INTER-GENERATIONAL COMMUNITIES:

PARTNERSHIPS In DISCOVERY

The Rationale and Structures of Stony Brook's Federated Learning Communities

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Introduction

One of the more pervasive phenomena of unravelling Western society is the breakdown of intergenerational community. The phenomenon manifests itself in many ways, including decreasing family size, widespread child-abuse, changing social priorities reflective of the "greying" of America, grossly ineffectual public education, the selfish disregard of the long-term consequences of our actions upon the ecosystem, a general collapsing of institutional authority, and a disturbingly more isolated and alienated youth subculture. In the sixties and early seventies, the first indications of these trends were understandably misinterpreted, spoken of as "the generation gap" and later (less benignly) as in the title of a famous book of the period as The Conflict of Generations. In higher education, the institution which above all others might claim to be the one in which the generations are communicating about the significance of the past and the future, the conflict was most intense. And in retrospect, it is not surprising that a comprehensive institutional "Self-Study" of the period, undertaken at the Stony Brook campus of the State University of New York, entitled itself The Eclipse of Academic Community, i.e. the indeterminate loss of the sense that the generations were willing partners in an academic enterprise of mutually acknowledged and mutually respected importance.[1]

The aforementioned Self-Study and a major grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) eventually led to the creation in 1976 at Stony Brook of the Federated Learning Communities (FLC), a cluster of curricular innovations designed to revitalize undergraduate education in large universities. The development of FLC was very much rooted (as should be any reform effort) in the context of Stony Brook, in the estimate of what was possible at this institution at that time. A full understanding of FLC would thus require a lengthy analysis of Stony Brook of the early seventies. However, since the structures of FLC have between then and now been adopted at several other institutions, some very different from Stony Brook, the emphasis of this

essay will be placed less on the actual history of the development of FLC at Stony Brook, than upon the generalized analysis of undergraduate education and the continuities/discontinuities of that analysis with the animating values of the sixties.[2]

A prefatory word about those animating values might prove helpful to readers of this essay. The major reform efforts of the sixties, inside and outside Academia, were animated in large measure by concern for a cluster of five values: freedom, diversity, relevance, participation and wholeness. The efforts, as most everyone clearly perceived, embodied a profound dissatisfaction with the unresponsive, authoritarian, monolithic, exclusionary and fragmented character of our major institutions. FLC is likewise animated, as will be plain, by a concern for those central democratic values in the light of which the inadequacies of higher education appear more than major. But FLC has been animated by another cluster of values as well: by the communal value of shared experience, upon which the rationale for democracy rests; and by the values of specialized expertise, upon which much of the rationale for the university rests. The attempt to affirm both clusters of values accounts for the unique structures and strategies described in these pages.

This essay is divided into four parts. In the first part, I describe the eclipse of community in terms of three variables, viz. mismatched expectation, institutional unintelligibility, and privatized academic experience. In the second, the lengthiest and most theoretical part of the essay, I sketch the parameters of response, the value-framework which guided the construction of the learning communities at Stony Brook. Thirdly, I will describe the structure of the Federated Learning Communities. In the concluding section, I will reflect briefly on the implications of this experiment for all of higher education.[3]

A. The Eclipse of Academic Community

"Students and faculty", concluded one researcher of the early sixties, "are two societies occupying the same territory".[4] Paul Goodman, by contrast, regarded that conclusion as a "catastrophic anthropological error"[5], a failure to see that students' subculture is merely a reaction to their exclusion from the real business of adult society. The two views aptly frame the issues raised in the initial part of this essay: to what extent do students and faculty have a common understanding of the nature and value of the academic enterprise? Taking students' academic expectations as a manifestation of their wider subcultural values and comparing them to the expectations of the faculty, it does seem that a "two societies" characterization is warranted. However, I will ultimately judge Goodman correct as well, for vital intergenerational communities can be built on our campuses. Community is not a fact, as Dewey frequently reminded us; it is an achievement.

1. Mismatched Expectations.

Sociologists used to speak of "like-mindedness" or shared purposes as generative of community. A related but more useful category for dynamic situations is that of the matched and mismatched expectations of the members or potential members of a given community.[6] With this descriptive category we are enabled to see the genesis and development of the vitality-destroying cross purposes of faculty and students in many educational situations.

a. Expectations of the Students

The academic expectations of many of today's students have four principal foci. In brief, they are (1) the long-range, significance-conferring expectation that there will be a rational, imaginable link between most of what is studied and a post-baccalaureate career; (2) the expectation that courses of study will assist them in evolving a sense of personal direction in their lives,

including insights and "answers" concerning the chaos of contemporary society; (3) the expectation of a major break with the artificiality and paternalistic rigidity of high school and in its stead a stimulating exchange of ideas with a faculty interested in them both as persons and as welcomed and central members of an intellectual community; and (4) the expectation, consistent with their previous education, that learning is primarily a consumer activity in which their first role is to listen, absorb and function reactively to the professor's attempts to motivate and interest them. The apparent contradiction of this fourth expectation with the other three is dissolved if it is remembered that these students are 17 - 22 years old; many of them do not (and perhaps should not) have firm senses of personal direction or even career choices. They expect the faculty and their collegiate experience in general to help them find focus.[7]

b. Expectations of the Faculty

What of the expectations of the faculty? The brief portrait which follows, originating in the life of an aspiring research university, may appear to some to be terribly inaccurate with respect to many of the nation's professoriate. My impression, to the contrary, is that the priorities of a university faculty function as an ideal in places very different from universities. These priorities define the profession. Teachers at small colleges or at community colleges, to be sure, invest more time and energy in their students. Nevertheless, while willing to admit the existence of many exceptions and of degrees of approximation to this portrait, I think there is a general character to the profession which manifests itself in very different institutions. Even for those rare persons in the profession who would describe themselves more as teachers than as intellectuals, there seems yet to be an involvement with and a commitment to specific values (e.g. the wisdom of Shakespeare or the scientific method) which fundamentally shape our interaction with students.

We can distinguish three foci in the expectations of the faculty:

1. For most faculty, the major focus of their professional-personal lives and aspirations is research and the sharing of that research with students able to appreciate it. In some situations, the desire to share entails investing most of one's teaching energy with graduate or pre-professional students. In other situations it will mean something else. In any situation where enforced assignments do not prohibit it, the creative intellectual is quite understandably searching for ways to share his/her work.

2. In the classroom, faculty expect that good and worthy students will be interested and motivated to participate in the kind of activity that occupies the professor's life, i.e., in a discipline-oriented, methodical, systematic inquiry whose character and boundaries are determined for the most part (a) by the free and creative judgment of the mature professor, and (b) in concert with the scholarly judgment of his/her department and disciplinary profession. Few faculty would be so narrow as to define good students solely in terms of reaction to their work. We are committed, however, to at least the general outlines of what we are doing and it does seem reasonable to expect that good students will find it interesting.

3. The third expectation, more generally than the second, concerns the understanding of the role assigned to each party in the intellectual community - i.e., the nature of faculty-student interaction. Concerning their own roles, faculty members assume that they have fulfilled teaching obligations when they have presented to their students as scholarly and up-to-date a version of their material that they can, as judged by their professional colleagues. This is the outreach to which professors are called and of which they are most capable. Many teachers, to be sure, will go beyond that in their pedagogical ef-

forts, but that is all that is expected and required.

Concerning the student's role in the community, the faculty member expects outreach from that side as well. It is expected that students will come to them for whatever is needed, whether assistance, encouragement, or an informal chat. If students do not come to see them, the conclusion will be drawn that they are either without problems, uninterested, lazy, or unwilling to reveal how little work they have done.

Expectations as seriously mismatched as these of the faculty and students do not remain statically mismatched. In a process that most persons in higher education will recognize, the expectations are adjusted to deal with frustration and disappointment. The accommodation, however, effects a progressive and cumulative devitalization of the institution: first, a lessening of enthusiasm, a subsequent withdrawal from responsibilities, a reduction in the frequency of interaction, and finally, a strategy of minimal cooperation in which each party goes through the motions and silently consents to accept the status quo as more manageable than any realistic alternative.

By no means is all of higher education characterizable in terms of mismatched expectations of students and faculty. Different institutions will configure differently, as a function of many variables including admissions policy, percentage of the student body that might be characterized (as Stony Brook students can be) as academically unheritaged, priorities of the faculty, etc. Within the same institution, there will be large sections accurately characterized in terms of mismatched expectations and other sections not so. Reactions from other institutions to the Stony Brook Self-Study have confirmed over and over again that radically mismatched expectations are not confined to Stony Brook, to multi-versities or to new institutions. Despite the willingness of a very large percentage of young people to spend four years at college, the

generations are on different wavelengths as to what is educationally significant.

2. Institutional Unintelligibility

The second feature revealed in the study of the experience of new students in the university is the unintelligibility of the institution. Discernible in varying degrees in the experience of most of the university's constituencies, this unintelligibility is particularly devastating to the possibility of intergenerational community for, as we shall see, it is ultimately perceived as arbitrariness.

