Empowerment in Mainstream Psychology: Legitimacy, Obstacles, and Possibilities

ISAAC PRILLELTENSKY
Wilfrid Laurier University

Abstract

Hitherto, the concept of empowerment has been largely denied a place of prominence in both mainstream academic and applied psychology. It is argued that if this concept is to expand beyond the field of community psychology into more traditional areas of psychology, such as social, personality, clinical and school psychology, its moral and psychological foundations should be more clearly articulated. In order to advance this proposition, an integrative conceptual model of empowerment is presented. Within this framework, the ethical and therapeutic legitimacy of empowering practices, obstacles for their inclusion in mainstream psychology, and possibilities for their future development are explored. Some of the benefits to be derived from the adoption of the concept of empowerment in academic and applied psychology are outlined.

If research on empowerment and policies designed to empower individuals are to reach beyond community psychology and have an impact in other, more traditional areas such as clinical, school, personality, and social psychology, then it is incumbent upon community psychologists to assert the legitimacy of these endeavours. I will argue that the ethical, psychological and therapeutic foundations of empowerment provide ample legitimacy for its vigorous pursuit in the discipline.

Empowerment is generally understood as interventions and policies intended to enhance the degree of control vulnerable individuals exercise over their lives (Rappaport, 1981, 1987). Hitherto, this concept has been largely denied a respectable place in mainstream academic and applied psychology (Joffe & Albee, 1988; Sarason 1982, 1988). With the notable exception of community psychologists (Florin & Wandersman, 1990; Wolff, 1987; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988) and some primary preventionists (Albee, Joffe, & Dusenbury, 1988), psychologists have neglected to view empowerment research and/or practice as legitimate activities. In the most recent edition of the *Journal of Social Issues* (Spacapan & Thompson, 1991), entitled "Perceived control in vulnerable populations," no references could be found to the concept of empowerment. Similarly, no specific mention of this concept could be seen in the new book *The psychology of human control* (Friedman & Lackey, 1991). These are only two examples of missed opportunities by control researchers to take advantage of studies on empowerment (e.g., Rappaport, Swift & Hess, 1984; Zimmerman, 1990). This paper is designed to enhance the cross-fertilization between research on empowerment and some mainstream psychological theories and practices. The concept of explanatory style advanced by Seligman (1990), and the four models of helping and coping identified by Brickman et al. (1982) will be instrumental in demonstrating the connections between empowerment, theories of control, and counseling approaches.

The article is divided into four parts. The first section presents a conceptual model of empowerment. This is necessary in order to (a) clarify the various meanings of the term, and (b) provide a framework for research and action. The second section elaborates on the legitimate ethical and psychological foundations of empowerment. While the
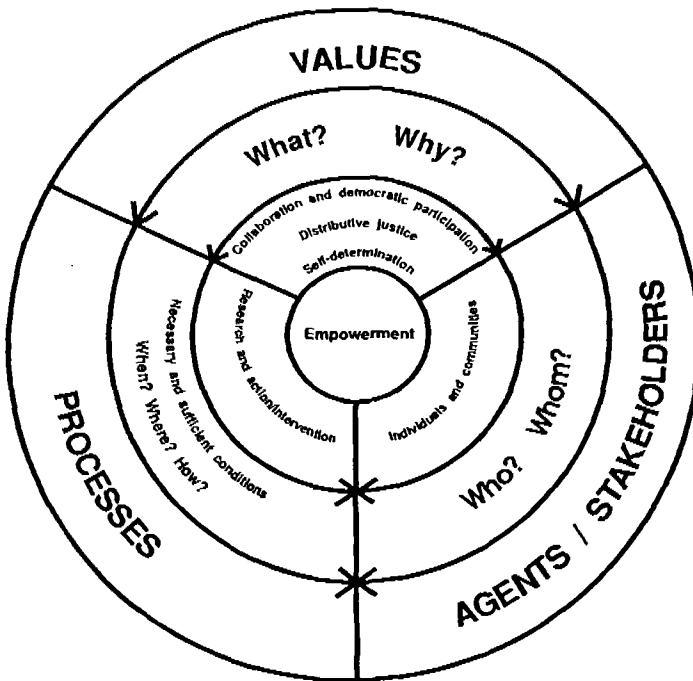
Figure 1. A descriptive and prescriptive model of empowerment.

third part deals with obstacles to be encountered in promoting empowerment in mainstream psychology, the last portion offers some directions to facilitate this integration.

Empowerment: A Descriptive and Prescriptive Model

The purpose of the model to be presented is twofold: (a) to understand the concept of empowerment by delineating its multifaceted nature, and (b) to provide a framework for the advancement of research and action in this area. In other words, the model will describe the constitutive elements of empowerment and serve as a basis for its prescription in psychology.

The circular representation of the model found in Figure 1 highlights the main three elements of empowerment as discussed in the literature. These are values, processes and agents/stakeholders. Each third of the model is subdivided into three sections. The outer circle denotes the main components of empowerment at their most abstract level. The middle circle specifies the question/s to

be asked of values, processes and agents/stakeholders. The inner circle details in concrete form the meaning of the key constitutive elements. The values of empowerment, that is, self-determination, distributive justice, and collaborative and democratic participation, inform and guide the process as well the agents/stakeholders of empowerment. This influence is represented in Figure 1 by the arrows pointing from values to the other two sections. These values are incorporated by researchers as well as by human services providers. The arrows pointing from processes to agents/stakeholders and vice versa represent the dynamic relationship between the people who conduct research and interventions and the processes involved. I will discuss now each section of the model in more detail.

VALUES

Values play a central role in empowerment research and actions. Empowerment studies and empowering interventions are explicitly concerned with, and guided by, three princi-

pal moral values: self-determination, distributive justice, and collaborative and democratic participation. The ethical foundations of these values will be articulated in the next section of this paper. My intention at this juncture is to show that these values have been central in the development of the concept of empowerment.

Against a background of paternalistic attitudes in social and psychological interventions (Swift, 1984), Rappaport (1981, 1986, 1987) advanced the concept and practice of empowerment in psychology as means toward the achievement of self-determination of individuals in need of changes in their lives. The inherent value of persons choosing a course of action on their own is indeed a constitutive part of what Riessman (1986) called the empowerment ethos. Self-determination, as a fundamental principle in human services, has been recognized not only in psychology, but also in social work (Breton, 1989; McDermott, 1975; Moreau, 1990), social policy (Boyte, 1990, McKnight, 1989; Wineman, 1984), education (Freire, 1971, 1985), and even agriculture and engineering (Ovitt, 1989), among other professions.

The second value, distributive justice, promotes fair and equitable distribution of resources and burdens in society (Miller, 1978). This value derives from the realization that misery and happiness are largely dictated by the way material goods and access to services are allocated in society. Contrary to the enduring belief in North America that equality of opportunity exists, the promoters of empowerment assert that the unequal distribution of wealth and power in society severely restricts access to services, education and employment (Albee, 1986; Boyte & Riessman, 1986; Rappaport, 1984). Consequently, empowerment calls for interventions designed to rectify this imbalance of opportunities wherever it exists. Distributive justice applies at the micro-social level, where people and small groups negotiate the fair allocation of resources, as well as at the macro-social sphere, where advocacy, social and political action are called for.

