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Speaking Truth to Power: Empowerment Ideology as Social Intervention and Policy[1]

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The popularity, and subsequent ambiguity, in the use of the term "empowerment" has created an even greater need for reassessment in the applied context than in the theory and research literatures. This paper outlines some of the areas of community, organizational, and societal level social intervention and policy ostensibly based on the concept of empowerment. These include neighborhood voluntary associations (for environmental protection, community crime prevention, etc.), self-help groups, competence-building primary prevention, organizational management, health care and educational reforms, and national and international community service and community development policies. Issues in applying social research to community organizations and to legislative and administrative policy making are reviewed. Ten recommendations are offered, including the value of a dialectical analysis, for helping researchers and policy makers/administrators make more effective use of empowerment theory and research.

KEY WORDS: empowerment; public policy; social intervention; research application; dialectical.

> Humpty Dumpty: "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean neither more nor less."
> King of Hearts: "If there's no meaning in it, that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we needn't try to find any." — Lewis Carroll

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In the years since Solomon (1976) recommended an empowerment approach to social work in African American communities, P. L. Berger and Neuhaus (1977) used the term as a guide for reforming public policy, Rappaport (1981) issued his paradoxical call for adopting a social policy of empowerment over prevention, and researchers, program administrators, and policy makers across the country have grabbed the empowerment banner and are flying it proudly. In 1984, Rappaport admitted that "we do not know what empowerment is, but like obscenity, we know it when we see it" (p. 2). To most people, it is a vague buzz word heard in political, community development, management, or therapeutic-wellness circles. Burns (1992) and others have shown how keeping the exact application of an ideology ambiguous can enhance its power, which may explain some of empowerment's enduring strength and appeal. But ambiguity ultimately inhibits the development of theory, scientific understanding, and sound program planning and policy making.

This paper outlines some of the areas of community, organizational, or societal-level social intervention (i.e., programs) and policy (i.e., an official course of action) in which the use of the concept of, or at least the term, empowerment has become omnipresent in recent years. It concludes with some analysis and recommendations regarding the policy application of social science with the goal of helping researchers to help policy makers and program administrators move toward more effective use of empowerment theory and research, as opposed to rhetoric.

Perkins and Zimmerman (1995) described the explosion of empowerment research in recent years. Little of this was *policy* research, however (i.e., research evaluating particular past, present, or proposed policies). Yet empowerment programs and policies have proliferated and enjoyed uncommon bipartisan support. Conservatives view these policies as private voluntarism that reduce the role and size of government, while liberals see them as a way of reviving public support for VISTA, urban renewal, antipoverty, and virtually every other government program they favor.

A computer search found that the root word *empower* was used in 360 different White House press releases, speeches, and policy statements from January 1992 through August 1994, and, as evidenced by President Clinton's 1995 State of the Union Address, the frequency is clearly increasing. It was also found in 293 U.S. House and Senate bills introduced in the first $1^1/_2$ years of the 103rd Congress; in 3,769 different items in the Congressional Record between 1985 and August 1994; and in over 7,000 state house bills from 1991 through 1994. But many of these legislative bills use the term solely in its original legal, that is, more specific and literal, meaning ("to give power or control to, to authorize, enable, or permit").

The present review focuses on programmatic applications of *community and psychological empowerment,* which are defined here as ones that use the language of empowerment and encourage, or claim to encourage, individual and community control over the planning and implementation of solutions to individually and locally felt problems, typically by decentralizing decision-making authority. These may be (but are very often not) an outgrowth of the legal empowerment of a local, state, or national entity.

The following review is intended to illustrate the breadth and scope of social interventions that are ostensibly based on empowerment concepts. Other articles in this issue give the reader more depth on specific approaches. The review includes small-scale grass-roots settings (e.g., local community development, environmental action, and crime prevention organizations and self-help and women's consciousness raising groups), competence-building primary prevention programs (e.g., Head Start), organizational management reforms (e.g., participatory workplace democracy), institutional reforms in health care and education, and national and foreign policies (e.g., community service, welfare reform, economic development, civil/political rights, and neoconservative uses of empowerment), all of which rely heavily on empowerment ideology. The present journal issue aside, the available literature on these interventions, especially at higher levels of policy making, rarely defines empowerment or its relevant dimensions clearly, or uses it consistently or measures it as an outcome.

EMPOWERMENT INTERVENTIONS AND POLICIES

Grass-Roots Settings

Interventions that "act" small and locally, even as they "think" more globally, are often the most effective (Weick, 1984). Small-scale, local, alternative, empowerment-oriented support and advocacy interventions include community development, environmental action, community crime prevention, and self-help and consciousness-raising groups.

Community Development

Community development (CD) organizations are an especially appropriate yet varied example of empowerment-based interventions and so are examined in some detail. They include building, block, neighborhood, or village resident associations that work, usually in cooperation with local government agencies, to improve the social, physical,

and economic environment of the community, and to empower residents to gain control over local quality-of-life problems. Some CD organizations focus on one issue, such as crime (see Community Crime Prevention, below), economic development (see discussion of international CD and Empowerment Zones, below) or housing (e.g., Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc.; Habitat for Humanity; Leavitt and Saegert's, 1990, Community Household Model). But the most enduring CD organizations may be multi-issue ones that are flexible enough to address whatever community problems arise.

Citizen participation in local CD and other grass-roots organizations can be viewed as an integral component or important behavioral exemplar of individual empowerment (Zimmerman, 1995). It may be more accurate to think of participation as a cause and effect of empowerment. In either case, the two concepts are closely linked at all levels, from individual to organizational and community. In 1984, Kieffer observed that the participation and community organizing literatures had generally ignored issues of individual empowerment. This has begun to change. Community psychologists have studied the development of leadership and empowerment in churches, schools, and voluntary block and neighborhood associations (Florin & Wandersman, 1990; Maton & Rappaport, 1984; Serrano-Garcia, 1984; Speer & Hughey, 1995).

Focusing on citizen participation as a form of empowerment is valuable in research and intervention for three reasons. First, as a behavior, participation can be more directly, and therefore reliably, measured than intrapsychic dimensions of empowerment. Second, participation forces psychologists to consider empowerment at various levels of analysis (individual, organization, community). In fact, research on participation in grass-roots organizations in three cities has found both community-*focused* cognitions and behaviors and aggregated community-*level* (climate) variables to be better predictors of participation than is individual locus of control (Perkins, Brown, & Taylor, 1995). Third, a focus on participation (ie., people's direct interactions with their neighbors, the community environment, local organizations, and government agencies) highlights the need to understand how those factors affect and are affected by empowerment (Perkins, Florin, Rich, Wandersman, & Chavis, 1990).