Several different but interacting aspects of this institutional unintelligibility deserve attention:

a) the size and complexity of the enterprise. Even in very small colleges, there are twenty different majors or programs. Large multi-versities have two or three times as many. The majors themselves, particularly those outside the natural sciences, offer a staggering number of courses: in just four departments (viz., history, philosophy, literature and political science) there was in 1975 at four large universities an average of 447 different undergraduate courses.[8] For the most part, an attempt to explain how all these activities cohere as a unified enterprise - even as vague and multi-formed an enterprise as intellectual inquiry - in general - is eschewed in favor of finding some comfortable niche for the newcomers. Hardly ever does the first year's curriculum offer meaningful orientation to or mediation of the university enterprise, e.g. through a course or program on the nature and interrelationship of disciplines. The initial impression - confirmed in the repeated advice to students to major in whatever interests them - is

that a university is less like a center for communal inquiry than it is like a shoe store: just keep opening the boxes until you find something that looks and feels good.

b) the unmanageability of knowledge. Most academics have made personal adjustments of one sort or another to the explosion of knowledge, but the institution and the curriculum have made no significant adjustment to this overwhelming fact of our times. No principle of selection is institutionally operative, much less visible. Two modes of adjustment, neither of which contributes to the intelligibility of the institution, are operative: (1) courses divide and subdivide into more specialized and fragmented units; and (2) the material covered within a single course expands further and further in pursuit of the ever receding goal of comprehensive coverage.

c) the highly specialized nature of the disciplinary research and departmental course offerings. Specialists narrow their research often for the sake of manageability, often because they are interested only in a small part of a larger problem and often with either the awareness or the expectation that the results will eventually be coordinated with the research of other specialists in allied fields. Such inquiry, despite its many virtues, robs the academically unheritaged undergraduate of the larger context of human problems and activities which might give meaning and intelligibility to the enterprise. Many undergraduates find the results of such inquiries mousy and unsatisfying; and they look upon such teachers, as Edgar Schien noted, as "professional hair-splitters".[9]

d) the remoteness of much of the enterprise from students' interests and experience.

e) the atomistic nature of the courses and the relationships of the faculty. In taking almost any course outside of a rigidly sequenced major, the student is deprived of any support system relative to the importance of what is being done and discussed. There is little or no use to be made of the material in other courses or in the future. The names of the books are not familiar and hardly ever mentioned by professors in other courses. Where there is occasional overlap, it is frequently undercut by the unique interpretations endemic to creative faculty members. The student is left with no interpretation of the educational enterprise other than its being one wherein each faculty member is "doing his own thing". In those all too frequent circumstances where a student does not appreciate a teacher's course, the requirements of that course will be viewed as arbitrary. In a manner utterly destructive to the probability of ideas being taken seriously, taking root, and becoming the basis for fundamental interaction with self, others and environment, there is a de facto reduction of all intellectual endeavor to matters of taste. Enthusiasm on the part of the teacher becomes the most appreciated and effective pedagogical asset. Significance in the atomistic university (as in the nuclear family) must be generated and sustained interpersonally, i.e. without the vital support of larger social systems.[10]

f) the centralized and bureaucratic unreachability of the processes that affects one's life. Passivity is an under-

standable if not intelligent response in a situation where one's efforts have no perceivable impact.

3. Privatization of Academic Experience

The mismatched expectations in the context of a centrifugally expanding and atomistic curriculum results in a privatization of academic experience. For students (and to a lesser degree for faculty) almost every essential dimension of community is undermined. In addition to the aforementioned absence of a coherence-bestowing central purpose or goal, that dimension of community emphasized must in the Comptean tradition, there is the following devastation:

a) Possibilities of common and shared experience are reduced, possibilities of having read and taken seriously the same books or studied with the same professors. When common experience does exist, it is depreciated by the atomistic structure of the academic and social system. What is common academically is not shared and built upon. Theodore Newcomb's analysis of the late sixties captures the sense of wasted potential:

> "Most students develop friendships with others whom they know as persons but not as students (in the literal sense). If peer groups of importance to their members include individuals who are sharing the excitement of academic-intellectual discovery, it is almost a matter of chance. It has become less and less probable during recent decades that students who know each other outside the classroom experience shared excitement in the same classroom.... [F]or the most part, [teachers] now operate in social systems such that whatever excitement they offer tends not to be caught up, reinforced and multiplied by being shared outside the classroom."[11]

b) Relatedly, there is virtually no public dimension in the students' academic experience. Almost all academic interactions are one-on-one relationships with isolated professors in classrooms

widely regarded as private. Often the interaction is nothing more than brief comments on end-of-the-semester examinations or term papers, themselves composed in isolation and without benefit of diverse input. With the exception of discussion-oriented classrooms (which themselves suffer terribly from the atomistic structure of the university), there are no credit-bearing places or times in the curriculum for sustained public reflection, for dialogue and debate, between the faculty and between the students, for obtaining in-process evaluations and feedback from diverse sources, for communal inquiry. Not the agora but the private confessional seems to have inspired the structuring of academic relationships.

c) A sense of a shared fate, essential if the generations are to perceive themselves as having important business together, is likewise undermined. Obviously, the institution conveys little sense of a continuity with the past (despite the existence of departments of history). Less obviously, there is little or no sense of shared dilemma and possibility in the present. There is no gripping and engulfing problematique. The impression is obtained that most problems are unique to the discipline or even to the person. To a large extent, each course and each faculty-student relationship are looked upon as new beginnings without links to past or future activities.

d) The possibility of a common language is lessened. Not only the disciplines themselves but the work of creative faculty members within a single discipline become obscure to the student body and mutually unintelligible to the faculty. That obscurity and mutual unintelligibilty, according to the late Robert Hutchins, may be at its

peak in human history.

e) Remarkably, there is little need for even minimal co-operation in the academic activities of the atomistic university. At least for the students, co-operation is more often than not disfunctional, for they are in competition with each other. Where it is not disfunctional, it may be impossible, because of the mutual unintelligibilty of the disciplinary languages and skills. For the faculty, co-operation is unnecessary for there is in the academic activities of most parts of the atomistic university such little real interdependence, that dimension of community most emphasized in the Durkheimean tradition. It appears that there are no major consequences to other operations of the university if I teach well or poorly. A long-term ecological analysis would discredit that judgment, but in terms of week-to-week and semester-to-semester realities, the individual professor will seldom be confronted (or congratulated) by a colleague from a neighboring department about the quality of his work in the classroom. To the extent that each discipline and each course is an atomistic unit, it makes no perceivable difference to my colleagues what is happening in my classroom. In terms of an analogy from another atomized enterprise: my dentist does not care what my podiatrist is doing, or even if I have one.[12]

B. Foundations of Inter-Generational Communities

The preceding diagnosis of the ills of higher education might yield dozens of more or less intelligent responses. One intelligent response would declare the diverse expectations of students and faculty to be irreconciliable; and means would be sought to confine higher education's efforts to situations of matched expectations, e.g. by cutting back the number of people who attend college or by finding different students whose expectations are more in accord with the faculty's. Such a decision, one that American society may in fact be making, would be viewed by some as a courageous acknowledgement of the mistaken over-extension of higher education. Others, closer in spirit to the heritage of John Dewey and Paul Goodman, would look upon such a decision as a) an unimaginative and ostrich-like acceptance of the sacredness of present structures in higher education; and b) more devastatingly, as a capitulation to and endorsement of the "two societies" analysis of the generations. We would be saying in effect that the skills and knowledge necessary to understand the emerging world a) are already perfectly developed by the disciplinary experts in the university and b) only a small number of young people have the intelligence and disposition to master those skills and thence to participate in the decision-making of the future society.

To reject this exclusionary alternative is to affirm a commitment to academically based intergenerational communities. That commitment is significant to the extent that it is sincere; for it amounts to saying that we are despite our differences still members of a single society, that we have business together, and maybe even that we are concerned about the welfare of each member. However,

without knowing the nature of the community to which a commitment is being made, the commitment is not only ethically rudimentary but dangerously misleading, a function of the emotional connotations and incredible ambiguity of the concept of community. The inclusionary commitment in question might be compatible with the students' set of expectations being regarded as altogether immature and thus in need of being corrected by appropriate methods (which might come closer to indoctrination than to teaching); or with the faculty's set of expectations being regarded as arbitrary and outdated impositions of the powerful and thus in need of being circumvented. The commitment to intergenerational community, in short, although a fundamental first step, tells us next to nothing about the nature of faculty-student relationships and offers us still less in the way of insight for a revitalized institution. We need more specific direction as to the nature of the reform effort.

A second step in clarifying the nature of the academic community in question can be gained in defining the community in terms of the problems it must address and the parameters within which it must operate. What we are seeking are new structures of association, readily intelligible structures of association which engage the intellectual and personal energies of students and faculty in common and shared enterprises, which confirm and work to realize the worthwhile expectations of students and faculty, which effectively challenge the unconstructive and devitalizing practices of students and faculty. Not incidentally, these new communities must operate in a socio-cultural and institutional context which can be counted on for the foreseeable future to be reinforcing centrifugal and privatizing pressures.

These general characteristics of the desired academic structures might be restated in the Deweyan terms of a simplified, balanced, and purified learning environment. The environment must be simplified, or as we would now say 'mediated', in the sense that its features are at first "fairly fundamental" and capable of being understood and responded to by the unitiated. The environment must be balanced in the sense that it contains a sufficient variety of elements to challenge the students to go beyond their personal and intellectual starting points. And the environment must be purified (which is not to say 'pure') in the sense that the unworthy features "are in so far as is possible eliminated."[13] We are looking in other words for a learning environment which is a challenging microcosm of the university's potential, its ideal potential as the locus of inter-generational communities.

