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1999 Division 27 Presidential Address

Making a Difference: The Social Ecology of Social Transformation[1]

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A multidisciplinary and multilevel framework for social transformation is proposed, encompassing four foundational goals: capacity-building, group empowerment, relational community-building, and culture-challenge. Intervention approaches related to each goal are presented at the setting, geographic community, and societal levels. Four exemplars of social transformation work are then discussed: the Accelerated Schools Project, Meyerhoff Program, ManKind Project, and women's movement. These examples illustrate the synergistic relationship among the four transformational goals, within and across levels of analysis, which is at the heart of the social transformation process. The paper concludes with three challenges to guide our efforts as we enter the new century: (1) to move social transformation to the center of our consciousness as a field; (2) to articulate jointly with allied disciplines, organizations, and citizen groups an encompassing, multidisciplinary, and multilevel framework for social transformation; and (3) to do the above with heart, soul, and humility.

KEY WORDS: social ecology; social transformation; capacity-building; group empowerment; relational community-building; culture-challenge.

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OPENING STATEMENT

Three decades ago, a peace symbol encircling my arm, I spoke with some trepidation at my high school graduation. My talk focused on the Vietnam War, on the race riots in my school that year, and on the need for social change. I ended with a poem I had written, about a child dreaming that war had broken out in the streets, and the child's subsequent search for connectedness and hope.

In important ways, I am still very much that 18-year-old high school senior. Still, like many citizens, desiring a lessening of conflict and suffering in the world. Still looking for something we can do to make a real difference in our social problems.

Still looking for answers, a poem, a vision to guide us. Therefore, my talk today.

INTRODUCTION

The social problems of our day—violence, children living in poverty, children raising children, school failure, divorce, and demoralization—are each deeply embedded within multiple levels of the environment (e.g., Garbarino, 1995; Maton, Schellenbach, Leadbeater, & Solarz, in press; Sampson, 1999; Sarason, 1996; Wandersman & Nation, 1998). Unless fundamental changes occur in each level of the social environment, our efforts seem destined to fall short (e.g., Albee, 1986; Garbarino, 1995; Sarason, 1996). Change in individuals alone, transient changes in setting environments, and interventions that do not ultimately impact community and societal environments cannot in and of themselves make much of a difference.

This viewpoint is strongly held by some community psychologists (e.g., Kelly, 1966; Levine, 1998; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997; Rappaport, 1981; Sarason, 1971; Seidman, 1988). Adherents to this view, of course, exist in many other disciplines as well. For instance, in the field of community health promotion, health educators have emphasized transforming public health environments through changing community norms and systems (cf. Thompson & Kinne, 1990). Some educators are attempting to implement whole-school reform, systems transformation, and alternative educational models (cf. Kohn, 1999; Oakes & Quartz, 1995; Schor, 1992). Bringing about community change through grass-roots activity, neighborhood revitalization, and the creation of coalitions is an integral part of the fields of community development and community organizing (Christenson & Robinson, 1989; Kraushaar, Hibbard, & Wells, 1999; Kretzmann &

McKnight, 1993; Lotz, 1998). A number of applied anthropologists and applied sociologists address pressing social problems through critical social analysis, applied community research, and social activism (e.g., Agger, 1998; Hess, 1999; Hackenberg & Hackenberg, 1999; Marcus, 1999; Mills, 1959; Paine, 1985; Roby, 1998; Shore & Wright, 1997; Singer & Baer, 1995).

None of us can do it alone, however. Indeed, viewing social problems as amenable to influence by a given discipline or a single approach can only enhance, over time, our sense of collective powerlessness, and ultimately lead to a lowering of our expectations and goals. There is a critical need for allied disciplines, organizations, and citizens to come together and align, to the extent possible, our methods and viewpoints (cf. Kelly, 1966; Newbrough, 1995). Delineation of common goals, common dilemmas, and areas of disciplinary complementarity would help us realize that we are fellow travelers, similarly concerned with influencing social problems and social environments.

The overarching purpose of this paper is to articulate a strategic vision of social transformation, one that can bring into alignment the work of multiple social change oriented fields, ours and others. Below I first provide four reasons why it is necessary to influence, and ultimately transform, setting, community, and societal environments. Next, I propose four foundational goals for social transformation work: capacity-building, group empowerment, relational community-building, and culture-challenge. These goals can guide our own research and action efforts, and hopefully those of our partners in other disciplines and in allied organizations and citizen groups as well. Third, I examine the critical interrelationships among the four transformational goals—these interrelationships are at the heart of social transformation. Finally, I conclude with three challenges for our field as we enter the 21st century.

A Focus on Transforming Social Environments Across Ecological Levels

Why the emphasis on transforming social environments, across ecological levels? First, consistent with an ecological perspective, social environments, not psychological or biological deficits, are viewed as the fundamental cause of major social problems. For instance, deeply troubled schools, violent neighborhoods, disaffected peer groups, family poverty, inadequate support systems, and limited opportunities for purposeful social engagement are some of the proximal environmental causes of urban social problems such as school failure, teenage pregnancy, delinquency, and youth violence (e.g., Black & Krishnakumar, 1998; Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Aber, 1997; Howard, Flora, & Grifin, 1999; Schellenbach & Trickett, 1998).

Furthermore, as portrayed in Fig. 1, each of these proximal social environments is directly influenced by the larger community environments and systems in which they are embedded—dysfunctional school and human service systems, lack of well-paying jobs and community resources for poor families, racial and gender discrimination, intergroup conflict, and socioeconomic disparities (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Lykes, Banuazizi, Liem, & Morris, 1996; Putnam, 1993; Sampson, 1999; Thompson & Kinne, 1990; Wilson, 1987).