Empowerment in the CD and many other contexts entails a process and ideology of oppositional dialectics, a method of interpretation associated with Hegel in which an assertable thesis is contrasted with an equally assertable, but apparently contradictory, antithesis until the paradox is resolved at a higher level of understanding by a synthesis that embraces both assertions simultaneously.

There are many such dialectics in the realm of CD. "One's autonomy is limited by the autonomy asserted by others; self-reliance takes place in a context of interdependence, participatory democracy at the base is engaged in the larger processes of representative governance; experienced-based learning is in creative tension with theoretical knowledge" (Friedmann, 1992, p. viii).

The most critical tension may be the need to elicit greater participation in CD organizations for the personal, organizational, and community benefits that come with participation (thesis), while avoiding the frustration, disappointment, and burnout that are so prevalent among active participants and leaders (antithesis). One synthesis, of course, is for community leaders to train, delegate to, and develop new leadership. Another possible synthesis would be the realization that it is not necessarily wrong for a voluntary association to have a period of inactivity, especially if it has been successful. The leaders can use the organizational dormancy to learn from any mistakes and to rejuvenate themselves for the next mobilization. To adapt a particular dialectic from Eastern philosophy, that which does not kill the leader and organization makes them stronger.

Other dialectics inherent in empowerment via CD are similar to those involved in residents' attachment to place (Brown & Perkins, 1992). These include the tensions between individual identity and interests and community identity and interests and between change and stability at the levels of individual, household, community, and culture. Another paradox of CD concerns the role of the church, a traditionally conservative institution, in empowering individuals and communities in this country (Maton & Rappaport, 1984), especially in African American communities, and in the Liberation Theology movement in Latin American (Gutierrez, 1973).

Aside from Kroeker's (1993) study of individual and organizational empowerment in a Nicaraguan agricultural cooperative, psychologists have paid little attention to *international CD.* Empowerment has become *the* premier paradigm for CD programs and policies abroad, especially in the Third World. A 1990 issue of the international *Community Development Journal* was devoted to the theme of empowerment, as have been hundreds of individual articles in that and other CD journals and many recent books (e.g., Friedmann, 1992). One of the few things most delegates to the 1994 United Nations Population Conference in Cairo could agree on was that policies focusing on the empowerment of women in developing countries are needed to help decrease the birth rate.

A growing number of international experts see the social and political empowerment of the poor as the basis for an alternative grass-roots model of global political and economic development. This represents a major departure from the traditional model, which emphasizes rapid, often unsustainable, economic growth based on environmentally harmful industrialization and urbanization (Friedmann, 1992). The empowerment approach to development "places the emphasis on autonomy in the decision-making of territorially organized communities, local self-reliance . . ., direct (participatory) democracy,and experiential social learning. Its starting point is locality, because civil society is most readily mobilized around local issues" (pp. vii-viii).

In practice, independent and unmediated community-based action is difficult to find or achieve. Most CD programs are either concerned with corporate growth and macroeconomic indicators (the traditional model) or rely heavily on centralized and bureaucratic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) which mediate between the state and the poor. From an empowerment perspective, NGOs may be necessary, but like the state, they should not usurp local initiatives, but enable and support them.

That is why Friedmann centers his empowerment model on the *household* rather than on higher levels of production or profit. He seeks to empower households and their members three ways: socially, politically, and psychologically. "*Social power* is concerned with access to certain 'bases' of household production, such as information, knowledge and skills, participation in social organizations, and financial resources" (Friedmann, 1992, p. 33, italics added). *Political power* concerns access to decision making that affects one's own future. For Friedmann, *psychological empowerment* involves individual self-efficacy, self-confidence, and successful action in the social and political domains (which, along with participatory skills, fits Zimmerman and Rappaport's (1988) definition of the term).

The 25th anniversary issue of the *Community Development Journal* took stock of past, present, and future CD practices and research and chose a single word to reflect the direction of CD throughout the world: empowerment. The editors point to the field's development toward community initiatives and democratic community participation in partnership with, rather than programs planned and led by, states and NGOs as manifesting the guiding value of empowerment (Craig, Mayo, & Taylor, 1990). They further demonstrate the cross-disciplinary attraction of empowerment as a concept, but in so doing, they also demonstrate the lack of discipline among social scientists, generally, to try to define and use it clearly.

One of the few attempts to measure empowerment as an outcome revealed that it was not an objective of past large-scale international CD projects, even among those with an element of community participation. Paul (1986, as cited in Stein, 1990) reviewed more than 40 community participatory CD projects financed by the World Bank and concluded that empowerment, defined as the equitable sharing of power and the process by which weaker groups acquire higher levels of political awareness and strengths, was a goal of only 3 of them. Even where it has been a clear objective, however (e.g., in El Salvador), empowerment (via consciousness raising and increasing negotiating power vis-à-vis the state) is seen as a long-run objective and part of a dilemma as it competes with the short-run objective of improving basic living conditions in the community (Stein, 1990). Aside from the statement on population control (above), it is apparently not viewed dialectically as the critical means toward achieving even the short-run objective, that is as part and parcel of the process and not a dilemma at all.

One important implication of this interest in empowerment among international CD workers and researchers is methodological. The bottom line of interest to sponsors such as the World Bank has been economic. And so CD project evaluations have traditionally been based on quantitative economic efficiency analyses. Although an economic model of CD can be empowering (Vindhya & Kalpana, 1989), an empowerment approach to CD addresses the social, physical, and political as well as economic context. Measuring these and the process of change ideally require the inclusion of *qualitative* research methods (Bamberger, 1990; Kieffer, 1984; Kroeker, 1993; Maton & Salem, 1995).

Environmental Empowerment

The physical environment is an important locus of both causes and effects of people's empowerment and participation. The environmental catalyst for participation may be as subtle and seemingly trivial as the poor condition of your neighbor's house (Perkins *et al.*, 1990) or neighborhood children and parents participating in the design of a new playground (Hester, 1987). Or it may be as dramatic as a toxic hazard (Rich, Edelstein, Hallman, & Wandersman, 1995) or a large-scale housing or other community planning project (Churchman, 1990).