Simplifying, balancing and especially purifying an environment each involves value judgments: what is worthwhile, what is essential and what is not worthy of preservation. The judgments, of course, are not judgments about absolute worth, but contextual judgments, about the comparative worth of specific expectations and structures relative to a specific desideratum. Some of the judgments are uncontroversial and easy to make: for example, it is clear that we do not wish to encourage the passivity of the students, the expectation on their part that the only active role in their education belongs to the faculty. But other judgments are not so easily made. How ought we to assess the students' desire for holistic, face-to-face communities, for "pseudo-Gemeinschaften" as some unsympathetic faculty will characterize them? And how ought we to assess the faculty's preference for specialized rather than holistic

inquiry, and for the atomistic structures that facilitate specialized inquiry? Are those disciplinary structures to be regarded as a necessary part of the university? Or are they now to be viewed as outdated by the emergence of an ecological age in which abstract specialization is no longer as innocent as it may once have been?

1. Philosophical Guidelines

Dozens of value judgments or questions of this sort shaped the construction of FLC. Space does not permit ample justification of even the most important ones. Instead, I will just list four judgments, those that might be termed the "philosophical pillars" of FLC, and subsequently weave some measure of explanation into the exposition of each of FLC's major structures.

a. What we are searching for in universities, as in cities, is not a return to the pre-industrial Gemeinschaft nor an uncritical affirmation of the Gesellschaft. We need new structures of association, ones that recognize the numerous limitations of the scale and fragmented structure of the Gesellschaft but which recognize as well the tension between the holistic, homogeneous and hierarchical structures of the Gemeinschaft on the one hand and the central values of modernity, such as diversity, individual freedom, self-determination, and specialized function on the other. The structures we seek are decentralized ones wherein individuality and diversity, the greatest of the resources of both democracy and the university, are daily celebrated. But these structures will build in as well equally routine mechanisms and opportunities wherein diverse experience can be shared, wherein communal inquiry is possible and wherein individuals are provided with support and challenge.

b. The exercise of meaningful freedom in an environment of

diverse options and perspectives is an essential part of a person's education. As serious and self-undermining a problem as is the unintelligibility of the contemporary university, it is not an acceptable response to "consolidate" the university, as some in the general education movement believe, by eliminating or marginalizing the pluralistic perspectives of the sixties or by pounding out some "cultural consensus" which can then be delivered to students in a coherent, pre-processed and pre-packaged form. There are at least three serious objections to such a strategy:

(1) In the Gemeinschaft, shared belief is a condition of membership. In the post-Gemeinschaft world, as Richard Sennett noted, "the essence of urbanity...is that men can act together without the compulsion to be the same."[14] Put more strongly, in a democracy and in a university, disagreement is not a defect; it is both a resource and a challenge.

(2) While genuine as opposed to imposed cultural coherence is obviously desirable, we in the West are only beginning to see outlines of a new culture. At least in the meantime, the most important kind of coherence is not a property of the curriculum per se. Rather it is a product of the interaction of purposive individuals with a set of courses or activities. From the outside point of view of a curriculum planner, a set of five courses -- (say), elementary Spanish, Goethe, introductory ecology, urban development and nutrition -- may appear quite random. But to the purposive individual -- one planning among other things to work with the poor in urban centers of Latin America -- there is at least as much coherence as one might obtain in many departmental majors.

(3) A pre-packaged, "hot" medium--because it confines the students'

role to that of absorption and reaction, systematically discourages the development of freedom, creativity, individual purpose and the assumption of active responsibility for one's own education and life. The proper response to the unmanageability of the current structures is not to take away the freedom of the student. It is to prepare environments that are at once more manageable and challenging; and along with them the support and guidance necessary to act freely and creatively in a pluralistic setting.

c. Specialization, whatever its limitations, cannot be regarded as the fundamental source of the problems we are focusing on. Additionally, specialized expertise of some degree is the normal pre-requisite for meaningful participation in contemporary society. More fundamental a problem, both in the university and in the society's planning efforts, is the absence of vital interaction among the abstractions of the specialists. From this atomistic structure flows the unintelligibility and the dangerous propensity to mistake a part for the whole.

Affirming the value of specialized inquiry and specialized function is not denying the holistic worldview in which most students are comfortable. The worth of specialized abstractions can be seen and finally assessed only in the fuller, original interactive context. And what is said here of disciplinary abstractions needs to be said as well about the abstractions of intellectual inquiry per se, i.e., the separation of the academic and the social, of thought and purposeful action, of cool intelligence and warm emotion -- what Dewey regarded as "the great moral tragedy."[15] Those abstractions diminish the potential impact of disciplined reflection and lose at least their pedagogical usefulness if they are seldom exhibited

in intelligent interaction.

d. It is not possible to change the whole university or the whole of society all at once, as some revolutionaries of the sixties believed. In the face of the staggering evils and imperfections which are choking our human potential, we might sensibly follow either of two paths. We might set up an alternative and separate society, fairly complete in itself and in the purest accord as is possible with our understanding of what the future must be like. And through that alternative society we might simultaneously live fuller lives and (in so far as we were not ignored) serve as a model for the rest of society. Following the second path, we might work within the already existing society, affirming what is worthwhile in it while at the same time inserting dimensions or streams capable of radically challenging the existing society to respond humanely to newly emergent problems. One of the many conditions affecting the impact of this approach is the mix of similarity and dissimilarity of the two streams: the streams must be sufficiently similar to each other to be mutually recognizable as part of a common enterprise but sufficiently dissimilar so as to challenge individuals and institutions to transcend present conceptions and priorities. This second approach, radical and mainstream at the same time, is the one followed by FLC.

2. Partnerships in Discovery

These "philosophical pillars" are far more specific and controversial in character than the bare commitment to intergenerational community with which we began. We are still not yet ready to move to the practical level, i.e., to a description of the structures

of FLC. Yet to be described are the general features of specifically intergenerational communities, for our time, i.e., those conditions which would be most appropriate to an academic enterprise which is attempting to highlight the commonality of generations in the rapidly changing times in which we live. The person most relevant to this dimension of our inquiry is the most articulate and passionate of the defenders of participatory democracy, John Dewey. His philosophy of community is in my judgment the most sophisticated and the most modern of the classic American philosophers. Appreciative by virtue of his small-town up-bringing of the importance of face-to-face communities, he yet refused to confine his understanding of community to spatial propinguity, to sustained interaction, to cooperative efforts toward a common end, or to interdependence. Above all, he would not identify community with common beliefs. For Dewey, the essential focus is not the end-product of common beliefs, but the process by which we effect a humane (i.e., non-manipulative) transformation of basic dispositions. Most important to our study is Dewey's understanding of the preparation of a humane learning environment:

> Setting up conditions which stimulate certain visible and tangible ways of acting is the first step. Making the individual a sharer or a partner in the associated activity so that he feels his success as his success, its failure as his failure, is the completing step. As soon as he is possessed by the emotional attitude of a group, he will be alert to recognize the special ends at which it aims and the means employed to secure success. His beliefs and ideas, in other words, will take a form similar to those of others in the group. He will also achieve pretty much the same stock of knowledge: since that knowledge is an ingredient of his habitual pursuits.[16]

But what might participation as a partner mean for contemporary higher education? Equal partnership seems out of the question, unless we were willing to depreciate and ignore the sharp inequalities of

knowledge and experience which exist in intergenerational communities; or to focus the communities on our academically contentless equality as human beings, an important but inappropriate basis for an academic community. We might consider thinking of students as junior partners or as silent partners in the faculty's efforts, but such conceptions have the potential of degenerating into the platitudinous commitment to community with which we began. The concept of participation as a partner will take on meaning as a function of the conditions we set up, i.e., in relation to the tasks or business which the community is pursuing and in relation to the nature and significance of the roles of the diversely equipped members. What should be clear from Dewey's analysis is that the partnerships will be unvital and ineffective in transforming basic dispositions if the younger or newer members do not <u>themselves</u> perceive the business as important -- something starkly different from an arbitrary matter of taste -- and if they do not themselves see their own roles as important. And it may have come to pass -- I am not sure -- that a large segment of young people cannot perceive the task as important unless it is obvious that the problem must be solved and that it cannot in any way be solved without their involvement.

