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*DEFINING INTERDISCIPLINARY  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT*

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Towards Interdisciplinary Community  
Collaboration and Development:  
Knowledge and Experience  
from Israel and the USA

Yossi Korazim-Körösy, DSW

Terry Mizrahi, PhD

Chana Katz, PhD

Amnon Karmon, MA

Martha Lucia Garcia, MSW

Marcia Bayne Smith, DSW

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Yossi Korazim-Körösy is Chair of The Interdisciplinary Forum for Community Development, and Head of the Policy-Planning Department, The Ministry of Social Affairs, Israel. Terry Mizrahi is a Professor and Director of the Education Center for Community Organizing, Hunter College School of Social Work-CUNY, New York. Chana Katz is a Lecturer at Sapir Academic College, Department of Public Policy and Administration, Israel. Amnon Karmon is Director of the Kerem Institute for Teacher Training in Jerusalem, Israel. Martha Lucia Garcia is a Social Work Supervisor Faculty at the School of Law, CUNY, in Flushing, NY. Marcia Bayne Smith is an Associate Professor, Urban Studies Department, Queens College-CUNY, New York.

Address correspondence to: Dr. Yossi Korazim-Körösy, 32 Hermon Str, POB 85327, Mevasseret, Israel 90805 (E-mail: korazim@netvision.net.il), or to Dr. Terry Mizrahi, Hunter College School of Social Work, 129 East 79th Street, New York, NY 10021 (E-mail: tmizrahi@nyc.rr.com).

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**SUMMARY.** This article looks at the conceptualization and practice of interdisciplinary community collaboration and development (ICCD) in Israel and the US. It is based on the work of two interdisciplinary professional groups which were initiated by social workers—one in Israel and one in the US. This article presents a mapping of key issues and concepts, including distinguishing between mono-, multi-, and inter-, trans-disciplinary and inter-perspectives. The article addresses the issues of multiple professional identities, identification of a common core knowledge base and skills among disciplinary specializations for community development practice, and an understanding of inter-organizational perspectives. A qualitative methodology was used to conduct a content analysis of data from dialogues among professional practitioners in the Israeli and the US groups. Despite differences in the purpose, frequency and intensity of the two forums, there is an underlying belief in the importance of these discussions and in the commitment to interdisciplinary practice. Both groups believe that multiple types of expertise are needed, alongside new models of both inter-organizational and interdisciplinary relationships as well as professional-community interactions. Recommendations include the need for further examination of interdisciplinary community collaboration and development. doi:10.1300/J125v15n01\_02 [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2007 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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### INTRODUCTION

The field of professional community work around the world has evolved during the last century differently in different countries (Campfens, 1997). The disciplines claiming competence in this arena include both academic and applied social and health sciences such as sociology, public health, social work, urban, rural and regional planning, community psychology, anthropology, political science, public interest law, adult and informal education, economics, public policy, and others. The terms used for this practice vary. Various disciplines use terms such as community organization, community work, community psychology, community practice, community development, community planning, community economic

development, and community building to refer to development-based work with communities. Nonetheless, these general career paths have similar purposes: to improve the conditions of communities, enhance the quality of life of population groups, especially the disadvantaged, and strengthen community based organizations and civic life.

Several organizations have begun recently to focus on the disciplinary dimensions of community practice. The International Association of Community Development (IACD) ([www.iacd.org](http://www.iacd.org)) noted recently that community development is multi-disciplinary by nature, but fragmented among many programs and disciplines (Hustedde & Calvin, 2003). That same year, in the USA, the new Editors of *Journal of Community Practice* (JCP) introduced the journal's expanded boundaries by claiming that it should become "a social work journal with an interdisciplinary perspective" (Alvarez, Gutierrez, Johnson & Moxley, 2003, p. 9). The Association for Community Organization and Social Administration (ACOSA) ([www.acosa.org](http://www.acosa.org))—the sponsoring organization of the JCP—followed this trend by expanding its mission statement and bylaws in 2005 in this direction.

The focus of this paper is on the work of two informal interest groups, one in Israel and one in New York City, that have taken up the challenge to examine the concept of interdisciplinary collaboration and its possible implications for future community practice. When the lead US author learned of the work going on in Israel, she initiated focus group discussions in New York City with diverse faculty who were teaching courses or who were engaged in community collaborations. While these two projects had different beginnings, their common agenda led to a sharing and comparing of the results of their discussions.

The Israelis used the concept of interdisciplinary community development both to guide and establish a goal for their deliberations. In the Israeli context, ICD refers to a range of broadly defined professions that include education, health, housing, welfare and employment, provided primarily by the national and local government or under its auspices (Cnaan, Korazim, Meller, & Rosenfeld, 1992). However, this definition also includes "collaboration" as the process by which individuals, groups and organizations come together to handle complex community problems. The US group began with the term interdisciplinary community collaboration, assuming that the foundation of community development was the coming together of diverse formal groups and organizations. It was then decided that the combined term *interdisciplinary community collaboration and development* (ICCD) will be used generically to describe the Israeli and US data.

The paper will present an analysis of the literature, and data from meetings of these two professional forums. The paper will also identify the themes which emerged from one or both groups, including the commonalities and differences in their interpretations of cross-disciplinary approaches to community practice, and consider whether there are some general principles and practices that apply beyond a specific profession or country (c.f., Harbaugh, Castro, & Burgess-Ellison, 1987). First, a brief background on the development of community practice in the two countries is presented, followed by literature related to the theory of interdisciplinary practice in general and as it relates to community development and collaboration. Next, the participants and the methodology are described, followed by an identification of the key concepts highlighted through the group discussions. Finally, directions for practice and professional education are discussed.

