

Reply to Augmentation and a Question

GREGORY W. BROCK*

The rejoinder presents the opportunity to reply and reiterate several points from my original statement:

1. Changing the traditional family science curriculum by augmenting what exists is a good strategy, and one that I recommended.
2. The curriculum I proposed includes all of the traditional undergraduate course work plus the addition of professional level skills. Any reference to minimizing course work on theory is a simple misreading of the proposal.
3. Teaching skills to undergraduates was labeled as vocationalism (usually connoting trade skills). The traditional curriculum trains students to become academicians, or in the view of many, nothing much at all (avocational pursuit). My proposal seeks to broaden, strengthen, and professionalize the undergraduate degree. Family science undergraduates should learn family theory, human development theory, and the ecological view of human problems experienced today. They also need the professional level skills required to change families and foster optimum human development.
4. The concern expressed about the effects of adopting a professional skills orientation on so called non-intervention faculty is very real. If the number of our majors continues to drop, non-intervention faculty will have few students to teach. Adding skills training of the type I have suggested to some content courses is well within the considerable capacity of existing faculty. We have tended to believe that intervention is the turf of the psychologists and social workers. We must discard that myth, value our expertise, and rightfully assume our role in the academic and professional services communities.

I'll take this opportunity to broaden the discussion. In my opinion, the factor most important to the development of new undergraduate curricula as well as to the development of family science as a social science discipline is the professional identification of faculty. As should be expected with a new discipline, many faculty in departments throughout the country received their doctoral training in home economics, psychology, social work, and sociology programs. Naturally, unless they have reoriented to family science, it is with those disciplines and related professional associations they are most aligned and whose goals they serve.

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Much as we might like to believe that the disciplines do not compete with one another and that professional identification is benign, a discipline typically prospers as the direct result of loss by another. In such a competitive environment, we ask faculty whose primary identity is with other disciplines to serve as leaders in our professional associations and to chair our graduate committees and department governance committees. Are family scientists asked to chair psychology or sociology department governance committees? Family scientists need to exert control over the affairs of family science if the discipline is to grow and prosper. Consequently, we must question whether faculty who do not have or seek a primary professional identification with family science can legitimately serve the needs of this new discipline.

By the above, I do not seek to disparage the contributions of other disciplines to family science. The multi-disciplinary heritage of family science is not at issue nor are the benefits of multi-disciplinary teaching and research. The presence of sinister motives among academicians from other disciplines who have provided long and distinguished service to family science is not implied. No inquisition is requested. The question is posed for the same reason(s) one might doubt the wisdom of hiring a man as president of an institution dedicated to the advancement of women.

We have defined family science as a discipline. It will prosper slowly, if at all, unless we also define a profession for family scientists separate from that established for other disciplines. Part of that defining process consists of (a) hiring family scientists as faculty so our students have family scientists as mentors, and (b) electing leaders for academic and professional governance who fully identify with the needs and goals of family science. These actions of advocacy for family scientists will define a profession and bolster the discipline.



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