

Practicing a Psychology That Builds Community

Lois Holzman, Ph. D.

East Side Institute for Short Term Psychotherapy [1]

I was trained as a developmental psychologist, but over the years I've become uncomfortable with that label. It's too disciplinary for my taste; it makes a false separation between development and other human psychological functioning; and it's based on a stagist understanding of human life that I don't agree with.

[2] So, I prefer to think of myself as a developmentalist, to convey both the attitude and activity of someone who supports people to utilize their creative capacities to grow and develop throughout their lifetimes.

My transformation, if you will, from developmental psychologist to developmentalist has proceeded hand in glove with my training and experience as a community organizer. To me, supporting people to grow and develop is inseparable from building community. The work I have been involved in for the last 25 years is the creating of a community psychology of a new and different sort. It's a psychology that builds community and simultaneously studies its own community building process. What I want to share with you today is some of what that activity looks like and its history and methodological base. Whatever uses this methodology might have for enriching community psychology I hope that we can discover together.

I suppose a good place to begin is by sharing what I mean by community. To me, community does not exist "out there" waiting to be studied; in our current alienated, fragmented and destabilized culture, community is just too difficult to sustain and is, at best, ephemeral. So, unless the term is meant to delineate an identity grouping or geographical location (and even these are not all that stable), community, in my opinion, must be built to be properly studied. I see community as a process -- a collective, creative process of people bringing into existence a new social unit and sharing a collective commitment to its sustainability. Rather than being defined from the outside and by others, this kind of community is defined by those who create it. Additionally, its structure and activity are more improvisational than scripted or role and rule governed. It is community in this sense that interests me because of its potential for human growth and social transformation.

I will now describe the specific community that I have been part of building. In doing so, I'm not suggesting that it's the only one or that there's only way to build community of this kind. It is, however, one I know intimately and one whose foundation is a new practice/understanding of psychology. Currently, the community involves 1000s of people who interact in many different ways with a variety of inter-related but financially and legally distinct organizations and projects.

The centerpiece project is the nonprofit East Side Institute for Short Term Psychotherapy, an international research and training center for new approaches to human development and community, headquartered in NYC. The Institute develops and promotes the psychological approach known as social therapy which, in addition to being a psychotherapy practiced by clinicians, has also been adapted and applied in the fields of education, youth development, prevention, health care and organizational development. The Institute has a postgraduate therapist training program and organizes seminars, onsite trainings and continuing ed programs. Through these activities and its international conferences, books and articles, the Institute promotes a global community building practice for people from many disciplines and traditions who share a desire to find new ways to relate to human beings and social change.

Centers where social therapy is practiced are another organization of this community. Currently, there are social therapy centers in the NY metropolitan area and six other US cities. Social therapy is a developmental therapy (i.e., non-diagnostic, non-problem solving) that understands emotional growth to be a social, creative, performatory activity. A sister psychology project is Performance of a Lifetime (www.performanceofalifetime.com), a consulting firm for professional and organizational development that brings the performance and improvisational aspects of social therapy into corporate and nonprofit settings. Both the Institute and Performance of a Lifetime are highly successful businesses.

Among the projects the Institute's approach has catalyzed are several community-based cultural and mental health programs. The All Stars Talent Show Network (www.allstars.org) was founded 18 years ago to provide a positive alternative to violence for inner city youth. Today, throughout the five boroughs of New York and in Newark, NJ, Atlanta, GA and Oakland, CA the Network creates environments for development by providing 20,000 youth, ages 5 to 25, with opportunities to produce and perform in talent shows in their

neighborhood schools. The children and teenagers are trained by peers with the support of adults to make every aspect of an All Stars production happen: the auditions, in which every young rapper, singer and dancer "makes it;" the performance workshops, in which trained theatre directors work with the young people to create skits about issues that concern them; and the shows, where they perform on stage and off, running the sound, stage managing, ushering and staffing security. All Stars youth leaders also recruit and mentor younger children from their neighborhoods. Through their involvement in building the All Stars Network, the young people learn all sorts of technical skills, but more importantly, they create new kinds of relationships as they learn experientially to relate to kids from other neighborhoods, to work with adults, and to interact with their community's institutions — schools, churches, block associations -- all the while doing something they love to do -- perform.

