

## Developing a University-Community Partnership Model Integrating Research and Intervention to Improve Food Decisions in Families and Communities

Ardyth H. Gillespie, Ph.D., R.D.

*Cornell University*

### ABSTRACT

A major goal of the Community Plant Food Project is to develop partnerships between the Cornell Community Nutrition Program and Community-based organizations, including Cooperative Extension. A core principle behind this work is integrating research and intervention. Based on our work in Rochester, New York, we have developed a process and principles for effective partnerships. This new paradigm what we call the University-Community Partnership Model is a team effort that builds on the expertise of both professionals and families. It draws from theoretical and experiential literature in the fields of communication, leadership, community and team development, sociology, and participatory research and action. We have applied this model both to increase our understanding of Family Food Decision-making and to develop programs for families. In this project, we have used a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods to understand food decisions from the perspectives of families and community stakeholders, including a group method for analyzing our qualitative interview data. For our survey of families, we developed the Enhanced Response Method, an approach for improving the validity and reliability of community surveys with families and, at the same time, building relationships with families and other stakeholders in the community for integrated and sustainable interventions. Because the knowledge we develop through the partnership and the interventions we seek to implement are products of the process, we are constantly seeking to refine this knowledge and to adapt emerging interventions through an ongoing evaluation process we call the Continuous Improvement Method. (*Korean J Community Nutrition* 3(1) : 120~132, 1998)

**KEY WORDS** : community nutrition, food system, family food decision-making, critical perspective.

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### Introduction

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Thank you for inviting me to talk with you about our Community Plant Food Project which started 2-

1/2 years ago in Rochester, New York, and is currently expanding to a second site in Onondaga County, New York. This project includes both rural and urban families. These research sites are in New York State, which is located in the northeastern part of the

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**Corresponding author** : Ardyth H. Gillespie Cornell Community Nutrition Program Division of Nutritional Sciences 375 MVR Hall Cornell University Ithaca, NY 14853, U.S.A.

Tel) 1-607) 255-2143, Fax) 1-607) 255-0178, E-mail : ahg2@cornell.edu

U.S., Rochester is a major urban area located in the west-central part of the state.

These programs are part of the Cornell Cooperative Extension Service. The Cooperative Extension Service, an arm of the land grant universities in every state in the U.S., were organized to take the knowledge of the university to people in communities throughout the state. Their major foci have been in the areas of agriculture and home economics, although their efforts have expanded considerably beyond agriculture and home economics in recent years.

### The Partnership Model : Shifting the Paradigm for Community Nutrition

#### 1. Overview of the partnership model

Our partnership model draws from the theoretical and experiential literature in the fields of communication, leadership, community and team development, sociology, and participatory research and action.

There are several key processes for the evolving leadership model : 1) the community leads the intervention : 2) evolving intervention strategies inform the research component : 3) as they emerge, research findings inform the intervention : 4) evaluation of the model and its components and interventions is an ongoing process, and therefore, the model is self-renewing : and 5) the focus at all stages is integration into the community for sustainability. We use an analogy of a system of trains to describe the model. That is, we envision tracks to every community, with customized trains for each community(unique application of the principles) consisting of a unique set of passenger and freight cars(representing program) headed for the destination(representing community identified project goals). However, the model itself focuses on process rather than on programs. It is the process that

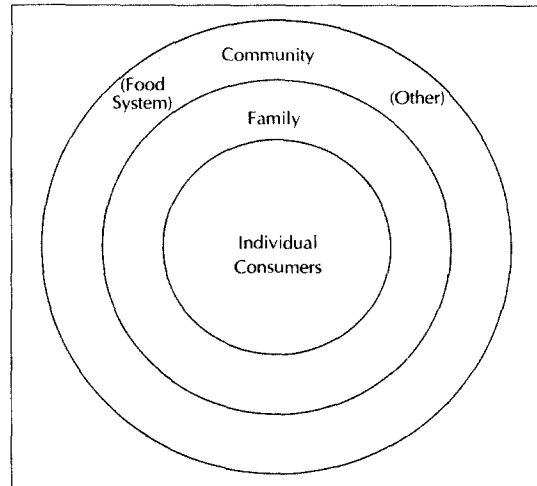


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework for Rochester Community Plant Food Project.

is transferable to other communities and, perhaps, to other countries, whereas programs themselves must be oriented toward the characteristics of each community and, indeed, toward the goals of families within that community.