The third fundamental value underpinning the notion of empowerment is collaborative and democratic participation. This value reflects best the ideal that persons affected by individual and social interventions should be part of the decision-making process. This principle, also identified by Riessman (1986) as a key element of the empowerment ethos, is a defining characteristic of empowering scientific and socio-political processes (Rappaport, 1990).

These three constitutive moral values inform the actions of researchers, therapists and social interventionists identified with the tenets of empowerment. In the next two sections we shall see how these principles permeate the people and processes involved in empowerment.

AGENTS/STAKEHOLDERS

The process of empowerment may take place either as a result of the natural actions of persons desirous of attaining higher degrees of control over their affairs, or as a consequence of social interventions coming from outside the setting. Agents are the people whose actions empower themselves and/or others. Stakeholders are persons or groups invited to participate in the process. The ideal is for the stakeholders to become agents of empowerment themselves as soon as possible. As Lerner (1991) recently showed in his work with individuals, families and entire communities, empowerment may occur at any of these levels. Briefly stated, this third of the model describes the people involved and affected by empowering interventions. Their actions are expected to uphold the values described in the previous section. Whereas Serrano-Garcia (1984), Wolff (1987), and Chavis and Wandersman (1990) demonstrate how these values are incorporated into research and interventions with entire communities, Dunst, Trivette and Deal (1988) illustrate the fusion of empowerment values with clinical practice.

PROCESSES

This section of the model represents the

variety of actions and processes taking place in studying and promoting empowerment. These may be best understood by posing the following questions: how, when, and where does empowerment occur, and what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for it to develop. The inner circle of Figure 1 shows the two main processes of empowerment: research and action. Actions take many forms. They may be the result of powerless individuals initiating social action, or they may come from professionals involved in community organizing, or from therapists empowering women to leave abusive relationships.

What defines an intervention as empowering is not its specific content but rather its adherence to the values of empowerment. In one case political action may be called for in order to improve the housing conditions of a community. In another case empowerment may take the form of helping a person deflect blame for problems from internal sources to external oppressive conditions. As noted earlier, self-determination, distributive justice, and collaborative and democratic participation should predominate at all levels of human co-existence. Therefore, depending upon the situation, empowering processes may be necessary to advance the interests and rights of vulnerable persons in the context of relationships, families, occupational settings, educational institutions, social and political structures, and practically every realm of human endeavour (Lerner, 1991).

The complex nature of social settings where empowerment is called for necessitates that psychologists be more versatile and creative in their interventions. Greater degrees of control for vulnerable people cannot always be attained by counseling and therapy. Social policy recommendations and political actions may have to be incorporated into the psychologist's repertoire.

The analysis of empowerment along the dimensions of values, agents/stakeholders, and processes furnishes a systematic understanding of the field at the same time that it serves to guide research and action. Although other models of empowerment have

been proposed before (e.g., Wolff, 1987), I believe the present one to be unique in its explicit emphasis on moral principles. In addition, the model advanced here may prove to be (a) of heuristic value in interpreting and organizing the field of empowerment, and (b) useful in disseminating this concept in mainstream psychology.

Legitimacy

The model of empowerment described above rests on philosophical as well as psychological foundations. Both aspects are necessary to attain an integrative and holistic understanding of empowerment. Moreover, they are mutually complementary. While the moral philosophical basis provides the justification for pursuing empowerment, the psychological ground facilitates its promotion.

THE MORAL FOUNDATIONS OF EMPOWERMENT
Although the prevailing discourse on empowerment is marked by ethical connotations (Rappaport, 1990), its moral foundations have not yet been fully explicated. In the present atmosphere of so-called pluralism and ethical relativism, the risk exists of misinterpreting moral imperatives as moral predilections (Lerner, 1991; Wolfe, 1989). As a result, mainstream psychologists may continue to regard advocacy and empowerment as activities which are largely dictated, not by ethics, but by personal world-views and preferences. I contend that a compelling argument for empowerment can, and should be made, on the basis of the ethical obligations of psychologists toward society in general and vulnerable populations in particular (see Steininger, Newell, & Garcia, 1984; O'Neill, 1989). Otherwise, mainstream psychologists will continue to regard empowerment as a matter of personal choice and not as a matter of moral duty. Following a discussion of the ethical principles of empowerment, I will attempt to show how these values resonate in the professional ethics literature.

Ethical principles. The three fundamental pillars of empowerment are self-determina-

tion, distributive justice and collaborative and democratic participation. As noted earlier in the model, these principles are widely promulgated by empowerment practitioners. Each of these values has a respectable tradition in moral philosophy.

Following Olson's (1978) analysis of freedom, self-determination may be thought of as "the individual's ability to pursue chosen goals without excessive frustration" (p. 45). The capacity to carry out one's objectives in life is, according to Rawls, "perhaps the most important primary good" (1972, p. 440). This constituent element of self-respect, Rawls claims, "implies a confidence in one's ability ... to fulfill one's intentions" (1972, p. 440). Ortega y Gasset (1983), who wrote extensively about self-determination (Ramos Mattei, 1987), captured the human essence of this value in the expression that "To live is to constantly decide what we are to become" (1983, p. 190, author's translation).

The primary good inherent in a sense of autonomy, personal freedom and self-determination may be threatened by at least two sources: (a) a restrictive psychosocial environment, and (b) paternalism. Concerning the former, Aboulafia (1986) states that "it is clear that the other(s) and the social-economic system can inhibit and prevent the realization of such a self... The obstacle I speak of is the relationship of dominance versus subordinance" (Aboulafia, 1986, p. 104). The interpersonal and societal barriers to self-determination identified by Aboulafia have also been widely recognized by the proponents of empowerment (Lerner, 1991; Serrano Garcia, 1984).

The second obstacle to self-determination has to do with paternalistic attitudes toward people in need of assistance. Many so-called "benevolent" interventions to help the disadvantaged have infringed upon their sense of self-respect and effectively curtailed their aspirations for self-determination (Gaylin, Glasser, Marcus, & Rothman, 1981). Among applied ethicists, Young (1982) contends that "opposition to paternalistic interference with adults, whether it involves the intervention

of the state (legal paternalism) or another adult individual, has usually been based on a concern to preserve human autonomy or self-determination" (1982, p. 47). The many converging critiques on paternalism coalesced to create alternate, empowering strategies (Boyte & Riessman, 1986; Rappaport, 1981, 1987; Swift, 1984).

The needs and rights of individuals promoted and protected by self-determination should be complemented with values designed to preserve the needs and rights of fellow community members. This ensures a balance between personal fulfillment and communal well-being. Distributive justice is the value invoked to guide the fair and equitable allocation of burdens and resources in society (Facione, Scherer & Attig, 1978; Miller, 1978; Olson, 1978; Rawls, 1972). In Sidwick's words, this value puts forth "principles from which we may work out an ideally just distribution of rights and privileges, burdens and pains, among human beings as such" (1922, p. 274). Similarly, according to Miller (1978), distributive justice may be defined as "*suum cuique*, to each his(/her) due" (p. 20). Justice, Miller explains,

concerns the distribution of benefits and burdens throughout a society, as it results from the major social institutions — property systems, public organizations, etc. It deals with such matters as the regulation of wages and (where they exist) profits, the protection of persons' rights through the legal system, the allocation of housing, medicine, welfare benefits, etc. (Miller, 1978, p. 22)

Proponents of empowerment in psychology and social services have asserted the need to redistribute resources in a more equitable fashion (Albee, Joffe, & Dusenbury, 1988; Rappaport, 1984; McKnight, 1989). Legal, political, ideological and social interventions have been launched in an effort to reallocate wealth and power in accordance with the precepts of distributive justice.