And, of course, these larger community systems are influenced by and embedded within still larger, national and international economic, political, and cultural institutions and systems—the roots of economic dislocation, discrimination, mass society, a culture of violence, and corporate greed (e.g., Caughy, O'Campo, & Brodsky, 1999; Fukuyama, 1999; Marsella, 1998; Pilisuk, McAllister, & Rothman, 1996; Sloan, 1996). Sociologists use the term "macrosystem dominance" to highlight the primary role of societal

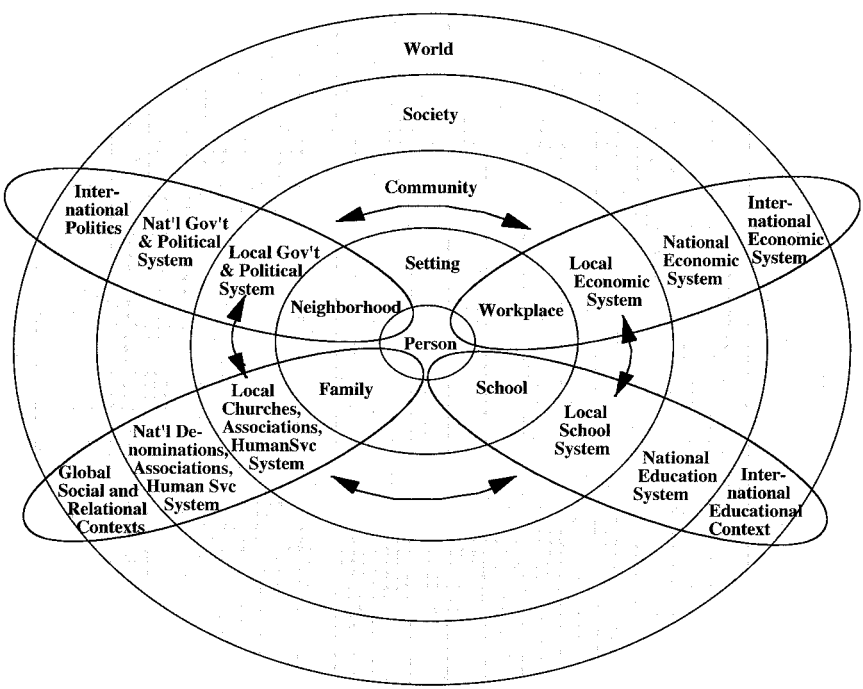

Fig. 1. The embeddedness and interrelatedness of environments. *Note:* The elements within each oval mutually influence each other in each and every case, but for clarity and ease of presentation only four, representative, bidirectional arrows are actually depicted.

systems and structures in causing and sustaining local community problems (Lyon, 1987).

Second, current attempts to address social problems often are limited in their impact due to the powerful, countervailing nature of the local social environments in which daily life and social problems are embedded. For instance, a school-based intervention program that enhances the competencies or support systems of inner-city youth may not be sufficient to prevent, or reverse, negative trajectories sustained in the neighborhood, family, and peer group environments. That is, the ongoing, cumulative impact of multiple, negative environments affecting many inner-city youth may prove stronger than positive gains in individual capacity of these youth resulting from a given social program. In public health terms, the interventions may not be sufficiently potent to truly serve as an inoculation, able to protect youth against powerful, noxious environmental forces.

Third, when promising programs are developed, fundamental features of social environments often allow neither sustained program operation over extended periods of time at the initial host setting or community, nor effective dissemination and adoption in new host settings or communities (Altman, 1995; Elias, 1997; Kelly, Dassoff, Levin, Schreckengost, Stelzner, & Altman, 1988). At the initial development site, demonstration projects may disband or lose effectiveness when demonstration funding ends, program advocates move on, and changing priorities result in reductions in resources. In new host settings or communities, the promising conditions present in the initial program development will likely not be present, including knowledgeable and influential program advocates, active staff collaboration in program development, and the resources necessary to implement the program fully. Promising programs can only make a difference in social problems if they become embedded deeply in setting and community host environments (Altman, 1995; Elias, 1997, Kelly *et al.,* 1988)—this in and of itself requires, and constitutes, environmental transformation.

Finally, our attempts to influence pressing social problems are fundamentally limited due to a lack of social, economic, and political resources. A large-scale, ongoing resource mobilization encompassing governmental, voluntary, and business sectors is necessary to harness sufficient financial and social resources to develop, disseminate, and "bring to scale" effective prevention and promotion approaches. Such a large-scale mobilization is dependent on major changes in social priorities, values, and norms—that is, on a transformation in our societal and cultural environment.

In summary, deeply embedded features of setting, community, and societal environments cause social problems, nullify person-focused "inoculation" programs, make it difficult to sustain and disseminate promising

approaches, and prevent the large-scale mobilization of resources necessary for making a difference. To influence social problems, we need to transform social environments.

ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONAL GOALS

If it is imperative to influence and ultimately transform complex social environments, what aspects of social environments should we begin focusing on, and how should we proceed to bring about change? Various dimensions of social environments have been offered as viable candidates (e.g., French & Bell, 1999; Heller, 1989; Kelly, Ryan, Altman, & Stelzner, in press; Levine & Perkins, 1997; Moos, 1996; Shinn, 1996; Thompson & Kinne, 1990). Four environmental dimensions appear especially important: the instrumental, structural, relational, and cultural. Related to these, respectively, four goals to guide social transformation can be delineated: capacity-building, group empowerment, relational community-building, and culture-challenge.

These dimensions and goals appear relevant across environmental domains and levels. They also appear central to the work of many allied disciplines, community and advocacy organizations, and citizen groups. Thus, they represent promising foundations for a larger, multidisciplinary and multilevel framework of research and action. Below, I briefly discuss each of these four dimensions and associated transformational goals, and touch upon selected intervention approaches at setting, community, and societal levels (see Table I).

Changing the Instrumental Environment: Toward Capacity-Building

One critical dimension of the social environment is the instrumental—the nature and quality of activities undertaken to accomplish core goals. The failure of schools to adequately educate, families to socialize, human services to serve those in need, and governments to govern, for instance, are failures at the instrumental level. These instrumental failures represent major facets of and contributors to social problems.

Important components of the instrumental environment include core methods, problem-solving capability, and leadership. Core methods refer to the basic techniques used to achieve the central mission of a setting or social institution; many interventions attempt to refine or transform core methods currently in use (e.g, active-learning pedagogy in education). Prob-

Table I. Environmental Dimensions and Attributes, Transformational Goals, and Levels of Analysis

	Environmental Dimensions			
	Instrumental	Structural	Relational	Cultural
Selected attributes	Core methods Problem-solving capability Leadership	Opportunity structure Distribution of resources and power	Connectiveness Inclusiveness Shared mission Support Belonging	Belief systems Values Social norms Traditions Practices
Transformational goals	Capacity-building	Group empowerment	Relational community-building	Culture-challenge
Selected levels of analysis				
Setting	Organizational effectiveness	Empowering community settings	Settings of support and significance	Alternative settings
Geographic community	Competent community	Empowering community	Caring community	Questioning community
Societal	Problem-solving society	Just society	Inclusive society	Balanced society

lem-solving capacity encompasses the ability both to devise potential solutions to pressing problems and to mobilize the resources necessary for implementing the preferred solution. Commitments, skills, resources, and relationships are all part of a problem-solving capacity (Chavis, 1995; Ferguson & Stoutland, 1999; Goodman *et al.,* 1998). Leadership represents another key facet of the instrumental environment. Capable, resourceful, and inspiring leadership is linked to instrumental effectiveness across environmental domains and levels (e.g., Astin & Leland, 1991; Bass, 1990; Maton & Salem, 1995; Rost, 1991; Schorr, 1997).