Edelstein (1988) took a dialectical approach to analyzing community environmental *dis*empowerment. He showed how the typical governmental response to an environmental threat disables rather than empowers citizens, who are caught in a series of double binds. For example, victimized families and communities are often too much at risk to live a normal life but not enough so to warrant definitive governmental action. They cannot sell their homes, but the government will not buy them out. If they publicize the issue, they decrease the desirability and property values of the community.

Government officials face similar dilemmas: They must warn, but not cause undue panic or market fight. They must respond to public demands, but not exceed a variety of limiting criteria, such as scientific and legal standards of proof decision-making authority, budgetary constraints, and political-economic realities. Citizens understandably tend to see all such criteria as more protective of business and government interests than their own.

Edelstein called the process of community empowerment in the face of toxic threat "the enabling response." It encompasses many of the same issues that community development does in other contexts, such as the need to find and develop community leadership and to prevent burnout among leaders. Environmental empowerment also has the same benefits as other forms of community development, including improved social support and cohesion, information gathering and dissemination, and most important of all, power in numbers.

National environmental politics have only contributed to the sense of outrage among some and the disempowerment of many. For example, the widespread and long-used practice of placing toxic waste disposal and other hazardous industrial sites in or near poor and minority communities because they are presumed to be environmentally disenfranchised (i.e., more concerned with jobs than with their own health or environment) has led to charges of environmental racism (Bryant & Mohai, 1992).

As seemingly ineffectual Environmental Protection Agency and court action under Superfund drags on with contaminated sites being identified faster than old sites are cleaned up, residents in almost every county of every state are facing the dialectics of environmental empowerment/disempowerment. According to Edelstein, they must (a) take the initiative and not let the bureaucracy control the decision-making process; (b) try to channel anxiety over the environmental threat into a constructive sense of community, shared anger, energy, and mobilization rather than isolationist fear and helplessness; (c) look for existing or innovative ways of rallying people; and (d) avoid the typical "not-in-my-backyard" reaction and answer, "not in *anyone's* backyard."

Community Crime Prevention

There are two general approaches to community crime prevention (Curtis, 1987; Podolefsky, 1983; Rosenbaum, 1988). One is the *victimization prevention* approach, which includes (a) individual protective measures collectively encouraged (e.g., Operation I.D.), (b) block, building, or neighborhood surveillance (e.g., block or neighborhood watch), and (c) efforts to improve crime deterrence by making the criminal justice system more effective (e.g., lobbying police for more patrols). The other is the

social problems or *empowerment* approach, which aims to eliminate the root causes of crime and includes (a) community development organizing for improving the neighborhood physical, social, and economic environment and (b) positive youth programs typically focusing on recreation or employment and building self-esteem as well as skills.

Some programs overlap approaches. In Salt Lake City, the Gang Task Force (a local law enforcement coalition) conducts Grassroots Empowerment Training workshops in the community. These are aimed not at empowering gang members or potential gang members, but at helping adult residents (in practice, mainly homeowners) take back their streets and presumably regain control over problems of graffiti and gang violence.

Theoretically, both the empowerment and victimization prevention approaches to community crime prevention *should* empower participants. Criminal victimization has a tendency to disempower both individuals and communities as fear and worry about the future of the neighborhood increase anxiety, depression, and community disintegration (Taylor & Perkins, 1995). The social problems approach appears to be the more empowering of the two, however. This is not necessarily because it is any more effective at reducing crime; both approaches have achieved only mixed success according to evaluation studies (Rosenbaum, 1988). Rather, it may be due to empowerment groups tending to involve more people actively and on a more regular and long-term basis on issues other than crime, and the fact that such groups do not raise community fears, as victimization prevention programs often do. But an important caveat is that crime, and concern about crime, have not been found to be catalysts for citizen participation in community empowerment organizations, even those with a major focus on crime prevention (Perkins *et al.*, 1990).

Self/Mutual Help Groups

Perhaps the most common form of empowerment-focused social intervention, with millions of participants in the United States alone, is the self- or mutual-help movement. Self-help groups aim to improve the psychological and physical functioning of individuals sharing some specific life experience or problem. Although many self-help groups are avowedly apolitical and eschew social action, the movement as a whole has moved over time toward models of advocacy and empowerment (Riessman & Bay, 1992). As with other empowerment-based social interventions, both support and criticism of self-help cut across political lines. A dialectical approach may be needed to understand the self-help movement's simultaneous strains of populism and progressivism (Reissman & Bay, 1992).

The empowering experience of self-help is perhaps most salient at the individual and group levels (Kahn & Bender, 1985; Levy, 1976; Luke, Rappaport, & Seidman, 1991; Maton, 1988; Maton & Salem, 1995; Rappaport, Reischl, & Zimmerman, 1991). But the impact of the groups is also felt at organizational (Zimmerman *et al.*, 1991) and institutional (Zola, 1987) levels. This is especially true of groups that move beyond the support-only function to include advocacy work (e.g., Gay Men's Health Crisis; see also Balcazar, Seekins, Fawcett, & Hopkins, 1990; Yeich & Levine, 1994).

The idea of empowerment has become popular in self-help because the sources of help are group members' own efforts, knowledge, and emotional support as peers. Similarly, the origin of and control over such groups typically rest with the members themselves, not with professionals or any external agency or authority (Levy, 1976). For most such groups, their primary purpose is to empower their membership in taking control over their lives and the institutions that affect them. Paradoxically, some of the most successful self-help groups (including 12-step programs) convince their members that the first step toward empowerment lies in relinquishing the desire for individual control and accepting the influence of a "higher power" (or at least group norms). This same dialectic between personal and spiritual control is found with empowerment in religious settings (Maton & Rappaport, 1984). With the possible exception of Alcoholics Anonymous, self-help groups tend to attract more women than men. Indeed, the women's consciousness-raising group is one of the best examples of self-help as part of an empowering social and political movement (Riger, 1984).