### ***THE ISRAELI AND US CONTEXTS***

As complex multi-cultural democratic societies, both Israel and the US have evolved a set of public policies and programs to address the social and economic needs of their citizens, while facing the challenge of integrating immigrants, refugees and racial, religious and ethnic minorities. However, the two countries have had different histories in terms of approaching these and other social problems at the community level. Israel was established in 1948 as a post WWII welfare state. This means that there has been a major commitment to meeting social needs through a range of broadly defined social services that include education, health, housing, welfare and employment and social security entitlements provided by the national government or under its auspices (Cnaan et al., 1992). On the contrary, the US experience is one where the federal government has seen itself historically as the solution of last resort to social and economic problems. To the extent that these are addressed, the presumption has been that the private sector, both corporate and charitable, should take the lead (Jansson, 2005).

In Israel, the public sector has taken major responsibility for community development with social work as the dominant profession (Katan, Korazim, & York, 1993). In recent years, there is a growing interest and involvement in community development by other disciplines, including urban and regional planning, public health, education and law. Community social workers employed by local public welfare offices must have professional social work degrees by law, at least at the bachelor's level.

While this provides formal recognition and status for the social work profession as the only publicly accredited community practitioners since 1996, this situation has also created limitations in the capacity to solve more complex problems at the neighborhood, local as well as national levels. This circumstance additionally has led to fragmentation among, and isolation from other professionals involved in community development (Korazim-Kőrösy, 2000; Hustedde & Calvin, 2003). There is a growing group of non-governmental advocacy organizations, which are challenging and criticizing the too-limited role of public sector community workers in addressing the various dimensions of civil society and advocating for excluded marginalized groups (Shatil, 2005).

By contrast, in the US, no one profession has dominated this field. Community organizing, planning and development has evolved on a more decentralized and individualistic basis, primarily by the voluntary, non-profit sector, as needs, interests, jobs and funding have focused attention on community life, usually locally-based and decentralized (Kahn, 1995; Bettin & Austin, 1990). Social work has played a varying role over time in community work, depending on the political climate and funding opportunities. The origins of community practice in social work are found in the settlement house movement of the early 20th century (Smith, 1995), and grew during the 1960s and early 1970s with the government's War on Poverty and focus on social planning (Garvin & Cox, 2001). By the 1980s, with a more conservative political climate (the Reagan-Bush years), some schools of social work abandoned community practice or merged it in generalist social work. Nevertheless, while increasingly focused on a mental health and clinical aspects, the profession has maintained a relatively small, but significant academic specialization in macro practice, which encompasses community building, organizing, planning, development (Mizrahi, 2001). Since the 1990s, however, US social work has strengthened its professional niche in community practice through educational programs in schools of social work as well as the creation of organizations, books and journals (c.f., Mizrahi & Morrison; 1993; Faulkner, Roberts DeGennaro, & Weil, 1994).

In this current conservative political and economic climate in both countries, universities, and in particular, professional schools, are being called upon to work across departments and schools, and to partner with the independent/voluntary and corporate/business sectors. Increasingly, schools of social work and institutions of higher education in general, are redefining themselves as engaged institutions that are committed to mutually beneficial collaboration with communities (Soska & Johnson

Butterfield, 2004; Corrigan, 2000). As a result, many community social workers in both countries are increasingly leading, participating in and evaluating these complex inter-departmental and/or university-community projects (Mulroy & Lauber, 2004). Therefore, knowledge and skills related to working collaboratively across disciplines needs to be more prominent in teaching and supervising students and practitioners at the macro level (Jones, Packard & Nahrstedt, 2002). Gains in these areas will not only enhance the competencies of future practitioners, but will assist various social work programs to proactively seek collaborative opportunities. Moreover, in Israel and the US, both public and private funders encourage, if not mandate, complex types of interdisciplinary structures. This can be seen in the requests for proposals by the US Departments of Education, Housing and Urban Development, and Health and Human Services, (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1994), and by foundations such as Ford, Kellogg and Rockefeller in their efforts to improve social conditions, strengthen neighborhoods, and enhance integrated services. In Israel, movement toward interdisciplinary projects began with Project Renewal in the 1980s (Elazar, 1992). It continues with programs such as *KADIMA*, an inter-organizational and interdisciplinary collaboration for child protection, funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which partners with different community-based organizations, local NGO's and the business sector to strengthen at-risk children and families (Korazim & Ben-Rabbi, 2003).

## ***LITERATURE REVIEW***

### ***Defining Interdisciplinary Work***

The interest in interdisciplinary practice first emerged as the critique of the institutionalization of separate and exclusive academic and professional disciplines (Klein, 1990; 1996; Nissani, 1997). Some scholars have done extensive intellectual thinking about the history, politics, conceptualization and operationalization of interdisciplinarity. For example, Klein (1990) examines the journey of interdisciplinary thinking and practice in the academy and the world of research, focusing on crossing boundaries, content and process issues—much of which is relevant to the real complex world of community life. She identifies three issues from the analysis of boundary work: integrative process (depth, breadth, and synthesis), the role of the disciplines, and communicative action. Accordingly, interdisciplinary work entails “rhetorical, social

and political negotiation” (p. 221); “language becomes paramount, and interdisciplinary skills become forms of knowledge themselves” (p. 234). Nissani (1997) describes the resistance to and challenges of moving from a unitary concept of a single discipline to interdisciplinary thinking and action, in spite of the multiple reasons for doing so. While these authors have documented and urged new forms of academic interdisciplinary approaches, their applications to professional education are only implied.