We use different ways to illustrate the model, and following I offer I'd like to show you several views of the model, that is, what it looks like to us from different perspectives. This(Fig. 1) illustrates the different levels of inquiry. Then, Fig. 2 depicts the model as a rolling sphere to illustrate the integrative nature of research and intervention illustrating that our view of the sphere also evolved over time. But this figure still does not capture the model's dynamics and underlying principles very well. Our field coordinator from Rochester, Mary Jeanette Ebenhach, proposed another view(Fig. 3) of the model, one with pillars of different inputs as the underpinnings for the issues that we are identifying through the partnership which is leading to action. Susie Craig, the Nutrition

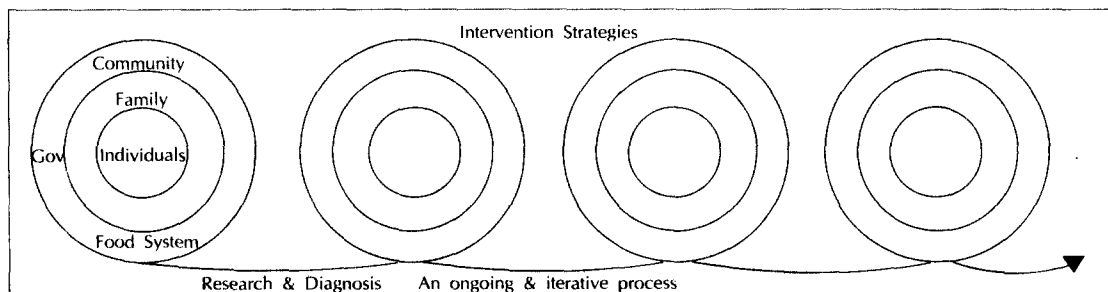


Fig. 2. Integration of research and Intervention.

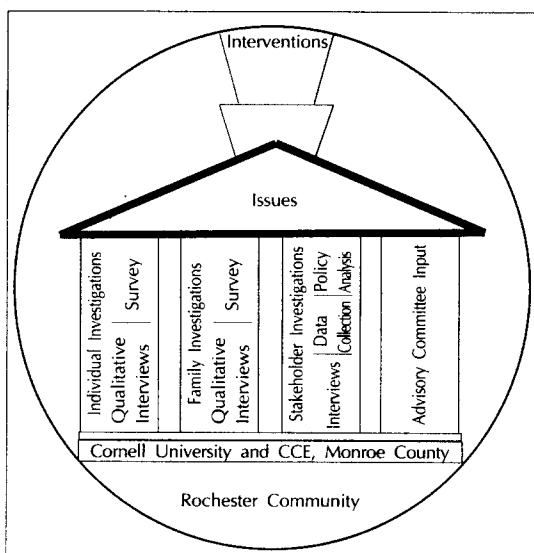


Fig. 3. Overview of the university-community partnership model.

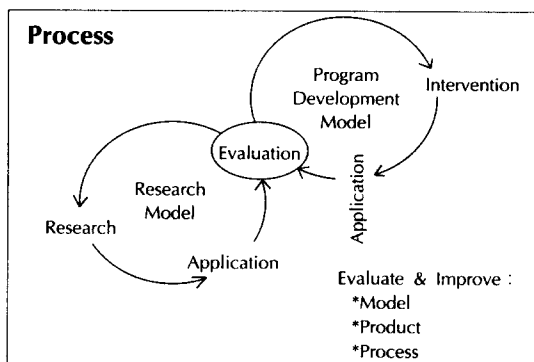


Fig. 4. Link between research and program planning.

Team Leader with the County Cooperative Extension in Rochester, illustrates the link between research and program planning as in Fig. 4, with evaluation linking the two.

Each of these diagrams gives a useful perspective on the model, but we have learned that two-dimensional drawings are too limited. A three dimensional slinky perhaps does a better job of illustrating the overall concepts of integration and collaboration built on trust and respect for everyone's contribution. We have developed the team to include diverse perspectives, we have encouraged each individual to contribute their multiple expertises and experiences, and we have valued the negotiation and synergism that this leadership style has produced. The connections are so carefully built among people continue, but they take dif-

ferent forms to address each new issue or challenge.

## 2. Goals for development of the partnership model

We developed several goals for the model when it is applied in a community. We decided that such a program should provide :

1. A working, collaborative partnership between the University and the community ;
2. Effective integration of research and intervention to improve both ;
3. Responsible relationships within the community to build a sustainable community nutrition program ;
4. Improved understanding of the community context, that is, the food system as well as individual and family decisions about food.

We found that working toward a true collaboration was labor intensive but very rewarding. It is a continual process, a relationship that requires continual care to maintain. Partnerships can take multiple forms and can vary the amount of commitment required from each partner. Collaborations are the most intense kind of partnership, as defined by the Society for Nutrition Education.

