

*Charles Schroeder talks to  
Aaron M. Brower, Kenneth A. Bruffee, and William Zeller*

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O LEARNING COMMUNITIES  
DISCOURAGE  
BINGE DRINKING?

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**W**E KNOW that binge drinking remains a major problem on our campuses. What we don't know is what causes students to binge. Without this understanding, our approaches to addressing the problem can only be superficial. Recently, Aaron M. Brower, Kenneth Bruffee, and William Zeller investigated how students' living-learning environment affects their drinking behavior. They have come away with insights into what contributes to binge drinking among students and what discourages it.

To learn more about what they have discovered, Charles Schroeder recently engaged in an e-mail roundtable discussion with Brower, Bruffee, and Zeller.

# Even though UW-Madison has one of the highest binge drinking rates in the country, learning community students were affected by others' drinking at the same rates as students who attend colleges where drinking is in the lowest third of the country.

**CHARLES SCHROEDER:** Bill and Aaron, you both have recently conducted research on the relationship between binge drinking and students' residential circumstances. What did you find out? Did anything surprise you?

**BILL ZELLER:** Each of the two studies we recently conducted at Michigan—one by Carol Boyd, the other by Cherry Danielson—found significant differences in binge drinking behaviors between students who were in living-learning programs and those who were not. The finding that surprised me most was that students in living-learning programs were drinking as often as their peers but were binge drinking at significantly lower levels. This finding strengthened my supposition that living-learning environments may actually be manifesting healthier and more educationally beneficial student behaviors.

**AARON BROWER:** Our research also showed that students in the learning communities drank just about as much students did on the rest of our campus. The big difference, though, between the learning community students and those living in other residence halls was that the learning community students did not experience the effects of their own or others' drinking at anywhere near the same degree as the rest of students on campus. What I mean is that the learning community students did not feel sexually or physically harassed or assaulted by others like students who live in other residence halls did, and the level of vandalism and disruption to sleep and study were much, much lower in the learning communities than in the other halls. In fact, my biggest surprise in these studies was how powerfully *protective* the learning community was. Even though UW-Madison has one of the highest binge drinking rates in the country, learning community students were affected by others' drinking at the same rates as students who attend colleges where drinking is in the lowest third of the country.

**SCHROEDER:** Why do you think learning communities reduce students' alcohol use and misuse? Are there spe-

cific aspects of the learning community experience that account for these results?

**ZELLER:** I have a couple of hypotheses. The first is that students who form social groups with peers who have a common academic link have different social interactions from students who socialize with peers who are not connected academically.

The nature of the interactions students have must be influenced when there is a shared academic experience. Although alcohol is still being used in these interactions, it may not be the primary focus of the relationship. I suspect that the academic link helps create different types of conversations and interactions that promote healthier and more mature drinking behaviors. Conversely, when there is no academic link in the peer group, drinking may become the focus of interactions, thus promoting binge behaviors. Knowing that you will be in class with your peers on Monday morning may also influence the amount you drink and your behavior while drinking as well.

My other hypothesis is that the environmental characteristics that promote academic success and the

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## Learning community students have other ways in which they're connected, so drinking per se is not the central bond between them nor the assumed way to fit in.

achievement of educational outcomes may also influence binge drinking behaviors. In *What Matters in College*, Alexander Astin reports that the most successful campus environments have quality student-to-student interactions, student-faculty interactions, significant time dedicated to studying, and quality social interactions. Richard Light, in both *Making the Most of College* and *Harvard Assessment Seminars*, has said that students who get the most out of college, grow the most academically, and are the happiest, organize their time to include interpersonal activities with faculty members or other students that are built around substantive academic work.

I believe that these characteristics are often manifested in living-learning programs, and that they can have a positive influence on student drinking. As Ken has suggested, binge drinking may be a symptom of an unhealthy campus environment that does not promote or contain these types of characteristics.

