, and strategies in order to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and excellence of programs and services offered across the state.

### ***System Faculty and Staff Employees***

The system's commitment to building economically and educationally strong and healthy communities will be achieved through its greatest investment, its human resources. To meet our challenge, each participating institution and agency shall:

- ◆ establish measurable accountability standards of all management personnel for effective leadership in a collaborative and diverse environment to include the selection, recruitment, retention, professional development, promotion, and evaluation of faculty, staff, and students;
- ◆ implement strategies that instill in each employee the system's commitment to excellence, service, collaboration, community building, and effective leadership in a diverse environment;
- ◆ incorporate in orientation and professional development sessions for faculty, staff, and students the system's mission and role for building communities; and
- ◆ implement team building initiatives to ensure collaboration, coordination, effectiveness, and efficiency in serving our constituents.

Several characteristics of this plan and other community-building efforts are worthy of highlighting. Community-building activities are reciprocal, drawing on multiple areas of knowledge and contributing to new knowledge. Community building should be viewed as acting on scholarship. There is a realization that university faculty will be more accepting and the entire effort will be more beneficial to community agencies and clients if it is based on a solid intellectual foundation.

Participants also recognize that, beyond the commitment of the board of trustees to policies and plans that focus on the "people's problems," the community-building mission must be rooted in the mission, programs, plans, and budgets of academic departments. The commitment of board members, presidents, and chancellors in writing is essential but insufficient to bring about the kind of comprehensive changes needed. The community-building mission must be infused into every level of the university and into the thoughts and actions of faculty and students, both in student affairs and academics. Community-building programs provide wonderful service-learning opportunities for students.

New organizational patterns must provide flexibility to build curriculum, teaching, and research around problem solution and disciplines. The traditional departmental structure of the university—an outmoded mechanism for managing knowledge utilization and dissemination—must change. The university has suffered long enough from a hardening of categories.

Cross-disciplinary teams must have flexible work schedules that provide opportunities to meet on and off campus and funding mechanisms that support collaboration with adjunct faculty in community sites where their students will participate in interprofessional internships and seminars. Other changes include the cross listing of courses, team teaching with provisions for distributing credit hours back to instructors' home units, dual appointments, and the creation of interdisciplinary and interprofessional centers and institutes on and off campus (Briar & Lawson, 1994; Lawson & Briar, 1994).

### **Special Responsibilities of Professional Colleges**

The development of collaborative community-based systems has special implications for faculty who work in professional colleges that serve as the training and research arm of their professions. In addition to discovering new knowledge and integrating knowledge from various disciplines, faculty in professional colleges have a responsibility to inform practice. Professors who educate practitioners to work in collaborative systems and interprofessional partnerships must confront reality—if they do not model collaborative behavior in the training and research arm of the education, health, and human-services professions, it is unlikely that future providers will understand the importance of such collaboration or be prepared to function in the new community-based integrated-service systems that are emerging.

Because education is such an essential component of new collaborative community-based systems, faculty from colleges of education must be in the forefront of this movement. The professions

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*Community building should be viewed as acting on scholarship.*

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charged with education, health, and human-services delivery have to get beyond the "I'll take care of mine, you take care of yours" syndrome. The "educating professions," as Cremin (1978) called them, have a common mission that they must accept and profess to others. Collaboration today is not an option—it is a necessity and an obligation of professional leadership.

The education profession, in conjunction with the other human-service professions, must identify the particular knowledge, skills, and values that educators need to be effective collaborators with other human-services providers, and vice versa. They must ensure that such knowledge, skills, and values become part of the curriculum in each field of specialization and are appropriately infused into new interprofessional development programs.

Also, creative ways must be developed to make appropriate knowledge and related skills a part of continuing education efforts for current practitioners. Community-based adjunct faculty from the participating professions must be trained so that they can serve as trainers and mentors in interprofessional-development programs offered in community sites.

Universities must also develop advanced-preparation programs at the doctoral and post-doctoral level for leaders in each of the participating professions. This cadre of professionals, already licensed in their own fields of specialization and highly respected by colleagues, will have special training in community-based interprofessional collaboration, policy development, and design and implementation of preservice and in-service programs.

In the future, if the land-grant extension model is implemented and expanded to all colleges, the three functions of research, teaching, and service will often be integrated in the same community-based activity. One example is when pediatric interns from medical college help to staff health clinics in elementary schools in Albuquerque. Designing content and pedagogy that emerge from communities and are then returned to improve services to children and families will require professional development for university faculty. Acting on scholarship implies a powerful pedagogy not often found in current course syllabi; it is the kind of pedagogical experience that very few professors have had. Professional development, key to change, must be a high priority component in all community-building efforts.

### Accepting the Challenge

Currently, most of the university professors engaged in the kind of community building described in this article are pioneers on their campuses. They are often more closely linked to their community

partners than to the traditional decision makers in their institutions. Largely dependent on temporary foundation grants or other sources of outside financing, they are extremely concerned about institutionalizing university financial support and with how to interconnect preparation programs in education, health, and social services to make them instruments for improving the total quality of life in communities.

Comprehensive change cannot take place if it depends only on outside "soft" money support. The university has to assume some responsibility by restructuring current programs and reallocating resources to this mission. Unless the mission of community building is reflected in the budgets, reward systems, and academic programs of universities, these concerns will be increasingly viewed as irrelevant by a society undergoing fundamental transformation.