The composite term *interdisciplinary community collaboration and development* has not been found in extensive reviews of data bases and search engines. The emphasis has been placed elsewhere. In the professional and practice literature, there is much on the value of interdisciplinary collaboration at the case/clinical level in the US and Israel (Albeck, 1983; Abramson & Bronstein, 2004; McMahan, Hoffman, & McGee, 1994). *Project Renewal*, the most significant comprehensive national effort in Israel which brought diverse partners to the table, focused more on involving community residents than it did on inter-professional issues (Hoffman, 1986; Lappin & Teicher, 1990). Other analyses have emphasized the dynamics of inter-organizational relationships without identifying and rarely examining the backgrounds or professions of the leaders and participants involved in these collaborations (Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 1993; 2001; Kaufman, 2004). Very few articles make distinctions between inter-organizational and interdisciplinary collaboration in either country. Abramson and Rosenthal (1995) and Lawson, Bronstein, McCallion, and Ryan (2004) are among the few who make those distinctions. Researchers and evaluators have begun, however, to examine the impact of collaboration and coalition building on strengthening individual, family, and community life. The assumption is that the synergy created with a diverse group of actors will result in more creative outcomes. The emphasis is on bringing multiple stakeholders together to address the complex health and social needs of vulnerable populations. These include studies of interdisciplinary collaboration in child welfare (Grossman & McCornick, 2003), health (McMahan et al., 1994), gerontology (Mellor, 1996), public health (Donchin, 2005; Lasker, Weiss & Miller, 2001; Lasker & Weiss, 2003), and economic development (Korazim & Klausner, 1989; Borovsky & Kaminsky, 1991).

Bronstein (2002; 2003) focuses on how interdisciplinary collaboration can be measured; Maidenberg and Golick (2001) and Grossman and McCormick (2003) examine teaching implications. Different groups of professionals are also coming together to develop generic guides to community-based practice that cross or merge different disciplines

(Gamble & Quinn, 2002). Still missing from the literature is the impact of the educational backgrounds of those engaged in community collaborations, and the preparation needed for interdisciplinary collaborations. Other unexplored areas include: the relationships among the professional disciplines in community practice; the knowledge, skills, values, and expertise that each profession brings to the table; and the common core needed for effective interdisciplinary community collaboration and development. Yet, the most striking absence from the literature are any references to the idea that much more studies are needed either from actual practice or from dialogue among professionals on the challenges and opportunities of interdisciplinary practice.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology for this paper includes the collection and content analysis of data from dialogues among professionals working in the field of interdisciplinary practice. The Israeli and US groups who came together to address interdisciplinary issues were independent of each other and met with different frequencies and intensity. In Israel, in 1999, a team of five professionals, four of whom were community social workers, invited members of other professions to dialogue about interdisciplinarity in community development. Within a year, they formed the Interdisciplinary Forum on Community Development (IFCD), which has been meeting regularly since that time. Their learning communities (c.f., Schon, 1983), included around 500 people—primarily practitioners—who attended one or more of the IFCD's four annual conferences, and a consistent group of about 20-30 professionals who meet monthly or bi-monthly. Their academic and professional backgrounds have included: community social work; sociology; public administration; psychology; formal and informal community education; medicine; public health; recreation; urban, regional and environmental development; community conflict resolution; social and human rights; community law; community policing; public social policy; local and regional economic development, among others. Several members had multiple degrees in different academic disciplines and professional specializations. The active IFCD members were primarily white and Jewish and approximately equal in terms of gender.

In the US, as a result of meeting with and presenting at an IFCD conference in Israel in 2003, the senior US author of this paper with two colleagues (the other two US authors) brought together three times, a

group of faculty from the City University of New York (CUNY). A total of 22 people representing a range of academic and professional backgrounds met for one or more of the sessions. Their professional backgrounds were similar to the Israelis, with the difference that there were more academics than practitioners. About three quarters of the group were women, and about one-quarter were people of color. Both the Israeli and the NYC groups used similar structured approaches, namely the group-learning processes in the tradition of Dewey's concept of community of inquiry. These take place in organized settings, with the goal of obtaining new insights and actions (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Frey & Fontana, 1991; Shkedi, 2003).

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

A qualitative methodology was used including content analysis of the rich discussion data that emanated from the groups in the US and Israel. The contents of each group process were analyzed independently using grounded theory. In each group, inductive analysis led to the identification of common themes and their categorization. In Israel, the data utilized consisted of summaries and analysis of documents based on the annual conferences, one sectorial/disciplinary meeting with a group of community lawyers, and a bi-monthly learning workshop. The group discussions combined case studies with conceptual analysis. An academic advisor was funded for two years to summarize and analyze the group discussions and to actively participate in its processes. The three authors from Israel independently reviewed the documents mentioned above and developed the key topics for further analysis. The Hebrew analysis was translated for comparisons with data from the US. In the US, the focus group meetings were audio-taped, transcribed and edited (Urwin & Haynes, 1998). The first US author extracted the major themes from three focus groups, which were then reviewed and modified by the other two US authors. Graphic recordings of the sessions were produced as another way of visually conceptualizing the content of the dialogues (Argilla, 2004; see Figures 1 and 2). In addition, the senior US partner met with the Israeli authors several times to review each country's preliminary analysis, identify common themes, and explain differences in findings and interpretations.

This methodology had similar limitations for Israel and the US. First, neither forum was established for the purpose of doing research. Second, the participants were a self selected and invited group of participants, so the findings may be skewed in favor of the topic at hand. Additionally,



FIGURE 1. Graphic Recording of Interdisciplinary Community Collaboration



neither group reflects their nation's ethnic composition or the ethnic composition of their countries' professionals. While Israeli society is composed of close to 20% Arabs, among the more active members of the Forum, their representation was negligible. The percentage of faculty of color (25%) attending in NY is probably reflective of the percentage of faculty of color at CUNY, but their representation is higher there than in most academic institutions in the US.

