

# DIVERSITY

This edition of Dialogue features the subject of leadership for a culturally diverse society. New approaches are needed because “[t]he social environment has become as turbulent as the weather, and traditional approaches to planning have proved ineffective for mobilizing large groups of people to take responsibility for their collective futures” (Emery & Purser, 1996, p. ix). This article will justify the need to make inclusive organizations and communities and describe the concept of *search conference*, a process to help communities find common ground and improve the quality of life.

Why should family and consumer sciences (FCS) professionals be involved? If, indeed, we believe that our profession uses an integrative approach to empower individuals, strengthen families, and enable communities, we must have knowledge and mechanisms for empowerment and community making. Because integrative issues and processes in formal educational programs are limited, Kappa Omicron Nu is engaged in providing resources and professional development opportunities to explore issues and learn about leadership processes.

The module, *Leadership for a Culturally Diverse Society* (Andrews, Paschall, & Mitstifer, 1993), was published by Kappa Omicron Nu for the purposes of understanding and valuing cultural diversity. (See order form on p. 4.) It was assumed that

leaders need a) to have a knowledge base which will increase sensitivity to and awareness of the cultural diversities in our society; b) to identify resources which can help strengthen and improve the quality of life for minority individuals; c) to communicate with others about cultural differences; and d) to use strategies which will enable them to work effectively as change agents to maximize the benefits of a culturally diverse society. Therefore, the module contains a broad conceptual base for cultural diversity, theoretical background for facilitators, and an extensive bibliography in addition to specific activities and suggestions for meeting the needs of leadership for a culturally diverse society.

## Background

The social environment of too many communities is less than desirable. And it isn't fair to call the problem an inner cities one. Although inner cities need help, all too many of us face similar problems in small-town America. However, we do need to acknowledge that many individuals and groups are already doing what needs to be done to solve social problems. Woodson (William Raspberry editorial, 11/7/97) has an interesting description of community helpers: “I call them antibodies, because they work in communities in just the way antibodies work in the human organism. What we need to do is find ways to strengthen these little cells of health and organize them into an immune system.” The thesis of this article is that FCS professionals should be important

partners in these immune systems.

Although discrimination is anything but new, making inclusive communities (the highest stage of diversity development) is a relatively new phenomenon. Affirmative action and understanding and valuing difference (the early stages of diversity development) have been the extent of our goals in dealing with discrimination. (The October 1996 Dialogue explored the stage of managing diversity.)

The 21<sup>st</sup> century brings with it the major forces of globalism and demographic change. The global village is already a reality, and the face of our nation is undergoing a major change. Perhaps the most significant demographic change is that the white male will become a minority. To compete in the global marketplace the workplace must reflect the diversity of the population, and the community environment must demonstrate respect for diversity in its many forms. Furthermore, strategies and methods for launching and living with culture change are required. The Search Conference (or Future Search Conference) is such a method.

## In This Issue . . .

- ◆ Leadership for a Culturally Diverse Society
- ◆ Call to Conclave
- ◆ New Board Members
- ◆ Developing a Multicultural Perspective
- ◆ Membership Survey

## Search Conference

The underlying philosophy of the Search Conference is that traditional “fixes” have been engineered by managers, technical experts, bureaucrats, or social engineers and that it is increasingly obvious that “the link to creating a desirable future for any system lies in the hearts and minds of the people who live in that system. All that is needed is to democratize the planning process, that is to develop a participative planning method where all people are experts in their own right” (Emery & Purser, 1996, p. x). Originally developed by Fred Emery and Eric Trist in 1960 at the Tavistock Institute in London, the Search Conference literature was not easily accessible because much of the early work was conducted in Australia and because reports were published there by Merrelyn Emery. Although successfully used in European countries, the Search Conference was first introduced in North America in the 80s, mostly in Canada. Resources that provide up-to-date and comprehensive exposition of the theory and practice of search conferencing include *The Search Conference* (Emery & Purser, 1996), *Future Search* (Weisbrod & Janoff, 1995), and *Discovering Common Ground* (Weisbrod, 1992).

Weisbrod and Janoff (1996, p. 1) describe future search as a unique planning conference that “meets two goals at the same time, [a] helping large diverse groups discover values, purposes, and projects they hold in common; and [b] enabling people to create a desired future together and to start working toward it right away.” Thus it is a participative event that involves 25-70 people and 2-3 days to develop long term visions, achievable goals, and concrete action plans.