Two other descriptions are useful in understanding the model : community and community systems. Community is a geographically-based concept with overlapping networks of systems that provide resources and constraints for its members. Community systems are social institutions that provide for people's needs within the community. The community systems of interest include food systems, health systems, transportation, and local governance.

## 3. Shifting elements to move toward a new paradigm

We believe this partnership model represents a paradigm shift for nutrition intervention in the United States as community nutritionists.

In this new way of thinking about intervention, we are shifting a number of our perceptions, about working in communities, changes which we illustrate here as continuums, viewing the shift as gradual and, to some extent, continual. In some instances, the right end of the continuum is the ideal, but for most elements, what we are looking for is balance. As with diet, moderation is often the best balance point. These shifts in perception include :

From the "outside expert" approach to "everyone's an expert" ;

From “Controlling” the process of intervention to “facilitating” the process of intervention;

From “problem solving” to “building capacity”;

From “hierarchical” structures to more “web-like” structures;

From “University initiated” interventions to more “community initiated” interventions;

From on “Individual/family decisions” to including the “community context” as well;

Expand “Limited stakeholders” to including “multiple stakeholders”;

Focus on “Scientific theory” to including “everyday life theory” as well;

From “power over” to “power with”;

Following, I discuss each of these elements which we think must be shifted in order to implement the partnership model.

#### 1) From an “outside expert” approach to “everyone’s an expert”

Academics in the U.S. are beginning to talk about the need to move away from the “outside expert” model. We prefer to think about it as a model wherein everyone is an expert, in some part, based on their experience and/or on their academic learning. The more diverse this expertise, the better the product. This is similar to the effect we get when we combine different colors. If I have all red paints, all I can paint is red. If I add blue to my collection, I can make purple. With some black and white, I can mix any number of shades and hues within the pertinent portion of the color wheel. Now, if I add yellow, there’s almost no limit to the number of hues and shades I can mix and integrate into a work of art. This is analogous to including people with different perspectives and different life experiences. By working together, we produce a much more colorful and insightful view of the phenomena we seek to understand.

#### 2) From “controlling” the process of intervention to “facilitating” the process intervention

As academics and as community nutritionists, we often feel responsible for program outcomes and, therefore, we feel responsible for controlling the process in order to enhance outcomes. Thus, becoming facilitators rather than “controllers” is a very difficult tran-

sition for many of us. It is much easier when we work with professionals based in the community, people who have learned the power of facilitating but who let others take the lead much of the time.

#### 3) From “problem solving” to “building capacity”

Most research and programming in both academic and community systems are toward a “problem-solving approach.” We posit that, instead, we should be moving toward building community capacity to proactively work for family and community goals. M.J. illustrated one fallacy of the problem-solving approach when she arrived at Cornell one day and bluntly asked, “What makes you think we have a problem in Rochester?” In other words, M.J. and others have said that we are really very good at identifying and solving problems and, in so doing, we create more problems to solve : unfortunately, while this keeps our system going, it does not decrease the problems encountered by families in communities.

#### 4) From a “hierarchical” structure to a more “web-like” structure

Sally Helgeson, in *The web of Inclusion*, talks about the power of structuring an organization following the architecture of a spider web. Like a spider, workgroups begin with a core of diverse individuals who come together around a particular issue or problem. Often they are individuals from different professional perspectives(e.g., an engineer, a marketer, a salesperson) who may not be used to working together as peers. They also often come from different levels in the hierarchy. As they develop a trusting, open relationship they can begin to bring in others from outside as well as inside as needed, and the web grows. Not unlike a spider web, the system must remain open, and the edges are always permeable and changeable to accommodate new people who have something to contribute. The focus is on solving the problem and creating the action, as well as on what each person can contribute to the solutions and actions. Sometimes people come, do their thing, and then leave as the project advances to a new stage with new needs. This way of flattening the organization as it moves away from hierarchical structure has worked well within our project team and with our collaborators in the community. The biggest challenge is

working within an academic structure which is largely hierarchical and where management decisions by others make the open and inclusive concept of the web difficult to realize.

In my experience, universities today are moving more toward the hierarchical-competitive model (at least I see ample evidence of this at Cornell) rather than in the direction of business where progressive leaders are moving toward a de-centralized model. Indeed, most of Helgeson's illustrations are from large industries. In the U.S., the medical field also largely maintains this hierarchical, expert-centered model. Thus, we have found our experiment in collaboration much easier to implement in the community than at Cornell University where I work. This may be due, in part, to the medicalization of nutrition in the U.S.