### ***FINDINGS***

Among the participants, understanding the meaning as well as the complexity and ultimate purpose of a more informed understanding of *interdisciplinary community collaboration and development* (ICCD) is a major finding. Although almost everyone participating believed in the importance of these discussions, there were differences among participants as to the directions and projected outcomes of such deliberations. Notwithstanding this diffuseness, both groups were dedicated to conceptualizing and identifying new models and principles of practice that went beyond the traditional mono-disciplinary emphasis, especially in Israel. Embedded in the agenda of both groups in US and Israel was a dedication to using their knowledge and experiences to improve their societies. The themes selected for presentation here include: professional self and identity; going beyond mono-disciplinary practice; relationships among the disciplines—their meanings and metaphors; distinguishing between inter-organizational and interdisciplinary practice; adding the community as a “discipline” in community development; and core knowledge, skills, and values and attributes needed in teaching and practicing ICCD.

#### ***Professional Self and Identity***

The consciousness of their own professional role and background and whether it affected how they teach or practice, varied among the participants in the US and Israel. This was a surprising finding. In the US, what began as introductions became a detailed and complex topic of professional identity. As participants were asked to introduce themselves by noting their job/title, degrees, and background in relation to ICCD, it became apparent that they wore multiple hats and varied in how they identified themselves in different settings. While the focus clearly was on professional- and academic-specific roles, participants

went far beyond those identities to include both other roles, for example, mother, youth worker, and characterizations of themselves as activist, bridger, trouble-maker. However, rather than making for confusion, there was a general comfort level, and even a feeling of pride in the mastery of many identities.

The US participants also identified themselves as an unusual group of academics. This was based on their ideologies, their interests in addressing issues of inequality and oppression, and their activism either or both inside the university and outside in the community. The participants were a cohort of do-ers as well as scholars; one participant identified herself as an activist-scholar; another, as an agitator. Most had one foot at least still embedded in community work directly and/or through their students. The US group focused on the attributes and values they had in common. People talked a lot about their passion, and their concern for social justice; conversely, they identified the reality of structured inequality around race, gender and other characteristics inside the university and in society. They saw their roles as greater than merely imparting knowledge and skill; what seemed to matter most to the cohort was the value base and purpose for which knowledge and skill would be put to use.

Also, it was rare for anyone to have had all three degrees (bachelors, masters, doctorate) in one discipline. Almost all the participants had at least one of their degrees in different academic or professional areas from the other two. Moreover, degrees like public policy, urban planning, human development, even public health, were identified as interdisciplinary. Some group members made a distinction between a professional and an academic discipline—e.g., the difference between a sociologist and a social worker. While some participants clearly had strong primary professional identifications, many of them were teaching in or members of departments or schools different from their own disciplinary background (e.g., an architect teaching in a department of urban planning; a community social worker teaching in policy and management programs).

In Israel, when specifically addressed as a question in one of their sessions, it was discovered that many of the IFCD members also had mixed identities and degrees. Several identified themselves as community social workers even if they weren't directly practicing it. Others included educational titles such as lecturer and teacher. Additional identities included characteristics such as educational entrepreneur, educational activist, systems thinker, a pusher, clinical teacher, professional lay leader, and administrative director. The commitment of the Israelis appeared similar to that held by the US group. In examining the topics

of their various IFCD programs, it became clear that a primary purpose of their interdisciplinary agenda was to address issues of social justice and an improved quality of life for the society, especially marginalized and disadvantaged communities.

### ***Beyond Mono-Disciplinary Practice***

In relation to community development, the writings of Klein (1990; 1996) and Nissani (1997; 2005) help clarify the concept of *discipline*. A discipline has been defined as a relatively self-contained and isolated domain of human/community experience, which possesses its own community of experts. Three types of disciplinary expertise are identified: first, those with self contained theoretical-academic knowledge—i.e., disciplines such as chemistry, sociology, economics, etc; second, those with action oriented, applied purposes—a combination of theoretical knowledge with practical application, professions such as lawyer, teacher, physician, social worker; and third, those vocations and professional roles which require some basic academic background, and an experiential, on-the-job training component such as the director of a local community development project. In Israel, the mono-discipline in community development has been social work at the second disciplinary level; in the US, community development has no single disciplinary base, and is located primarily at third disciplinary level. From the beginning, both groups attempted to clarify the concept of disciplinarity and to distinguish it from the concepts of multi-disciplinarity, inter-disciplinarity, and in the US, trans-disciplinarity. The IFCD members in Israel had long debates justifying the need for interdisciplinary community development, since professionally trained social workers had a virtual monopoly on those careers. It took a long while to clarify the differences by disciplines on the one hand, and what their common denominator was on the other hand. The US group with fewer meetings, focused more on the commonalities, although some differences emerged.

The meanings of the variety of terms related to disciplinarity emerged somewhat impressionistically and by inference in their three forums. *Multi-disciplinarity* in community development describes those usually short-term interactions among disciplines, in which each discipline maintains its own identity, professional language and norms of actions as it works with others. *Multi-disciplinary* implies bringing one's own professional or disciplinary perspective to the table, while learning from other disciplines. It means ultimately expanding one's own repertoire and gaining an appreciation of other disciplines' perspectives. There is

an additive feel to it—that is, the disciplines remain distinct, but the whole grows larger with each discipline’s input. Multidisciplinary work is the sum of its parts. This is the most common form of multi-professional interaction in Israeli community development, and no doubt in the US as well. Among the Israelis, it was confused with inter-disciplinary in the beginning.