The intrinsic beneficial qualities of self-determination and distributive justice are

brought forth by the collaborative and democratic process. The belief in the inherent capacity of individuals to select their goals and defend their interests is recognized in the value of democracy. As Swift noted (1984), "the concept of democracy and its embodiment in our political institutions are based on the principle of empowering citizens to participate in decisions affecting their welfare" (p. xiii). A commitment to treating persons fairly, equitably, and with respect demands that a collaborative approach be used. This is in opposition to paternalistic models of intervention which have traditionally operated from an expert-knows-best point of view.

While the importance of collaboration and democracy may be publicly upheld by psychologists, an in-depth examination of psychological theories and practices reveals that these values are not always at the forefront of their priorities (Sampson, 1991; Walsh, 1988). Proponents of empowerment in psychology endeavour to make collaboration and democratic participation one of the first items of their scientific and social agenda (Rappaport, 1986, 1990). As we shall see next, applied moral philosophers attempt to incorporate primary values into the *modus-operandi* of the professions.

Professional ethics and empowerment. Morality, Frankena (1963) claims, "is not to be a minister merely to one's own good life but to that of others as well" (p. 77). This reasoning, widely endorsed by other moral philosophers (Facione, Scherer & Attig, 1978; Olson, 1978) implies that ethical behaviour should encompass actions designed to enhance the welfare of fellow community members. By extension, professional ethical behaviour calls for efforts to promote the welfare of the community as a whole (Kultgen, 1988). Reeck (1982) said it well when he claimed that the moral guide of the professional should be the *"devotion of professional skills to meeting the needs of client groups and, ultimately, to the common good"* (italics in the original, p. 38). Reflecting on

the same topic, Lebacqz (1985) commented: "If the professional's relationship to society is seen as a matter of entrusting of power, then the professional will be bound by obligations to society... It is really a matter of justice of repaying a debt" (p. 85).

Reeck (1982) argues for the legitimacy of empowerment in the professions. He contends that "an ideal that seems common to the moral heritage of the professions is that of *enablement*" (p. 38), which is understood as the empowering of individuals for the purpose of helping themselves. Consistent with the philosophy of empowerment, Lebacqz claims that meaningful improvement in the life of many citizens cannot be attained without fundamental social changes — changes which require a more equitable distribution of political power (Albee, Joffe & Dusenbury, 1988; Edwards, Reich & Weisskopf, 1986; Ryan, 1981; Schwartz, 1987; Weisband, 1989).

Kultgen (1988), Lebacqz (1985), and Reeck (1982) explicitly advance the precepts of empowerment in the professions. They support the process by which individuals acquire control over their lives and the power to enhance their personal and communal welfare. Professions can accelerate this process. However, in establishing their moral duties, professions have traditionally sought to secure only the welfare of their immediate clients and neglected (a) to consider the welfare of the community at large, and (b) the need to change damaging societal structures (Lebacqz, 1985; Reeck, 1982; Wilding, 1982). Psychology has not escaped this proclivity (Prilleltensky, 1990a, 1990b, 1991). The obstacles section of this paper will outline in some detail why psychology has been reluctant to embrace empowering paradigms and social change propositions.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EMPOWERMENT

Psychology has much to offer, as well as to gain from, the field of empowerment. The potential of this mutually beneficial relationship will be explored in this section. The

psychology of personal control can definitely inform empowerment research (Friedman & Lackey, 1991; Langer & Rodin, 1976; Seligman, 1990; Spacapan & Thompson, 1991; Zimmerman, 1990; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). Control investigators, in turn, can learn a great deal from observing the experience of empowerment in real-life settings (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Dobyns, Doughty, & Laswell, 1971; Lerner, 1991). I will review next a number of studies that bear directly on the relationship between issues of personal control, coping, helping, and empowerment. These will show some of the mainstream psychology foundations of empowerment, as well as the therapeutic and protective aspects of empowering processes.

Research. Studies concerning issues of control and empowerment at the individual level of analysis will be reviewed first, followed by research dealing with communities. There are long-term beneficial repercussions for the early experiences of task mastery and control (Chess & Thomas, 1984; Rolf, Masten, Cicchetti, Neuchterlein, & Weintraub, 1990). Indeed, as Cowen (1991) recently noted, "the rooting of relevant life competencies may be the single most important precondition for the young child's development of an early phenomenological sense of empowerment and having control over one's fate" (p. 406). Moreover, important positive effects can be derived from the perception of control, not the least of which is physical health (Lord & Farlow, 1990). In their review of the literature, Thompson and Spacapan (1991) mention improved (a) emotional well-being, (b) ability to cope with stress, (c) health, (d) motor and intellectual performance, and (e) capacity to make desired behavioural changes, as resulting from perceptions of control.

A sense of personal control contributes also to the development of psychosocial resilience (Garmezy, 1984; Rutter, 1987; Seligman, 1990; Zimmerman, 1990). That is to say, experiences of control act as buffers against future adversities. The opposite is

also true. Experiences of helplessness across the life-span render people vulnerable to a range of emotional problems (Seligman, 1990).

It has been well documented that the experience of helplessness is mediated by cognitive style. Seligman (1990) contends that individuals who explain bad events in terms of external, specific and temporary causes, what he calls *optimistic explanatory style*, will show greater attempts at control when they encounter adversities in the future. Those who attribute failure to personal, permanent and pervasive factors will likely not assume control when faced with the next setback. Although the degree of helplessness people manifest is moderated by their attributions, an *optimistic explanatory style* can go only so far in protecting people facing severe or chronic stressors. Recurring or acute life-stressors may teach their victims that no matter what they do, their lot in life does not improve. If the adverse effects of these experiences subside, children "will develop the theory that bad events can be changed and conquered. But if they are, in fact, permanent and pervasive, the seeds of hopelessness have been deeply planted" (Seligman, 1990, p. 135).

To overcome the deeply planted seeds of hopelessness, individuals growing up in permanent and pervasive depriving conditions need more than a change in attributions and perceptions to cope with misfortune. They need real experiences of control to change real-life stressors. Research on empowerment can show how this can be attained (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; Zimmerman, 1990). The present dominant focus on attributions and perceptions of control should be complemented by research on the increase of actual power in real-life settings. This is the main potential contribution of empowerment research in this area.

Research on the empowerment of communities shows the gains derived from a sense of group cohesion and collective action around specific goals and problems. Florin and Wandersman (1990) describe the em-

powering effects of citizen participation, voluntary organizations and community development. Chavis and Wandersman (1990), for example, illustrated how a sense of community may generate social action and enhance the participants' perception and actual control over their environment. Given the action research nature of community empowerment, more will be said about it in the next section.