The principles that guide this method include getting the “whole system in the room;” thinking globally, acting locally; working common ground/ desired futures; and self-managing discussions/ action plans (Weisbrod & Janoff, 1996). The first principle of getting the whole system in the room is critically important. All the people with a stake in the agenda don’t usually meet, so this enlarges the potential for learning and action. The second principle of thinking globally and acting locally ensures that the big picture is understood. The third principle of focus on common ground and desirable futures removes problems and conflicts as central concerns. The fourth principle invites small groups to manage their own discussions and planning.

The future search agenda typically revolves around five tasks:

- ◆ The Past: Where We’ve Been
- ◆ The Present: Trends Affecting Us and What We’re Doing Now
- ◆ “Prouds” & “Sorries”
- ◆ The Future: What We Want To Do, and
- ◆ Common Ground & Action Planning (p. 2).

Most groups are surprised at how much they agree on, including common values.

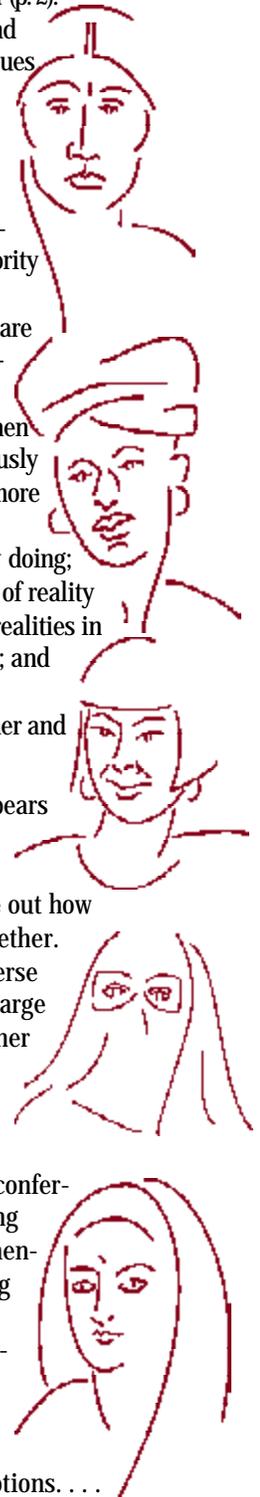
The benefit of this process for dealing with diversity issues, in particular, is that search conferences prove that “most people can bridge lines of culture, class, gender, ethnicity, power, status, and hierarchy if they will work as peers on tasks of mutual concern. They can do this despite stereotypes, prejudices, and ‘isms’ that lie deep in all of us. They can do this

despite skepticism and sometimes gloomy predictions of what will or won’t happen. Freed from the impulse to put pressure on each other to solve intractable problems, people often find common ground none of them knew existed (p. 2).”

A more level playing ground makes it possible to see issues from many more angles. The assumptions are quite different from the traditional “expert” approach: a) a wide range of individuals have information, authority to act, and a stake in the outcome; b) value choices are more important than expertise and data; c) dialogue creates different choices when working with others previously unknown; d) people have more skills and motivation to do more than they are already doing; e) each person has a piece of reality and needs access to other realities in order to get the big picture; and f) people need to deal with confusion and chaos together and do something about it.

Although this process appears simple, it is not easy. One of the important pre-planning tasks is to figure out how to get the right people together. But once a broad and diverse group is identified, the charge is to face ambiguity together so that a new world view and new ways of working can emerge.

The outcome of a search conference is a learning-planning community. As a comprehensive approach for affecting social and organizational change, the search conference restores “an oral culture based on mutual trust and people’s confidence in their own perceptions. . . .”





It is through the spoken word, through dialogue and conversation, that people in a community develop a shared context for planning joint action" (Emery & Purser, 1996, p. 11).

**Application**

Any social agenda will ultimately fail if it is inconsistent with the fundamental need for a humane existence.

Because cooperation is so vital, it might be regarded as the next frontier. The Search Conference has the potential to fulfill the "role of mediating institutions in the middle space of society, that is between individual organizations and the nation state" (Emery & Purser, 1996, p. 267). The

problem of moving from the authoritarian model to a more participatory democracy is that the new values and structures did not accompany the shift. Etzioni explains this dilemma: "The problem is that the waning of traditional values was not followed by a solid affirmation of new values; often nothing filled the empty spaces that were left when we razed existing institutions" (1993, p. 24).