**KEN BRUFFEE:** Bill talks about “shared academic experience.” If by that he means shared substantive experience, then I’m with him all the way. The issue is to create circumstances where shop talk prevails, in order to avoid the scenario of, “Say, Sally, how did you solve the last differential equation on that test?” *Bor-ing. Gi’me another beer.*

Of course, I’ve just pushed the question off to a somewhat harder one to answer: What counts as substantive? Research on the nature of the conversations that go on informally in learning communities would be one route to find out what’s going on in learning communities. My hunch is that the answer would not lead to redesigning learning communities to gain *more intentionality*. In fact, I’d guess that less intentionality might be the way to go, or maybe broader intentionality. That would certainly be the case if, as I suspect, binge drinking is a social symptom of a deeper educational disorder.

**BROWER:** Learning community students have other ways in which they’re connected, so drinking per se is not the central bond between them nor the assumed way to fit in. Furthermore, the *opinion leaders* in the

learning communities are not defined by being the heavy drinkers, so others don’t have to suffer in silence the effects of obnoxious drinking behaviors around them. As Bill well knows, the bathrooms on Saturday and Sunday mornings are very often not a pretty sight, and students generally simply put up with vomit and vandalism as a normal weekend occurrence.

In the learning communities, however, we very often hear that the students tell their friend to “clean up your own damn puke” instead of stepping over it silently. The line I’ve been using lately when presenting these findings is that the learning community students treat their residence hall more like a home than a hotel (with the assumption that the cleaning people will take care of this). These students feel ownership of their residence hall.

**BRUFFEE:** I differ with Aaron when he says the residence halls of learning communities are more like homes than hotels. My guess is that when learning community students “feel ownership of their residence hall,” they feel that it’s more like their own home than the home where Mommy always cleans up. If so, there’s a hint about binge drinking buried somewhere in there. Mommy (and/or Daddy) is, after all, a rebellion object. Your peer ain’t. Once you get the idea that the other guy down the hall is the one you’re offending when you puke in the hall, the idea begins to get through that messing your own nest isn’t such a heroic thing to do after all.

**SCHROEDER:** Ken, you wrote a fascinating essay for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* called “Binge Drinking as a Substitute for a Community of Learning.” Why did you choose to write it, and what were the main points you were trying to convey?

**BRUFFEE:** I wrote it because it seemed to me that many people still had the wrong end of the stick on the problem of binge drinking. The wrong end is symptoms; the right end is the underlying disorder. Social alienation is rife on college campuses and especially in college classrooms. Take a walk down the hallway of any classroom building in the country and look through doors left and

right. What social relationship inherent in the situation there engages those students with one another, sitting course after course, docilely in rows? In seminars, what engages them with one another when the principal game being played is to impress the teacher?

My goal in the article was to exploit my own experience in a way that might draw people's attention to the possibility of grasping the other end of the stick—to begin treating the larger educational problem or disorder rather than staring so fixedly at the symptom, as distressing as that symptom remains. Establishing residential learning communities is one way to do that, as Aaron and Bill have shown.

**SCHROEDER:** You're all familiar with Henry Wechsler's Twelve-Step Program for addressing the binge drinking problem on campuses. (*Editor's note: See About Campus 2:2 for information on Wechsler's Twelve-Step Program.*) Does it surprise you that Wechsler fails to include learning communities and other innovative educational reform efforts as strategies?

**BRUFFEE:** I respect Wechsler's work a great deal, but it doesn't surprise me that his program as a whole has been less successful than we all might have hoped. Wechsler's program is a top-down, managerial approach, the kind of can-do thing that is likely to appeal to college presidents and provosts who need to tell their trustees that they are Doing Something.

I'm sure Wechsler is well versed in adolescent psychology. But so far as I can see he hasn't applied it. And there are some really new and interesting things being said these days in that field. An example is Terri Apter's *The Myth of Maturity*. Some of Apter's examples seem extreme, or rather, might seem extreme to anyone who hasn't dealt hands-on, as Bill and Aaron have, with eighteen-year-old undergraduates en masse (or hasn't dealt with a few adolescents of their own).