The Development School for Youth is a leadership-training program for 16-21 year-olds. The program is designed to introduce young adults to the world of work and support them to develop culturally and psychologically by performing in new ways. The program runs weekly for three months; each session is led by adult professionals -- all volunteers -- who conduct workshops at their workplaces which include financial institutions, advertising agencies and law firms. Since 1998, over 200 young New Yorkers have graduated from the program, not only learning vital vocational skills but, more importantly, learning how to perform their lives as learners and leaders. And more than 50 corporations have joined the program, supplying workshops, mock job interviews, classroom space and paid summer internships. [3]

Let's Talk about It is a group therapy program located in Erasmus High School, an ethnically and racially diverse public high school in Brooklyn serving some 3000 young people in grades 9-12. For eight years, as part of Erasmus' health center, this program has given young people the opportunity to actively participate in the creation of their own mental health services. Barbara Silverman, the founder of the program and a trained social therapist, will speak here this afternoon. style="mso-spacerun: yes">

Another project of the community is the Castillo Theatre (www.castillo.org), a theatre based in New York City that draws an audience from all over the country. Founded in 1984, Castillo gives expression to the issues and conflicts of the community. At the same time, Castillo functions as the community's performance laboratory. It's a community theatre in that its artists, its audience, its plays and, most significantly, its producers are drawn from the community.

It's a laboratory in that it experiments with performance not primarily to create interesting art (although it often accomplishes that) but with an eye toward encouraging the developmental potential of performance to be taken off the stage and into daily life. [4]

The community also includes a philanthropic arm, the **All Stars Project, Inc.**, through which thousands of donors contribute to support the youth and theatre projects, and many hundreds actively volunteer their time and skills to the growth of the projects. To give you a sense of how successful and expansionary a model we have developed, ten years ago contributions totaled \$200,000 (nearly all raised on the street or at the door by volunteer canvassers) and this past year over \$4 million was raised (by a small staff, some volunteer telemarketers and a large, active group of donors).

The community includes the Committee for a Unified Independent Party (www.cuip.org). The Committee (CUIP for short) was formed in 1994 as a positive response to the disillusionment with negative and partisan-dominated politics on the part of millions of Americans, regardless of party affiliation. Organizing support to the growing populist movement to revitalize our democracy, CUIP functions as a research and strategy center, it works to unify diverse independents around common goals and lobbies for meaningful political reform with a broad coalition of democracy-minded activists and politicians. As a grassroots-organizing center, CUIP has trained hundreds of volunteers to participate in reform efforts.

Over the years, through books and articles, conferences, trainings, web sites and email, the community has expanded to include people around the globe. This year, a new project called Performing the World was founded. Stemming from an international, cross-disciplinary conference held last October in Montauk NY, a new online community (www.performingtheworld.org) has formed for people interested in performance as a human, social need.

It's important to stress that the community is greater than the sum of these projects. Like a set of semi-concentric, semi-overlapping circles, the community continuously changes, as individuals bring it to their work places and homes and bring colleagues, co-workers, friends and families to community events. Hospitals, social services agencies, schools, cultural institutions and professional associations are just a few of the places you'll find the community.