**5) From "university initiated" interventions to "community initiated" interventions**

The next element in moving toward "community initiated" interventions is much easier in a web-like organization. Although we academics have an important role to play in developing community programs, the expertise of the audience and professionals who work in the community enhance the intervention's relevance and impact, and working as a team is a much more direct route from the generation of knowledge to the application of that knowledge in everyday life decisions. The current Community Nutrition program model has moved a ways distance along the continuum in the past 20 years so that it is a standard among academics with a community nutrition orientation to discuss new program initiatives with a few community folks during program development. However, it is still the research base and the academic perception of the audience needs that largely drives the goal setting, the target audience selection, and the program content.

What our model proposes is that community members take ownership for programs very early in the research-intervention planning process and work collaboratively with academics in the conceptualization, as well as in the program development stages. Then, the community leads the implementation, with academics more involved with evaluation and assessment for future program initiatives.

**6) From "individual/family decisions" to include the "community context" as well**

Families are constrained by the community contexts and, at the same time, their communities offer many resources that can support wise family decisions about food. But the community process has to support community structures and processes that capitalize on resources and minimize constraints. Therefore, community-level decisions are important areas of study. Also, improvements for families may require changes in the community to enhance the context, that is, public policy, retail market structure, and transportation to the markets can enable families to make better food decisions. Moreover, families may take on an advocacy role to influence their community context. Another potential role of the community is to help moderate the influences imposed upon families by national and global policies and processes. This approach might be thought of as the "family centered" rather than the "scientist centered" approach to studying and impacting the context for family food decision-making.

**7) From "limited stakeholders" to including "multiple stakeholders"**

In our model, everyone who eats is a stakeholder in the food system. In addition, food passes through many hands from production to consumption. Sometimes, this occurs in the local community, more often, food passes through the national or global markets. In spite of global influences, community stakeholders with purchasing power have some measure of control of the local community food system, and they therefore are important stakeholders in research about, and intervention in, the community food system. It is clear that not only do we need multiple stakeholders in the community to respond to issues, these multiple stakeholders may also help us define the multiple facets of an issue. Where global or national influences dominate, communities have a better chance at making changes than families do by themselves.

**8) From "scientific theory" to including "every-day life theory"**

We have discussed the value of scientific theory in other papers (Gillespie and Gillespie, 1992). The point I want to make here is that people's everyday-life

theories and professionals' theories of family and community intervention are both important. We think of theories as representations of the way the world works. Although non-scientists do not often think of their how-the-world-works ideas as theories, these conceptions are often quite internally valid, and they can help us develop scientific theories that are more valid and more useful to families and communities. Qualitative interviews help us uncover, and begin to articulate, some of these theories.

#### 9) From "power over" to "power with"

The last, and perhaps the most important, element we have been studying is the shift from "power over" to "power with". My colleague, Don Barr(1997), talks about the importance of finding the appropriate balance between these two concepts. Rather than increasing power over families and communities by increasing our knowledge about them, this shift emphasizes the need to work in collaboration with families and communities to develop true partnerships. By releasing ourselves from the "power over" model, we actually gain rather than lose power, as we share it with the community stakeholders. Perhaps we really mean giving up control to enhance the power of the overall system.

This model has been successful in Rochester, New York and I am very interested in how this model might be applied in Korea. We believe paradigm shifts which our partnership model suggests will support partnerships which : 1) are true collaboration, based on mutual respect and trust : 2) integrate research and intervention to improve the external validity of research and to enhance the impact of resulting interventions : and 3) address the context as well as individual and family change. As I next address, this partnership model also reflects shifting paradigms in community nutrition research changes.

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### Shifting Research Paradigms

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Some of the shifts I see in the Community Nutrition research paradigm are already becoming mainstream : others are still visions which I hope will become mainstream during my lifetime. First I'll describe the team approach which for our model has been central to the other shifts, I describe.

#### 1. A team approach

We have found that families, professionals, activists, and other community stakeholders each have expertise that can contribute to the research and intervention team. Indeed, everyone has their sphere of influence and expertise. Researchers set the research standards while nutrition educators and community nutritionists set program standards. Everyone is involved in developing the process and the interventions that meet community defined goals and standards.

#### 2. Our perspective on behavior change

Nutritionists, nutrition educators, and health professionals are very interested in behavior change, and much of the current discussion is focused on behavior change and how consumers can be motivated to change. While these are important research and intervention questions, we need to move away from the positivist perspective with its associated quantitative approach to research and its prescriptive nature to a more humanistic, interpretivist perspective which recognizes the evolving character of human activity. Qualitative research methods are central to the interpretivist perspective, a view which recognizes the importance of process as well as outcome and the need to probe indepth to find answers to certain research questions. At the same time, our goal is to work with families and community stakeholders to help identify issues to study, to develop strategies for change based on the community data, and to implement strategies to change the context within which families make food decisions as well as the family's food decision-making processes.