Consciousness Raising

Similar to political empowerment, consciousness raising involves the shift in one's world view that results from recognizing one's inferior social and economic position in society (Levine & Perkins, 1987). A better understanding of gender and other differences in the experience of and reaction to power disparities (Bookman & Morgan, 1988) is just one of the many ways self-help and conscious raising can inform our understanding of empowerment and vice versa. Riger (1993) made the important point that an empowerment orientation may only serve to increase competition within or among groups and thus overshadow more cooperative or communitarian approaches that women's or other groups might take. This criticism ignores the fact that groups must also be empowered at both the individual and organizational level in order to deal with group-level power

and resource disparities, however (Serrano-Garcia, 1994). Whether or not the danger of empowered people competing with each other is significant, Riger's caution does highlight the importance of collaboration within organizations (Bond & Keys, 1993) and effective coalition building among them (cf. Fawcett *et al.*, 1995; McMillan, Florin, Stevenson, Kerman, & Mitchell, 1995; O'Sullivan, Waugh & Espeland, 1984).

Competence-Building Primary Prevention Programs

Prevention and empowerment have tended to be categorized as separate action paradigms. But preventive interventions that adopt a strengths approach, such as youth mentoring programs (Freedman, 1993), may increase the social and political skills, self-efficacy, and confidence of both program recipients and workers. Such competence-building programs may be considered exemplars of empowerment and provide conceptual bridges between the two paradigms. Two other popular examples are Project Head Start and interpersonal problem-solving training.

Head Start

Education has long been used for the purpose of promoting equal opportunity and empowerment, especially to compensate for poverty, disability, and other disadvantages. The dual rationale for this is that (a) early experiences, particularly in school, are thought to play an important role in social adjustment and social mobility later in life and (b) schools allow the most practical access to the greatest number of children. By far the largest and most popular and enduring compensatory education program has been Project Head Start, the broad national program to prepare poor preschoolers for the demands of first grade and beyond (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992).

Sarason (1978) argued that Head Start and other War-On-Poverty programs had maintained empowerment on the national agenda only, inadvertently, through their *failure* to eradicate poverty and their maintenance of the status quo. But from the beginning, a major goal of Head Start was to directly empower poor communities, parents, and children through their "maximum feasible participation" in the program (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992). Local centers were given control over the planning and operation of specific program goals, techniques, and duration. Parental participation and local control enable communities to develop culturally sensitive and unique preschool programs (Roberts, 1993).

Problem Solving

School-based social or interpersonal problem-solving (IPS) training is one example of a competence-building curriculum that has shown promise as a strategy to teach children the social-cognitive skills necessary for a sense of mastery or control in problem situations and life, generally. IPS skills include viewing problems from the other person's perspective, comprehending the etiology of the problem, generating alternative solutions to problems, and foreseeing the possible consequences of those solutions. It is clear that IPS training can make children appear empowered insofar as responding more effectively and prosocially to hypothetical and simulated interpersonal problem situations. Evaluations of IPS intervention programs have produced mixed results, however. As with Head Start, variation in IPS program implementation makes it difficult to draw any definitive conclusions about its effectiveness (Elias *et al.*, 1986). Furthermore, many IPS studies have not sufficiently considered possible cultural and sex differences in problem solving. Exploration of different coping styles may illuminate ways to teach the most empowering skills to all.

Organizational Management Reforms

At the organizational level, enhancing people's control could be achieved by any number of strategies that shift power from executives, bureaucratic administrators, professionals, and experts to middle-managers, workers, and collective (often client/community-based) governing boards. Empowerment of managers is the subject of Spretizer (1995) and governing boards are covered in previous issues of this journal (Bond & Keys, 1993; Gruber & Trickett, 1987). I therefore briefly review two forms of worker empowerment: organization development (OD) and participatory workplace democracy.

Organization Development

OD is a change strategy that has been used in a wide variety of public and private-sector organizations to create "a culture which institutionalizes the use of social technologies to facilitate diagnosis and change of interpersonal, group, and intergroup behavior, especially those behaviors related to organizational decision-making, planning and communication" (Friedlander & Brown, 1974, p. 343). It is a "strategy for facilitating change and development in people (e.g., styles, values, skills), in technology (e.g., greater simplicity, complexity), and in organizational

processes and structures (e.g., relationships, roles)" (pp. 314-316). It emphasizes workers' morale, satisfaction, participatory collaboration, and work climate. OD theories have been applied to help give workers a sense of mission and job ownership, respect for oneself and one's coworkers, new knowledge, improved lines of communication, and group support for solving problems.

All of this sounds relevant to empowering workers, but OD interventions have not generally developed empowerment as a major focus of change at the organization, group, or individual level. Out of 1,582 articles on OD in four different business or social science CD-ROMs, only 21 mentioned empowerment in the title or abstract.

Participatory Workplace Democracy

This is a truer exemplar of empowerment at both the individual and organization levels. Many problems in the workplace, for workers, supervisors, and clients, stem from the fact that the dominant organizational structure is still based on 19th-century bureaucratic industrial management principles that are antithetical to empowerment (Toch & Grant, 1982). They are now being questioned more frequently in business (Spreitzer, 1995) and are clearly out of place with the culture and goals of most human service programs.

Strategies for worker empowerment include decreasing layers of supervision, pushing decision making lower in the hierarchy, moving from assembly line organizational process to team work process (e.g., Quality Circles), and rejuvenating the grass roots of labor unions. Job enrichment (Emery & Emery, 1976) focuses on various criteria that may be viewed as psychological job requirements, including physical space, psychological space (i.e., nonoppressive supervision and work climate), and its antithesis — meaningful feedback (i.e., it is possible to get too little supervision), opportunities to learn on the job and to be challenged, variety, conditions allowing help and respect from fellow workers, a sense that one's own work is meaningful and uses the abilities that the worker has to offer, a desirable future with new possibilities (i.e., dead-end jobs are disempowering), and especially, a sense of control over goal setting and over the paths to reach those goals.

Empowerment theories in management are thus rife. But (as in other fields), according to Conger and Kanungo (1988), they lack clarity and consistency in the definition and use of the concept of empowerment and lack integration between theory and practice.

Institutional Reforms

Health Care

It appears that much of health care reform may be determined in the current national policy debate and so could be discussed equally well in the next section. The very first health reform bill introduced in the 103rd Congress was the Universal Health Benefits Empowerment and Partnership Act of 1993. As that and other attempts at serious reform failed, Rep. Jim Cooper repeatedly claimed that his managed competition national health care proposal would empower the average citizen consumer.