*Inter-disciplinarity* begins with the specific disciplines/professions at the table, but goes beyond it. Implied is that something new and different is created as a result of interacting and working together. While the professions still maintain their separate identities, the boundaries between them soften. There is an exponential feel to the interaction or collaboration, a synergy, so that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The Forum ultimately developed a working definition of *interdisciplinary community collaboration and development* to take into account the distinctions, as follows:

The complexity of community problems, often require applied action, by clustering a variety of knowledge bases, skills, and collaborations depending on the issue at stake. These are long-term collaborations of teams containing representatives of several disciplines, together with community representatives, which lead to new methods of synergetic interventions—over, and above the single (mono)-disciplinary method, or the short-term multi-disciplinary connections. These methods integrate community action with team-learning processes, leading towards the involvement of individuals and groups for the development of favorable communities for their residents. (Korazim-Körösy, Katz, & Karmon, 2006)

*Trans-disciplinary*, the newest term to emerge in scholarly and policy circles in the US was the least defined (Nowotny, 2004). It was not familiar to the Israelis. As briefly discussed in the US, it is not clear whether trans-disciplinary is a further evolution of inter-disciplinary or a totally different entity. The concept could mean the creation of a new or eclectic discipline/profession, or that it could mean beginning with a professional discipline and then submerging or losing the professional identity over time in the community development work. The implication could be that the whole is different from the sum of its parts. For some in the US, “trans” meant a fundamentally different approach to community development which would not be associated with any particular professional background, and therefore there would be no boundary issues among the professions involved. Indeed, someone in the US group

wanted to add the term *non-disciplinary* to the mix. The idea was not that no education or training was required, but rather to focus the work on problem-solving methodologies and a common core of knowledge, skill and values. Other questions emerged in the discussion that require further dialogue and discussion, but it is helpful to record them here. Do these various models of work among and between disciplines fall on a linear continuum that moves from mono- to multi- to inter- and to trans-disciplinary? Is there a continuum or progression, in which the preferred and final direction for all community collaboration and development ends at the inter- or trans-levels?

***Relationships Among the Disciplines:  
Meanings and Metaphors***

Since its inception, the IFCD devoted long discussions to the problems involved in the interaction among professionals from different disciplines in community development practice. Beyond definitions, philosophical conceptions and metaphors were used to give symbolic meaning and intellectual clarity to those complex interactions. While the US group spent less time on these issues, they added their own visions following the impetus of the IFCD.

*Philosophical conceptions.* One of the first insights was the use of four philosophical conceptions to understand the relations between different disciplines of knowledge, as follows (Karmon, 2002):

- **Harmonic interdisciplinarity**—*Merging the disciplines into one grand theory.* This conception claims that it is possible to melt together all relevant disciplines into one harmonized approach. Such an integration of disciplines requires extremely high levels of theoretical thinking. Those who support such an approach will aim to develop a comprehensively integrated model, into which all relevant disciplines involved in community development will be integrated.
- **Dialectic interdisciplinarity**—*Emphasizing differences and creating a new synthesis.* This conception claims that theoretical thinking grows out of practical experience. This perception emphasizes the vital importance of the contrasts between the participating disciplines, which enables them to learn from each other, and to distill their basic values and assumptions, and based on those, to reach a new and comprehensive synthesis.

- **Dynamic interdisciplinarity**—*Each problem has its own integrative solution.* This conception claims that there is no one best way to reach a comprehensive interdisciplinary integration, since direct community practice always raises new problems that the existing disciplines and collaborations can not cope with. Thus, this conception claims that each new problem requires a new and unique mode of intervention. Those who support it will aim to reach the most rational solution to each one, until the environmental changes require a new interdisciplinary solution.
- **Pluralistic interdisciplinarity**—*Each problem has numerous integrative solutions.* This conception claims that different disciplines are incommensurable in their essence, and thus there is no way to reach a rational synthesis between them (Kuhn, 1970). Those who support this conception will recommend the implementation of tentative combinations of disciplines, since they are aware that each integration is only one possible solution, among many others for the given problem.

*Metaphors.* Along with the philosophical conceptions, the Israelis used various metaphors that highlighted other important aspects of the relationships between the disciplines, to which the US added their own. The metaphor of the flower was adapted by the IFCD and used as its logo. Other metaphors included the salad, juice, the puzzle and the kaleidoscope (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Judge, 1991; Nissani, 1995; Morgan, 1997). The metaphors were elaborated as follows:

- *Flower.* The flower was chosen as the IFCD logo, since it was perceived as representing an inner circle with some core knowledge base shared by all disciplines, or an “anchor profession/discipline” which dominates and takes leadership on an interdisciplinary process. The petals of the flower—the outer circle—stand for the participating disciplines. Since there are many kinds of flowers, there are many combinations of disciplines in interdisciplinary community development projects.
- *Salad.* A salad is composed of a mix of several different fruits or vegetables—each keeping its original taste and visible identity. However, the mixture creates a different, but not entirely new flavor. The salad itself does not influence its components, but only its new flavor. This metaphor was found to be more relevant to multi-disciplinarity than to inter-disciplinarity. The US introduced the variation of the “fruit salad” where each fruit maintain some its

original flavor, but also take on some flavor of the others depending on which fruit is dominant; however the fruit juice is an entirely new taste, which changes depending on the type and amount of each fruit in the salad as per the next metaphor.

- *Juice*. A juice is the result of a process of “blending,” where each type of fruit or vegetable loses its identity, and creates “the new entity,” its origins no longer recognized. This new creation can either become a new type of community development practice or transdisciplinary, or a new way of looking at community development from an interdisciplinary perspective.
- *Puzzle*. A puzzle is a picture created by putting all its parts in the right places. The emphasis is on the unique combination of the various parts. Missing or misplaced parts will result in failing to create the full picture. In this sense, the puzzle represents a situation in which there is only one or at least one best way to solve a community problem with an identified group of professionals involved.
- *Kaleidoscope*. A kaleidoscope, the metaphor used first by the US group, begins with a pattern, but it is not fixed. By turning the kaleidoscope even one millimeter (e.g., adding one new partner), a new picture is created, although the composite parts maintain their shape and identity. It is the interaction among the parts, the environment and the light that creates a transformed picture each time it is changed, even slightly. This metaphor emphasizes the delicate balance between maintaining a unique identity of the parts, and the ability to reach a new pattern beyond the sum of all parts.
- *Bridges*. The US group added the bridges metaphor. It has two related meanings. The bridge assumes that the parts (i.e., the community components) are fixed, while professionals (i.e., the bridge-builders) move from one component to another, connecting the isolated parts to each other, thereby changing the patterns of interaction. It could also mean that certain professionals can serve as bridges (i.e., cultural translators) between different groups, often between the dominant and subordinate ones, since they know the languages, experiences, history, meanings, and situations of those groups.