Action/Intervention. As in the research section, I will examine empowering interventions at the individual and community levels separately. A useful theoretical framework for understanding and appreciating the need for empowerment at the personal level is provided by Brickman and his associates (1982). They made a comparative analysis of four models of helping and coping and their effects on clients. The techniques they explored were examined in terms of two dimensions: (a) Attribution to self of responsibility for the problem, and (b) Attribution to self of responsibility for the solution. Each variable was divided into high or low. This resulted into four models of helping: (a) *medical* (People are not held responsible for problems or solutions), (b) *compensatory* (People are not held responsible for problems but responsible for solutions), (c) *moral* (People are held responsible for problems and solutions), and (d) *enlightenment* (People are not held responsible for solutions but responsible for problem). Their comparison of helping methodologies falling into the four categories led them to the conclusion that the compensatory model, the one which advocates empowerment, is generally the preferred one, particularly with disadvantaged populations. In this approach people are not held responsible for their problems but are expected to be active in the solutions, a philosophy which is congruent with the tenets of empowerment. Brickman et al. (1982) prefer the compensatory model because it avoids blaming-the-victim at the same time that it benefits from the advantages associated with holding individuals

responsible for improving their lives. Knowing that change is within their ability and control provides suffering people with an empowering feeling.

Lord and Farlow (1990) discuss the implications of the compensatory paradigm for health promotion. According to them the "individuals who achieved the greatest degree of control in their lives" (p. 3) were those who resisted blaming themselves and adopted an active stance with respect to their future aspirations. An application of the compensatory model by Rose and Black (1985) helped discharged psychiatric patients adjust to the community. They found that through the externalization of blame, and through "seizing command of some aspect (however minute) of their lives" (p. 90), individuals attained a degree of dignity and self-respect that could not have been obtained otherwise.

Finally, empirical evidence for the positive results associated with the compensatory mode of helping comes from the work of Lerner (1991). Based on the assumption that occupational stress derives primarily from self-blaming, Lerner launched interventions designed to (a) reduce personal blame, and (b) modify oppressive working conditions. He found that

with a decrease in self-blaming comes an increase in ability to cope with stress at home and at work. This is partly explained by the increased sense of personal power that comes from being able to focus anger at oppressive work conditions. But it is also explained by the fact that once people are no longer totally disempowered by self-blaming, they are in a better position to formulate plans for how to engage in concrete struggles to change their environments. (Lerner, 1991, p. 44)

The therapeutic aspects of the compensatory model can also be seen at the community level. A prime example of its powerful impact is furnished by the women's movement. In elucidating systemic (as opposed to personal) conditions of oppression and facilitating con-

trol over their own affairs, Kravetz noted that "consciousness-raising groups have served as an important mental health resource for women" (1987, p. 55). Grass-roots associations (Boyte, 1990; Burgess, 1990), students' and seniors' groups (Wolff, 1987), native (O'Sullivan, Waugh, & Espeland, 1984) and poor rural communities (Serrano-Garcia, 1984), among others, have been helped by the tools of social action advocated by empowerment theory.

To summarize, this section dealt with the moral and psychological foundations of empowerment in mainstream psychology. Next, I will examine some of the barriers to be encountered in promoting a wider acceptance for the concept of empowerment.

Obstacles

In spite of the fact that professional ethics call for the enablement and empowerment of vulnerable populations (Kultgen, 1988; Lebacqz, 1985; Reeck, 1982), most professions, in actuality, have either rejected these endeavours as illegitimate or paid little attention to them. What follows is an analysis of the main obstacles and arguments obstructing the introduction of empowering practices in psychology.

PROFESSIONAL CREDIBILITY

Social action, a key empowerment strategy, has been historically perceived as undermining the credibility of the social sciences. In the social sciences, the conflict between so-called "academics" and "reformers" dates back to 1865, when the American Social Science Association was formed. This conflict is very well documented in Furner's (1975) book *Advocacy and objectivity*. According to her, the "academics" had no trouble winning the struggle for recognition as "professionals." Unfortunately, the monopoly over *professionalism* exerted by the academics had rather adverse consequences. As Furner (1975) noted: "as professionalization proceeded, most social scientists stopped asking ethical questions" (p. 8).

The fear of reformers is associated with the intrusion of values in what is supposed to be a value-free enterprise (Wilding, 1982). The claim is made that social action, and its concomitant values, derogate the scientific status of psychology (Robinson, 1984). This argument neglects to consider two points. First, nonepistemic values, that is, social and political values, are an inherent part of psychology, whether we like it or not (Howard, 1985). And second, claiming to be value-neutral is in itself a value-laden position, one that upholds the societal status quo. Failure or neglect to challenge predominant values translates into indirect support for them (Prilleltensky, 1989).

Empowerment, advocacy, and social action are not presented here for the pursuit of the narrow private interests of professionals, in which case the credibility of the profession may be jeopardized. On the contrary, empowerment is advanced as a means to fulfill our ethical commitment to the vulnerable (Hillerbrand, 1987).

SOCIAL ETHICS

The study of social ethics in the social sciences in general and in psychology in particular has not received as much attention as it probably should (O'Neill, 1989; Tymchuk, 1989; Warwick, 1980). This error of omission led to a narrow preoccupation with individual, as opposed to social ethics (For examples of this proclivity see APA, 1987; Cabot, 1926; Carroll, Schneider & Wesley, 1985; Clarke & Lawry, 1988). As a result, the ethical dimensions of social action, power structures, domination and oppression do not receive the attention they merit.

A commitment toward the individual client, or what may be termed *individual ethics* (Prilleltensky, 1990a, 1991) dominates the professional and psychological ethics literature. Few references are made in that literature to the need to promote a *social ethics* mentality — an ethics that is directed toward enhancing the quality of life for large and vulnerable segments of society.

The negative effects of this neglect are strongly felt in the helping professions.

Human services in general (McKnight, 1989), and medicine (Waitzkin, 1989), social work (Carniol, 1990; Gil, 1990), and psychology in particular (Prilleltensky, 1989; 1990b; Walsh, 1988) provide examples of professional practices where, paradoxically, preoccupation with the single "case" may ultimately hurt the "case." This is simply because in searching for solutions to a client, attention is diverted from pervasive social forces that may have caused, contributed to, or perpetuated the nature of the problem.

This is well illustrated in a program reported by Halpern in 1988. Attempts to minimize infants' diarrhea by psychoeducational measures were severely hindered by an overbearing environmental condition: lack of access to uncontaminated water. This is an incident where medical or psychological interventions should be accompanied by social and ecological change. In the context of psychotherapy, Lerner (1991) also shows the debilitating effects of focussing exclusively on the individual. "Lacking a sense of social causality, most therapists interpret the frustrations of family and personal life as individual failings ... therapists implicitly suggest that the problems are individual in scope" (p. 323). In spite of the ill-effects of this implicit message, therapies and therapists continue to reinforce the notion that it is only the client who needs to be changed, not the social conditions (Halleck, 1971, Jacoby, 1976; Lerner, 1991; Nahem, 1981; Prilleltensky, 1989, 1990b, 1990c). Such bias is prevalent in most social and medical services (McKnight, 1989; Waitzkin, 1989).