The thinker of the sixties who intuitively understood all of this was Marshall McLuhan. In the phenomenon of the teach-in, he saw the emergence of the learning medium appropriate to our age. Characteristically ignoring the academic content of the teach-in and dismissing the issue of Vietnam as a red herring, he focused his Olympian gaze on the intergenerational medium:

> The teach-in represents an attempt to shift education from instruction to discovery....It is a big dramatic reversal.... As with the Hawthorne experiment, its strategy is to use the

> audience and the student body as work force -- one of the great things that is happening under electric conditions....
>
> The audience as work force has unlimited possibilities. Suppose we were to brief fifty million people on some extremely difficult problem facing top-level scientists. Inevitably, some dozens, hundreds, of the fifty million audience would see instantly through any type of opaque problems, even on the highest scientific levels....There are enormous possibilities for using an audience as work force in scientific research or any other type of research. It is simply that we insist on beaming instructions at them instead of allowing them to participate in the action of discovery.[17]

Clearly, McLuhan was proposing a paradigm shift in education away from unilateral transmission to participatory discovery. As with all paradigm shifts, it is possible to misperceive the phenomenon as a special case manageable under the old paradigm. Allowing students to discover things for themselves, and to participate in the discoveries of the faculty, one might object, is a pervasive feature of all good teaching in higher education. Discussion-oriented teachers foster such discovery; good lecturers leave students with unanswered questions; and even routinized homework assignments force students to discover rather than just record.

In reply: There is, it is true, a kind of teaching which some will judge much preferable to closed-ended lecturing in which the students are led by the faculty to discover things for themselves. Unquestionably, there is value in such methods. The point of McLuhan's observations relative to the concerns of this essay, however, is different in two essential respects:

a) The problems or questions which McLuhan would have us address, as is the case in an original scientific experiment, are of such a kind that no one knows the answer. The inquiry is "real" in the sense that all participants realize that they are collectively searching for and forging the only answers that can be expected.

Different levels of skill and knowledge exist, to be sure; but the answers have not yet been formed. Such inquiry is the genuine Socratic method, founded as it was on the perception of communal inquiry as the only hope of overcoming individual ignorance.

b)While the paradigm of discovery-teaching can be and is used within a single discipline with properly prepared students, (e.g. graduate students participating in the research of their mentors) the concerns of this essay suggest the exploration of much broader use of the paradigm. Our concern is to render the enterprise of the university intelligible and to engage the energies of a generation of students currently unattracted to participate in the disciplinary research of their professors. In combining Dewey and McLuhan, we are searching for conditions wherein the vitality of the discovery paradigm is wedded to an inter-generational enterprise in which faculty will contribute their expertise and students will see themselves as significant partners in inquiries which they themselves feel are important.

It is not clear to me if McLuhan was proposing a total shift from the paradigm of transmission to the paradigm of discovery. His assessment of the ordinary classroom environment as a "hot", outdated, classificatory medium suggests to me that he would have favored a total shift. Our "philosophical pillars" lettered (c) and (d) suggest not a total shift but the insertion of the discovery paradigm into the life of the university as an interacting and complementary paradigm. The goal would be to bring the specialized disciplines and their transmissible knowledge into vital relation with each other in the context of inter-generationally important issues.

C. FLC: The Complementary Paradigm

Many different institutional responses might be devised, all compatible with the preceding analysis. In expositing the complex structures of the learning communities at Stony Brook, I will make explicit connections between the structures and the analysis, wherever it seems that the connection might not be obvious. I will place the primary emphasis in the exposition on those structures which are most directly curricular and pedagogical. Other structural features of FLC, important supportive extra-curricular and institutional arrangements, will be mentioned but not elaborated.

In terms of curriculum and pedagogy, a cluster of five interacting structures constitute FLC's learning environment: federated courses, a new kind of course called a Program Seminar, new kinds of teachers called Master Learners and Mumford Fellows, an inadequately named "Core Course", and interdisciplinary independent study projects. Those knowledgeable about higher education will recognize two or three of the structures to have been employed elsewhere - e.g. in Evergreen's Coordinated Studies Program or Minnesota's Cross-Disciplinary Program or SUNY Binghamton's Integrated Semester Program or UCLA's Lower Division Program or Madison's Integrated Liberal Studies Program, but one or two of the structures and the entire cluster are, we believe, unique to Stony Brook.

1. Federation

The academic and social foundation of an FLC program is a federation of six or nine thematically related but disciplinarily diverse courses into two or three consecutive and cumulative integrated semesters. The themes are somewhat urgent contemporary issues, e.g. "Technology, Values and Society" or "World Hunger" or "Social and Ethical Issues in the Life Sciences." The courses are already existing dsiciplinary courses from the immense Stony Brook curriculum.

For example, the program on "World Hunger" was created from existing courses of the departments of philosophy ("Contemporary Moral Problems"), ecology and evolution ("The Ecology of Feast and Famine"), economics ("The Economics of Developing Countries"), history ("The History of Latin America Through Film"), psychology ("The Psychology of Eating and Drinking"), and political science/ Africana Studies ("Politics of Developing Areas".) The programs are offered as academic minors, advertised as complementary to the majors of the participating departments, and spoken of as opportunities to expand horizons and to give focus and depth to one's career choice.[18]

Federation is only the first of FLC's five structural innovations, but relative to the eclipse of academic community, it is the most important. Others of FLC's innovations have attracted more attention, for reasons of more obvious novelty; but federation of the sort described here is the necessary condition for the creation of vital academic communities. Additionally, while federation has not been separated for testing purposes from the cluster of five innovations, seemingly many important consequences flow solely from the federation. Hence, we need to explore a bit further this first structure of FLC, attending to its nature, its relationship to the preceding analysis, and its consequences. In the elaboration which follows, I will be addressing in turn three distinguishable elements within the federation: the focus on contemporary issues, the interdisciplinary or holistic context created by the federation, and the use of already existing courses.

a) Focus on Contemporary Issues

(1) The emphasis on contemporary issues bridges generational gaps. Students can understand much more readily what academic inquiry is about when it is so focused, especially in holistic and interdisciplinary contexts like FLC. Presumably, this was what we meant by "relevance" in the sixties.

The focus on contemporary issues should not be understood as if it excluded or even depreciated the study of history. The foci of FLC programs

have always been such as to highlight the importance of studying the history of the problem.[19]

(2) The contemporary issues in question are in varying degrees the very kind which McLuhan had in mind: urgent, open-ended questions for which the experts do not have answers. Additionally, the issues are inter-generational - they focus the tools of the faculty on the problem-filled world which the next generation will inhabit (not to say 'inherit'). We are not talking about merely interesting contemporary themes - like "The Influence of Joyce on Contemporary Writers & Film Makers" - but urgent issues that are engulfing us, e.g. genetic engineering, Three Mile Island and its implications, the poisoning of our food and water, the women's movement, the computer revolution, the re-assessment of human potential, etc.

(3) The contemporary issues chosen by FLC are ones which cannot be adequately addressed within the framework of a single discipline or division of the university. While the structures of FLC might prove useful in a less inclusive context, one of our fundamental concerns is to render the university intelligible. Hence, almost all FLC programs have drawn courses from the three traditional divisions of the university, thus creating the desired microcosm of the university's resources. After FLC's guided introduction to those resources, students should be able to construct their own federated programs.

b) The Interdisciplinary Context

(1) The federation creates the possibility (which is actualized in ways that will subsequently be described) of shared experience between faculty and students. Each of the faculty understands the problem under consideration primarily in terms of one discipline, broad though that might be. The students approach the problem in the light of several disciplines. Gradually, the fac-

ulty come to look upon the students as intellectually interesting, perhaps even as junior colleagues.

(2) In a real community, the members know what each member is doing and how that activity relates to one's own and to the whole enterprise. This awareness on the part of the federated faculty, vital to its participation as learners in the community, is developed in a weekly Faculty Seminar which precedes by one semester the offering of the federated courses and through detailed notes on each course which circulate weekly as the courses are being offered. While still preserving the integrity of its own courses, the faculty is thus enabled to refer the material and perspectives of one course to others that the students are taking. In effect, each FLC program operates as a comparatively autonomous educational unit.

(3) The federation of disciplinary courses to address a contemporary issue decreases the perceived arbitrariness of the university's enterprise and provides an intelligible whole in relationship to which the parts make sense. While FLC students do not develop even undergraduate-level expertise in all or most of the disciplines federated into a program, they intuitively understand major aspects of what disciplines are and how they relate to each other.

(4) For the most part, the federated courses complement each other. Occasionally, they come into more or less direct conflict, as when someone from literature suggests that a colleague is psychologizing a problem, or when someone from sociology objects to a federated colleague's apparent approval of a Monsanto pamphlet on the role of chemicals in our lives. In the presence of multiple and conflicting authority figures, students then perceive two important things: that they cannot wholly rely on the judgment of the experts; and that the disciplines, however complementary at some times, do not fit neatly back together like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle.

(5) The problem-focused federation offers a horizontal coherence that complements the vertical coherence of the departments. At the outset, the courses have a thematic coherence (which varies greatly in degree) which is supplemented as the students' own interest in sub-themes of the program generates connections between courses that none of the professors has seen. Some FLC professors in certain disciplines regard this kind of horizontal and personal focus as more valuable and reliable than normal patterns of departmental preparation. Preliminary studies of the academic performance of FLC students in upper-level classes for which they do not have the usual departmental pre-requisites do indicate achievement of an outstanding sort. But additional studies are in progress, none of which unfortunately will be able to separate out the effect of federation alone.

c) Already Existing Courses

The use of already existing courses, something that surprises many visitors to FLC, deserves more than passing consideration. We had the capacity, given the FIPSE grant, to generate entirely new courses. We rejected that course of action for the following reasons:

(1) A jettisoning of already existing courses would be altogether inconsistent with the diagnosis of the institution's ills in terms of atomization rather than specialization. The existing courses are by no means perfect; but neither are they fundamentally flawed. Additionally, specially created courses and programs which are not interacting with the central research and teaching interests of the regular faculty are courting institutional marginality for themselves and creating a refuge for their students.[20]

(2) Aspiring as we did to effect lasting change in the institution, and eschewing the possibility of total change, it seemed wiser to engage the

faculty in terms of its central research and teaching interests. Activities generated because of external financing, closer as they might be to someone's educational ideals, would likely disappear when the external funding dried up. Like unusually honest conversations with a hitchhiker, such activities would not likely impact on long-standing priorities.