These philosophical conceptions and metaphors were used by the IFCD according to what Schwab (1970) termed the practical-eclectic approach. It maintains that practice cannot be effective without theory, but that it becomes sterile if it succumbs to one theory only. Accordingly, the IFCD treated all conceptions and metaphors as a rich theoretical

inventory to highlight important aspects of interdisciplinary community development practice. For example, dialectic interdisciplinarity stresses the importance of sharpening the differences between the disciplines which take place in the discourse, and the puzzle metaphor suggests the need to ascertain the presence of all the essential parts—disciplines professionals and community representatives—needed for an effective intervention with the problem. It is also possible to begin linking the philosophical conceptions and the metaphors. For example, dialectic interdisciplinarity could be linked with the kaleidoscope, harmonic interdisciplinary with the juice, and pluralistic with the flower. Both groups, but especially the US one, felt the need to expose ICD/ICC practitioners to these concepts. Their experiences would then either be integrated into the theoretical conceptualizations to arrive at new syntheses, or would heighten any contradictions, so as to move to another level of thinking and doing—known as praxis.

### ***Adding the Interorganizational Dimension to ICCD***

An important finding of the IFCD was the difficulty participants had embracing the concept of interdisciplinarity as distinct from interorganizational. The reasons may be that in Israeli community development, interorganizational connections are more common, the practitioner's allegiance is to the organization rather than their profession over time, or because in practice, their professional background and organizational job description may overlap. It might also be because the assumption is that the community practitioner role is fulfilled by social workers, so the professional degree is not emphasized. Interorganizational describes the instrumental reasons for collaboration among different organizations and service delivery systems, whereas interdisciplinary as just discussed, emphasizes the relationships among different disciplines and professional expertise, styles and backgrounds. Table 1 shows a beginning typology of community collaboration and development developed by the Israeli authors to capture the various permutations, which range from single organization/single discipline community work to models that are both interorganizational and interdisciplinary in scope (Korazim, Katz & Karmon, 2006). This framework does not include the addition of the new term trans-disciplinary.

The discussions in the IFCD also raised an important insight: when interorganizational *and* interdisciplinary relationships are combined, a variety of potential situations are created. For some Israelis, the meaning was clear: the closer a community development project came to the

TABLE 1. A Typology of Interdisciplinary and Interorganizational Collaborations in Community Development

Number of Disciplines	Number of Organizations		
	Single, Intra-Organizational	Multi-Organizational	Inter-Organizational
Single/Mono/ Intra-Disciplinary	An intra-organizational project by a single discipline.  <i>Example:</i> Community social workers and social caseworkers collaborate in a local welfare office.	A multi-organizational forum by a single discipline.  <i>Example:</i> A short-term collaboration of community social workers from different organizations, to discuss strategies against poverty.	A joint inter-organizational project, by a single discipline.  <i>Example:</i> A long-term collaboration of community social workers and other social workers from different organizations, to operate a community project for the elderly.
Multi-Disciplinary	An intra-organizational project by several disciplines.  <i>Example:</i> A short-term collaboration among social workers, public health nurses, legal advisors and social planners within one organization to create a new service, e.g., to create a well-baby clinic.	A multi-organizational project by several disciplines.  <i>Example:</i> A short-term inland-security community-health project among army, police and health service organizations, which require collaboration among doctors, nurses, social and mental-health workers.	A joint inter-organizational project conducted by more than two disciplines.  <i>Example:</i> A long-term process of a community safety plan for the elderly, undertaken by the welfare and health services, the police and a community center.
Interdisciplinary	An intra-organizational, long-term project, by several disciplines.  <i>Example:</i> Social workers, doctors, nurses and lawyers from the same organization collaborate to develop a community project.	A multi-organizational project by several disciplines.  <i>Example:</i> A long term collaboration of social workers, educators, community health workers, the local police and others, involved in local child protection projects.	A complex, long-term, joint inter-organizational and interdisciplinary project.  <i>Example:</i> Social workers, urban planners and economists from different organizations create a "new type" of synergic community collaboration, e.g., community economic development plan.

inter-organizational-interdisciplinary category, the closer it reached an ideal-type of collaboration. Presently in Israel (and probably in the US), it is hard to find genuine inter-organizational-interdisciplinary relations; it is more common to find multi-disciplinary relations in either intra- or multi-organizational levels. Therefore, this assumption needs further deliberation. In the US, the discussion did not include these various permutations. Perhaps because all of the participants were academics, they did not emphasize inter-organizational relationships per se. The focus for the US participants was on the way any professional (or group of professionals) understood and related to relevant factors in community, organizational and social life.

### ***Adding the Community Dimension to ICCD***

Both US and Israeli groups strongly believed that the community needed to be actively engaged in any ICCD work. Multiple definitions and varied meanings were given to the terms *community*, *partnership*, and *community empowerment*, with the meaning of the latter two terms focusing on the process and goals for the professional. Generally, in both countries these were generally understood to include clients or consumers if it involved welfare or social service issues, to parents if it involved specific school, child welfare or family issues, and community residents or citizens more generally if it affected a neighborhood or geographic community. Given the values and experiences of both the Israeli and US participants, there was a consensus that the inclusion of local grassroots constituencies was a necessary component of any ICCD. The question became one of how to do this effectively when, at the same time, inter-disciplinary professional roles and interorganizational relationships were being negotiated. Clearly the relationship to the community—be it a geographic or functional definition—added complexity to the discussions in both countries.