The point of the book is that maturity doesn't happen, pop, as the door closes on home and Jack and Sally arrive on the campus of ol' Sy Wash. And it isn't just a matter of the desire to belong. That's there of course. But the feeling can be described in a more pos-

itive way. As one of my freshman students put it recently, "We like working together." What collaborative learning and residence learning communities do is replace internalized parental control with internalized peer support. The highly valuable long-run product of this process is graduates who have learned to live in a state of adult interdependence.

**ZELLER:** Although I admire Wechsler's research and leadership in this area, I too was disappointed with the recommendations from the twelve-step program. As Ken suggests, they focus on quick-fix, commonsense solutions that many campuses are already implementing. If colleges are going to change student drinking behaviors—and often these are shaped prior to students' coming to college—there must be a comprehensive approach that addresses the deeper environmental problems contributing to binge drinking. The educational environment needs to be constructed to promote healthy interactions between students and between students and faculty. There must be coherence between students' in-class and out-of-class experiences, thus linking students' academic and social experiences.

**BROWER:** Yes, Wechsler's focus is top-down and managerial. To be fair, however, his approach is a counterbalance to the traditional alcohol programming on campuses that has either focused on individual treatment that gives help to students who get into serious trouble, or on "just say no" forms of prevention. Henry views his approach as *environmental*, but as Bill and Ken point out, it doesn't really go far enough to focus on the learning environment of the campus.

I've heard Wechsler say many times that if there was one solution to the problem of binge drinking, we'd have already found it. Instead the problem needs to be addressed from all angles and in a comprehensive, integrated way. No one solution exists; we have to change the campus environment by including everything and bringing into play every level of interaction and learning.

**SCHROEDER:** In an essay for this publication, Will Willamon, Dean of the Chapel at Duke University, stated that

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“abandonment aggravates our struggle with alcohol on campus.” Will seems to be referring to the fact that the modern university is structured in such a way that the chances of faculty befriending students are quite slim. Is this a large part of the problem? Will also mentions the dramatic separation between students’ academic life and life outside the classroom. Is this part of the problem as well? Aren’t learning communities designed to address both of Will’s concerns?

**ZELLER:** I think that the *abandonment* Willamon refers to very much contributes to our problems with alcohol abuse on our campuses. Without intensive student interactions with influential adults, the established undergraduate peer culture dictates values and behaviors. Today’s campus environments and faculty reward systems often inhibit the development of intensive interactions with students. Although faculty befriending students is an ideal outcome, I believe simply increasing the presence of faculty in nonclassroom environments can have a great impact. Obviously, their presence in student residential areas can have a pervasive and positive impact on the environment in the hall.

Residential learning communities facilitate more intensive and educationally supportive interactions between students and between students and faculty and ultimately minimize the gap between students’ in-class and out-of-class experiences. I believe these two characteristics in particular have an impact on binge drinking behaviors.

**BROWER:** On most college campuses there are few opportunities for meaningful student-to-student interaction, let alone student-to-faculty interaction. I see students desperately wanting meaningful interactions with others, and desperately wanting to be part of a world that’s better than the “real world” around them. Colleges and universities can, and should, provide models for how meaningful community can develop. Since that’s the model we strive for in our learning communities, I believe that that’s why they have such long waiting lists!

**BRUFFEE:** The separation between students and faculty is part of the problem. The Academic Deans of the Commonwealth Partnership were getting at this in their pamphlet “What You Should Know: An Open Letter to

## Students Are Binge Drinking at Alarming Rates

**J**UST RECENTLY, another national study—this one conducted by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism—revealed some startling results. The researchers found that drinking by college students contributes annually to 500,000 injuries, 70,000 cases of sexual assault and 1,400 deaths. Also, 400,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 reported having had unprotected sex as a result of drinking.