In terms of intervention process, there has been increasing disillusionment over the years with external, expert-dominated approaches to solving problems in the instrumental domain. As an alternative, capacity-building is offered as a primary transformational process and goal. Capacity-building emphasizes a participatory, self-help, assets-based approach to enhancing instrumental capacity (e.g., French & Bell, 1999; Kretzman & McKnight, 1993; Minkler, 1997a). It assumes that the mobilization of internal setting, community or societal resources is the essential foundation for effective and enduring change. Examples of capacity-building approaches at three levels of analysis are described briefly below.

Effective Organizations: Participatory Organizational Development

At the setting level, in pursuit of effective organizations, a capacity-building process with special potential involves the active participation of all major constituents in analyzing problems and devising solutions—this might be termed participatory organizational development. In the realm of education, for example, whole school transformation through a capacity-building process marks the work of well-known school reformers such as Comer (1988) and Levin (1996). In these and related reform efforts, teachers, administrators, and parents, with the help of outside facilitators, are engaged in ongoing, in-depth, problem-solving processes in troubled schools. Outcomes include changes in core methods, enhanced problem-solving capacity, stronger school leadership, and gains in student achievement. Comparable processes have been linked to positive outcomes in other organizational domains (e.g., French & Bell, 1999; Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992).

Competent Communities: The Community Development Approach

At the geographic community level, in pursuit of competent communities, attention to capacity-building has greatly expanded in recent years. A range of disciplines, including community development (e.g., Bhattacharyya, 1995; Kraushaar *et al.,* 1999), community public health (e.g., Minkler, 1997a), social work (e.g., Weil, 1996), urban planning (e.g., Ferguson & Dickens, 1999; Gittell & Vidal, 1998), and community psychology (e.g., Wolff, 1999) are involved. A range of techniques are employed, including coalition-building, community-based economic development, and comprehensive neighborhood revitalization.

Joint problem solving (''power with'') is the norm in community development work (Minkler, 1997a), based on collaborations with local groups representing various community domains (e.g., neighborhoods, voluntary associations, governmental agencies, businesses). For example, comprehensive neighborhood revitalization efforts, funded in part in recent years through large foundation initiatives, aim to work simultaneously with and transform multiple community systems, including human services, family support, employment, and education (e.g., Brown, 1996; Kingsley, McNelly, & Gibson, 1997; Schorr, 1997; Stagner & Duran, 1997).

A Problem-Solving Society: Strengths-Based Social Policy

At the societal level, in pursuit of an effective problem-solving society, social policy has a critical role to play. Of particular importance, strengths-

based, capacity-building social policies view citizens as valuable assets, and as self-determining agents. This contrasts with a deficits-based approach, which focuses on deviance, individual remediation, punishment, or external mandates. Strengths-based approaches, for example, direct resources to citizen and community groups, via programs that support child, youth, family, school, and community development (Black & Krishnakumar, 1998; Connell, 1999; Sampson, 1999; Schorr, 1997; Wiley & Rappaport, in press). Currently, the Society for Community Research and Action [Community Psychology Division 27 of American Psychological Association (APA)] is involved, with Child, Youth, and Family Services (APA Division 37), in a collaborative advocacy effort to help shift policy paradigms toward a strengths-based approach (Maton, Schellenbach, Leadbeater, & Solarz, in press).

Capacity building addresses both the process and the content of instrumental change. As such, it represents a critical foundation for social transformation work. When our interventions, including prevention and promotion programs, are aligned with instrumental missions of settings and embedded in a capacity-building process, the potential for local ownership, and enduring, transformative change is greatly enhanced.

Changing the Structural Environment: Toward Group Empowerment

The distribution of resources and power across groups, and the presence of viable opportunity structures that allow disenfranchised groups access to valued resources, are key facets of the structural environment (Fisher *et al.,* 1996; Sampson, 1999; Seidman, 1988). Where large discrepancies in resources and power exist, and opportunity structures are inadequate, a debilitating sense of powerlessness, and ensuing negative social outcomes, may be expected (Fisher *et al.,* 1996; Montero, 1998; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Rappaport, 1981).

Enhancing the access of marginalized groups to economic, psychological, and political resources is central to transformative social change. Economic resources, and economic status, are strongly linked to health, child development, and vibrant community (e.g., Dickens, 1999; McLloyd, 1998; Taylor, Repetti, & Seeman, 1997; Wilson, 1987). Psychological resources, such as self-esteem and self-efficacy, have been linked to a wide diversity of positive social outcomes, and emerge in part from involvement in settings that allow individuals and groups the opportunity to develop key competencies, carry out socially valued roles, and enlarge personal networks (Levine & Perkins, 1997; Maton & Salem, 1995; McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman,

1994). Political power across ecological levels is essential if disenfranchised groups are to garner needed economic and psychological resources.

Issues of power and resources are clearly critical to the functioning of our primary social institutions as well. For instance, in urban schools all parties appear to feel powerless: parents and students may feel intimidated and powerless to deal with teachers and principals, whereas teachers and principals experience powerlessness *vis-à-vis* the larger, rigid, bureaucratic school system (e.g., Lieberman, 1994; Sarason, 1996). Current reform efforts involving curricula, classroom size, and other important areas may be doomed, due to the failure to effect changes in these larger, structural power arrangements (cf. Sarason, 1996).

As an antidote to discrepancies in resources and power, group empowerment as a transformational goal underscores the need for changes in power relationships between groups (cf. Labonte, 1994; Rappaport, 1981; Seidman, 1988; Weil, 1996). Bottom-up and top-down approaches to empowerment each have distinct advantages and disadvantages; it is the simultaneous enactment of bottom-up and top-down approaches that thus appears most likely to result in far-reaching change.

Empowering Community Settings: Development and Collaboration

One important "bottom-up" approach to group empowerment is the development of empowering community settings. In such settings, key psychological expectancies and competencies linked to economic mobility, psychosocial adaptation, and social activism can be developed in individual members of disempowered populations. Social action groups, faith communities, self-help organizations, and voluntary associations are examples of local community settings with empowering potential. Specifically, they have the capability to provide the motivational structure, developmental opportunities, multifaceted support system, and empowering leadership likely to enhance the personal empowerment of the disenfranchised (cf. Maton & Salem, 1995). Collaborative interventions that help develop and strengthen such empowering community settings represent a primary, desired means of action at the setting level (e.g., Jason, 1997; Pargament & Maton, in press; Rappaport, 1981).