Yet, with its unwieldy and hierarchical bureaucracy, dominated by the interests of the medical profession and insurance and pharmaceutical industries, it is difficult to imagine an institution that is more disempowering than the health care system. It seems reasonable to assume that meaningful empowerment of health care consumers and workers is more likely to occur at the local community and organizational level. Prevention of HIV or other health problems may be the central focus of programs that have a broader, empowering effect on the target population (Levine *et al.*, 1993). Community empowerment partnership coalitions have become a leading model for public health promotion and substance abuse prevention (Altman *et al.*, 1991; Fawcett *et al.*, 1995; Kumpfer, Turner, & Alvarado, 1991; Linney & Wandersman, 1991; McMillan, *et al.*, 1995; Wolff, 1987). All provide excellent examples of making their community empowerment models both clear and practical, with well-defined and tested strategies and specific tactics.

Education

Similar trends have been evident for some time in educational training and policy. Empowerment was central to Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in Latin American and it has become a guiding principle in teacher training in this country (Vaines, 1993; Williams, 1988). For example, the stated mission of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (formerly, American Home Economics Association) is "Empowering Individuals, Strengthening Families, Enabling Communities." School systems have decentralized to give more power over curricular and other decisions to local school boards, who have passed much of it on to principals, teachers, and parents. Sweeping the country are a variety of new, empowerment-focused parent involvement programs that go well beyond PTA activities, which have also expanded greatly in many districts.

Institutional reforms have occurred frequently with much fanfare throughout the history of public education, much of it targeted at minority students. Cummins (1986) claimed that previous attempts at minority educational reform, such as compensatory education and bilingual education, were severely limited because they did not significantly change the relationships between educators and minority students and between schools and minority communities. He advocated a redefinition of educational roles within the classroom, community, and broader society that would promote the empowerment of students. Gruber and Trickett (1987) found that attempts to empower parents and students in an inner-city alternative school failed for similar reasons. They argue that the concept of empowering others is paradoxical in that in virtually all settings, not just educational ones, the institutional context serves to maintain existing inequalities. It may be necessary to reframe such paradoxes into dialectical terms, such as the need for authoritative (i.e., the opposite of empowering) leadership to force fundamental institutional changes (Bond & Keys, 1993; Cummins, 1986), if the current set of empowerment reforms are to have a greater or more lasting impact than previous ones.

National and Foreign Policies

Many of the empowerment programs (e.g., Head Start, community crime prevention) and institutional reforms (e.g., health care, education) I have discussed have been debated and enacted at the state and federal (i.e., societal) levels. In most cases their planning and implementation occurred in the local community, program, or coalition. But it is at the federal policy level, where empowerment has been invoked to sell legislation promoting everything from televisions that would allow parents to tune out violence to the right to sell assault rifles, that the term has probably been most overused. Here are three examples in which the term, although still not well defined, seems more appropriately used.

Community Service

In proposing his national community service bill,[3] President Clinton said he wanted "to empower young people and their communities and not bureaucracies." By paying more than lip service to local community organization control and by providing the individual participant with an intensive experience

[3]This is not be confused with the National Community Services Empowerment Partnership (NCSEP) bill, which set up an NCSEP Corporation and Advisory Committee to "empower" (which, in policy speak, means many things; in this case, fund and assist) community development and community service organizations (see "Empowerment Zones").

in public service, this is one national empowerment-focused policy whose *potential,* at least for the workers if not for the clients, actually comes close to matching the rhetoric. The Americorps program, a kind of domestic Peace Corps, is ostensibly based on a principle of mutually empowering relationships between alienated, middle-class young people and those predominantly poor people they serve. Some programs are aimed at getting inner-city youth involved in community service (e.g., Conservation Corps). Workers are paid minimum wage and money toward college expenses in exchange for 2 years of community service working with undeserved (especially youth and elderly) populations in many of the policy areas already discussed: health care, education (Teach for America), environmental protection, housing, crime prevention (Police Corps).

Community service has been on the local, state, and federal agendas for several years, but it is perhaps no coincidence that it began taking off even prior to the Clinton administration as the other kind of national service (defense and defense-related) jobs have declined. The program started with ambitious plans to expand to 100,000 service workers (compared to about 18,000 workers in the Peace Corps, Vista, and more than 60 state and local programs combined). The program has been targeted for elimination by Republican leaders in the current Congress, however (see Conservative Uses . . ., below).

As with other federal programs with significant *de facto* local control (e.g., Head Start), implementation is critical. A special issue of *Social Policy* (Fall, 1993) devoted to National Service includes various recommendations to make the program empowering for both volunteers and the communities served. Mainly, local and national administrators should look to what has worked well in the rich history of private-sector community service. Similar to mentoring programs, one effective approach is multigenerational: to involve retirees and other adult trainers and role models as the leadership skills and awareness of youth are developed at different ages and ability levels. Most important of all, service programs and participants must be accountable to the host community and the experience should be continually reassessed with the goal of reciprocal benefits (for both providers and recipients).

Welfare Reform

Federal policy makers also use the term, if not the research, of empowerment to push self-sufficiency-oriented welfare reform. President Clinton, in his first State of the Union Address, proclaimed that he wanted to "shift people from entitlement programs to empowerment programs." And so his welfare reform bill was entitled the Responsibility and Empowerment Support

Program providing Employment, Childcare, and Training (RESPECT) Act. Its purpose was "to provide welfare families with the education, training, job search, and work experience needed to prepare them to leave welfare within two years." Like most of the other ostensible empowerment policies at the societal level, however, there is nothing in this legislation that is socially or politically empowering (i.e., in terms of the community, issue, or labor consciousness and organizing skills they will need once off welfare). Current welfare reform proposals, which focus on individual responsibility, tend to blame the victim and ignore contextual social and economic problems, including the availability of family-wage jobs and affordable child care. The Administration might do better to nationally replicate the Center for Employment and Training, which grew out of the California migrant farm workers movement and which comes closer to actually empowering its participants as they move at their own pace through intensive training of life skills and specific, market-based job skills.

Empowerment Zones

The Clinton community development policy is called the Empowerment Zone Initiative. The legislation states: "public-private partnerships between government and community-based organizations offer an opportunity to empower residents of low-income distressed communities and to forge innovative solutions to the challenges confronting these communities." It is similar to the urban enterprise zone concept of targeted capital investment, training, and employment tax incentives, but expanded to some rural areas and Indian reservations as well as 110 urban communities. The White House claims that its "bottom-up, community-based strategy" will reduce bureaucratic red tape at the local level in order to encourage the involvement of existing small community development organizations. Although social service block grants are included, the main innovation is the proposed creation of 100 community development investment banks around the country to promote the infusion of money into the zones. Apparently, money is not only power but also empowerment. Despite the name, there seems to be little in this legislation that is empowering or new.