Although these findings are shocking, they are consistent with other studies conducted during the 1990s. For example, the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) found that students spend \$5.5 billion each year on alcohol, which represents approximately 33 percent of their discretionary money. CASA also estimates that 40 percent of academic problems, 29 percent of dropout cases, 80 percent of vandalism, 90 percent of Greek hazing deaths, and 90 percent of date rapes are

alcohol related. This research suggests long-term consequences of staggering proportions—240,000 to 360,000 of today’s students will eventually die of alcohol-related causes!

Studies on my own campus show similar results. Despite our having a nationally recognized alcohol education program, the binge drinking rate on our campus has remained relatively stable at 50 percent over the past ten years. The figure is much more alarming for fraternities, where the rate is 86 percent. Perhaps most disturbing is the finding that 35 percent of students who drink do so with the explicit aim of getting drunk.

Although most institutions have attempted to help students make good decisions about alcohol through a variety of educational programs, these interventions have produced few positive results. Why? Perhaps the answer lies in understanding the environmental factors that

## Without intensive student interactions with influential adults, the established undergraduate peer culture dictates values and behaviors.

New Ph.D.s.”They told young Ph.D.’s entering the profession that—and I’m quoting here—“while academics are often portrayed as loners, the faculty members we seek should be prepared for a great deal of social involvement ... engaged in an effort to give students the opportunity to experience a democratic community ... [and sharing] an interest in the personal as well as intellectual development of young adults.”

I admire that declaration and endorse it. But from my perspective a greater part of the problem today may be that the chances of students befriending students are on most campuses even slimmer. That’s where residential learning communities come in, and collaborative learning too.

**SCHROEDER:** What would further strengthen the impact of these programs on binge drinking? What roles should

faculty, student affairs professionals, student leaders, and mentors play? Do you have any other suggestions for our readers to consider?

**BRUFFEE:** Almost anything will help that involves students—particularly freshmen—directly by engaging them on substantive issues in groups small enough for them to get to know one another.

Some of these can be administration initiated. For example, *block programming*, where entering students attend two or three of their beginning courses together, has helped a lot on our campus to increase retention. Endemic dropping out is another symptom of the root educational disorder. People who make friends quickly and substantively tend to stick around.

Another administration-led alternative, one I’ve

affect undergraduates. If the environment around them includes easy access to alcohol, too few consequences for drinking alcohol, and perceived peer pressure to drink, then how can we possibly expect students to make appropriate decisions about drinking? In my community, for example, the local bars feature weekly drink specials such as quarter rounds, penny pitchers, bottomless cups, and “free ’til you pee.”The alcohol-centered culture of the Greek system encourages frequent and irresponsible drinking; in fact, on average fraternity men consume 21 drinks each week, and sorority women are not far behind.

But the environmental factors extend much farther than irresponsible proprietors and student culture. They include a considerable number of campus policies and practices as well. For example, students receive mixed messages when we tell them that they shouldn’t drink while we encourage alumni tailgate parties at athletic events—events that often display, in prominent locations,

sponsorships by the major alcohol brewing companies. Perhaps most significantly, we fail to provide settings that truly encourage a sense of community—settings where all students matter, where friendships, inclusion, and meaningful relationships abound, not only between students but among students, faculty, and staff.

My colleagues Bill Zeller, Aaron Brower, and Ken Bruffee remind us that binge drinking is not simply a public health problem; it is first and foremost a social problem. And this social problem is especially acute for new students who need to fit in, desire genuine friendships, and often crave a sense of belonging. The challenge of addressing binge drinking is not only about connecting the fragmented pieces of the student experience, it is also about connecting us all through the creation of purposeful, value-centered, and intellectually powerful campus communities.

—Charles Schroeder

been trying to establish here but so far with no luck, is to capitalize on existing cohort groups that freshmen tend to gravitate to, some ethnic—the Black Caucus, the Asian Alliance—some not. Even the more civil fraternities could work. This would create new, close, substantively engaged relationships among students. On one hand it turns the older undergraduates into reliable friends by giving them formal responsibility for some of the entering neophytes. On the other it gives freshmen reliable friends right off the bat, friends they immediately trust because they are social-category-familiar.