Empowering Communities: Social Action Approaches

At the geographic community level, a primary bottom-up strategy is social action. Working toward the development of empowering commu-

nities, social action approaches strive for changes in local policies, enhanced access to decision making, and shifts in power, status, or resources for disenfrachised groups (Fisher, 1994; Paget, 1995; Pilisuk *et al.,* 1996). The social action tradition encompasses a number of approaches, united by an emphasis on consciousness-raising, critical analysis, advocacy, conflict, power tactics, and direct action (Comas-Diaz, Lykes, & Alaron, 1998; Ledwith, 1997; Minkler & Wallerstein, 1997; Mondros & Wilson, 1994).

Citizen grass-roots organizing, a classic social action approach, involves direct work with oppressed or marginalized populations (Minkler, 1997b). Participatory action research, carried out by activists in diverse social science subfields and disciplines, represents another form of grass-roots work, aiming to enhance ''voice'' and sense of empowerment for those lacking influence in society (Brydon-Miller & Tolman, 1997; Greenwood, Whyte, & Harkavy, 1993; Montero, 1994; Rodriguez, 1996; Wolf, 1996). A third social action approach mobilizes networks of community-based organizations, exemplified by the effective social advocacy work done with networks of faith-based organizations by the Industrial Area Foundation (IAF; e.g., Boyte, 1984; IAF, 1990).

A Just Society: Social Movements and Social Policy

Emerging under certain conditions from local social action, social movements represent a societal level force for group empowerment in pursuit of a more just society. A confluence of factors accounts for the emergence of social movements, including historical developments, political opportunity structure, mobilization of resources, collective identity, and movement infrastructure (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996; Morris, 1984; Mueller, 1992; Tarrow, 1994). In the past four decades, the movements for civil rights, women's equality, disability rights, and justice for gay and lesbian individuals have resulted in substantial increases in political power, legal rights, government resources, and to varying extents socioeconomic status for previously marginalized groups of citizens. Intellectuals and scholars can contribute importantly by providing ideas and data that help fuel activism (e.g., Astin & Leland, 1991; Eyerman & Jamison, 1991). Collaborating with established and emergent movements represents a critical intervention approach in the empowerment domain.

Turning to the top-down perspective, national, state, and local economic, social and judicial policy can contribute directly to a more just society through enhancing the resources and opportunity structures available to

disenfranchised social groups (Ferguson & Dickens, 1999; Fisher *et al.,* 1996; Lotz, 1998; Sampson, 1999). Clearly, some sociohistorical periods are more conducive than others to far-reaching, distributive efforts (cf. Levine & Perkins, 1997). Researchers can work toward group empowerment related policies in the agenda setting, formulation, implementation, evaluation, and revision stages of the policy process (cf. Anderson, 1997; Palumbo, 1994). Forming alliances with allied disciplines, advocacy organizations, and citizen groups will directly enhance our capacity to make a difference in the policy arena.

Group empowerment as a transformational goal directs attention to both the process and outcome of transforming the structural/power dimension of environments. Empowerment has become a guiding ideal for a diversity of activist social science subfields, citizen groups, and advocacy organizations (e.g., French & Bell, 1999; Mondros & Wilson, 1994; Roby, 1998; Rodriguez, 1996; Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1994; Wright, 1998). As such, it represents a key component of a multidisciplinary, multilevel framework of social transformation.

Changing the Relational Environment: Toward Community-Building

A third critical dimension of setting, community, and societal environments is the relational, encompassing the quality and nature of intergroup and personal relationships (Heller, 1989; Jason, 1997; Moos, 1996; Riger, 1993). Social environments characterized by high levels of support, belongingness, cohesion, cooperation, and trust contribute to positive socioemotional and behavioral outcomes (e.g., Davidson & Cotter, 1989; Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Maton, 1989; Timko & Moos, 1991).

Relatedly, social analysts have argued that a basic cause of many social problems, and a contributing factor to their apparent intractability, is a serious weakening in the overall social-relational fabric—i.e., the erosion of community (e.g., Etzioni, 1993; Nisbet, 1953; Putnam, 1996; Sarason, 1974). This is most clear in our inner-city communities. More generally, many citizens appear in search of the benefits of relational community, including connectedness, support, safety, shared values, and meaning (cf. French & Bell, 1999; Jason, 1997; Jordan, Kaplan, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Wuthnow, 1994).

Given the significance of relational community for personal and societal well-being, relational community-building is offered as a key goal to guide transformational efforts in the relational domain. Examples of intervention approaches are presented below.

Settings of Support and Significance: Relational Norms, Humanizing Structures, and Mediational Processes

At the setting level, various approaches are being pursued to enhance relational community and support (e.g., French & Bell, 1999; Gouillart & Kelly, 1995; Peck, 1987; Sergiovanni, 1994). These approaches include development of relational norms and humanizing structures, and use of mediational processes. Concerning norms, the introduction of elementary schoolwide norms and practices focusing on cooperation (e.g., Battistich, Solomon, Watson, Solomon, & Schaps, 1989) was reported to make a difference in the development of a supportive school relational community. Developing intact, separate 6th and 9th grade cohorts for students making the transition into middle school or high school (e.g., Felner & Adan, 1988), or developing small, multigrade, school communities-within-schools for urban high school students (e.g., Fine, 1994), represent attempts to enhance relational community through the humanizing of setting structures. Examples of mediational processes contributing to community-building include participatory action research conducted by an outside researcher in a deeply divided native Indian community (Chataway, 1997), and mediation work by an outside community organization focused on rival gangs in an inner city housing project (Raspberry, 1999).

A Caring Community: A Diverse Array of Personal Communities of Support

At the geographic community level, a critical aspect of a caring community is the presence of a large, diverse array of personal communities of support and significance, providing opportunities for connectedness and belonging for a wide diversity of citizens. Such relational communities include religious/spiritual settings, self-help groups, voluntary associations, women's and men's groups, and ethnicity-based associations. Taken together, if a critical mass of these and related settings are present in a geographic location, levels of overall citizen connectedness should be enhanced. Strategies to enhance the number, range, and viability of such communities of significance include development of new settings, collaboration with established groups, enhanced linkages to citizens, and legitimization through research of promising communities of support (Jason, 1997; Levine & Perkins, 1997; McKnight, 1995; Schwartz, 1997; White & Madara, 1998).