The Search Conference process has the potential for restoring social structures that serve the common welfare and public interest by discovering communal values. According to participants, We do not hear the language of individualism, with its emphasis on "me and my rights," in a Search Conference. Rather, we hear communal voices regarding shared concerns and affirmations of ideal statements based on shared

images of a desirable future. We hear people articulating, staking out, and building upon common ground. We hear a community language, inspired by future possibilities, not past problems. What we hear is the unified voice of the demos, "We the People" (Emery & Purser, 1996, p. 272.)

**References**

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**Congratulations**

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**Toward a Theory of Family Well-Being**

by  
 Edith E. Baldwin

with responses by  
 Elizabeth Goldsmith  
 Margaret I. Henry  
 Dorothy I. Mitstifer

and a Summary of Dialogue by  
 Frances M. Smith

Published by Kappa Omicron Nu

This publication includes a conceptual paper by Edith Baldwin and exploration by three respondents and audience dialogue at two sessions at the 1996 AAFCS Annual Meeting.

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## Call to Conclave

### Fourth Kappa Omicron Nu Leadership Conclave

Hyatt DFW, Dallas, Texas  
August 7-10, 1997

*Theme:*  
*Leadership for the New  
Millennium*

Join Kappa Omicron Nu in the BIG D for the biennial meeting of the organization. KON members from across the nation will study leadership, renew commitment to the honor society, enjoy fellowship and fun, and learn from each other. Conclave is a dual purpose meeting: it fulfills governance obligations of official delegates and offers leadership development for students and professionals.

Practical sessions on the application of the leadership theory, *Reflective Human Action*, are planned for two tracks: student and professional. The student track will deal with chapter and personal leadership issues. The professional track will deal with job-related or personal issues and give chapter advisers an opportunity to apply leadership principles to their concerns.

It's Action Packed! Highlights of the conclave include A Texas Welcome and Keynote Address, introduction of the new Campus change Model and Community of Practice Change Model, a Texas Barbecue, historical tour of Dallas, and much more. Undergraduate student paper presentations, award ceremonies, and the biennial Assembly of Delegates Meeting are other features of the Conclave. During the meeting of the Assembly of Delegates, voting delegates will elect

Student Representatives, consider Kappa Omicron Nu business, and participate in a forum to identify priorities for achieving the mission of Kappa Omicron Nu.

The Conclave will begin Thursday evening and conclude with the closing banquet Saturday evening—all for a registration fee of \$185.00 (including leadership Workshops, Texas Barbecue, beverage breaks, two breakfasts, Saturday banquet, tour, and a memento).

The lodging rate is \$85.00 + tax for single or double rooms and \$105.00 + tax for triple or quad rooms. Registration and room reservation forms will be distributed and available on the KON Web Site (<http://www.kon.org>) in February. The deadline for room reservations will be June 25, 1997 to ensure confirmation in the headquarters hotel at the advertised rate.



### Order Form Kappa Omicron Nu Diversity Module

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## Developing a Multicultural Perspective

Racism and other forms of discrimination have a long history in our schools. Each form of discrimination is based upon the perception that one ethnic group, class, gender, or language is superior to all others. In the United States, the norm generally used to measure all others is European American, upper-middle class, English speaking, and male. Discrimination based on perceptions of superiority is part of the structure of schools, the curriculum, the education most teachers receive, and the interactions among teachers, students, and the community. The effects of discriminatory attitudes and behaviors are always negative (Nieto, 1992c).

Learning to affirm differences rather than deny them is the essence of what a multicultural perspective is about. Becoming sensitive to multicultural perspectives means reeducating ourselves in several ways:

1. We need to learn more: Read a variety of materials, attend culturally pluralistic activities.
2. We need to confront our own racism and biases. Because we are all products of a society that is racist and stratified by gender, class, and language, we have all internalized some of these messages in one way or the other. Sometimes our racism is unconscious, the words we use carry a deep-seated bias, our actions carry the messages we have learned. Our re-education means learning new things and unlearning

some of the old. The process is difficult and painful but a necessary part of becoming multicultural.

3. We need to learn to see reality from a variety of perspectives. Because we have often learned that there is only one "right answer" we have developed only one way of seeing things. A multicultural perspective demands just the opposite (Nieto, 1992a).
4. Not only do we need to learn more, our knowledge of others must include interaction and personal experience in other cultural environments.

A monocultural perspective represents a fundamentally different framework for understanding differences than does a multi-cultural one. Even a multicultural perspective has a variety of levels of attitudes and behaviors (Nieto, 1992a).