#### 3. Definitions

The positivist tradition is based on the presumption that "there is a reality out there to be studied, captured, and understood." (Schwandt, 1994) On the other hand, interpretivists share (with other, related traditions such as constructivists) "the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" (Schwandt, 1994). Qualitative methodology is philosophically consistent with the interpretivist perspective.

"Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational

constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. In contrast, quantitative studies emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes. Inquiry is purported to be within a value-free framework" (Denzin et al., 1994, p. 4).

We define family as a food decision-making unit which is any configuration of people who regularly eat together and who influence decisions about one another's food. It includes any unit of two or more people within a residence unit or spanning residence units. Thus, most people are members of such families most of their lives.

Family food decision-making therefore is defined as "the 'socially-situated' process whereby families seek to meet the nutritional, social, and taste preference needs of their members by simultaneously : (1) considering and choosing from the foods they understand to be practically available and (2) developing a strategy for mobilizing family resources. These strategies include *who* will acquire, prepare, serve, and clean up : *how* to prepare (including purchasing prepared foods) : and the quantity to purchase, prepare, and serve." (Gillespie and Gillespie, 1997).

#### 4. My personal research paradigm shifts

My own research paradigm changes during my career have set the stage for the perspective of the partnership model I advocate today. I began my career in nutrition as an undergraduate in laboratory-based nutrition and undertook a rat feeding project. By the time I graduated, I had decided that I wanted to add a dimension of "people" to nutrition. Thus, I joined the Cooperative Extension Service in Iowa. My experience of working in rural and urban community with the Iowa State University Cooperative Extension Service dramatically broadened my view of researchable topics. With community experience, I thought it was important to include questions about how we help consumers apply what we learn in the laboratory about nutrition. At the same time, I discovered that very little research had been done in community nutrition; indeed, in the 1970s, the idea that nutrition education or community nutrition could be a researchable field was quite radical.

In graduate school, I studied social sciences and applied them to community nutrition from a very quantitative, positivist perspective to answer the question of what influences people to change food behaviors to healthier ones. I began by attempting to understand the influences and motivations for change in the context of nutrition education by studying the application of communication theories.

I quickly realized that we do not know enough about how people make decisions and how they change without intervention in order to be able to effectively intervene, at least on the scale of change expected by and from the field of community nutrition. Since then, my colleagues and I have made three transitions in our research program, which I briefly describe in the following subsection as background for discussing the characteristics of our partnership model.

##### 1) From studying interventions to more basic research

When I joined the faculty of Cornell University in the late 1970s, I began the first transition by shifting my research program from studying interventions to studying knowledge, attitudes, and behavior, and changes in behavior, in the natural course of events—that is, I shifted to more basic research in Community Nutrition.

##### 2) From quantitative to qualitative methodologies

Concurrently, I realized that, to answer some of the most urgent research questions, a fuller picture of behavior change was necessary. Initially, I had expertise in path analysis. Quantitative path analysis, however, proved inadequate for me, and I began to focus more on the process than on the outcomes themselves.

At the same time, I began working with a sociologist, Gilbert Gillespie, who has expertise in qualitative methodology. With this methodology, we could apply a method or set of methods that best fit the research question, and this was the second transition. This transition not only required applying different methods of data collection, it also required thinking about and using the data in different ways. This is a philosophical transformation away from a positivist perspective to a interpretivist one wherein people are seen as having real choices : therefore, they can not

be understood simply as a complex set of stimuli and responses. The partnership with my colleague and husband, the other Dr. Gillespie, has been most helpful in this transformation because he understands the philosophy of science underlying the diverse perspectives, and he has expertise in both quantitative and qualitative methods. Thus, his input and influence on broadening my perspectives has been invaluable for our methodological transition. This transition, then, has two parts and, in my experience, it takes the most energy and insights of any. For those of us who were trained in the positivist quantitative tradition (as are most nutritionists), the transformation is an ongoing process.

**3) From individual variables to family-level phenomena**

The third transition which has had a major influence in our research program involves moving from measuring individual variables to family-level phenomena. We define families broadly to include multiple family forms. The focus is on the family, as defined earlier, to mean those people who share the eating experience and thus who potentially influence each other. Therefore, most people are part of a family much of their lives.

My experience working at the community level helped me realize the importance of families in shaping and supporting food habits. As I became more familiar with the social science literature, I came to realize that our nutrition education tradition was too narrowly focused on individuals out of context. Whereas, I began my research career studying individual family members and how they interact, only at a very basic level, now, we are studying family level phenomena such as family food policies. We are also interested in how the family as a unit interacts among themselves, as well as with its external environment.