Furthermore, the development of social programs that substantively enhance network embeddedness and social support for disconnected citi-

zens potentially can contribute to sense of community and embeddedess. Examples include mentoring programs (e.g., Big Brothers/Big Sisters), community settings that serve as caring ''urban sanctuaries'' for inner-city youth (McLaughlin *et al.,* 1994), nurse or layperson home visiting programs for isolated or at-risk families (e.g., Olds *et al.,* 1998), and community-based family support centers (e.g., Johnson, 1988).

An Inclusive Society: Diversity within Wholeness

A major challenge in relational community-building is developing the social glue needed for an inclusive society—connecting the many distinct and sometimes antagonistic relational subgroups in society (cf. Gardner, 1991; Klein, 1999). One part of the answer to this difficult challenge involves the positive portrayal of the strengths and common humanity of those seen as different, via media and print (Davis, Maton, Humphreys, Moore, & Wilson, 1998; Hrabowksi, Maton, & Greif, 1998; Lappe & Du Bois, 1994; Young & Astin, 1996). Another important intervention focus is the enhancement of intergroup contact through diverse means including intergroup action coalitions, study circles, multicultural training, recruitment initiatives, and public dialogue (e.g., Bond, 1999; Community Foundations/ Intergroup Relations Program, 1999; Klein, 1999; McCoy & Sherman, 1994). Another critical need is the development, identification, and emergence of leaders whose vision, symbolic acts, and concrete practices encompass the larger whole (Pierce & Johnson, 1997; Rost, 1991).

Relational community-building should not be idealized, simplified, or reified—conceptual and practical barriers are manifold (e.g., Heller, 1989; Wiesenfeld, 1998). Nevertheless, relational community-building speaks both to a vital process, bringing people together, and to significant outcomes, connectedness and community, consistent with fundamental values of our field, allied disciplines, and average citizens. As such, it represents a critical anchoring point for any social transformational journey.

Changing the Cultural Environment: Toward Culture-Challenge

Culture represents a fourth critical facet of the social environment, encompassing belief systems, values, norms, traditions, and practices. Culture, within any given context, is simultaneously a conservative facet of the environment, and the basis for potential change. Settings, ethnic or population groups, communities, and societies all have unique and vibrant

cultures (Ferrante, 1995; Geertz, 1973; Kluckhohn, 1964; Martin, 1992; Sarason, 1971).

At the societal level, two important facets of American culture undergirding many social problems are the cultural tendencies toward other-denigration and self-absorption. Those who are different—the "other"—are denigrated and seen as lesser in value (Trickett, Watts, & Birman, 1994). Depending on the context, how different-ness is defined will vary (e.g., via ethnicity, gender, disability, social class, age, religion). In all too many cases, for the group defined as different deficits are emphasized, expectations are lower, contextual explanations of problems are overlooked, and professionals rather than group members are looked to as problem-solving resources (cf. Caplan & Nelson, 1973; Ryan, 1971; Lykes *et al.,* 1996; McKnight, 1995; Rappaport, 1981). The flip side of other-denigration, the culture of privilege, further compounds the problem by leading to a sense of entitlement for those born into one of the dominant cultural groups (men, whites, higher socioeconomic status).

Self-absorption, due to excessive consumerism, individualism, and careerism, severely limits our potential to mobilize social and economic resources for the larger, public interest. As a pervasive cultural process, it prevails at all ecological levels and in all social domains, including education and the human services. A disproportionate valuing of self and one's own (family, workplace, profession, country) above others affects us all (e.g., Bellah *et al.,* 1985; Fukuyama, 1999; Marsella, 1998; Sloan, 1996).

Across ecological levels, culture limits the "universe of alternatives" considered when addressing social problems (Sarason, 1971), and thus the potential for substantial progress to be made. It is often difficult to conceive of, much less seriously consider, mold-breaking alternatives given the power of received cultural belief systems, traditions, and practices.

Culture-challenge is proposed as an essential, countervailing goal to guide social transformation work. To challenge cultural givens, first they must be identified, which may be difficult since many cultural elements are so ingrained or taken for granted that they are difficult to uncover. Then, means must be employed to challenge, and hopefully alter, the problematic cultural elements.

Alternative Settings: Values, Practices, Lifestyles

At the setting level, one important means to challenge conventional values and norms is through alternative community settings and groups—those guided by and advocating for social paradigms counter to the cultural mainstream. Examples of such settings include progressive social action or

political groups, intentional communities, and some self-help, spiritual, or religious organizations. One important means through which alternative settings exert influence is by affecting the values and beliefs of their members. Activist social scientists can work collaboratively with established alternative settings to enhance their organizational capacity to develop and sustain members' alternative values, practices, and lifestyles.

A Questioning Community: Activist Social Science

At the geographic community level, in contributing to a questioning community, a primary focus is to enhance the influence of alternative groups' outreach and advocacy efforts in the larger community (Boyte & Kari, 1996; Lappe & DuBois, 1994). Important roles for activist social scientists include consultant, allied researcher, advocate, or setting co-creator—the latter involves working with local citizens to develop new, alternative settings within the community. A second approach is to challenge and change the culture of mainstream settings from within, perhaps as part of the ongoing, programmatic work we perform in many such settings (cf. Hustedde, 1999; Lerner, 1996; Porras & Silver, 1991; Prilleltensky, 1997). If fundamental cultural change is to occur within a community, ultimately the majority of local settings and citizens will need to be affected.

A Balanced Society: Critical Social Analysis, Social Movements

At the societal level, social values and social belief systems are regularly manifest, and periodically contested, in the public domain. In pursuit of a balanced society, the one-sided domination of public life by problematic cultural values, understandings, and norms (e.g., excessive consumerism, self-promotion, and individualism; blaming the victim) can be challenged by countervailing public discourse, in part inspired by social science ideas and writings. Examples include Bellah *et al.*'s (1985) *Habits of the Heart,* Etzioni's (1993) communitarianism, Ryan's (1971) *Blaming the Victim,* and Wilson's (1987) writings on concentrated poverty and the urban underclass.

Furthermore, critical social analysts, through sociological, cultural, and discourse analyses, attempt to lay bare the disempowering practices of oppressive systems, stimulate discussion about values, and provide alternative paradigms (cf. Agger, 1998; Prilleltensky, 1997; Sloan, 1996). Critical analysis also turns its lens inward, on the social sciences themselves, whose ''objectifying'' methodologies, status quo-oriented paradigms, and dependence on mainstream funding are viewed as supporting the privileged

classes and the current societal (and international) power system. The answer to the basic question posed by Caplan and Nelson more than a quarter of a century ago, ''whose interests are being served'' (Caplan & Nelson, 1973), is presumably clear in the case of a social science strongly connected to the prevailing power structure.