The most important question for those of us who work in universities is whether we prepare professionals for the best of all nonexistent worlds or for reality. If the mission is a real one, then we must ask how university programs can connect with and improve the settings in which our most vulnerable children and families live, learn, and work.

The current movement to create collaborative community-based education, health, and human-service systems is built on a fundamental value premise. At stake is more than service to the downtrodden. It is a question of our country's survival and the role of universities in meeting our most challenging moral imperative. Higher education—indeed society in general—needs a new generation of visionary leaders who, in the tradition of the great land-grant idea of public service, will restore a sense of social purpose to the university.

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## Study Circles: A Powerful Strategy for Making Community

*A project of the Topsfield Foundation, the study circles process has the mission of advancing deliberative democracy and improving the quality of public life. The Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) supports organizers of community-wide efforts with technical assistance and discussion guides. Experience of ten years has proven the effectiveness of study circles in race relations, schools and education, crime and violence, community development, youth issues, sexual harassment, civil rights for gays and lesbians, conflict resolution. A recent message from Martha McCoy, SCRC Executive Director, speaks eloquently about "Citizenship in America: Putting Our Civic House in Order."*

Recent articles and op-eds on citizenship have taken an almost mournful tone. In essence they are saying, "What's wrong with us? Why can't we get up from in front of our television sets and computer screens? Why can't we give up some of our evenings at the mall, and become active, engaged citizens?" The National Commission on Civic Renewal reinforced this tone when it named its recently released report "A Nation of Spectators."

There is certainly plenty of work to do in American civic life. But diagnoses and prescriptions that start with the traits and habits of individual citizens (or even of individual institutions) are starting in the wrong place. Democracy is about individuals and community. It's about the arrangements we have for deliberating together—for engaging in a participatory, face-to-face exchange about our common hopes and problems. It's about working together to address those common problems and to shape our common life. It's about our voices, our power, about governing ourselves.

Because democracy is inherently a common enterprise, individual remedies (whether to watch less TV, or to vote more) aren't enough. Calling for citizens and institutions to act more civic-minded is a lot like a marriage counselor working separately with each partner in a failing marriage and not ever working with the couple. Urging a husband and a wife to be better spouses won't be enough—it takes looking at the marriage as a relationship and coming up with solutions that address the complexity of the whole.

### A Compelling Vision of Democracy

Of course, individual acts (in a democracy as well as in marriage) do matter—but individual transformation is more likely to

“*Democracy is about individuals and community. It's about the arrangements we have for deliberating together—for engaging in a participatory, face-to-face exchange about our common hopes and problems. It's about working together to address those common problems and to shape our common life. It's about our voices, our power, about governing ourselves.*”

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have a real impact when there are clear ways to link it to systemic change. That is why effective civic engagement requires a strong democracy.

Unfortunately, even many of the people who talk about civic life don't present a compelling vision of democracy. Instead of continuing to describe the symptoms of an ailing civic life, we need to ask ourselves: If we were to have an active and democratic public, one worth getting engaged in, what would it look like, and how would we create it?

Down through the ages of democratic ideas and ideals, a powerful vision of that kind of civic life has emerged. In that vision, there are places where we can be heard, where our voices count. There are ongoing, structured opportunities for all of us to meet as citizens, across different backgrounds and affiliations, not just as members of a group with similar interests and ideas. In these accessible settings, diverse groups of everyday people can honestly express their stories and their concerns; listen to others; form relationships; discuss community issues from every viewpoint; work with each other to make a difference on those issues; and make their voices heard by public officials and other community leaders. Some people have described this as "deliberative democracy," others as "communicative democracy." To reinforce this vision, Vaclav Havel, the former Czech president, reminds us that "democracy is a discussion."

If such opportunities—democratic discussion where everyone has a voice—were to exist throughout a community, and throughout our country, they would form the core of a civic life that draws people in. The premise of community-wide study circle programs is that our most important task is to *create* those opportunities.

The study circle work being done in communities around the country is being led by individuals and institutions (government, schools, the faith-based community, media, businesses, nonprofits). But they are not just getting their own "civic houses" in order. They are working in coalition with others to build an all-encompassing civic house for all the members of their community. Communities that are working at this collective creation are finding that citizens will participate when they know their voice will be heard, when they know that their participation matters.

## Editor's Message

My heart was warmed by Corrigan's use of the phrase, **acting on scholarship**, and its implication for the value of the scholar. In recent years, I've discovered that the title of scholar is not a universal badge of honor for Kappa Omicron Nu members. Sometime ago I made a speech to new initiates about the role of a scholar and received a cold reception. Five years ago our member survey verified that fact, and I've wondered how we might regain pride in "scholar." I don't mean to imply that KON members aren't proud of their scholarship and membership in the honor society, but why don't they like the title? I like it and use it. Is there something wrong with me?

Have we allowed the theory vs. practice debate to color our emotional baggage? Is scholar perceived as elitist? Or, has mediocrity risen its ugly head? I don't really think so. Maybe it is that we have not as a profession used enough learning experiences (of the kind described in this issue) to act on **our** scholarship. I keep thinking that Boyer's three-fold definition of the scholarship of discovery, integration, and application would give so much credibility to **scholar** that it would once again become a badge of honor. But I've decided that if I want something to change, I'd better take action by speaking out and putting myself on the line.

Let's promote the notion of "acting on scholarship." And will you join me in proudly proclaiming you are a **SCHOLAR**?

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