International Empowerment

The language of foreign policy and diplomacy is notoriously cryptic, filled with understatement and latent meanings. This can make international empowerment policies particularly paradoxical. It is at this level that the term empowerment should take on more of the original, clearer, legal meaning. But if empowerment policies tend toward greater ambiguity, and possibly ineffectiveness, at higher levels of analysis, international empowerment policies may be particularly suspect.

One such policy is the Early Empowerment agreement reached between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Cairo in August 1994. Israel rejected full Palestinian autonomy, including elections, throughout the West Bank in favor of Early Empowerment, which provided for limited Palestinian autonomy in certain, circumscribed functional areas: education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation, and tourism (Gold, 1994). The PLOs own policies were no more empowering. As of July 1995, the PLO had still not even held elections in Gaza where they were allowed. At this level, "empowerment" apparently does not necessarily mean democracy.

Conservative Uses and Abuses of Empowerment

Berger and Neuhaus (1977) were among the first to use the term empowerment in the community (as opposed to 6 gal or individual) context. But perhaps the more significant impact of their American Enterprise Institute monograph was to provide a populist-sounding language and rationale to fiscal conservatives fighting antipoverty programs, in particular, and government domestic spending and regulation, in general. Berger and Neuhaus focused on the importance of mediating structures (what Vaclav Havel, and Friedmann, 1992, call "civil society"), such as neighborhood, family, church, voluntary associations, and cultural identification in making more efficient public policy. And justifiably so.

But to Berger and Neuhaus, empowerment is just a means. As ends, they seem more concerned with lowering taxes and finding "*alternative mechanisms . . . to provide welfare-state services*" (p. 1, their emphasis) than with reducing poverty, improving the quality of community life, or creating political bases of the newly empowered. The reactionary potential of their conception of empowerment is evident in their warning against civil liberties as the enemy of communal values, in their isolation of racism as the only form of discrimination worthy of legal proscription and their approval of community control over legal but "deviant" behavior (pp. 12-13).

Berger and Neuhaus presaged the neoconservative movement's cooptation of the term empowerment. But whereas Berger and Neuhaus focused on the importance of community and improving government services, neoconservatives use the term as a cloak for a combination of antigovernment individualism and corporate imperialism. Not wanting to miss the empowerment bandwagon, right-wing leaders of the Republican Party recently started Empower America, a political organization funded by profits from leveraged stock buy-outs. Just *who* Empower American wants to empower is open to speculation. Its mission and policy statements are predictably vague, but do champion entrepreneurship, lower taxes, less government spending and regulation, and international free-market capitalism.

Thus, it is unlikely that Empower America's operational definition of empowerment, if it has one, let alone its preferred methods to achieve empowerment, would exactly match that of either progressives or the research literature. It is therefore in the macropolitical realm that empowerment is used most loosely and ambiguously, making it all the more powerful as ideological rhetoric. Politicians of every persuasion have adopted the term because it is popular, and are using it to mean whatever they want. This is not an auspicious circumstance for those who wish to apply empowerment theory and research with the goal of making social policy more effective.

IMPROVING THE USE OF EMPOWERMENT THEORY AND RESEARCH

The preceding overview finds that empowerment is more vaguely and confusingly applied at the policy than the community, program organizational, or institutional levels. But the need is acute for empowerment researchers to "speak truth to power" by sharing their knowledge with community leaders, clients, staff, and administrators in all kinds of organizations, and policy makers at all levels of government. Unlike most areas of research application, this is by definition one in which legions of the empowered can be expected to join forces with researchers to work for political change. I briefly examine some of the issues researchers, administrators, and policy makers face in improving the organization-to-policy-level application of empowerment or any research.

Social Science and Community Organizations

Much has been written about how to make research more useful to community organizations (Linney & Wandersman, 1991; Serrano-Garcia, 1984; Tolan, Keys, Chertok, & Jason, 1990). Based on a community empowerment intervention with grass-roots community leaders, Chavis, Stucky, and Wandersman (1983) argued to all psychologists that research would be more useful if it were more of a collaborative process with the community and its citizens. Borrowing from their analysis, empowerment research would be less mystifying to community leaders and organization members if they were more involved in setting priorities, in monitoring program implementation, in the design and evaluation of the data feedback process (workshops, materials, etc.), and in the interpretation of the data. They could be taught basic, practical need assessment and evaluation research methods. That

would make it more likely that the data and the feedback would not be ends in themselves but means toward meeting the needs of the organization or community and its members. Such a partnership among empowerment researchers, citizen/clients, and practitioner/administrators can improve the quality of the research, enhance its use, encourage greater public support for empowerment research, and ultimately improve empowerment applications in the community.

Chavis *et al.* (1983) concluded that this approach is unfamiliar to most social scientists and may require a different value orientation, new resources, skills and roles, a loss of control over the research, political issues, and academic costs (unless new rewards are created to offset those costs). Perkins and Wandersman (1990) used research conducted with an empowerment-oriented nonprofit organization and block associations to expand on those benefits and pitfalls in doing research with community organizations. The benefits included material and human resources, legitimacy and entree (with both funding sources and the communities), and more practical knowledge about specific communities, organizations, and leaders. The collaborative relationship did more than increase the relevance, validity, and application of the research — it made it possible.

The pitfalls of doing empowerment or any research with community organizations include both nonindependence bias, or being too closely tied to the organization, and problems of being too independent of the organization (Perkins & Wandersman, 1990). The latter include bureaucratic problems, failing to spend enough time with the people, communities, or organizations that one is trying to understand and empower, and the various constraints that divergent perspectives and priorities can place on sampling strategy, what research questions get asked, and how they are asked. Other pitfalls are failing to measure program activity and implementation, ignoring spillover (contamination) and naturalistic effects — not only on program staff and clients but on their physical environment and social climate, and underestimating the practitioner. Perkins and Wandersman concluded that the community and organization must reveal and define both the official goals of the program and any hidden agendas and negotiate with the researcher the clearest and most specific procedure possible for determining whose information and experience will be used as a basis for action under what circumstances. For their part, empowerment researchers working with community organizations should use multiple methods to collect qualitative and process as well as outcome data and validate and give credit to the efforts and feelings of practitioners and clients as much as possible.