The Israelis raised a series of important questions that paralleled a major discussion in the US. Can we regard the community as a discipline with experiential/indigenous knowledge? How do we reconcile tensions between professional knowledge and experiential knowledge? Can we use the best of professional expertise alongside client expertise, without one dominating the other? How does the community perspective become integrated into interdisciplinary community development practice? In attempting to answer these questions, the Israelis started to use a new term: *inter-perspectives*, which goes beyond the concept of discipline, profession, and organization. An inter-perspective approach

would assure that the relevant constituencies become more significant partners. In the US, the dialogue revealed differences among the participants in the way the role of the professional was viewed vis-à-vis the community. Some participants were uncomfortable with the dichotomy between the professional and the community, if professional meant an outsider, more privileged and coming from the dominant class or culture. Most emphasized the importance of lessening the gap between professionals and community to create genuine partnerships, or at least to create a sense of ownership by the community. They, like the Israelis used the term indigenous voices to characterize the perspective of those living in the community and/or who were receiving or needed specific services. Many acknowledged that community members had a different view of their situation, their problems and the solutions, than did the professionals. They were experts in their own lives—in their own lived in experience. The need for listening and dialoguing was deemed critical. In the US, there was a consensus that professionals made or could make a contribution to community problem solving with their specialized knowledge and skills. Professionals bring their ability to link theory to practice, and provide critical awareness. They present a different interpretation of a situation, and frame issues within a broader context that includes the connection of specific problems to underlying social, political and economic conditions. However, professional attitudes toward community participation were paramount. Professionals must be self-aware and understand that they need to learn from the community as well as to provide feedback to it.

Identifying “who is the community” took on further complexity in the US given the racial and ethnic diversity of the participants. Some differences surfaced between those who identified themselves as people of color and those who were white. Participants of color characterized themselves and their relationship to others in complex ways. As academics and as professionals who work with low income, marginalized or oppressed communities and populations and/or who teach students from those communities, they identified a dual role for themselves. “We are the community,” they said, since several of them were working in and bringing students to work in their own communities or comparable communities. These faculty were not asserting that only professionals of like background could work in those communities, nor conversely, that professionals of like background did not have to deal with their own issues when they went back to work in their community of origin or a similar one. Rather, they were aware of the need to educate students with similar and different backgrounds to the important, but different

roles, they could play in the community. The fact that issues of race, ethnicity and culture were not fully explored among the Israelis was raised in preparing for this comparative analysis. It was speculated that because virtually all the participants were Jewish and most of them worked for government or quasi-governmental organizations, they held a position of hegemony in society no matter how committed they were towards improving conditions for disadvantaged communities—including Israeli-Arabs. The US group also speculated that had its conveners and participants not been a diverse group—racially and ethnically—those issues might not have surfaced in the way they did.

***CORE COMPETENCIES:  
KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, VALUES AND ATTRIBUTES***

The emphasis in the US was on the core knowledge and skills needed by any practitioner to bring different organizations, professions, and other constituencies in a community together to improve conditions and quality of life. The following core competencies were identified or accepted by the Israelis as well as the Americans for ICCD. One set of skills are analytical. There was a full agreement that professionals involved in community development need to have a common professional language and a set of basic skills, to allow an easy flow of interdisciplinary communication for planning and action. The following activities were identified: conceptualization and critical thinking; social mapping—that is, collecting, analyzing and utilizing both hard and soft data about community dynamics, history, structures and services; the assessment of needs; power analysis; the development of goals and strategies; priority-setting and problem-solving. The US emphasized the need to understand the concept of community in all its dimensions, including racial, economic, ethnic, religious and other structural inequalities. They also emphasized multi-culturalism and diversity.

The other set of skills are interpersonal. These include primarily: communication skills such as listening, public speaking, and effective writing; relationships building and interpersonal engagement skills; bridging, negotiating and mediating differences; conflict-management; reaching for consensus and commonalities; creating and sustaining a sense of ownership in the community process; shared decision-making; leadership identification and development; building effective collaborations and partnerships; task centered group work; the understanding of personal motivation and behavior. Identifying a set of shared values

is central for effective interdisciplinary collaborations. There was agreement on: respect for and inclusion of other professional identities; respect for and inclusion of indigenous voices; belief in self-determination, while recognizing its limits; a quest for social justice; recognizing and owning one's own identities, biases, and prejudices. The US participants identified a list of personal qualities and ascribed characteristics, which most of them felt mattered more than professional background and socialization. Doing effective interdisciplinary community development combined among others: heart and passion; personal integrity, and commitment; energy; a combination of humanity and humility; self-reflection and self-criticism; comfort with uncertainty, complexity and tensions; and creativity and innovation.

Neither the US nor Israeli group denied the importance of specialized professional knowledge or skills that might be needed by a community—for example, advice on economics, architecture, law, medicine, and so on—but the group distinguished these from a broader, generalist, professional role needed to engage and transform a community. The IFCD used the term *anchor profession* for the latter role, which in the past had almost always been a professional social worker. In subsequent discussions, the participants in both countries also understood that there could be differences in how different professions and disciplines interpret and impart such content. Professionals, especially those not from the same community, would have different perspectives on how problems are identified and approached, the lens through which they look at problems, the way issues are interpreted, and the meaning given to certain phenomenon. This was not posed as a problem per se; it was viewed as inevitable. In some instances, it might be positive, as long as all perspectives were known and respected.