### The four levels are:

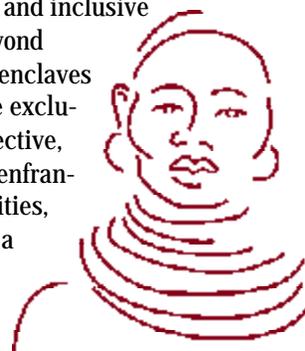
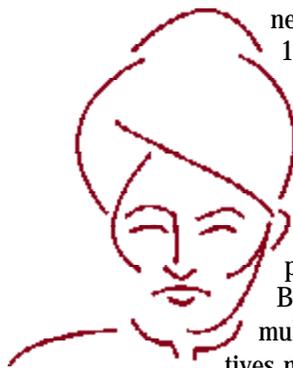
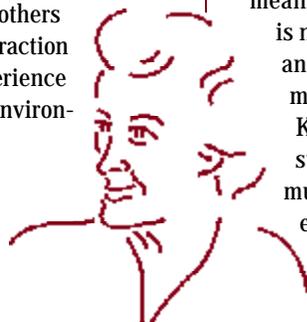
1. *Tolerance* means to have the capacity to bear something, though it may at times be unpleasant. To tolerate differences is to endure them, not necessarily embracing them. Tolerance represents the lowest level of multicultural perspective.
2. *Acceptance* is the next level of dealing with diversity. If we accept diversity, it means that we, at the very least, acknowledge differences without denying their importance.
3. *Respect* is the third level of multicultural perspective, meaning to admire and hold in high esteem. When diversity is respected, students value different ways of approaching the

same reality.

4. *Affirmation, Solidarity, and Critique* represent the highest level of multicultural perspective. It means accepting the culture and language of students, their families, and others as legitimate and embracing them as valid vehicles for learning. It also means understanding that culture is not fixed or unchangeable and one is able to critique its manifestations and outcomes. Kalantzis and Cope (1990) state: "to be effective, [a] multicultural [perspective in] education needs to be more active. It needs to consider not just the pleasure of diversity but more fundamental issues that arise as different groups negotiate community and the basic issues of material life in the same space—a process that equally might generate conflict and pain."

Multicultural education without critique implies that cultural understanding remains at the romantic or exotic stage. If we are not able to transcend our own cultural experience through reflection and critique, we cannot hope to understand and critique that of others.

In an educational setting, affirmation, solidarity, and critique mean using the culture and language of all students in a consistent, critical, comprehensive, and inclusive way. It goes beyond creating ethnic enclaves that can become exclusionary and selective, although for disenfranchised communities, this is certainly a step in the process. It



means developing multicultural settings in which all students feel accepted and visible. The programs would reflect a multicultural sensitivity and inclusiveness and include a wide variety of content and perspectives. Teachers' attitudes and behaviors would reflect only the very highest expectations for all students, although they would understand that students might express their abilities in very different ways. Instructional strategies would also reflect this multicultural perspective and would include a wide variety of means to teach all students.

The process of development of an institutional multicultural perspective may be in harmony or at odds with development of individual sensitivity. The ideal, of course, is to encourage development at both levels.

In the strategic stage, institutions adopt more comprehensive and better coordinated measures. Long term outreach and collaborative strategies are aimed at expanding the pool of minority candidates with the preparation needed for college success and the support required to retain them.

The integrating stage involves faculty involvement and changes in academic practices. At this stage the institution becomes multicultural in its composition and outlook. Multiculturalism is valued as a strength.

### References

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### A multicultural perspective has four levels:

1. Tolerance
2. Perspective
3. Respect
4. Affirmation, Solidarity, and Critique

From an analysis of 10 institutions, Richardson (1989) identified three stages of institutional development for improving equity: reactive, strategic, and integrating. In the reactive stage, institutions increase participation through interventions relating to recruitment, financial aid, admissions, and scheduling. This stage is usually a response to pressure, but does not entail systematic planning. Unfortunately, reactive intervention may increase racial conflict and magnify differences.

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Source: Andrews, F.A., Paschall, G.T., & Mitsifer, D.I. (1993). *Leadership for a culturally diverse society*. East Lansing, MI: Kappa Omicron Nu (pp. 101-102).

# Tell us what you think!

Meeting your needs today and tomorrow is our goal. For us to achieve that goal, we need to hear from you. We must understand:

- √ What is important to you
- √ What we can do to improve

The Board of Directors has developed this survey to obtain information we need to address these issues and serve you better.

## Why should you complete the survey?

- √ You have important feedback we need to hear!
- √ Your feedback will help the Board and Conclave set direction for the organization!
- √ Your opinions are the only way we can determine your needs!