Social Science and Executive and Legislative Policy Making

Given the above review of ostensible empowerment policies, our knowledge about real empowerment processes is most needed to inform higher levels of policy making. But social researchers have always had difficulty applying their data to issues of public policy and communicating the data clearly and effectively to the administrative and legislative branches of government (regarding judicial applications, see Perkins, 1988). This is evidently the case even for empowerment researchers, who one might expect to be more politically savvy.

Weiss (1977) found that most of the perceived dangers, costs, and risks involved in using social science as part of government policy making (e.g., that government sponsorship diverts and distorts the true scientific enterprise, forces hasty conclusions, imposes value judgments onto otherwise value-free research) are as simplistic as the more favorable assumptions (e.g., that greater use of social knowledge can only improve government decisions and that only minor reforms are needed to help government officials make better use of research). She offers four more complex conclusions. First, the logic and rationality of social scientists' world view is not how government always operates and not what politicians usually want to hear. Second, researchers too often assume that they know best and that policy makers will accept that fact regardless of the political interests at stake. Third, research is used by policy makers usually in a pragmatic and expedient way (as ammunition to back up a decision already made or as a general guide to, or validation of, an overall policy direction), rather than to specifically form particular decisions. Fourth, there are different models of research use (e.g., decision-driven, knowledge-driven, interactive, research as political ammunition, and research as conceptualization).

Similarly, Knorr (1977) has identified four different roles for social science in the decision-making process: (a) decision-preparatory (usually the official role, in which data serve as an information base prior to a decision), (b) decision-constitutive (direct application of data to a particularly policy or program, which in reality is rare), (c) substitution in which research is used to satisfy concern while delaying any real action, (d) legitimating (selective and often distorted use of data to rationalize a decision already made on the grounds of politics or personal opinion).

Thus, policy making is far from a rational process. It follows more of a chaotic dynamic interest group model (Seekins, Maynard-Moody, & Fawcett, 1987) in which researchers interested in informing the process must become more familiar with its complexity and key players and must become more proactive not only in the beginning (planning) and end (evaluation) stages, but throughout.

Focusing on the early stages, Rein and Schon (1977) argued that there is usually a lack of consensus about what the exact definition of the problem is and, since politicians use research primarily to legitimate policy stances, research influences the climate of opinion more than it does specific decisions. They concluded that "policy development is about problem setting, dilemma and tradeoff management, and consensus building via coalition formation" (p. 236) and so policy research should refocus more systematically on problem setting (rather than problem solving). They recommend the use of generative metaphors to gain and convey essential insights, draw lessons, and turn the social policy problem into a personal story.

An empowerment agenda would seem to fit well into this more qualitative or anecdotal approach. This may make the presentation of the problem more compelling, but the danger is that stories tend to focus our attention too much on individuals rather than institutional and structural problems, which are the bigger sources of problems and what government is supposed to solve. Rein and Schon (1977) also recommended applying various problem-solving strategies: for example, aggregating and disaggregating related issues (i.e., how do they differ and what do they have in common?) and working back from action (i.e., starting with the kinds of solutions that are more attainable).

Finally, Rein and Schon argue that problem setting should be evaluated according to five main criteria: (a) Is it consistent (does it fit with a large number of facts in a consistent and plausible framework?). (b) Is it testable? (through either basic research or program evaluation). (c) Does it lead to a morally acceptable position? (d) Does it lead to a clear prescription for action? (e) Is it aesthetically appealing? (i.e., a simple and elegant understanding of the problem).

Seekins and Fawcett (1986) identified various types of research information that is particularly useful in the early stages of policy development. In the first stage of agenda formation, data on the dimensions and relative standing of the issue, the number of people affected, and the interests of those involved would be helpful. The next stage, policy adoption, demands information on what variables are likely to control the behavior of those affected by the policy, specific program alternatives, and the social acceptability of those alternatives.

Caplan (1977) analyzed 575 cases of social research utilization in interviews with 204 different federal government officials in the executive branch. He identified five important preconditions for social research being used by policy makers: First, the policy maker must share an appreciation of the scientific as well as extrascientific (i.e., political, ideological, administrative, economic) aspects of the policy issue. Second, a conscious sense of social direction and responsibility must be a central value for the policy

maker. Third, the policy issue must be well defined and require research knowledge to solve.[4] Fourth, the research findings must be methodologically sound and believable, have politically feasible implications, and not be counterintuitive. (Policy makers appear to have an even harder time accepting unexpected findings than do the researchers whose hypotheses are not supported by the data.) Fifth, policy makes and researchers must be linked by a staff capable of translating data into policy goals and objectives. Caplan found that government officials perceive that policy makers and researchers represent two distinct and mutually distrusting cultures that have to be bridged before they can work together effectively. For example, most policy makers believe that social scientists are naive about the political feasibility of applying their findings and need to become more familiar with the policy-making process.

Caplan's (1977) conclusion has gone largely unheeded: that new groups of scientists and policy makers need to be formed to

> make realistic and rational appraisals of . . . information . . .; make appropriate (translations) of information from the universities to the policy setting . . .; recast policy issues into researchable terms; . . .distinguish between scientific and extrascientific knowledge needs; deal with the value issues and bureaucratic factors that influence the production and use of scientific knowledge; and gain the trust of policy makers and . . . knowledge of the policy-making process to substantially introduce social science knowledge in usable form into the policy-making process at the key points where it will most likely be used. (p. 196)

S. Berger (1980) argued "that success or failure in the application of social science depends on a mesh between the scientific skills and political interests of the social scientists on the one side, and the political skills *and* scientific interests of the policy makers on the other" (p. 8). With the apparent political interest among many empowerment researchers, they would seem to fulfill half of that equation. Berger agrees with Caplan that where science and politics have successfully converged, it has been due to *scientists and politicians working together on both activities around a specific project.* The six factors she identified that determine the contribution of social science to policy are similar to those discussed above for community organizations: (a) how the question (or problem) has been posed (usually by politicians, which can make research difficult); (b) the structure of academic disciplines and their system of incentives (this has resulted in the emphasis on publishing in specialized, *intra*disciplinary, "pure" research journals rather than on *inter*disciplinary or ecological or applied research

[4]Caplan believes that two of the worst examples of this are social indicators research and program evaluation which is ironic given that they are probably the most common kinds of government-sponsored social research. He thinks that the problem lies in the lack of mutual understanding about such research — what the key variables really mean and how they should be translated into policy.

or on teaching and other, more immediate forms of dissemination); (c) field experience; (d) familiarity with and sensitivity to cultural differences; (e) the choice of methodologies and technologies (most researchers are trained in just one methodology and might develop their own technology of some kind; and so they become biased in favor of those; but choosing the appropriate methodologies and technologies should come last, not first); (f) the political values of the researcher.