If professionals are entrusted by society to enhance the quality of life for the population at large, then social ethics is as important as individual ethics. Yet, the former continue to be overshadowed by the latter. This bias is reflected in the Canadian code of ethics (CPA, 1991), whereby responsibilities toward the individual client come before responsibilities toward society at large.

MERITOCRACY
Another reason why professionals have not regarded collective empowerment as vital is because of their fundamental belief that the answer to social problems lies in individual merit (Bledstein, 1976; Hall, 1983; Kultgen, 1988; Perkin, 1990; Reiff, 1974; Wilding, 1982). By embracing the ideology of meritocracy, whereby success and failure are explained in person-centered terms, professionals proceed to change individuals and not social structures. Professionals project onto society their own experience of success due to so-called talent and merit, thereby expecting their clients to improve their fortune not by social action but by personal effort.

DISTRIBUTION OF POWER
Empowerment calls for equitable distribution of power between professionals and citizens (Lebacqz, 1985; Rappaport, 1981, 1987; Riessman, 1986), a departure from the customary practice of treating professionals with deference and ascribing them moral and intellectual superiority. Empowerment will not occur unless professionals concede to share power with the recipients of their services (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990), a development which many observers consider unlikely under the dominant hierarchical professional ethos (Illich, 1977; Kultgen, 1988; Lieberman, 1970; Perkin, 1990; Reiff, 1974; Wilding, 1982).

SCIENTIFIC TRAINING
Psychologists are mostly trained and socialized into a professional problem-solving mentality that glorifies neat, sterile, lab-type methods and procedures, the kind that is not readily — if at all — applicable to social complexities (Sarason, 1978). Psychology's adoption of the natural science's experimental approach as its preeminent paradigm had unpropitious repercussions for the usefulness and applicability of psychological knowledge to human and social problems (cf. Kline, 1988). As Sarason (1981) put it, since its early days

psychology committed itself to the cult of standardization, i.e., to contrive situations that

would be standard for all people. This seemed to meet the scientific requirements of objectivity, reliability, and validity but at the expense of recognizing or pursuing the following question: how does behavior in standardized situations relate to and illuminate behavior in naturally occurring situations. (p. 183).

Similarly, DeBoer (1983) wrote that "in nomothetic psychology ... the human being is methodically stripped of his(/her) historicity. The test-person is ahistorical" (p. 6). This ahistorical stance has largely prevented a full and rich understanding of the dynamics involved in life in the community.

The empowerment of individuals and communities requires the management of unpredictable variables, political complications, and uncontrollable social events. Traditional training does not prepare applied psychologists for this kind of work. The few attempts by mental health specialists to launch community-wide interventions that we have seen in the last decade or so have been conducted almost exclusively by community psychologists (Albee, Joffe, & Dusenbury, 1988; Rappaport, Swift, & Hess, 1984), a professional group trained in a scientific approach that seeks to merge methodological rigour with real-life vicissitudes.

Possibilities
I have argued for the legitimacy of the concept of empowerment in mainstream psychology and outlined some of the obstacles for its inclusion in our profession. In this section I wish to discuss two areas of psychology that might particularly benefit from the values and theory of empowerment. The first has to do with ethics. The second, with issues of control, power, and well-being.

QUOTIDIAN ETHICS
Empowerment brings to the forefront of scientific and professional endeavours three values: self-determination, distributive justice, and collaborative and democratic participation. In fact, it may be argued that the main thrust of empowerment theory is the dissemi-

nation and permeation of ethical values into everyday activities. The term quotidian ethics refers to the recurrent application and promotion of moral values in the various services professionals provide. I offer this term to suggest that ethics are to be of prime concern in performing daily routines. Ethics become a matter of constant observance, and to a large degree determine the contents and procedures of the occupational realm. This is to be contrasted with the current attitude toward ethics. In the present atmosphere, professional ethics are essentially equated with rules and regulations to be upheld and called upon to discipline misconduct. Quotidian ethics proactively procure the enhancement of certain moral values in every aspect of the professional's life.

Moral philosophy should be easily accessed and debated by professionals and consumers alike. Ethics should not remain exclusively in the hands of ethical boards or applied moral philosophers. For as long as the public feels excluded from the ethical decision-making process affecting professions, professionals and citizens, the risk of nurturing an elitist kind of ethics is perpetuated.

The concept quotidian ethics is evocative of Cohen's (1988) discourse ethics, "with its emphasis on the equal participation of all concerned in public discussions on contested norms" (p. 315). According to Cohen (1988), social policies and professional activities are to be regarded as legitimate only if all those possibly affected by them would have an equal opportunity to voice their concerns, and a vote on the final decision. The term discourse ethics, like quotidian ethics, is drawn from "the principles of democracy" (Cohen, 1988, p. 315).

Quotidian ethics attempt to incorporate moral values into the occupational realm and disseminate them among all individuals concerned, service providers as well as citizens/consumers. Proponents of empowerment have made a great deal of progress in translating these principles into action. As it was pointed out in this paper, the values of empowerment are congruent with the values

of professional ethics in general. The empowerment paradigm affords professionals an opportunity to actively pursue the fulfillment of their moral duties; primarily those concerned with the social welfare of the population at large, an area largely neglected in professional circles.

Quotidian ethics may be practiced at the university as well as at the community. Courses dealing with the social ethics and the values of psychology may be introduced at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The degree of congruity between empowerment values and the contents and processes of psychology curricula could be the subject of discussions among students, staff, and faculty. In the community, psychologists can engage the public in debating service priorities. With limited resources, service providers struggle between giving immediate help to individuals in need and planning long-term interventions and prevention programmes to enhance the welfare of the community at large. The ethical and social repercussions of each course of action need to be carefully examined, and input from consumers is vital in this process. An excellent illustration of how the ethical values of empowerment can be incorporated into counseling with individuals and families is provided by Dunst, Trivette, and Deal (1988). Their clinical work reaches a rarely attained integration of client participation, self-determination, and sensitivity to restrictive social circumstances and life events. These values are similarly reflected in the therapeutic work of Lerner (1991) with individuals and occupational stress groups. These authors attempt to operate from a clinical framework that would seem to be congruent with the philosophy of quotidian ethics.

In summary, the language of empowerment fosters public debate on moral issues. It vitalizes individual and social ethics. In applying the values of empowerment to their teaching, research, and interventions, psychologists would be advancing the practice of quotidian ethics.

CONTROL, POWER, AND WELL-BEING

It has been argued that psychological well-being is generally enhanced by control over one's life events and circumstances (Langer & Rodin, 1976; Lerner, 1991; Thompson & Spacapan, 1991). However, an important distinction is to be made between the *perception* of control and *real experiences* of control and power. Research and interventions dealing exclusively with the perceptions of control have serious limitations. Attempts to increase perceptions of control will have different effects depending on whether the individuals live under relatively empowering or disempowering conditions. Whereas in the former situation people may benefit from these efforts, in the latter people still have to contend with depriving living circumstances. At this point more than purely psychological help is needed. Individuals and groups facing disempowering life events and circumstances require assistance in changing not only their perceptions of power, but also, and more importantly, the real constellations of social power that deprive them of rights, goods and services (e.g., Kallen, 1989). The latter is the realm of empowerment.