Another option to consider stirring into the pot is to subtly deemphasize student politics. We don't have many binge drinkers, but we do have a lot of highly competitive, corrosively uncollaborative, deeply self-involved binge politicians, students who, in working their way up the hierarchy of student politics, lose their educational way. I consider it one more symptom of the root educational disorder.

Finally, I'd suggest that schools with massive Ph.D. programs look seriously, with an eye to the quality of the campus culture as a whole, at the human qualities of, one, their degree candidates and degreed products and, two, the new faculty members they hire. David Damrosch's book *We Scholars* may help point the way.

**ZELLER:** Campuses could use their living-learning programs strategically to undermine the binge drinking culture on their campuses. If the living-learning programs were designed to serve primarily first-year students, for example, the entire undergraduate culture could be affected over a four- or five-year period. Such a strategy would need institutional support in order to ensure carryover into the sophomore, junior, and senior years, but I think this could be an approach worth considering.

Having an impact on the binge drinking culture of Greek chapters is a complex problem but could be pursued within the Greek chapters. Can faculty play a more prominent role in Greek chapters? Can learning community models be applied in Greek chapters? For example, I think it would be interesting to have pledge classes take a common class together and build a connection

between the course instructor and the chapter house. Some might see these types of initiatives as far-reaching, but I think they are worth considering.

**BRUFFEE:** I'm with Bill when he says first-year students are the place to start. Starting there, we'd have to be careful not to neglect second-year students. But the kind and degree of organization they'd need would be different—probably a lot lighter and more student organized—from the freshmen.

I'm not sure we'd have much success trying to organize Greeks into learning communities. There may be much tradition and conflict of interest there. But one way to handle them might be for the administration, by fiat, to postpone Greek rush to the second year. That would give the freshmen a year to sort themselves out. In the long run it might even make the composition of the Greeks a bit more mature.

**BROWER:** The binge drinking problem can be addressed by building meaningful connections and *integrated learning* into the very center of the college experience. On our campus, we've said very publicly that binge drinking per se is not the problem: if students want to drink—even overdrink, and even every night—and if they go home, go to sleep, and get up the next morning with no consequences, then this isn't a problem that the university is going to focus on. It may be that we might think this is a waste of time, but it's not the problem that we're addressing—we want to treat students like adults, after all.

The real problem is when students suffer consequences as a result of their own drinking and when the campus community suffers consequences as a result of their drinking. The problems we want to address are the assaults, rapes, school failures, vandalism, and so forth and so on, that result from student drinking. And these problems have to be addressed through holistic solutions squarely attached to the university's primary mission. When binge drinking defines the campus culture, it does so because it exists in a vacuum resulting from the absence of a more integrated and meaningfully interconnected campus culture.

The binge drinking problem can be addressed by building meaningful connections and integrated learning into the very center of the college experience.

# If colleges are going to change student drinking behaviors, there must be a comprehensive approach that addresses the deeper environmental problems contributing to binge drinking.

**SCHROEDER:** Why haven't learning communities and collaborative learning made a positive impact on student learning? More to the point, why aren't they a defining feature of undergraduate education throughout the country? What can be done to move them from the margin to the core?

**BROWER:** This is the \$64,000 question. There are lots of reasons. Not everyone agrees that these approaches *should* be moved to the core because there's research that shows that not everyone learns better through collaborative learning. Still, most do learn better. There's faculty, instructor, and student inertia—for example, some students complain about these approaches because it takes some of their control away. And institutions don't reward faculty for teaching, so they have no incentive to change what they're doing.

**BRUFFEE:** They aren't (yet) a defining feature of undergraduate education because, I suppose, the turnaround reaches very deep. If you had to turn only what you can see of the QE2, it would be pretty much a piece of cake. But you also have to turn all that heavy metal below the surface. And although we began to identify what's below the surface in the late 1960s, we've only begun to apply what's practicable.