(3) Using already existing courses does not imply a total and unquestioning acceptance of the courses as they are. We start with already existing courses. Some of those courses, for good or ill, remain exactly as they are. Others get transformed beyond recognition, in response to one or another of the several and diverse feedback mechanisms within FLC (to be described shortly). The courses which undergo change sufficiently outnumber those which do not to have led my Stony Brook colleague, Lee Miller, to describe FLC's emphasis on already existing courses as a fiction. An emphasis on already existing interests might be more accurate. Nonetheless, the courses are already there in the catalog when we start. And usually it is one of the persons who regularly teaches the course who is asked to join the learning community.[21]

(4) The use of already existing courses has important implications for students as well as faculty. The federated courses are of the same kind if not identical with courses the students might have taken anyway to satisfy distribution requirements or the requirements of their majors. Although FLC disrupts the plans of students, they need not feel as they often did in the sixties, that participation in an educational experiment places them out of the mainstream of the university and wastes time with respect to what will for the foreseeable future be regarded as far more important business, viz fulfilling the requirements of one's major and thus preparing for a career.

2. The Program Seminar.

The second of FLC's cluster of structural innovations is the variously titled "Program Seminar" or "Meta-Seminar" or "Learning Seminar". Built atop the

three federated courses of each semester, and led (in ways to be specified subsequently) by the Master Learner and Mumford Fellow, the Seminar is most simply described as a discussion-session with three rather than one course as its academic base. As in the traditional one-course discussion-session, reading material additional to that of the "parent course" is seldom introduced. The federated courses of the semester are absolute co-requisites for participation. Public reflection on common experience is thus made possible.

Registration in the Seminar is limited to 35 students per section, with multiple sections as needed. These students are enrolled as a subset of the total enrollment in the federated courses. The organizational relationship of the federated courses to the Program Seminar is illustrated in the diagram on the following page. I will describe the multiple purposes of the Seminar first in terms of academic operations and then in terms of programmatic and institutional functions.

a. Academic Goals and Operations.

The major academic business of the Seminar is the integration of the perspectives and materials of the three federated courses and the development through dialogue of each student's individual perspective on the theme or sub-themes of the program. After a number of weeks in which Master Learners and Mumford Fellows model interdisciplinary thinking and integrative responses to the material of the federated courses, the students gradually assume responsibility for the conduct of the Seminar. That responsibility includes choice of topic, designation of relevant material from the federated courses, opening presentations and facilitation of discussion. An uncommon amount of assistance is provided prior to a session as well as extensive evaluative feedback afterwards. Throughout the Seminar, more individualized intellectual activity occurs in journals, multi-staged papers and lengthy term papers. Master Learners and Mumford Fellows provide extensive feedback to the students, pressing them to gain optimal benefit from the federated courses and providing

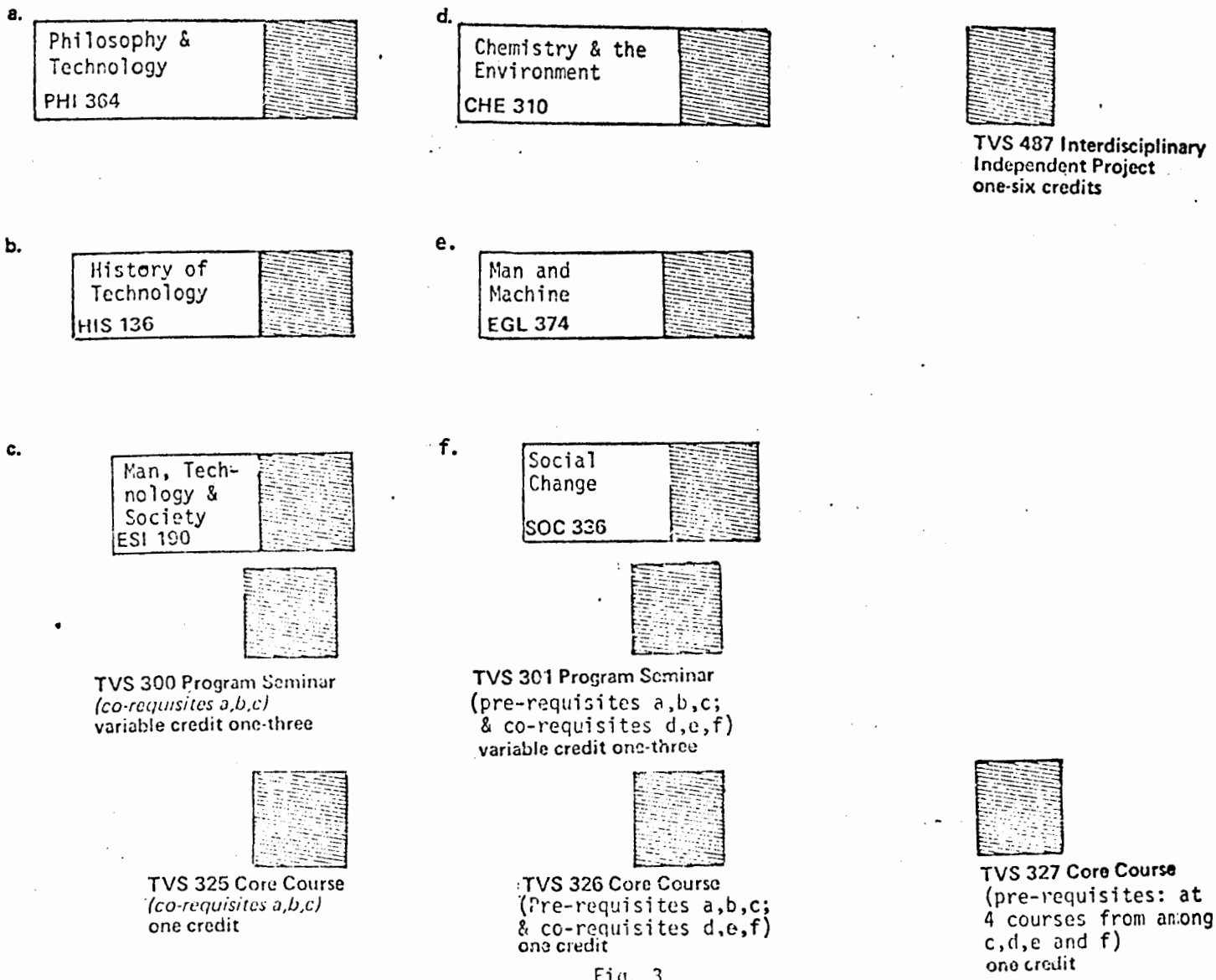

Fig. 3

KEY: The large rectangles (a,b,c,d,e,f) represent the six departmental course federated into the TVS program. The shaded areas represent TVS students. In the large courses, both TVS students and the general student population are enrolled. The smaller squares represent the unique components of the TVS program: the Program Seminar taught by the Master Learner, the team-taught Core Course, and the Interdisciplinary

assistance as each defines his/her own interests and perspectives within the theme of the program. These individual products feed back into the more public activities of the seminar. Students thus participate in, indeed they are co-determiners of their curriculum.

The activities of different seminars vary greatly, a function of different features in the federated courses and diverse student interests and difficulties. A few examples may be worth more than the abstract statement of goals and operating mechanisms:

(1) In One FLC program, students responded incredulously to the engineer's claim that technology had never solved a major human problem without seriously offsetting side-effects. Puzzled students considered seemingly obvious counter-examples, e.g. eyeglasses, only to have them shot down by other students. Professors in philosophy and history were consulted in class and outside, and eventually the question was brought to the Program Seminar where several sub-groups of students were asked to agree on the best examples from history which confirmed the engineer's claim and the strongest counter-examples. In the plenary session, the group assessed the examples and began to discuss (at the philosopher's suggestion) the concept of "solution" which underlies the claim.

(2) Professors in the program on "World Hunger" were employing very different concepts of exploitation: an ecological one based on the carrying capacity of the land, an economic one based on the amount of return necessary to encourage re-investment, and a philosophical one based on the non-instrumental nature of the human being. The three concepts were compared in the seminar, the results reported to the professors, and a modification was made of the final examination in economics to invite different perspectives on the subject matter.

(3) Students in a particular FLC program were evaluating the contribution of one federated course in starkly polar ways, a function in

part of the disciplinary prejudices of some students and in part of the unusual teaching style of the professor. A panel-debate was set up in the Seminar, pitting three students (including the Mumford Fellow) who most appreciated the course, against three who found it worthless. The rest of the students mediated, pressing the panelists to be open to what the others were saying. Valuable insights were gained, among them a greater awareness of the kind of student who would have difficulty with courses of this sort and of what might be done about them.