Culture-challenging social movements represent a primary vehicle for social transformation. Social movement researchers have applied the label ''new social movements'' to the emergent movements in recent decades which encompass values, lifestyle, environment, global concerns, human rights, and quality of life (e.g., Buechler, 1995; Larana, Johnston, & Gusfield, 1994). Currently, the women's, environmental, peace, human rights, holistic health, and alternative spiritual movements, among others, seek to challenge prevailing cultural values and norms. An important part of our social transformation work is to develop means to influence positively the development of these, and future, progressive culture-challenging forces.

Challenging and transforming cultural values and norms is no easy feat, but needs to be part of any serious effort to address our social problems (e.g., Bellah *et al.,* 1985; Jason, 1997; Prilleltensky, 1997). Only through shifts in underlying values, norms, and practices will far-reaching innovations be seriously considered, and sufficient resources mobilized for their widespread and effective implementation.

THE SOCIAL ECOLOGY OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The instrumental, structural, relational, and cultural aspects of social environments are clearly interrelated and interactive. Indeed it is the emergent, mutual influences between and among capacity-building, group empowerment, relational community-building, and culture-challenge that constitute the heart of social transformation. These linkages span levels and domains of the social environment.

A central challenge for a social ecology of social transformation is to understand how intervention approaches can be fashioned that build upon and contribute to such transactions, within and across ecological levels (Fig. 2). As a beginning effort to examine these interrelationships, four examples are presented below.

Transforming Capacity in Elementary Schools: Levin's Accelerated Schools Project

Levin's Accelerated Schools Project incorporates an in-depth process of participatory organizational development in an attempt to turn around

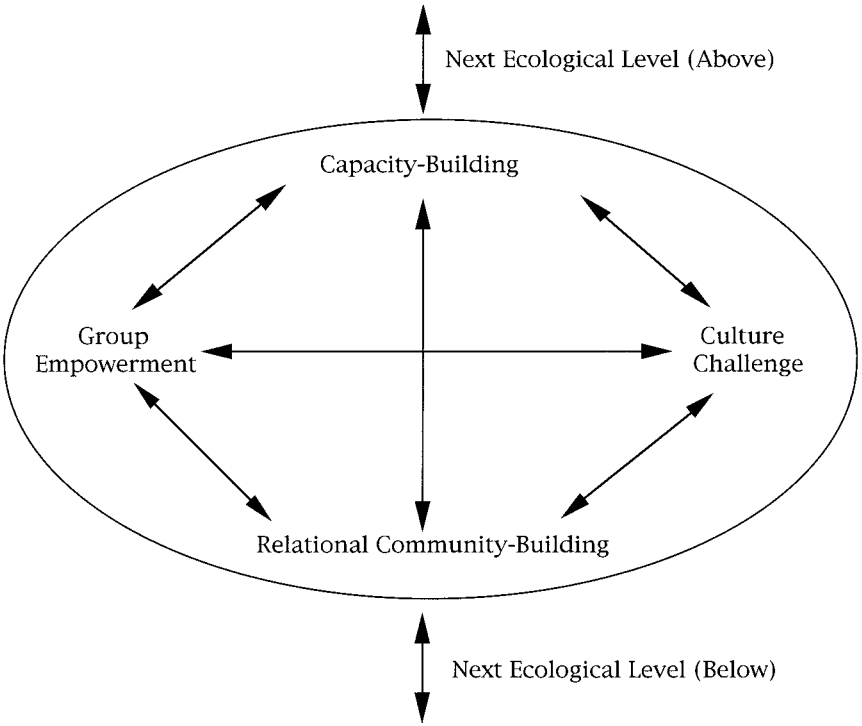

Fig. 2. Model of social transformation process.

low-achieving elementary schools, many in urban areas (Finnan, St. John, McCarthy, & Slovacek, 1996). As Levin describes it, "The project introduces a process by which the school takes over its own destiny and that of its students. This process includes fundamental explorations of all dimensions of the school, the construction of a living vision and goals, a setting of priorities, a governance system in which all participate, and a systematic approach to action research and problem solving" (Levin, in press, pp. 11–12).

A critical outcome of the process is the adoption of a student-centered, action-learning teaching approach, replacing ineffective passive-learning pedagogies. Academic outcomes to date are encouraging (Levin, 1996, in press).

The organizational capacity-building process appears to contribute to greater relational community—that is, a sense of connectedness and shared purpose. This emerging relational community, in turn, appears to help

facilitate productive learning environments—shaping the instrumental dimension.

Furthermore, the Accelerated Schools facilitators explicitly work to challenge and transform the culture of expectations in the school. The underlying assumption is that all students can be fully incorporated, and will respond positively to an enriched learning environment—the type usually reserved for students identified as gifted and talented (Levin, in press). Such a shift in belief systems helps open the door to new core methods. In addition, the opportunity structure allows teachers and parents who may have felt disempowered to contribute productively to educational outcomes.

To varying extents, then, this participatory organizational development approach, over time, jointly builds upon instrumental, structural, relational, and cultural change processes.

In terms of levels of analysis, if enough schools in a given community were affected by school reform, then overall community capacity could be substantively enhanced. Furthermore, as Levin (in press) notes, if the culture of schools were changed in a critical mass of schools around the country, then the society-wide culture of schooling would ultimately be challenged and transformed. At any rate, the participatory organizational model, as implemented by Levin, embodies an exciting intervention approach with social transformative potential in a critically important domain, urban schools.

Group Empowerment for African American College Students: The Meyerhoff Scholars Program

The Meyerhoff Scholars Program (named after its initial benefactor) was developed in 1989 as a multifaceted support program to empower African American science students in a medium-sized university to achieve at the highest levels, and to go on to graduate science programs. Program components include full scholarships, a summer bridge program, program community, personal advising and counseling, summer research internships, mentors, and strong support from the university administration and science faculty.

Prior to the Meyerhoff Program's inception, talented black students in the sciences performed very poorly at the university, at levels far below their white and Asian peers, and rarely went on to graduate science programs. The Meyerhoff Program has been tremendously successful. Science GPAs have dramatically turned around: the African American Meyerhoff students now achieve science GPAs higher than those of their Caucasian

and Asian peers. As a result of their high achievement levels, and related factors, close to 50% of entering male and female Meyerhoff students now attend graduate science programs (another 20% enter medical school; Maton, Hrabowski, & Schmitt, in press). The university now appears to be one of the country's leading contributors of black undergraduates to science and engineering Ph.D. programs (cf. Brazziel & Brazziel, 1997; The College Board, 1999).