**ZELLER:** Change is always slow and cumbersome in higher education. I think faculty reward structures and traditions, student affairs organizational structures, and administrative and budgetary structures typically prioritize maintaining the status quo.

Another void in higher education is that very little expertise exists on our campuses to ensure that quality learning and teaching is actually taking place. Most faculty are not trained to teach or measure real learning; student affairs staff are not trained in this area. Thus we've placed a great deal of emphasis on an area that lacks real expertise within current university personnel structures.

**SCHROEDER:** How should colleges and universities address the broader issue of *social alienation* as a root cause of binge drinking? Do we need to fundamentally change

our approach to undergraduate education?

**BRUFFEE:** I think the answer is bigger, or rather, deeper, than an "approach." In the 1970s and '80s, people in practically every academic discipline questioned the nature of knowledge in their discipline. We have not yet thought through the understanding that came out of that conversation about what we do when we teach, learn, and become learned. Underlying that is our understanding of the authority of knowledge. The investment in the educational tradition we have all been brought up in is still rock solid in most places—and most of all in the graduate schools.

**ZELLER:** I agree with the need for reform that has been espoused by numerous reports on undergraduate education over the past fifteen years. By focusing on the first year, and introducing these more progressive educational models, it is likely that the entire undergraduate experience would be affected over a few years.

**BROWER:** I don't know whether undergraduate education needs to be fundamentally different, but major differences that promote integrative learning and meaningful connections among students, faculty, and staff certainly need to be put into place.

I also think that focusing on freshmen is the way to go. We're doing that here at Madison—putting a lot of effort into changing the nature of the freshman year—since we're seeing this as a reasonable lever for change across the undergraduate experience. We're finding that frosh come in with lots of great idealistic expectations about themselves and college life, and the typical thing that happens after some experience with college is that these expectations are dashed. So we've instead been trying to capitalize on these expectations by creating more theme-based and integrative experiences for frosh.

Learning communities are one example of a residentially based integrative experience, and FIGs (first-year interest groups) are an example of a course-based integrative experience. We're almost at the point where we might be able to market to prospective students that the frosh year is a novel one at UW-Madison—where you're

# Students—freshmen in particular—seem desperately eager to join in college a world better than the “real world” around them.

brought into the richness of a Research 1 university through a theme-based, integrative first-year experience. We're thinking that this might just give us the best of all worlds: starting college with the intimate and coherent experience of a small college coupled with the resources and options of a large university.

**SCHROEDER:** Most senior leaders in higher education today went to college in the '60s, when the catchword was *freedom*. Many of these folks still believe that students today need an abundance of freedom, yet Art Levine, Will Willamon, and other higher education scholars argue that today's students are much more concerned with stability, order, and identity than with freedom. Do these generational differences contribute to problems of fragmentation, social alienation, and absence of campus community?

**BRUFFEE:** Generational differences contribute, but not always in a straightforward way. The “stability, order, and identity” that Art and Will have in mind isn't necessarily the “stability, order, and identity” that the students have in mind. The 1960s were more individually oriented than we quite realize (or were aware of at the time). Aaron and Bill have discovered that the “stability, order, and identity” the kids have in mind is the kind that residence learning centers give them. Remember my student's comment: “We like working together.”

**BROWER:** I support Ken's statement that the “stability, order, and identity” that students seek is more stability of institutional purpose than stability of rules and structures. That is, students seem interested in being swept up by the institution's prosocial, collaborative, and activist momentum—at least, those seem to be the desires of the students attracted to the learning communities and other frosh programs that I'm involved in. They seem desperately eager to join in college a world better than the “real world” around them.

**BRUFFEE:** The trick with the “stability, order, and identity” (and authority) issue is to create situations that make available to students the kind of peer-confirmed contexts they crave but can't name because they've never experienced them. At the very least, it will teach them something real about civil life to take away from college and plant elsewhere.