(4) Without being coaxed to do so, students frequently are on the lookout for more effective means to become involved with course material. The FLC program on "Social and Ethical Issues in the Life Sciences" elevated field-trips to a central role in this enterprise. Participation in a highly emotional debate on abortion in a nearby school district and witnessing a commitment hearing at a psychiatric hospital became "real-world" bases for reflecting in the seminar on the material and perspectives of the federated courses.

The academic business of the Seminar is made more demanding and more rewarding because of the diversity of the students. Students in the Seminar represent many different disciplinary preferences, a function of the trans-divisional character of FLC's themes. Students from thirteen different majors enrolled in one program. When there is more than one section of a seminar in a particular FLC program, disciplinary diversity is the primary consideration in assigning students to sections. Participation in a communal inquiry in which progress depends upon the diverse members contributing specialized skills (after the manner of the faculty), has enormous impact on the student. In the context of focused interdisciplinary inquiry, students look upon the disciplinary diversity as a great asset and come to value the student community as supplementing the faculty as a learning resource, in much the manner that graduate

students in a single department regard themselves. They also perceive themselves differently, integrating their own reactions to course material and their own self-perceptions with the responses of a diverse community which is continually but indirectly providing supportive and challenging feedback regarding one's own contribution.

Disciplinary diversity in the Seminar (and in the program as a whole) is supplemented by other kinds of diversity: learning styles, political and ideological commitments, and (to a degree that is less than desirable) racial, ethnic, generational and gender differences. Students learn to treat diversity of perspective as a tool for learning, as is reflected in their growth in open-mindedness, tolerance for ambiguity and maturing comfortableness with conflict.

Responsibility for building and sustaining such a diverse and responsive community is itself an enormously educative experience. To be successful, students must develop listening and presentational skills, empathy, tolerance of ambiguity and conflict, the ability to learn from and to cooperate with persons whose opinions are radically different from their own and whom they may not like, plus integrative habits of mind. In terms of these skills, one might define a major part of the literacy most appropriate to the democratic and highly complex society in which we live. And, as educators like Dewey and Joseph Hart and Arthur Morgan have been trying to teach us, such literacy need not be taught, in any traditional sense of that word. Such literacy flows naturally and easily from meaningful participation in task-oriented, pluralistic communities. In such communities, that literacy is functional and valuable, whereas it is frequently neither in the atomistic classrooms of the transmission-paradigm.[22]

b. Programmatic and Institutional Function

In addition to its directly academic purposes, the Program Seminar functions as a reliable cybernetic mechanism for the program. Many reactions

to the courses which might never surface or be taken seriously elsewhere are discussed and evaluated in the Seminar. Students are aware that the Master Learner is monitoring teaching effectiveness, so they themselves are inclined to let fewer things pass without comment. Additionally, the comparative context of the Seminar's activities usually involve explicit and implicit evaluations of the material of the federated courses. Students might never tell one of the federated faculty that they think his/her course misconceives the nature of ethical decision-making, but that can emerge in the Program Seminar as it becomes obvious that the students make decisions in very different ways and do not take the professor's approach seriously. In the seminar, the Master Learner and Mumford Fellow are concerned to know why a course is not being taken seriously. The explanation may be an intellectual one or it may be an emotional one - e.g., a feeling that the professor just doesn't care about students. The response will be listened to; and if it is justified and widespread, an appropriate means will be found to communicate the information to the professor. The potential for improving the teaching at the institution is, of course, enormous. The impact on FLC students, however, is almost independent of a response to their reactions: they know that they are being listened to, they know that their feelings will not be dismissed a priori as irrelevant, and they learn in time (partly through the sharply diverse reactions which community members have to any style of teaching) that effective teaching is more difficult than they first supposed.

The idea for the Seminar originated in the awareness that shared residence could not be relied upon as a basis for vital academic community among the students. Opening up reflective spaces in the curriculum for students with common academic experience allows genuine academic community to flourish. That community can justify itself in purely academic terms - e.g. by the work of its faculty and its graduates. Along with those developments, however, must be noted the striking impact of the community on the personal

lives of its members and on their commitment to the institution. Space does not permit even a summary of those personal changes, only a brief word about the impact of this sort of community on the students' lives is possible.[23]

For many students (as would be the case for most people in American society) the Seminar is their first experience of genuine community, maybe even their first experience of any sort of community. For the vast majority, it is an engaging and exhilirating experience: they receive both encouraging support and challenging feedback for their fledgling ideas; they learn to provide that to others; they test different self-conceptions in a relatively safe environment; they learn about the difficulties of communicating in a diverse environment; they learn to take the needs of the group into account; and they feel the warmth and conviviality of sharing a wealth of good and bad academic experiences with friends. All of this in a context where they are beginning to think of themselves as persons with intellects and with valuable contributions to make to a troubled society. For the vast majority, it is a valuable and maturing experience.

3. Master Learners and Mumford Fellows.

The third of FLC's structural innovations is a new kind of teaching role, that of the Master Learners and Mumford Fellows. Occupants of these positions, almost always regular members of the faculty or well advanced graduate students at Stony Brook, are "masters" in two senses: they have mastered one discipline to a degree that has earned the respect of their colleagues; and they are sufficiently accomplished as teachers to have earned the respect of both students and colleagues. They are "learners" in the sense that in FLC they become full-time students again, signing on for an extended course of study of a contemporary issue in which they have prior interest but no prior expertise. The Master Learner and Mumford Fellow (henceforth referred to as ML/MF) do everything the undergraduates do: they actually take all the federated courses, they write the exams and term papers and they are graded. Released by the university from all normal teaching responsibilities, the ML/MF's only teaching assignment is in the Program Seminar where, as already indicated, they provide assistance in integrating the perspectives of the federated courses and extensive response to the developing ideas of their co-students.

The ML/MF's are essentially builders of academic community. They strive to actualize the intergenerational community made possible by the structures of FLC. Full analysis of these complex, ambiguous and multi-faceted roles is beyond the scope of this essay, as is a reflection on parallel innovations in other atomized institutions of our society.[24] For our purposes, a slightly annotated enumeration of just six dimensions of the role will have to suffice.

a) ML/MF's serve as role models for the students, embodying all the values which ideally animate the university: love of learning, the benefits of reflection and of critical thinking, the process of disciplinary inquiry, empirical orientation, open-ness, and the joys of discovery, to name but a few. Frequently, taken-for-granted aspects of the ML/MF's life, e.g. relating course material to a television program or to a course taken in the previous semester

or to personal problems, open a student's eyes to the meaning of the reflective life.

b) The ML/MF's are mediators or interpreters. They interpret the expectations and behavior of faculty and students to each other, pressing each party to transcend initial caricatures and to respond to what is worthwhile in the other's expectations.

c) The ML/MF's are integrators. They circulate a weekly report to the federated faculty, calling attention to agreements, disagreements, connections, and lacunae. In this report as well as in the Faculty Seminar, they grope for a common language and for a common understanding of the issues that divide the faculty.

d) ML/MF's are feedback mechanisms to the federated faculty regarding the (in)effectiveness of their teaching. Such feedback is more differentiated (with respect to different kinds of students), more empirically based, more individualized, more long-range, more credible, more comparative and more extensive than a teacher is likely to receive in all of his/her career.

e) The ML/MF's are midwives. Comparably barren in the area of the program's thematic focus as was Socrates, they are not able to transmit scores of heavily researched ideas. Like Socrates again, they are aware of what we do not know and they are in search of insight and intelligent responses. One of their primary obligations is to assist in the development and evaluation of the students' own ideas. In case the image of midwifery is not clear: the ML/MF's are providing students the support and guidance to utilize freedom intelligently in a pluralistic setting.

f) The ML/MF's are facilitators. In the Program Seminar they attempt to maximize the intellectual potential of the community by improving the listening and presentational skills of the students, by identifying resources

and opportunities for learning, and by placing students with similar or complementary interests in touch with each other.

4. The Core Course.

The fourth of FLC's five structural innovations is the inappropriately titled "Core Course". The print-out of the Registrar lists all the federated faculty as the teachers of this course. It would be more accurate to list all the participants - both faculty and students - as co-teachers and co-learners in the course.

Nowhere in FLC are the intergenerational partnerships more visible or functional than in the Core Course. The most striking and unusual feature of the Core Course is its meeting schedule. The course is divided into three one-credit segments, usually meets just once a month and is spread out over three semesters. This unusual structure, somewhat dictated by the discovery-oriented character of FLC themes, supports the academic and programmatic goals of the Core Course.

At the outset of the Core Course, the federated faculty have responsibility for the Core Course meetings. Their goals are threefold: (a) to illumine by sustained interdisciplinary inquiry the central themes and issues of the program; (b) to exhibit the nature and relationship of the federated disciplines; and (c) to model for the students how persons skilled in one discipline integrate the sometimes complementary and sometimes conflicting perspectives of other disciplines and ideologies. Topics of Core Course meetings - like the themes of FLC programs - are ideally broad enough as to require multi-disciplinary analysis, contemporary in the sense that students will recognize the importance of the issues, and somewhat controversial. The faculty of the "Cities,

Utopias & Environments" program, for example, focused attention on shopping malls and each drew up a list of questions which seemed most important for understanding the phenomenon. The economic function of the mall as a major employer of the region, its socio-psychological function as a place for suburban young people to congregate, its destructive impact, aesthetically and ecologically, upon the wider environment, were among the many dimensions discussed. In another meeting of a different program, the opening panel focused on various dimensions of life-sustaining technologies.