## DISCUSSION

Given the differences in the purpose, frequency and intensity of the forums on ICCD held in the US and Israel, there still appears to be more similarities than differences in the findings. There was an underlying belief in the importance of the discussion and the commitment to the work. Both groups began with the assumption that the complexity of community problems, and the inability or unwillingness of both governments to tackle them, meant new challenges for professional education and practice. Both groups believe that multiple types of expertise are needed, alongside new models of professional and inter-organizational

relationships as well as professional-community interaction. Nevertheless, the participants had a hard time coming to a common understanding of many of the concepts—professional identity, mono-multi-inter-trans-disciplinarity, mono-multi-and inter-organizational structures, and the community in all its dimensions—that inform interdisciplinary work. The Israelis started with the challenges to community social workers and the need to bring other professions into the process, while the US group began with faculty members who already had some connections to the community and other professions, but needed to dialogue about how to conceptualize those perspectives and bring them into the classroom and field. Both groups recognized the critical importance as well as complexity of including those affected by the problem—the community residents or clients—into the process. The US emphasized values and attributes more, while the Israelis began with knowledge and professional expertise, but as their learning dialogues unfolded, it was clear that the US group recognized the importance of multiple knowledge and skill areas and the Israelis had a definite humanistic, democratic value base. Nonetheless, the ideas presented here provide the foundation for an evolving ICCD theoretical framework, informed by practice.

### ***Differing Voices About the Interdisciplinary Direction***

In both the US and Israel, there were differences with respect to the direction the ICCD would take, and whether that was the framework on which to concentrate future work. After years of discussions in Israel and months in the US, there was still a diversity of opinions as to what going beyond mono-disciplinary meant, and whether it was always a positive advancement in terms of community development. In spite of the importance and acceptance of the subject, there were still some questioners. On the downside, some thought it could lead to mediocrity without first establishing the foundation of a sound professional/disciplinary education and identity. The danger was that the concept of ICCD could be reduced to the least common denominator by minimizing the level of education and training needed to do it well. Others felt that creating something new and/or different could lead to professional imperialism with one discipline taking over another, especially if those disciplines collaborating had differing status or standing in society, as for example, between medicine and nursing, or social work and law.

Within the social work community in particular, there are or could be some serious concerns. Some community social work faculty in Israel oppose to the creation of a new field or profession, believing that social

workers are already doing it, have the proper knowledge base, and should always be the anchor profession in ICCD. While not discussed in the US forums, there is speculation that community practice social work educators may worry that they will lose the impetus to strengthen and promote a social work-based community practice within the profession (Korazim-Körösy, & Mizrahi, 2003). It might also submerge the professional identification of social work as a legitimate professional career track for those pursuing community organizing and development.

Beyond the social work concerns in the US, differences surfaced about how much emphasis to place on the discipline or professional background of a practitioner versus an emphasis on the attributes and characteristics of the person, regardless of discipline. As mentioned earlier, a few participants suggested the use of the term *non-disciplinary* to emphasize the perspective that values and problems should guide action rather than any specific educational background. Without a disciplinary perspective, they assert, a new, more holistic way of looking at community issues could emerge. To some, the concept *trans-disciplinary* would fit this meaning.

There were also those in both countries who recognize the appropriateness of the term *disciplinary* and the various ways to go beyond it (multi-inter-trans) within academic institutions and discourse, but they had trouble seeing its validity in the context of social problem-solving and transforming communities. For them, it leaves out the dimensions of organizational and community life. Additionally, it makes the assumption that it is the type of configurations of professionals that will transform communities. According to this framework, the lens must be shifted to begin with the complex social conditions, and then identify the various skills sets (personal and professional) and contributions that each discipline/profession can make toward collectively improving the social ills of disadvantaged communities (Bayne-Smith, Graham, & Guttmacher, 2005). It is for this reason that the term *inter-perspectives* was coined by the Israelis to legitimize the presence of the experiential knowledge of other important constituencies and voices in the community—organizations, residents, other sectors, etc.

### ***DETERMINING FUTURE DIRECTIONS***

The complexities of this topic are related to at least four potential roads which these conceptualizations can take concerning the development of the ICCD agenda. While not mutually exclusive or conflicting,

each of the paths can lead in a different direction with a different purpose, or each can move ahead on a parallel track to the others:

- Create a new interdisciplinary profession devoted to community collaboration and development, presumably at a graduate level.
- Expand the knowledge and skill base of existing professions which incorporate these new ICCD understandings incorporated into the way they work.
- Develop teams of various community development professionals based on the leadership and expertise needed to address a particular problem or condition.
- Identify an anchor (generalist) profession from an existing discipline which recognizes the need to systematically involve other professions.

If there is a commitment to examining and building new models of doing interdisciplinary community development, time and resources must be made available to conduct action-research and to establish in-depth forums of myriad professional, community and academic groups like those of the IFCD and CUNY. They would come together to dialogue and debate, and to create pilot projects and community interventions with the buy-in of the multiple stakeholders. Some objectives for future teaching and research:

- Study the current status of interdisciplinary approaches being taught and/or practiced in schools of social work in the US, Israel and other countries, in particular the interconnectedness of knowledge, skills, values and pedagogy.
- Examine how community social work is imbedded in the broader field of interdisciplinary community development in different communities in the US and in other countries.
- Identify the universal and contextual dimensions of ICCD at the macro level in various countries related to the development of their academic institutions and professions, and the historic conditions and social structures in which the practice is embedded.
- Analyze models of mono-multi-inter-trans-disciplinary in community development practices to ascertain the factors that favor similar or different approaches.
- Distinguish the different and intersecting professional roles and relationships in any ICCD research and evaluation undertaken.

- Create teaching options that utilize and continue to build core competencies and pedagogical principles for teaching ICCD (formal for-credit, and continuing education and training for practitioners).

### CONCLUSION

These Israeli and US forums are continuing to work on these important and relevant issues for improving the conditions of communities and the quality of life of society within a social justice framework. The concepts presented here deserve scrutiny from myriad professional and community groups including social work. The challenge for others is to develop efforts that invest teaching, research, and practice in one or more of the four directions for ICCD. What is clear is that complex community projects, which tackle tough social problems comprehensively, are requiring additional skills and knowledge bases (Bradshaw, 2000). Whether in Israel, the US, or in other countries throughout the world, social workers can contribute their competencies to new forms of interdisciplinary community practice.

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