**4) Toward community-level measurement and analysis**

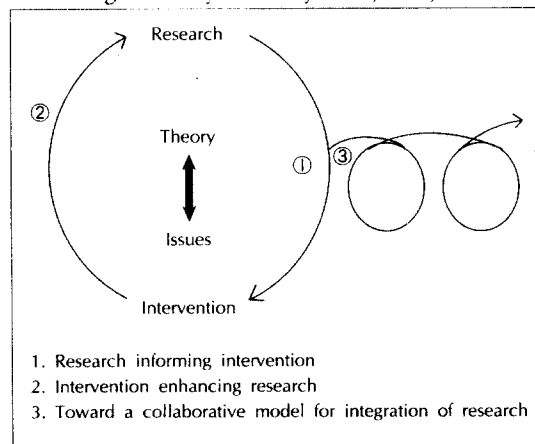
The most recent emphasis in our research has been on expanding the context to the community level. Families make decisions within community contexts, and often those override individual or family level influences. Including the community context is very much a transition in process because this level of

analysis is very complicated indeed.

The Community Plant Food Project, now in its third year, has given us an opportunity to look at the community-level context on a larger scale. Jennifer Wilkins, a colleague at Cornell, has provided leadership for interviewing stakeholders in the food system. We are asking a community advisory committee and other community leaders what are the issues that need studying in Rochester and what are the implications from our data for families and the community systems that support families.

**5. The relationship of research to intervention : a paradigm shift for the field of community nutrition**

I will now focus on the broader field of Community Nutrition research as we have established field research in communities and for communities as a legitimate area of research within nutrition. Since I entered the field over two decades ago, I have seen two major transitions, and I hope we are leading a third transition. As illustrated by Fig. 5, in the late 1970s, community nutrition researchers (including myself) and programers were talking about the need for research to inform programs and to make them better. This era is represented by a U.S. conference sponsored by the National Dairy Council, "The Leading Edge in Nutrition Education : Research Enhancing Practice". Coupled with this shift was the recognition of the importance of theory in informing intervention and the importance of community nutrition research in building this body of theory. This, then, is the first



**Fig. 5.** Integrating research and intervention : a paradigm shift.



transition in the relationship between Community nutrition research and intervention.

In the late 1980s, some of us who worked with community professionals, as well as some researchers in universities, began to talk about the influence moving in the other direction as well—that is, research was being influenced by intervention goals and experiences (Gillespie and Bron, 1992). This transition is still in process in the Community Nutrition research, but it has been widely accepted by those who work in communities. I have illustrated this transition as each influencing the other, with theory at the core as the integrating element.

In the current decade, we have been urging what I hope will be the next transition in the field to integration of research and intervention. Our community plant food project has allowed us to further our thinking and experience with this concept. Integration suggests that it is not just one informing the other: rather, they work in conjunction throughout the process. This integration provides for synergism with outcomes beyond the sum of research and intervention conducted separately by researchers and programers. I like the way M.J. Ebenbach, one of our team members from the community, put it when she said that it's like walking on two feet, one of theory and one of practice. It is much more difficult to walk on one foot alone whether it is either theory or practice.

Fig. 6 illustrates the design in Rochester for integrating research and intervention with a focus on issues related to individual, family, and community decisions about food. We began with multiple inputs (past research: experience of community advisory committee members, staff, and academic researchers; and interviews with individuals, families, and food system stakeholders in the community). Through this process, we identified issues which influenced intervention development and, at the same time, helped focus quantitative interviews with individuals and families in order to understand the prevalence of these issues. The original plan included assessment of community systems, as conceptualized in Krueter and Green's "precede model". We have not yet obtained resources for this component.

## Development of the Partnership Model for Integrating Research and Intervention

### 1. Research and program goals

Our research and program goals for the plant food project reflect these paradigm shifts.

The scholarly goals are to:

- 1) Understand family food decision-making processes, including resources and constraints;
- 2) Identify families' goals for food decisions and family perceptions of issues related to food and the food system;
- 3) Improve our understanding of the context in which families make food decisions;
- 4) Develop partnerships with communities in which everyone's expertise can contribute to understanding and to appropriate actions to build community capacity for healthy and sustainable food decisions;
- 5) Bring families together with other stakeholders in the community to enhance the resources available to them to support healthy and sustainable food choices.

At the same time, we have operational goals to support the process of the partnership model. These operational goals are to:

- 1) Deal responsibly with the community;
- 2) Move toward an effective and sustainable community initiated intervention;
- 3) Support current community activities.