The creation of a strong relational community contributes powerfully to the program's group empowerment process. Students and program staff constitute in many aspects a family-like community, providing connectedness, support, mentoring, and intensive monitoring. Students take part in an initial summer bridge program, then live together on campus, and participate regularly in program-wide meetings and cultural events. Students are embedded, many for the first time in their lives, in a relational community of over 100, academically high-achieving, black peers.

Culture challenge contributes importantly to student empowerment. Strongly emphasized program values are to perform at the highest levels, and to seek out and work with the highest achieving students in a course—whether Asian, White, or Black. Achieving at the highest, ''A'' level, is expected, and not viewed pejoratively as ''acting white.'' Academic success is paramount.

Capacity-building also contributes to student empowerment, via study methods and program leadership. Students are encouraged to participate regularly in study groups, a core method shown to be extremely helpful for mastering difficult science course material (e.g., Bonsangue & Drew, 1992). Older students share advice about professors with younger students, and share previous year exams as well. In terms of leadership, the program was developed by an African American mathematician who now is president of the university. He is an empowering, resourceful, and personable leader, serving as a powerful role model, supporting students both directly, one-on-one, and indirectly, through enhancing department chair and faculty support of the program.

In terms of cross-level influence, the program, beginning its 12th year, has influenced in some important ways the university culture. Preliminary evidence suggests it has transformed faculty expectations of black students, and attracted high-achieving black students in diverse fields (Maton, Hrabowski, & Schmitt, in press). If the Meyerhoff students succeed in graduate school and beyond, the program will have substantively expanded the African American male and female presence in the higher tiers of science, a change with possibly important ramifying impacts on the culture of science in the larger society.

Relational Community-Building and Masculinity: The ManKind Project

The ManKind Project is an international men's organization, which strives to provide an alternative to the traditional model of masculinity, facilitate emotional healing, and empower men to missions of service. The organization offers an intensive personal development weekend, during which men do deep psychological work in the presence of other men. Following the weekend, ongoing support groups are developed, to reinforce and extend the gains made over the weekend, both in terms of emotional development and meaningful life mission. Attempts to bring about widespread change and healing in men represent an important focus for social transformation, given too many men's abuse and misuse of power in society, and the increased awareness of the troubled paths traveled by many young males (e.g., Garbarino, 1999; Levant, 1995; Murray, 1999).

The ManKind Project appears to have a powerful effect on many participants, with preliminary data suggesting positive changes in life goals (e.g., clarity of life mission, social change orientation), connectedness (e.g., number of confidants, network satisfaction), personal development (e.g., learning to "live with an open heart," sense of equality to other men), well-being (e.g., depression symptoms), and level of gender role conflict (e.g., reduction in success, power, and competition orientation; reduction in restrictive emotionality; Maton, Mankowski, Burke, Hoover, & Anderson, 1998). In some outcome domains, change was not found, including self-esteem and attitudes to women's issues (concerning the latter, participants generally had very positive attitudes to women's issues at baseline, leaving less room than in many other areas for positive change).

Culture-challenge contributes to relational community-building by offering participants an alternative vision of masculinity centered on vulnerability, accountability, intimacy, and service to society. This view of masculinity facilitates the deep personal work done within the community, and taken together with that personal work, helps provide a strong basis for community-building.

The structural environment of the setting contributes to community-building by providing a pervasive, accessible opportunity structure through which all participants can become involved, independent of social class, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Men discriminated against and disempowered in society, such as gay men, generally appear to experience a positive sense of inclusion (Anderson, 2000). There are multiple, rotating leadership roles available to men in the setting, enhancing community-building by reducing the potential for large structural discrepancies in power or influence.

Instrumental capacity also contributes directly to community-building.

The core methods used, including role playing, in-depth sharing, visualizations, outdoor adventures, and so on, contribute to powerful, positive shared experiences and community. In addition, problems are addressed democratically, with widespread member involvement and input sought. Leadership capacity-building is an explicit focus of the organization, with many men who desire to receive training for key community roles able to take part.

Beyond building local relational communities of men, the ManKind Project ultimately hopes to contribute more broadly to society in a number of ways: (1) to societal-level culture-challenge, by providing an alternative to the traditional model of masculinity; (2) to community capacity-building, by encouraging men to devote themselves to missions of service; and (3) to national and international community-building, by enhancing men's potential for connectedness and compassion. Achieving such aims likely would require, over time, the emergence of a larger, social movement, sharing related goals (cf. Faludi, 1999; Lerner, 1996; Messner, 1997).

Culture-Challenge as a Social Movement: The Women's Movement

The contemporary women's movement represents in exemplary fashion the potential of a social movement to transform the cultural and societal landscape. In the last four decades, the women's rights and women's liberation facets of the contemporary movement, taken together, have brought about dramatic changes in attitudes about gender, and contributed to legislation that has reduced oppressive structures and marshaled societal resources for women. The lives of many North American women have been transformed. Not all goals of the movement have been accomplished, and not all women (e.g., minority women, lower income women) have benefited equally. Nonetheless, the powerful social forces that systematically limit voice, roles, resources, and expectations for many women have been directly challenged, and substantially reduced in influence (Buechler, 1995).

Historians and social movement theorists point to a complex array of factors that together led to the highly visible, mass mobilization facet of the contemporary women's movement in the late 1960s. These include the following: (1) a set of critical historical background factors (e.g., increasing women's labor force participation and educational achievement; transformation of the American economy; urbanization and suburbanization); (2) a set of proximal social factors (civil rights movement; new left movement); (3) a powerful motivational basis (e.g., psychological sense of marginality in the context of rising expectations; emerging group consciousness and group identity); and (4) movement resource mobilizational capacity (emerg-

ing movement leadership and organizations, as well as key community and governmental resources; cf. Buechler, 1990; Evans & Boyte, 1986).

The women's movement represents a clear and vibrant example of the mutual influence, within and across levels, of emerging changes in instrumental, structural, relational, and cultural environments. For example, local relational community-building in the movement facilitated both consciousness-raising (e.g., "the personal is political") and group empowerment (e.g., "sisterhood is powerful"), which ultimately led to social policy changes across ecological levels. Group empowerment, in turn, facilitated both personal and movement development, and led over the longer term to societal capacity-building—women have increasingly contributed powerfully to many fields, to problem-solving processes, and to leadership, across societal domains. Furthermore, all of the above emerged from, and contributed to, cultural transformations in belief systems, values, social norms, traditions, and practices regarding women and gender (cf. Buechler, 1990; Evans & Boyte, 1986; Klein, 1984).