In terms of procedures, the Core Course meetings usually open with a panel presentation, followed by small-group discussions, and then a plenary-session summation. Two faculty members lead each discussion group, drawing upon the students' greater familiarity with the material of the federated courses to illumine the issue under discussion. When appropriate, the faculty leaders will contribute their own expertise or draw upon the often superior expertise of students in fields far from their own. Ideally speaking, the nature of the questions and of the discussions is such that the diversity of perspectives is experienced by all as an inexhaustible resource.

As the Core Course proceeds through its multi-semester life-span, a very important change takes place. Gradually, students with special contributions to make to the understanding of a particular topic become part of the opening panels; and eventually the entire opening presentation is made by the students. Not quite literally, faculty and students exchange roles. Symbolically, the exchange (which all participants know of in advance) foresignifies a changed relationship between the generations and underscores the academic meaning of the partnership. Pedagogically, the exchange has two important functions: it requires that the students project and then assume at some point

a non-passive role for themselves; and secondly, it focuses the efforts of faculty and students on a competency-outcome which is useful throughout the program (but especially in the Seminar): after a year in FLC, students should be able to put together a coherent presentation which draws on the perspectives of the federated disciplines to illumine a contemporary issue. But the exchange has more than symbolic and pedagogical justification. Ideally speaking, the exchange is justified as well in terms of merit: the younger partners in the inquiry have been studying (say) world hunger virtually full-time for over a year in the light of at least six disciplines. Most of the federated faculty, even with the best of efforts, will remain confined in the perspective of one or two disciplines. The students, like the ML/MF themselves, should have acquired a range of information and insights that is superior in an interdisciplinary context to that of the federated faculty. And hence it is altogether appropriate toward the end of a program that faculty and students should exchange roles. Lest the exchange remain merely symbolic or strategic, a simple criterion of success is employed: the federated faculty should be stimulated by and learning from the presentations of at least the good students in ways that the faculty themselves will judge to be interesting and valuable.[25]

5. The last in the cluster of FLC's curricular structures is the Interdisciplinary Independent Study Project. Although these projects are important features of the FLC curriculum, they require but passing mention in this essay, since they are the least novel and the least complex of FLC's structures. Following completion of roughly 18 credits in an FLC program, students may elect to work on a project of their choosing with two of the federated

faculty. The length and intensity of the projects vary significantly and may involve an off-campus "field" dimension when appropriate. Many students will choose the professor in their major field to facilitate transferring the credits to the requirements of their majors.

The organization of this essay around the five curricular structures has ignored crucial extra-curricular dimensions of community-building, e.g. block-scheduling and the creation of public meeting places. The exposition has also tended to isolate the academic dimension from the holistic environment of FLC. An exposition in terms of the daily and weekly experience of the FLC student would be needed to provide a sense of the interaction of the academic and the social and the personal and the generally extra-curricular. Since space limitations preclude a second lengthy exposition, two brief examples will have to suffice as images of the FLC experience:

a. The first example, in the opinion of my colleague Lynne Mitchnick, captures the essence of FLC. An attempt to acquire an FLC lounge for use between classes had succeeded after two years and 31 memoranda, but a request that the lounge be re-painted seemed to be triggering another 2-year battle. The students decided to paint the lounge themselves. Some faculty donated the paint, the equipment, moral support and a bit of muscle. Sandwiches and refreshments were brought in to keep the effort going all day long. As the students painted and ran up and down the ladders for cokes, they talked about their courses and about the sociobiology debate which they had recently encountered. They talked of other things, of course; but easily and naturally their common academic experience kept bob-

bing up in their interactions.

b. The second example is almost a left-handed compliment to the engaging nature of the FLC socio-academic environment. Susan, a non-FLC student in a philosophy class, burst into tears when she saw the take-home examination. "I'll never be able to do this," she cried. Linda, an FLC student, tried to comfort her by promising to help. "But you can't help me," Susan said; "you're not a philosophy major and you hate this course." "It doesn't matter," replied Linda. "I'm in FLC and you can't help learning the stuff even if you don't want to."

D. Concluding Reflections

FLC is by no means a total success, neither with respect to the huge social problems which energized reformers of the sixties nor with respect to the much smaller slice of problems which it set out to address. With respect to the former, the decision to work within the framework of already existing courses and personnel places severe limitations on what might be done: to take just one example, there are far too few women and minorities and Third World citizens on the faculty to create a truly diverse set of perspectives. And with respect to the latter: while we may have been impatient to have expected otherwise, FLC is only now beginning to refine its awareness of the resources and the problems associated with the kind of curriculum all of higher education will soon be involved with, namely one which centrally addresses change, complexity, and diversity. Our tasks remain challenging.

Nevertheless, in terms of impact upon students, upon faculty, and upon Stony Brook and other institutions of higher education, FLC has enjoyed considerable success. The implications of that

success are many and diverse. Without attempting to be exhaustive, I will conclude this essay with a list of what seems to me some of the more important implications:

1. In times frequently characterized as centrifugal and anarchistic, it is important that we point to places resisting the prophecy of Yeats. In FLC, as elsewhere, the center is still holding and inter-generational communities are not only holding but multiplying.

2. It is not necessary to turn our backs on the values of the sixties in order to have a more coherent curriculum or a common learning experience.

3. The only significant reforms in higher education are ones which change at least partially the atomistic, transmission-dominated medium. If that medium does not change, as it is not changing in the general education movement, little will be accomplished. If it does change, all sorts of energies will be released and many people who were written off as deadwood or as unmotivated will be engaged and renewed. The general direction of significant reform in higher education is that of building academic communities.

4. Relatedly, much of the passivity, illiteracy, lack of motivation and creativity which faculty complain about in their students is structurally induced by an unimaginative curriculum. Opening up spaces in a discovery-oriented curriculum invites and rewards the creative involvement of students. And the literacy appropriate to the situation develops naturally.[26]

5. The commitments of the industrialized West to both democracy and technological expertise have always been in tension. Our increasingly complex world exacerbates that tension and tempts us to abandon either the expertise or the participation of citizens in all

the decisions that affect our lives. FLC is one curricular model in which the expertise is relied upon to illumine complex problems in a context where a) its strengths and weaknesses will be obvious; and b) citizens are being educated to develop their own perspectives.

6. The one-half to three-quarters of a student's credits earned outside the major seldom cohere meaningfully, seldom relate to one's major interests, and hardly ever effect that expansion of horizons that is sought by Pass/No Credit options and distributed requirements. Outside the major, one's education is a random affair. FLC offers one model wherein a significant portion of one's non-major study can be coherent, meaningful and interest-expanding--even in subject areas which one had dismissed as unworthy of study. A specialized field of expertise may be necessary for meaningful participation in contemporary society, but our education need not constrict our potential and our identity to that one field.

7. Relatedly, the dichotomy between special and general education is a misleading one. The generally educated person ought to be defined, in my judgment, not in terms of some abstract skills or agreed upon exposures, but in terms of an experienced relationship between specialized knowledge and its function in a complex and diverse world. Educated persons of this mold are accomplished in one discipline and understand its strengths and weaknesses, most particularly the inherent partiality of its viewpoint. They have moved from passivity to active moral commitment in a relativistic world. They have immersed themselves in a communal, interdisciplinary study of one problem of social magnitude and have learned thereby the value--indeed, the necessity, of seeking many and diverse perspectives. They have developed skills in understanding and in inte-

grating these diverse perspectives. They will themselves be able to conduct with their colleagues and to contribute their own expertise to subsequent social issues as the need arises in their lives. Tolerance of ambiguity, empathic understanding, a sense of partiality, openness to growth through dialogue in plural communities--all those things have become so important to them that a communal inquiry is a major source of joy in their lives.

8. Both economies and diseconomies of scale exist in large universities (and small colleges as well). Among the many economies are those which allow FLC to utilize already existing courses to address one contemporary issu after another with no permanent or costly administrative structure or visiting faculty. The familiar diseconomies -- impersonality, non-engagement, lack of community -- can all be addressed without withdrawing into a small and allegedly more humane enclave. FLC is a dialectic of the large and the small, incorporating the strengths and avoiding the weaknesses of each scale.

9. Top-notch faculty and career-conscious students in an upwardly mobile, research-oriented university will still participate in experimental and demanding programs. The variety of institutional inducements for participants has not been described in this essay. The essential inducement, the one which makes the others effective, is -- I believe -- the continuity of the activity with one's major commitments. For faculty this means the previously described utilization of already existing courses. For students, it means the incorporation of FLC programs into distribution requirements and the acceptance of FLC programs by eight or ten departments toward the requirements of the major.

Notes to Inter-generational Communities...

1. The first report of the Institutional Self Study was called Stony Brook in Transition (Stony Brook, 1974). The Eclipse of Academic Community, (Stony Brook, 1975), written by the author of the present essay, was one of several follow-up studies.

2. Major portions of FLC have been adopted by LaGuardia Community College, Queens College, SUNY at Plattsburgh, and the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Two or three other colleges, all small liberal arts institutions, are currently studying the ELC model.