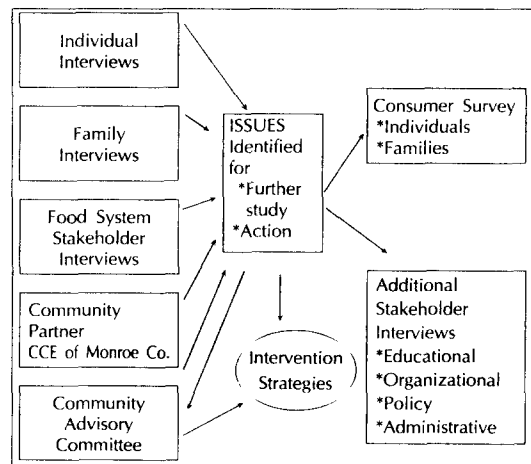


Fig. 6. Research-Intervention prototype for community food system projects: from understanding to action.

Respect	Shared Responsibilities
Understanding	Effective Communication
Flexibility	Creative Process Evaluation
Inclusion	Valuing Diversity
Adaptability	Proactive Approach
Integration	Meaningful Partnerships
Common Goals	Positive Conflict Resolution
Trust	Personal Accountability
Creative Thinking	Strategic Planning
Acceptance and Tolerance of Change	

**Fig. 7.** Principles and values for community-university partnership model and process.

**2. The continuous improvement method : an evolutionary approach**

Consistent with these goals, the method for developing the model and articulating the processes for effective partnerships is self-correcting and self-renewing, one which integrates evaluation and development. By definition, then, the model and its processes are evolving as we discuss, observe, listen to, and analyze them from within. The diversity of the project team, the partners, and the informants provide for both breadth and depth of evaluation and development. An external evaluation comes later, in the stage of development. We call this the Continuous Improvement Method.

**3. Principles at the core of the partnership model**

As we worked through the developmental phases, we developed some basic principles for the partnership process. Some of these principles are listed in Fig. 7. The model requires principle centered leadership(Covey, 1991).

I have learned in this process what my extension colleague, Susie Craig, has said all along-that building relationships is the basis for good partnerships. It is about how people work with people in ways that allow everyone to contribute to their potential and to be rewarded for these contributions, usually by intangible rewards. Building relationships is a time-intensive process, and the system needs to plan for and allow time for this important work. One of the lessons of our experimentation with a partnership model the past two years is that we need to put much more emphasis on this aspect and allocate resources accordingly. We liken it to building a solid road-bed for a passenger train. It takes time, labor, and skill to develop a firm road-bed over the best route, and building relationships

takes the same care. But carefully built, the road-bed will support the train track(the relationships among partners) and the cars(programs) that make up the train for each community. It is time well spent because, without a well-built foundation, the whole system is vulnerable. Indeed, both in the community and at the university, we have seen this happen all too frequently when we have impatiently moved ahead to running trains on inadequate railroad beds. Another thing that our project has illustrated is that connections are built between people, and when the people in organizations change, the connection with the organization is very vulnerable because an organization's commitment and trust is built on the individuals who make up the organization. Therefore, we recommend building strong connections with multiple individuals within an organization. Also important is a coordinated developmental process, one which includes all team members, maintain and renew the intellectual and physical energy necessary to keep the collaboration active.

**4. Adding partners : building a leadership web**

Although it is important to begin with a core of partners with common goals, in our case, the Cornell Community Nutrition Program and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County, additional partnerships are necessary to achieve the goal of building community capacity. Thus, additional processes, based on the same core principles, were employed to expand our contacts and partners. The community partner was key in this process, with the academic partner moving to the background and supporting primarily through the community partner. This builds on the special relationship of CCE to Cornell as its front door to the community, with offices in every county throughout the state. In developing these connections, we have begun to build a web-like partnership structure, both within the community and across communities.

**5. Challenges to collaborations**

This new paradigm for collaborations between university and community brings with it challenges from university systems and from within the community. In general, the elements in the shift in paradigm, particularly from "power over" to "power with", run

counter to many of the unspoken principles of the university structure. Moreover there are additional challenges that require explication as part of our understanding of the changes implied by the principles of the partnership model. One challenge is the reward system at the university, in which individual accomplishments are valued over team accomplishments. At the same time, there is a bias toward rewarding laboratory-based research over community-relevant research (sometimes called "applied"). Undoubtedly, there is a certain security with university positions which is threatened by a process that shifts power and resources to the community. In addition to the perceived loss of control, we have found considerable discomfort among academics with shifting decision-making to the community because they distrust non-academics' ability to make decisions in areas they consider within their "expertise."