Since certain injurious systemic conditions remain present even after we adjust our cognitions, an *optimistic explanatory* style (Seligman, 1990) may be considered only the first step in propelling people into changing demeaning and oppressive societal structures. Following a process of cognitive liberation equivalent to saying: "It is not my fault," oppressed individuals need to be empowered to oppose structural configurations of power that precluded them from experiencing control in the past and perpetuate their misfortune in the present.

Furthermore, interventions designed to enhance the level of control people exercise over their affairs provide an insight into the real-life dynamics of power that can be rarely attained by the somewhat removed, laboratory-type of research on perceptions of control and attributional style. Hence, we might conclude that when dealing with depriving psychosocial environments, empow-

erment research and action are needed to complement psychological interventions dealing primarily with perceptions and cognitions. This is solid ground for the construction of bridges between the fields of empowerment and control theory in particular, and between community psychology and mainstream psychology in general.

Conclusion

The concept of empowerment brings to the forefront of research and action the unequal distribution of power among citizens and its concomitant personal and societal repercussions. Problems deriving from excessive and unjustified use of power are endemic in families, classrooms, industry, business, religious settings, and governments. Practically in almost every sphere of our lives there is the potential for psychological damage caused by some people oppressively controlling others. The model of empowerment presented in this article offers mainstream psychology a value-based argument for exploring and intervening in situations of power inequality.

References

Aboulafia, M. (1986). *The mediating self: Mead, Sartre, and self-determination*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Albee, G.W. (1986). Toward a just society: Lessons from observations on the primary prevention of psychopathology. *American Psychologist, 41*, 891-898.

Albee, G.W., Joffe, J.M., & Dusenbury, L.A. (Eds.). (1988). *Prevention, powerlessness, and politics: Readings on social change*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

American Psychological Association. (1987). *Casebook on ethical principles of psychologists* (Rev. ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

American Psychological Association. (1990). Ethical principles for psychologists. *American Psychologist, 45*, 390-395.

Bledstein, B.J. (1976). *The culture of professionalism*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Boyte, H.C. (1990). Politics as education. *Social Policy, Spring*, 35-42.

Boyte, H.C., & Riessman, F. (Eds.). (1986). *The new populism: The politics of empowerment*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Breton, M. (1989). Liberation theology, group work, and the right of the poor and oppressed to participate in the life of the community. *Social Work with Groups, 12*(3), 5-18.

Brickman, P., Rabinowitz, V.C., Karuza, J., Coates, D., Cohn, E., & Kidder, L. (1982). Models of helping and coping. *American Psychologist, 37*, 368-384.

Burgess, L. (1990). A block association president's perspective on citizen participation and research. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 18*, 159-161.

Cabot, R.C. (1926). *Adventures on the borderlands of ethics*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Canadian Psychological Association. (1991). *A Canadian code of ethics for psychologists*. Quebec: Author.

Carniol, B. (1990). *Case critical: Challenging social work in Canada* (2nd. ed.). Toronto: Between the lines.

Carroll, M.A., Schneider, H.G., & Wesley, G.R. (1985). *Ethics in the practice of psychology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Chavis, D.M., & Wandersman, A. (1990). Sense of community in the urban environment: A catalyst for participation and community development. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 18*, 55-81.

Chess, S., & Thomas, A. (1984). *Origins and

evolution of behavior disorders: From infancy to adult life. New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Clarke, R.W., & Lawry, R.P. (Eds.). (1988). *The power of the professional person.* New York: University Press of America.

Cohen, J. (1988). Discourse ethics and civil society. *Philosophy and Social Criticism, 14*(3-4), 315-337.

Cowen, E.L. (1991). In pursuit of wellness. *American Psychologist, 46,* 404-408.

DeBoer, T. (1983). *Foundations of a critical psychology.* Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Dobyns, H.F., Doughty, P.L., & Lasswell, H. D. (Eds.). (1971). *Peasants, power, and applied social change.* London: Sage.

Dunst, C., Trivette, C., & Deal, A. (1988). *Enabling and empowering families.* Cambridge, MA: Brookline.

Edwards, R.C., Reich, M., & Weisskopf, T.E. (Eds.). (1986). *The capitalist system* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Facione, P.A., Scherer, D., & Attig, T. (1978). *Values and society: An introduction to ethics and social philosophy.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Florin, P., & Wandersman, A. (1990). An introduction to citizen participation, voluntary organizations, and community development: Insights for empowerment through research. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 18,* 41-53.

Frankena, W.K. (1963). *Ethics.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Freire, P. (1971). *Pedagogia del oprimido (Pedagogy of the oppressed).* Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI.

Freire, P. (1985). *The politics of education: Culture power and liberation.* Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey Publishers.

Friedman, M.I., & Lackey, G.H. (1991). *The psychology of human control.* New York: Praeger.

Furner, M.O. (1975). *Advocacy and objectivity: A crisis in the professionalization of American social science, 1865-1905.* Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky.

Garmezy, N. (1984). Stress-resistant children: The search for protective factors. In J.E.

Stevenson (Ed.), *Recent research in developmental psychopathology* (pp. 213-233). New York: Pergamon Press.

Gaylin, W., Glasser, I., Marcus, S., & Rothman, D.J. (1981). *Doing good: The limits of benevolence.* New York: Pantheon.

Gil, D.G. (1990). Implications of conservative tendencies for practice and education in social welfare. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 17*(2), 5-27.

Gorlin, R.A. (Ed.). (1986). *Codes of professional responsibility.* Washington, DC: Bureau of National Affairs.

Hall, P.M. (1983). Individualism and social problems: A critique and an alternative. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 19*(1), 85-94.

Halleck, S. (1971). *The politics of therapy.* New York: Science House.

Halpern, R. (1988). Action research for the late 1980s. *Journal of Community Psychology, 16,* 249-260.

Hillerbrand, E. (1987). Philosophical tensions influencing psychology and social action. *American Psychologist, 42,* 111-118.

Howard, G.S. (1985). The role of values in the science of psychology. *American Psychologist, 40,* 255-265.

Illich, I. (1977). Disabling professions. In I. Illich (Ed.), *Disabling professions* (pp. 11-40). London: Marion Boyars.

Jacoby, R. (1976). *Social amnesia.* Boston: Beacon.

Joffe, J.M., & Albee, G.W. (1988). Powerlessness and psychopathology. In G.W. Albee, J.M. Joffe, and L.A. Dusenbury (Eds.), *Prevention, powerlessness, and politics: Readings on social change* (pp. 53-56). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Kallen, E. (1989). *Label me human.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Kline, P. (1988). *Psychology exposed.* New York: Routledge.

Kravetz, D. (1987). Benefits of consciousness-raising groups for women. In C.M. Brody (Ed.), *Women's therapy groups: Paradigms of feminist treatment* (pp. 55-66). New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Kultgen, J. (1988). *Ethics and professionalism.*

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Langer, E.J., & Rodin, J. (1976). The effects of choice and enhanced personal responsibility for the aged: A field experiment in an institutional setting. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 34,* 191-198.