Berger (1980) also found that social science is most likely to be used when the problem is seen as a crisis by the public and by politicians, which seems almost paradoxical given the deliberative, complex, and probabilistic nature of social research. It does not lend itself to the quick, decisive, and universal fixes that crises demand, which is why scientists and policy makers operate on different time frames. But even when social science information is hedged with qualifications and uncertainties, it is more objective and reliable than the biased views, hunches and experiences of politicians, judges, the media, and other opinion makers.

Of Rein's three strategies for policy research (as cited by Berger, 1980) — consensual (in which policy makers and administrators get the knowledge they want), contentious (research that concentrates on the failings of government policy and is therefore ignored or used, depending on the policy maker's agenda), and paradigm-challenging ("the researcher acts independently of the established paradigm and tries to expose its fundamental weaknesses and to propose alternate principles of intervention," S. Berger, 1980, p. 23) — Berger argued that only the third approach, one adopted by many empowerment groups and researchers, poses a serious dilemma for the policy maker. New and innovative principles of intervention promise the highest payoff but they cannot be specified in advance since they require giving maximum control to the researcher. With empowerment interventions, workers and clients are in control, which can also make evaluation difficult. But it is during crises, when research is relied on the most, that paradigm-challenging interventions and research, like those based on empowerment *concepts* (and not just ideological rhetoric), are most called for.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the vast proliferation of programs and policies claiming to be based on the concept of empowerment, the connections between policy or program content and empowerment theory and research are often tenuous at best, especially at the legislative and administrative policy level. I

offer 10 recommendations to policy makers, program planners, and especially empowerment researchers:

1. Greater attention should be paid to different *levels of empowerment* (individual, organization, community). Psychologists, in particular, must look beyond individualistic conceptions, most of which are adequately captured by the existing terms and knowledge base, to *collective* conceptions of empowerment that are commensurate with solving group, organizational, and community problems (Perkins *et al.*, 1990).

2. *Smaller is better.* Beyond the community and organizational level, efforts to empower through higher levels of policy-making appear to result in progressively more ambiguous conceptions of empowerment and diminishing returns. As the experience of community development and other policy areas suggest, local grass-roots efforts may work best.

3. The paradox implied in the first two recommendations illustrates the validity and utility of a *dialectical analysis of empowerment* (Rappaport, 1981). Possible dialectics include (a) simultaneously emphasizing both personal and collective (and, for some, spiritual) control, (b) the paradoxical requirements of leadership, order, and organization in helping others to help themselves (i.e., to counteract disempowering institutional constraints; Gruber & Trickett, 1987), (c) people's needs for both individual and community identity within empowering organizations and (d) for both change and stability at all levels (Brown & Perkins, 1992), (e) the personal and organizational benefits of greater empowerment along with its risks and challenges (e.g., burnout, disappointment), (f) a political orientation embraceable by Big Government progressives and Small Government conservatives alike (Riessman & Bay, 1992), and (g) an approach to theory and research on empowerment that allows for both deductive and inductive logic and both idiographic and nomothetic information. We should not blind ourselves to possible universal principles, but we also need to pay more specific attention to what models of empowerment work with what *populations* in what *settings* and why.

4. The relationship between empowerment cognitions, person–environment transactions (Altman & Rogoff, 1987), and behaviors must continue to be explored more thoroughly (Perkins *et al.*, 1990; Zimmerman, 1989; 1990). In particular, because many vague descriptions of empowering thought patterns, emotions, and other intrapsychic constructions (especially in the nonscientific literature) have clouded the definition of the concept, greater emphasis on empowering *behaviors* — such as citizen participation in the community, workplace, and government — is needed for the sake of clarity and validation of the construct.

5. Empowerment researchers need to become more familiar with the policy-making process, its complexity and key players, and more comfortable disseminating and directly applying their research, not just in a particular organization, but by working with executive, legislative, and judicial policy-making bodies and advocacy organizations at *all* levels, from block and neighborhood associations to federal and international agencies.

6. Empowerment-related research itself would be better used if, instead of conducting the research prior to considering its exact policy application, more empowerment researchers were to follow Coleman's (1972) five steps toward planning effective policy research: "1) identify the parties in policy outcomes and with some power or potential power to affect policy; 2) determine interests of these parties; 3) find what kinds of information are relevant to their interests; 4) determine the best way to obtain this information; 5) determine how to report the results" (p. 16).

7. The effective policy researchers' job does not end there. They must become more *proactive,* not only in the planning and evaluation stages but *throughout the process,* from agenda formation and policy adoption to policy implementation and review (Seekins & Fawcett, 1986).

8. As evidenced by the studies described in this issue, applied researchers, especially those working with expert-wary and unsubmissive empowerment organizations, should play the role more of *learner/collaborator* than scientist (Chavis *et al.*, 1983; Kroeker, 1993; Perkins & Wandersman, 1990; Yeich & Levine, 1994). This implies that graduate programs must do a better job of training for such a role.

9. Empowerment researchers must learn to disseminate more *practical information* and to deliver it in ways with which they may have little experience. This means cultivating information channels within the policy-making bureaucracy. It may include choosing multiple target audiences (e.g., legislators, voters, demographic and other interest groups), understanding each one's unique orientation, and tailoring the focus and style of presentation accordingly. It requires the ability to present complicated theories and data concisely, in plain but accurate terms (i.e., without overgeneralizing or overstating the case). Berkowitz's (1990) charge that we do not know enough about measuring or maintaining empowerment is still all too valid.

10. Both theory and research would be more practical if more researchers carefully examined and tried to understand the *qualitative* knowledge about real-world empowerment processes that practitioners bring. For example, grass-roots community organizing principles (e.g., of leadership and organization structure, climate, processes, development, and

momentum) may apply equally well to more institutionalized applications of empowerment. The clearest definitions and descriptions of empowerment may come more from voices on the front lines of movements for social change than from the policy or even research literatures. We could use fewer Humpty Dumpty policy makers and King of Hearts psychologists.

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