While this challenge of shifting decision-making power away from academics was not unanticipated, it had not occurred to me that community stakeholders might be skeptical about the shift as well. But, after listening to informants' expectations of us and of the projects, I realized that a number of community professionals were not only used to us playing the expert role, they expected it. Indeed, they were uncomfortable with our sharing that role, in part perhaps because the change in our role also requires changing their role expectations and increases their responsibility for interpretation of research findings and, indeed, in framing research questions. My colleague, Susie Craig, talks about it this way: "One way of dealing with the cognitive dissonance between what one knows they should do and what they do is to shift blame to the expert. When we move community members to a facilitating role, then they have to take responsibility. We can encourage and facilitate other to change, but motivation comes from within."

Thus, an additional challenge is helping the community change their expectations of "outside experts." Of no surprise was that internal conflicts and turf battles among the committed, but diverse, advocates and relative newcomers make partnerships difficult. Working with those involved in this process has been very enlightening for us all.

Another challenge is one I have already discussed as

an element in the paradigm shift: the hierarchical and bureaucratic administrative structure. One specific example that we have encountered is bureaucratic misunderstanding of the need for multiple expertise in both management and science to build maintain the kind of project team which can facilitate partnerships with communities.

The final challenge, of course, is helping us all shift the elements I outlined earlier to achieve a balance that is right for each partnership, and this challenge suggests everyone needs to become more comfortable recognizing "everyone's an expert," facilitating more, building community capacity, setting up web-like structures, supporting community initiated interventions, including the community context and multiple stakeholders, and honoring everyday life theories, all of which help move toward being more "power with" partners.

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### **Implementation of the Model : The Rochester Experience**

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We began the process in Rochester by asking for the cooperation of the Cornell Cooperative Extension Service of Monroe County as we were preparing to submit our first research proposal to the United States Department of Agriculture for funding to do a community study. They agreed and, thus, we started to build a partnership. Then, we hired interviewers and a field liaison who became staff members of the County Extension Association. The next step was to put together a consultants group for a one-time meeting and an advisory committee that agreed to meet twice a year. These groups helped identify what issues to address in the project. The advisory committee discussed the interviews and surveys at each stage of the process, and we reported findings as they became available. The next major intervention planned is a search conference to be held this spring. The goal of this conference is to initiate further action directed by community stakeholders.

As part of the study in Rochester, we developed a survey methodology for surveying families based on the principles and processes of the Partnership Model. Called the Enhanced Response Survey Method, it was devised to (1) be scientifically sound and produce sta-

tistically representative and valid data : (2) address integrated family and community goals : (3) involve a university responsibly in a partnership with families and other community stakeholders : and (4) build links that will promote better food choices and nutrition in the long run. All project team members participated in designing the sampling and survey procedures, developing and pretesting the questionnaire, and collecting the data. For example, team members assessed survey questions based on their own understandings of food decision making at the individual, family, and community levels. They brought multiple perspectives to bear on the study design, yielding many advantages, including (1) innovative methods for sampling and recruiting families to meet project goals and (2) proactive strategies for completing interviews with hard-to-reach families. The adults in 550 families were interviewed face-to-face in their homes in the city. Throughout the survey, a "continual assessment" process involving all project members was used for design adjustments to improve the representativeness and validity of the data.

The surveys also provided additional opportunities for integrating intervention with the research process. Interviewers noted that they were gaining entrance to houses of families not usually involved in community programs. Therefore, they recommended while they were there (after completing the interview), they would like to be able to come with information to respond to the family's inquires about food and community programs. This process will be planned into next survey. Moreover, interviewers spontaneously identified families that they recommended be involved in the development of intervention programs.

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stantially contributed to our lengthy theoretical discussions about partnerships and integrating research and intervention in her community and, through these contributions, has kept us in touch with the real world in which families live. To Sally McCoy, the advocate and critic who has special ability for succinctly articulating her special perspective on families in the community where she has spent much of her life seeking to improve the context in which they live and work and eat. And finally, to the newest member of our team, Leslie Goodyear, who brings her evaluation and qualitative research knowledge and experience to help us tease out the issues important to families, as revealed in their interviews, and for her thoughtful challenges to the principles and processes of this evolving model. Members of the Community Advisory Committee, such as Tom Ferraro and other community informants who are too numerous to mention, have all contributed to our insights about the process of building partnerships to act. Merita Sheive was only with the project a short time, but her contributions were broad and deep, and she added a visionary perspective on management that helped us build the model and communicate about it : she was often the first to sense the need to correct our course from the academic perspective. And we couldn't have done it without Dotti Kompf at Cornell, who has been the constant communicator and facilitator throughout this project.

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