Lebacqz, K. (1985). *Professional ethics: Power and paradox.* Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Lerner, M. (1991). *Surplus powerlessness.* London: Humanities Press International.

Lieberman, J.K. (1970). *The tyranny of the experts.* New York: Walker & Company.

Lord, J., & Farlow, D.M. (1990). A study of personal empowerment: Implications for health promotion. *Health Promotion, Fall,* 2-8.

McDermott, F.E. (Ed.). (1975). *Self-determination in social work.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

McKnight, J. (1989). Do no harm: Policy options that meet human needs. *Social Policy, Summer,* 5-15.

Miller, D. (1978). *Social justice.* Oxford: Clarendon.

Moreau, M.J. (1990). Empowerment through advocacy and consciousness-raising: Implications of a structural approach to social work. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 17*(2), 53-67.

Nahem, J. (1981). *Psychology and psychiatry today.* New York: International Publishers.

Olson, R.G. (1978). *Ethics.* New York: Random House.

O'Neill, P. (1989). Responsible to whom? responsible for what? Some ethical issues in community intervention. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 17,* 323-341.

Ortega y Gasset, J. (1983). *Que es filosofia?* (What is philosophy?). Madrid: Alianza.

O'Sullivan, M.J., Waugh, N., & Espeland, W. (1984). The Fort McDowell Yavapai: From pawns to powerbrokers. *Prevention in Human Services, 3*(2/3), 73-98.

Ovitt, G. (1989). Appropriate technology: Development and social change. *Monthly Review, 40*(9), 22-32.

Perkin, H. (1990). *The rise of professional society.* New York: Routledge.

Prilleltensky, I. (1989). Psychology and the status quo. *American Psychologist, 44,* 795-802.

Prilleltensky, I. (1990a). Enhancing the social ethics of psychology: Toward a psychology at the service of social change. *Canadian Psychology, 31,* 310-319.

Prilleltensky, I. (1990b). The politics of abnormal psychology: Past, present, and future. *Political Psychology, 11,* 767-785.

Prilleltensky, I. (1990c). On the social and political implications of cognitive psychology. *Journal of Mind and Behavior, 11,* 127-136.

Prilleltensky, I. (1991). The social ethics of school psychology: A priority for the 1990's. *School Psychology Quarterly, 6,* 200-222.

Ramos Mattei, C. (1987). *Ethical self-determination in Don Jose Ortega y Gasset.* New York: Peter Lang.

Rappaport, J. (1981). In praise of paradox: A social policy of empowerment over prevention. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 9,* 1-25.

Rappaport, J. (1984). Seeking justice in the real world: A further explication of value contexts. *Journal of Community Psychology, 12,* 208-216.

Rappaport, J. (1986). Collaborating for empowerment: Creating the language of mutual help. In H.C. Boyte & F. Riessman (Eds.), *The new populism: The politics of empowerment* (pp. 64-79). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Rappaport, J. (1987). Terms of empowerment/exemplars of prevention: Toward a theory for community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 15,* 121-148.

Rappaport, J. (1990). Research methods and the empowerment social agenda. In P. Tolan, C. Keys, F. Chertok, & L. Jason (Eds.), *Researching community psychology* (pp. 51-63). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Rappaport, J., Swift, C., & Hess, R. (Eds.). (1984). *Studies in empowerment: Steps toward understanding and action.* New York: Haworth Press.

Rawls, J. (1972). *A theory of justice*. Oxford University Press.

Reeck, D. (1982). *Ethics for the professions*. Minneapolis: Augsburg.

Reiff, R. (1974). The control of knowledge: The power of the helping professions. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 10*, 451-461.

Riessman, F. (1986). The new populism and the empowerment ethos. In H.C. Boyte & F. Riessman (Eds.), *The new populism: The politics of empowerment* (pp. 53-63). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Robinson, D. (1984). Ethics and advocacy. *American Psychologist, 39*, 787-793.

Rolf, J., Masten., Cicchetti, D., Nuechterlein, K.H., & Weintraub, S. (Eds.). (1990). *Risk and protective factors in the development of psychopathology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rose, S.M., & Black, B.L. (1985). *Advocacy and empowerment: Mental health care in the community*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Ryan, W. (1981). *Equality*. New York: Pantheon.

Rutter, M. (1987). Psychosocial resilience and protective mechanisms. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 57*, 316-331.

Sampson, E.E. (1991). The democratization of psychology. *Theory and Psychology, 1*, 275-298.

Sarason, S.B. (1978). The nature of problem solving in social action. *American Psychologist, 33*, 370-380.

Sarason, S.B. (1981). *Psychology misdirected*. New York: Free Press.

Sarason, S.B. (1982). *Psychology and social action*. New York: Praeger.

Sarason, S.B. (1988). *The making of an American psychologist: An autobiography*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Schwartz, M. (Ed.). (1987). *The structure of power in America: The corporate elite as a ruling class*. New York: Holmes & Meyer.

Seligman, M.E.P. (1990). *Learned optimism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Serrano-Garcia, I. (1984). The illusion of empowerment: Community development within a colonial context. *Prevention in Human Services, 3*(2/3), 173-200.

Sidwick, H. (1922). *The methods of ethics* (7th. ed.). London: Cambridge.

Spacapan, S., & Thompson, S.C. (Eds.). (1991). Perceived control in vulnerable populations. *Journal of Social Issues, 47*(4).

Steininger, M., Newell, D.J., & Garcia, L.T. (1984). *Ethical issues in psychology*. Homewood, IL.: Dorsey.

Swift, C. (1984). Foreword: Empowerment: An antidote for folly. *Prevention in Human Services, 3*(2/3), i-xi.

Thompson, S.C., & Spacapan, S. (1991). Perceptions of control in vulnerable populations. *Journal of Social Issues, 47*(4), 1-22.

Tymchuk, A.J. (1989). Anticipatory ethical and policy decision making and community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 17*, 361-365.

Waitzkin, H. (1989). A critical theory of medical discourse: Ideology, social control, and the processing of social context in medical encounters. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 30*, 220-239.

Walsh, R.T. (1988). The dark side of our moon: The iatrogenic aspects of professional psychology. *Journal of Community Psychology, 16*, 244-248.

Warwick, D.P. (1980). *The teaching of ethics in the social sciences*. New York: The Hastings Center.

Weisband, E. (Ed.). (1989). *Poverty amidst plenty: World political economy and distributive justice*. San Francisco: Westview Press.

Wilding, P. (1982). *Professional power and social welfare*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Wineman, S. (1984). *The politics of human services*. Montreal: Black Rose.

Wolfe, A. (1989). *Whose keeper? Social science and moral obligation*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Wolff, T. (1987). Community psychology and empowerment: An activist's insight. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 15*, 151-166.

Young, R. (1982). Autonomy and paternalism. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Supplementary volume VIII*, 47-66.

Zimmerman, M.A. (1990). Toward a theory of learned helpfulness: A structural model analysis of participation and empowerment. *Journal of Research in Personality, 24,* 71-86.