3. FLC has attracted a great deal of national attention, resulting in several previous publications about the enterprise. Each of these previous publications, however, has addressed questions which were both significant abstractions from the complexity of FLC and quite different from the broader concerns which generated it. FLC, as will be seen, sheds important light on problems of general and liberal education, core curricula, faculty development and inter-disciplinarity, but none of these concerns surfaced as a central problematique in the studies which preceded the birth of FLC. The context created by this conference and this anthology, recalling as it does the turmoil of the sixties and early seventies out of which FLC sprung, appears for the moment to be a most appropriate and congenial one for the understanding of the novelty and continuing relevance of FLC. However, those other contexts are legitimate and fruitful ones which illumine different aspects of the complexity of FLC. For this reason (in addition to the limitations of space), references will be made at several points throughout this essay to previously published work which elaborates a particular point.

Several people have provided significant assistance to me in framing this essay. Participants in a conference on the implications of FLC, held at Stony Brook in June 1981, all called attention to the need for an explanation of FLC less wedded to the context of Stony Brook and more rooted in a theory of academic community. In particular I wish to acknowledge the help of Susan Bordo, Lynda Glennon, Anita Landa, John Lane, Robert Marcus, Lee Miller, Marjorie Miller, Kenneth MacKenzie, Lynne Mitchnick, Steve Olsen, Robert Smith, and Marshall Spector.

4. Quoted by Paul Goodman, Compulsory Mis-education and The Community of Scholars. (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), p. 277. Goodman's reference on this quotation is incorrect, as is its attribution to Theodore Newcomb. The more likely author was John Bushnell.

5. Ibid.

6. The concept of mismatched expectations was invented by Laing, Phillipson and Cooper in Interpersonal Perception (London: Tavistock Publications, 1966). They used it for the analysis of miscommunication in marriages. I elaborated by concept and applied it to higher education in my "The Incomplete Revolution: A Reassessment of Recent Reforms in Higher Education" (Cross Currents, Vol. XXIV, No. 4 Winter 1975), pp. 423-443. In those pages, the description of the mismatch of faculty and student expectations is more complete than is possible in the present essay. The situation of adult learners also receives more adequate treatment there.

7. The intial emphasis of this essay upon the mismatched expectations of traditionally aged students and their professors, and the continuing emphasis upon intergenerational communities may create two misimpressions: that FLC was designed for below average or unusually discontented students and that

FLC is irrelevant to the situation of the older adult. The analysis, we would claim, describes pervasive features of youth culture and is applicable in varying degrees to all or most young students, the more so as one interacts with them outside their field of specialization. That claim is supported by FLC's record with a wide variety of students. Some of our most striking successes are with students who were on the edge of withdrawing from higher education or being asked to do so. Other students, now enrolled in distinguished professional schools were among the finest of Stony Brook's upper-level students when they immersed themselves in FLC.

Regarding older adults: again, FLC has enrolled many such students and been equally successful with them. The structures of FLC, as will be seen, address pervasive needs of the society at large, not just those of young people. The needs of adults, to be sure, are quite different, but the structures of FLC are open to these differences. Consequently, the emphasis or intergenerational communities should not be interpreted in terms of age differences, so much as in terms of disparate levels of achievement in areas valued by the society.

8. The four large universities were Stony Brook, Santa Barbara, Stanford and UCLA.

9. Edgar H. Schein, "The Reluctant Professor: Implications for University Management", Sloan Management Review, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Fall 1970), p. 42.

10. The recent attempt to resurrect general education addresses in a minor way some dimensions of institutional unintelligibility. Where successful, a re-instituted core sequence might convey to the students the message that the institution for one reason or another regards some courses as more central or important than others. The quality of these courses will in large measure determine the students' willingness to endorse the institution's judgment. More tellingly, few institutions have conceived general education (much less implemented it) in a manner that makes visible the structure, the interrelating functions and the importance of the specialized endeavors which constitute a university. Rather than serving as an academic orientation point or institutional center, general education courses run the risk of becoming just another set of courses, required courses at that. Current versions of general education will save some students from narrowness or perhaps provide skills of a transferable sort; but given its conception and its insignificant status in most of our institutions, it will not likely have much impact upon the way students experience the university.

For a sustained statement about the relationship of general education and FLC see my "Medium and Message in General Education" in Liberal Education, Vol. 67, No. 2 (Summer 1981), pp. 129-145.

11. Theodore M. Newcomb, "Student Peer-Group Influence," The American College, ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, INc., 1962) pp. 483-84. Newcomb believed that the "conspicuous exceptions to this general trend" are small, homogeneous colleges, but he did not think that large colleges must exhibit this pattern of privatized intellectual life.

12. The dominance of competitive and atomistic modes of behavior in higher education struck the authors of a recent Club of Rome report as the starkest evidence of the irrelevance or inappropriateness of the current curriculum: "It is astonishing," they said, "how the practice of cooperation so essential to contemporary life is neglected in formal educational systems where competition is the fundamental rule. The capacity to search for and enter into new interdependencies, of being open to new forms of participation, of being challenged by the logic, norms, and interests of other systems and people, is a matter

of integration. Global issues are a reminder that the future puts a premium on those qualities of integration which comprise mutual respect, self-restraint, the perception of common interests, and the capacity to renounce selfishness. Taken together, these qualities underlie global solidarity." From James W. Botkin, Mahdi Elmandjra and Mircea Malitza, No Limits to Learning: Bridging the Human Gap, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1979) p. 37.

13. See John Dewey, Democracy and Education (New York: The Free Press, 1944), pp. 20-21.

14. Richard Sennett, The Fall of Public Man (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), p. 255.

15. John Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct (New York: Random House, 1930), p. 258.

16. Democracy and Education, p. 14.

17. "Address al Vision 65," The American Scholar, Vol. , No. (Spring 1966), p. 204.

18. In its first five years, FLC offered programs on the following topics: "World Hunger", "Cities, Utopias and Environments", "Technology, Values and Society", "Social and Ethical Issues in the Life Sciences", a revision of the "World Hunger" program called "Hunger, Health and Poverty in International Perspective", a re-cycling of "Technology, Values and Society", "Ways of Seeing", "Human Nature", and "Science for Public Understanding". Fifty different faculty mambers (including ten graduate students) from nineteen different departments and three colleges participated in these programs.

19. The history department and the period-oriented English department resisted the development of FLC at Stony Brook because of the focus on contemporary issues. Over time, however, faculty from these two departments -- along with philosophy and sociology -- have been the most frequent participants in FLC programs.

20. Student perception of FLC as a refuge from the ordinary Stony Brook curriculum would be hard to maintain in view of the fact that FLC frequently federates the largest classes on campus, ones that enroll 600 or 1200 students a semester.

21. Engaging the faculty's central commitments is more important than is the use of already existing courses. At institutions like Stony Brook, where three or four regularly offered courses serve as vehicles for transmitting one's scholarly research, the use of already existing courses does engage the faculty's central commitments, lessening the possibility of artificial or non-engaging involvement. At smaller colleges where a faculty's commitment to good teaching may take precedence over the teaching of particular courses, it may be less important to utilize already existing courses.

22. The relationship between the task-oriented focus of the FLC themes and the intensive experience in community-building gained in the Program Seminar deserves explicit attention. The theme of the program forms the framework within which the Seminar operates. Students are conscious of being engaged in a joint enterprise wherein they are being asked to contribute something which the faculty has been able to do, if at all, in only a rudimentary level, viz., to develop the relationships of the federated courses to each other as resources for understanding the program's theme. However, the experience

of community-building is itself so engaging and educative in its own right, that for some students -- especially in a program where the task or focus is not a clear and understandable one, the task-orientation of the enterprise becomes backdrop rather than animating framework. While this phenomenon has to be described as goal-displacement, for the most part the results are far from negative. Some students develop professional interests in studying aspects of community or communication or alternative higher education. Almost all, regardless of their estimates of the federated courses, must learn some course material and develop the aforementioned skills in order to participate in the community. So long as the theme of the program is well chosen and sufficiently focused, there is little danger that the community will become introspectively preoccupied rather than discovery-oriented.

23. A volume of essays by faculty participants in FLC is being readied for a 1982 publication. The impact of FLC on students is described in "Significant Changes --I" and "Significant Changes -- II", unpublished evaluation reports of Professor Anita Landa of Lesley College.

24. The fullest treatment of the ML/MF role is in my "Communities of Learners...", in the tentatively titled Towards a Better Curriculum, ed. by James Hall and Barbara Kevles, slated for March 1982 publication by Greenwood Press.

25. The simple criterion is adequate only as a rough measure of the existence of a genuine, intergenerational academic community. Epistemologically, the issues are far more complex, requiring as they do the articulation of standards of excellence for interdisciplinary inquiries. In "Communities of Learners...", I have outlined such standards, and I am currently working on a lengthier essay addressing this topic.

26. This point, which may appear as a startling and naive repetition of romantic errors of the sixties, is argued at length in my "Ethics of Helping: A Comparison of the Role of Self-Reliance in International Affairs and Pedgogy", in Metaphilosophy, Vol. 12, No. 2 (April 1981), pp. 181-205.