The above four exemplars illustrate the potential interdependence of capacity-building, group empowerment, relational community-building, and culture-challenge. When these processes are jointly embraced and influenced by social interventions, the potential for transforming social environments is synergistically enhanced. The four examples illustrate as well the interdependence of changes across multiple ecological levels. Individuals need to change so transformed social environments are possible; conversely, societal values and norms need to change so communities, and then settings, and then individuals can change. It is not an either/or: social transformation depends, simultaneously, on the development of interventions on multiple levels, ranging from the individual up to the societal, and via social movements, from the societal down to the individual.

What will the next major social movement be? My dream is "the children's movement," in which the majority of citizens finally realize that the development of *all* children really matters, and that all children are "our children" (here, and globally). Government, business, and average citizens would jointly mobilize to transform the environments in which children and families, especially poor children and poor families, are embedded. Capacity-building, group empowerment, community-building, and culture-challenge are joined. An activist, collaborative social science, working closely with citizens and allied organizations, would contribute innovative models and ideas, research-based knowledge, and widespread support.

Can this happen in the 21st century? And what should we be doing, if this or related opportunities develop during community psychology's next 33 years? This brings me to the concluding section of the paper.

CHALLENGES

Based on the above analysis, three challenges to our field appear central as we enter the next century.

Challenge 1: To Move Social Transformation to the Center of Our Consciousness as a Field

The goal of influencing, and ultimately transforming, setting, community, and societal environments should inform all that we do. In this regard, part of the challenge is to enhance our understanding of the social ecology of social transformation. We need to understand the various factors influencing social transformation, and in so doing, delineate the conditions under which our planned interventions are most likely to facilitate enduring change at the individual, setting, community, and societal levels.

Our field's understanding of social environments, of how and when fundamental, enduring changes in social environments occur, is very limited compared to our understanding of individuals. It is not that research focused on individuals, and developing and evaluating programs that change individuals, are not important. They are. However, they are incomplete and must be integrated and aligned with larger, social transformation goals, processes and methods, some based in other disciplines and fields.

Challenge 2: To Jointly Articulate with Allied Disciplines, Organizations and Citizen Groups an Encompassing, Multidisciplinary Framework for Social Transformation Work

We need to take seriously that what many allied disciplines, organizations, and citizens are doing, at least in part, is community psychology work, and that what we are doing, at least in part, is an aspect of their work. Joining with allied disciplines, organizations and citizens to articulate a guiding framework for social transformation would help broaden our collective identities, and contribute to a larger, multidisciplinary and multileveled effort to address social problems (Fig. 3).

The resulting intellectual and action-oriented bridge building could encompass the entire spectrum of allied disciplines: applied anthropology, community development, community public health, education, community social work, applied sociology, and so on. It would encompass a broad array of research and action methods, including participatory organizational development, participatory action research, embedded program develop-

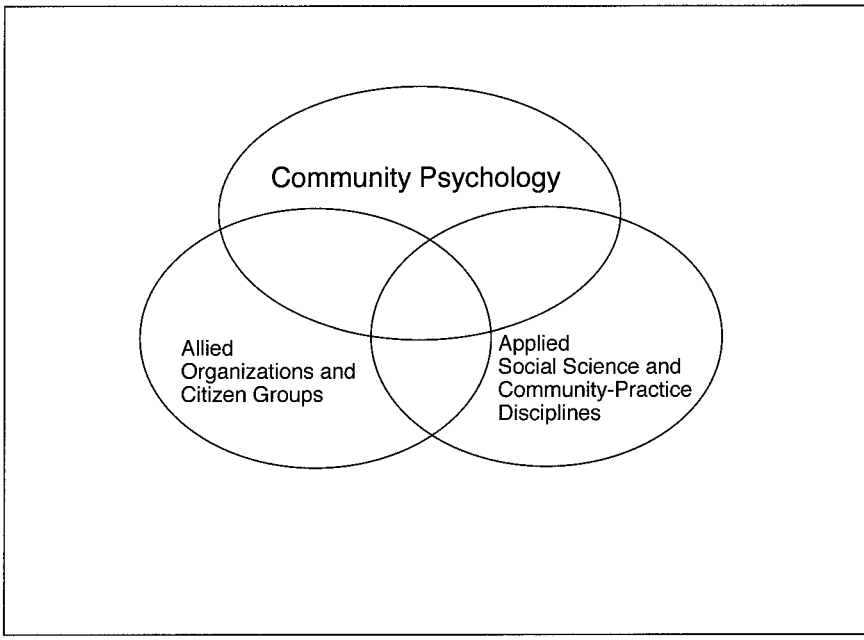

Fig. 3. Community psychology as part of a larger transformation effort.

ment, community development, social action, social policy, critical social analysis, and social movements. Finally, capacity-building, group empowerment, relational community-building, and culture-challenge would all be engaged, across ecological levels.

Challenge 3: To Do the Above with Heart, Soul, and Humility

Expanding our sense of who we are, along with extending our domains of inquiry, action, and collaboration, will be difficult. It is not assured in advance what the outcome of these efforts will be. Importantly, though, we do have some degree of control over how we do our work—the processes through which we approach those we hope to understand, work with, and influence.

Always, we should do so with heart—compassion, caring, and a deep sense of shared humanity.

And we should do so with soul. As Ron Hustedde (1999) put it in his recent presidential address to the Community Development Society, this

means in part wrestling with the truly difficult questions, creating a climate in which people can tell their stories, living the paradox of working within and against the dominant culture, building quality relationships, giving and receiving a blessing, and being still within the noise and activity of a community.

Finally, we should do so with humility. The challenges are great, our knowledge is quite limited. In every situation, we have as much to learn and receive from others as we have to share with them.

IN CLOSING

As I close, let me return to where I began—my high school graduation speech. Specifically, below are the opening lines (revised) from a poem of mine included in that talk.

A Child's Dream

A child dreams that gunfire erupts in the streets, like the tit-tat-tat of sirens; and another death. Sleep torn open like old sheets; the child's deep night-tears erupt, dark and fearful, like the night's storm.

***

We cannot afford to be self-absorbed. We cannot afford to pursue our work narrowly, unaligned or isolated from other disciplines and from citizens, too complacent or too busy to generate a poem, a vision, a multileveled and multidisciplinary strategy, for our complicated times.

All our children need us to do this, and more.

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