Zimmerman, M.A., & Rappaport, J. (1988). Citizen participation, perceived control, and psychological empowerment. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 16,* 725-750.

Résumé
L'appropriation du pouvoir: légitimité, obstacles et perspectives

Le terme appropriation du pouvoir («empowerment» en anglais) est généralement utilisé pour désigner toute intervention ou politique dont le but est de rehausser le degré de contrôle que les individus vulnérables exercent sur leur propre vie. Jusqu'à présent, les psychologues des milieux universitaires et de la psychologie appliquée se refusent à accorder à ce concept une importance prédominante. On y soutient que si l'on veut élargir la théorie de l'appropriation du pouvoir au-delà du domaine de la psychologie communautaire vers des domaines plus traditionnels de la psychologie, comme la psychologie sociale, la psychologie de la personnalité, la psychologie clinique et scolaire, on devra mieux expliquer ses assises morales et psychologiques. Afin d'illustrer cette affirmation, l'auteur nous présente un modèle conceptuel intégré de l'appropriation du pouvoir.

Le modèle possède un objectif double: (a) comprendre le concept de l'appropriation du pouvoir en spécifiant ses multiples facettes, et (b) offrir un cadre d'analyse pour l'avancement de la recherche dans le domaine. Le modèle met l'accent sur les trois principaux éléments de l'appropriation du pouvoir dont on a déjà traité dans de nombreuses études sur le sujet. Ce sont les valeurs, les processus et les agents/dépositaires d'enjeux. Les valeurs de l'appro- priation du pouvoir, à savoir la détermination de soi, la justice distributive, ainsi que la participation collaborative et démocratique déterminent et guident les mécanismes et les agents/dépositaires d'enjeux de l'appropriation du pouvoir. Ces valeurs sont intégrées par les chercheurs aussi bien que par les agents de services sociaux. Les agents sont des personnes qui posent des actions qui leur donnent un plus grand contrôle de leur propre vie et/ou aident les autres à prendre contrôle de leur vie. Les dépositaires d'enjeux sont des personnes ou des groupes qu'on invite à participer au processus. L'idéal est que les dépositaires d'enjeux deviennent aussi vite que possible les agents de l'appropriation du pouvoir eux-mêmes. Dans la troisième section, l'auteur s'attarde à la variété d'actions et de mécanismes qui se produisent lorsqu'on étudie et fait la promotion de l'appropriation du pouvoir. Les questions suivantes aident à mieux comprendre les actions et les mécanismes qui mènent à l'appropriation du pouvoir: où, comment et pourquoi l'appropriation du pouvoir se produit-elle, et quelles sont les conditions nécessaires et suffisantes pour qu'elle se développe? Le processus de l'appropriation du pouvoir peut se présenter comme le résultat des actions naturelles des personnes qui cherchent à obtenir plus de contrôle sur les choses qui les concernent, ou comme la conséquence des interventions sociales venant de l'extérieur. Pour ce qui est des actions, elles ont plusieurs formes. Elles peuvent être le résultat d'actions sociales initiées par des individus impuissants, ou encore être posées par des organisateurs communautaires et des thérapeutes qui encourageraient, par exemple, des femmes à quitter une situation de couple où elles sont victime d'abus. Ce qui définit une intervention comme de l'appropriation du pouvoir n'est donc pas son contenu spécifique mais plutôt son adhésion aux valeurs de l'appropriation du pouvoir.

Afin de justifier la pertinence du modèle qu'il propose, l'auteur en explique les bases

philosophiques et psychologiques. Il soutient que les deux aspects sont nécessaires si on veut arriver à une compréhension intégrée et holistique de l'appropriation du pouvoir. La base philosophique morale justifie la poursuite de l'appropriation du pouvoir, tandis que la base psychologique en facilite la promotion. La psychologie a beaucoup à offrir et à gagner dans ce domaine. La psychologie du contrôle de soi peut enrichir la recherche sur l'appropriation du pouvoir; ceux qui font des recherches sur le contrôle peuvent beaucoup apprendre à observer l'expérience de l'appropriation du pouvoir vécue dans des milieux réels.

Malgré le fait que la déontologie professionnelle clame l'importance de l'habilitation et de l'appropriation du pouvoir des populations vulnérables, la plupart des professions, en fait, ont, ou bien rejeté de telles tentatives comme illégitimes, ou bien ne leur ont réservé que très peu d'attention. En définissant leurs devoirs moraux, les professions n'ont traditionnellement cherché qu'à assurer le bien-être de leurs clients immédiats et ont négligé de prendre en considération (a) le bien-être de la communauté en général, et (b) la nécessité de changer les structures sociales nuisibles. La psychologie n'a pas échappé à cette tendance. L'auteur de cet article offre une analyse des principaux obstacles et arguments empêchant l'introduction en psychologie des pratiques de l'appropriation du pouvoir.

Dans la dernière section de cet article, l'auteur traite des deux domaines de la psychologie qui peuvent bénéficier des valeurs et de la théorie de l'appropriation du pouvoir. Le premier touche la déontologie et le second, les questions de contrôle, de pouvoir et de bien-être. Quant au premier, on peut maintenir que la poussée principale de la théorie de l'appropriation du pouvoir est la dissémination et l'infiltration des valeurs déontologiques dans des activités quotidiennes. L'auteur introduit le terme *déontologie quotidienne* afin de mettre l'accent sur la nécessité d'appliquer et de promouvoir de façon continue les valeurs morales dans les divers services fournis par les professionnels. Il utilise ce terme afin de suggérer que la déontologie doit être d'une importance primordiale dans l'accomplissement des tâches routinières. Dans ce contexte, les principes déontologiques méritent d'être rigoureusement observés, et, en grande partie, déterminent le contenu et les procédés du domaine occupationnel. Ceci vient en contradiction avec l'attitude actuelle face à la déontologie. De nos jours, la déontologie professionnelle est généralement mise sur le même pied que les règles et règlements à respecter et auxquels on fait appel dans des cas d'inconduite. La déontologie quotidienne aide à rehausser de façon proactive certaines valeurs morales dans tous les aspects de la vie d'un professionnel.

En ce qui concerne le deuxième domaine d'intérêt, on soutient que le bien-être psychologique est généralement rehaussé en prenant contrôle des événements et des circonstances de sa vie. Toutefois, on établit une distinction importante entre la *perception* de contrôle et *l'expérience réelle* de contrôle et de pouvoir. Les recherches et les interventions qui s'intéressent exclusivement aux perceptions de contrôle sont sévèrement limitées. Des tentatives d'améliorer les perceptions de contrôle auront des effets différents si les individus vivent dans des conditions relativement favorables ou défavorables à l'appropriation du pouvoir. Tandis que dans la première situation, les gens peuvent beaucoup retirer de ces tentatives, dans la deuxième, les gens auront toujours à faire face à des circonstances de vie de privation. En lequel cas, nous avons besoin de plus que d'une aide purement psychologique. Les individus et les groupes qui doivent faire face à des événements et à des circonstances de vie défavorables à l'appropriation du pouvoir ont besoin d'aide pour changer, non seulement leur perception du pouvoir, mais également, et plus encore, cette véritable constellation du pouvoir social qui les privent de droits, de biens et de services.