**ZELLER:** I think today's students (and their parents) expect greater structure, supervision, and guidance. When one looks at our students' childhood experience, it is understandable. Our students have typically been in formal structured activities from preschool through high

## BOOKS AND OTHER RESOURCES

“Are Living-Learning Programs an Antidote for Binge Drinking?” by William Zeller. (*Talking Stick*, 19(6), April 2002)

“Binge Drinking as a Substitute for a Community of Learning,” by Kenneth Bruffee. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*: Feb. 5, 1999, p. B8)

*Collaborative Learning: Higher Education, Interdependence, and the Authority of Knowledge* (2nd ed.), by Kenneth Bruffee. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999)

*Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds*, by Richard Light. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001)

*The Myth of Maturity*, by Terri Apter. (New York: Norton, 2000)

*Residential Learning Communities Positively Affect College Binge Drinking*, by Aaron Brower, Chris Golde, and Caitilyn Allen. (*NASPA Journal*, forthcoming)

“Student Life Survey: Beliefs, Behaviors and Substance Use,” by Carol Boyd. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Substance Abuse Research Center, April 2000)

“Study of Alcohol Use Among Residence Hall Populations,” by Cherry Danielson. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Health Services, 1999)

*We Scholars*, by David Damrosch. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995)

*What Matters in College: Four Critical Years Revisited*, by Alexander Astin. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993)

school, including summer activities. I think many students and parents now see college as one more structured activity that the student is being placed into. These expectations and the background experiences of our students have contributed to this dilemma.

**BROWER:** I agree. Our chief of campus police, Sue Riesling, tells a funny but cautionary story about why she now requires all her officers to audiotape their interactions with students that lead to late-night citations. What was happening was that after ticketing a student over the weekend, she would invariably get a call Monday morning from the mother or father, who would say, "You must have made some kind of mistake—my son or daughter would *never* do what you're charging him with." They'd argue with Sue about the citation in the same way that Sue imagined they had previously argued with their son's or daughter's middle school principal when they advocated for a certain teacher, or with the soccer coach about the position on the field the son or daughter would play. And even after the officers began taping these interactions, which allowed Sue to play the tape to the parent, *clearly demonstrating* the abuse the student gave to the officer, the parent would still sometimes say, "You must have doctored that tape—my son would *never* use that language!"

**BRUFFEE:** Here I disagree with Bill. The problem lies in how students and parents each define "structure, supervision, and guidance." What parents want is, generally speaking, what they tried to produce at home but (probably) weren't very able to bring off, at least some of the time. In fact, most kids go to college thinking they're finally getting away from that hassle.

Also, I'm not sure it's entirely accurate to say that "students have typically been in formal structured activities from preschool through high school, including summer activities." The sixties—or one understanding of them—have gripped the primary and secondary education establishment pretty firmly for the past thirty years or so. I see it mostly in the teaching-writing aspect: great interest in self-expression, very little interest in teaching kids to put together something that's unified and coherent. All of which is fine and in fact important in the early years of schooling. But at least by sixth or seventh grade, students should be beginning to understand how to adapt their individualities to some of the conventions of civil life, and by the end of high school they should have pretty well mastered that.

Many students these days do want the coherence and support that structure provides. But I think it's the kind that learning communities provide, not *in loco parentis* control. That just leads to another beer.



#### THE LATEST FROM NEW DIRECTIONS FOR STUDENT SERVICES

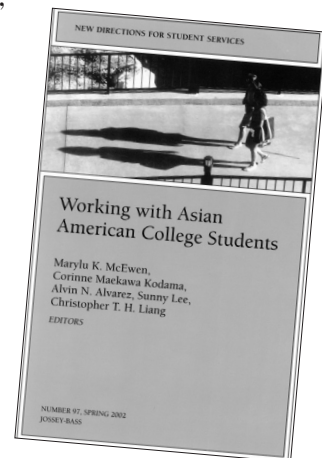
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## Working with Asian American College Students

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