We have a continuous process of strategic thinking and planning; your input is a critical component in carrying out that responsibility. Please take a few minutes right now to complete the survey and return it. We would like to receive all responses by March 15, 1997. Thank you for sharing your opinion with us!

*Janelle Walter, Chair, Board of Directors, Kappa Omicron Nu Honor Society*

## Membership Benefits

Please answer the following questions using a ranking of 1 -5. If you cannot answer, please indicate NA for not applicable or UA for unaware.

5      4      3      2      1      NA      UA  
*High*      .....      *Low*

*Membership in KON helps me to...*

- Improve my professionalism
- Find valuable information
- Stay well informed about critical issues
- Provide leadership in my job
- Provide leadership in volunteer groups
- Save research time
- Broaden my horizons
- Renew my commitment to excellence
- Contribute to succeeding generations
- Enhance my achievements

5      4      3      2      1      NA      UA  
*High*      .....      *Low*

The following KON Benefits are valuable resources for members:

- Dialogue
- Kappa Omicron Nu FORUM
- Scholarships, Fellowships, Grants
- Modules
- Monographs
- Membership Directory
- Workshops
- KON Web Site
- 800 number (chapters)

Other Benefits I would like to have:

## Demographics

- Gender:       Male       Female
- Age:       Under 25       25-34       35-44       45-54       55-64       65+
- Level of Education:       Baccalaureate degree       Master's degree       Doctoral degree
- Status of Membership:       Alumni       Undergraduate       Grad Student       Adviser

Return by March 15 to Kappa Omicron Nu, 4990 Northwind Drive, Suite 140, East Lansing, MI 48823-5031

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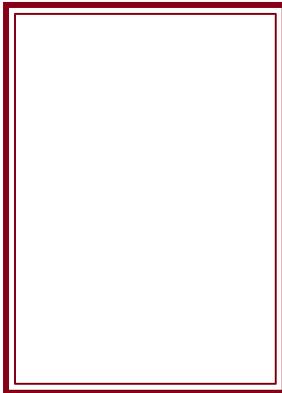
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## Message from Anne Weiner

*Chair, Board of Directors*

I offer congratulations to the recently elected members of the Board of Directors and of the Editorial and Nominations Committees. I commend your dedication to Kappa



Omicron Nu and wish you success in your leadership efforts. I would like to thank the individuals who are completing their terms on the Board or as committee members. Your accomplishments have enabled the organization to continue to grow and prosper.

Kappa Omicron Nu continues to be in the forefront of leadership development for the profession. We will again sponsor a preconference workshop at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences. Our partner in this venture is the Coalition for Black Development and the conference theme is *Taking Charge of Change: A Reflective Human Action Workshop*. The planning process for this workshop is underway, and details will be made available in the near future. Another leadership workshop is planned for the Society of Nutrition Education Annual Meeting in Montreal in July 1997. The Leadership

Academy is also moving forward. Currently, associates in this endeavor are reviewing a proposed structure to facilitate collaborative efforts among the partners. A meeting of the visioning group and representatives from several organizations in the academy will be held in conjunction with the February meeting of the Council of Administrators of Family and Consumer Sciences.

The next Leadership Conclave will be held in Dallas at the Hyatt Regency DFW, August 7-10, 1997. The theme guiding Conclave activities is *Leadership for the New Millennium*. The professional track of workshops that was introduced at the Chicago Conclave will continue, and I invite alumni members to participate in this event.

I encourage you to visit the Kappa Omicron Nu Web Site at [www.kon.org](http://www.kon.org) and review the Update, the Calendar, and the other pages on this site. In addition to providing a communication link with members, the home page is professional in appearance and contributes a positive identity for our organization to nonmember web browsers.

This is my last *Dialogue* message, so I would like to use this occasion to express my appreciation to the members of Kappa Omicron Nu for the opportunity to serve the organization and for the help and support that you gave me. It has been a busy, but fulfilling year. I wish Janelle Walter success as she chairs the board in 1997.

Kappa Omicron Nu Dialogue, Volume 7, No. 1-Executive Director and Editor: Dorothy I. Mitstifer; Assistant Editor: Lisa Wootton. Board of Directors: Janelle Walter, Laura D. Jolly, Merry Jo Dallas, Erica L. White, Elizabeth DeMerchant, Scott Ketring, Jill Robinson. © Copyright 1997 by Kappa Omicron Nu Honor Society, 4990 Northwind Drive, Suite 140, East Lansing, MI 48823-5031. Telephone: (517) 351-8335. Facsimile: (517) 351-8336. E-mail: [dmitstifer@kon.org](mailto:dmitstifer@kon.org).