I'm most impressed with how heterogeneous, open and fluid this community is. It includes inner city children and teens, theatre artists, corporate executives, Wall Street financiers, paraprofessionals, health and mental health and educational professionals, people from all walks of life and backgrounds, sexual orientations and political views. It's an unusually and radically inclusive community -- everyone who relates to any part of it is included unless they choose not to be. There are no membership requirements, no set of beliefs to ascribe to, no prerequisite social identity. People are encouraged to participate and contribute whatever, whenever and however they choose. Some members devote their days or evenings to building it; others a few hours a week; still others almost no time at all. Some members become involved in several projects at once; many others do not. Amidst these differences, there is a critical commonality -- what people are participating in is a creative effort to develop less alienated and more socially relational ways to be together and live our lives.

The psychology that creates this community (and in turn is created by it) is difficult to describe. I will touch upon some of its key features today and hope that a picture begins to emerge for you. For those who want to learn more about the philosophy, theory and practice, there are several books you can read. [5] To begin, I will tell you how I came to be doing this work, for in my story are some of the central issues that we deal with in creating this psychology.

I come from and have been shaped by an intellectual tradition of challenging existing paradigms. As a graduate student in developmental psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University in the early 1970s, I worked closely with Lois Bloom on her pioneering studies of children's early language. Bloom was charting new ground then, one of a handful of researchers around the country who were looking outside developmental psychology proper for tools with which to create a new research methodology. The longitudinal and observational approach we developed—spending time with young children in their homes over an extended period of time, taping our conversations and noting what activities we and the children were engaged in—was influenced more by ethnography and linguistics than by psychology. So was our method of data analysis—letting the categories "emerge from the data" as opposed to imposing predetermined ones. I recall that this bothered some people; they refused to take the work seriously because, they said, it did not meet the strict criteria of the accepted scientific paradigm. I think, however, that those who got riled up did so because creating new methods of investigation calls into

question the very nature of the thing you are investigating. In this case, our work was initially threatening (and ignored) to the extent that it challenged the accepted conception of language and language behavior.

We believed that children's utterances in the first few years of life could not be understood in terms of idealized grammatical categories of the adult language, nor in isolation from the context in which they are uttered. Rather, they could be comprehended in terms of patterns of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic categories that were fundamentally expressive of (and, perhaps, inseparable from) children's actions and interactions and people and objects.

Unlike Piaget, who posited schemas and operations inside the child's mind in his effort to explain how human beings come to operate on the world in terms of logical and/or scientific thinking, Bloom and I (and eventually a whole group of graduate student researchers) were wary of such blatant mentalism and teleology. We thought of our work as descriptive, not explanatory (as if it was simple to separate the two) — more akin to linguistic and anthropological concerns than to philosophical problems about the nature of mind. We saw our goal as describing child talk in concert with non-verbal context, rather than in comparison with adult talk. To the extent that we made knowledge claims, we tried to confine ourselves to what children knew about language and not venture to posit what they knew about "the world."

I loved the challenge of this work, especially the interplay of participant observation, data analysis and theory construction. I was thrilled when we made discoveries that contributed to developmental psychology's knowledge base (especially when our findings contradicted conventional wisdom). As an intellectual exercise, I found it immensely satisfying. Yet, I wondered if our elegant analyses had anything to do with the children we were studying. I couldn't reconcile the gap between our categorizations of their talk and their language-learning lives; the complexity of our descriptions of what was going on linguistically and non-linguistically came nowhere near capturing the richness of their -- essentially social -- activities. I began to question whether it was possible to really learn anything about how children develop through this kind of intellectual exercise. I didn't have an alternative, but still I couldn't accept that we *had to* isolate variables — to separate out from the total interactive activity what the child said, and then relate to what the mother or I said, what we were doing together, or what went on five minutes or five days earlier as *context*? I was uncomfortable with what seemed to me the artificial split that this made between inside and outside, between psychological and

social, and between child and environment.

Upon completing my Ph.D., I joined the research lab of Michael Cole at Rockefeller University. An experimental psychologist turned maverick cross-disciplinary explorer of human cognition, Cole was enthusiastic about the promise offered by non-contemporary and non-Western approaches to understanding learning and development. He was putting together a team of researchers from several disciplines to study the differing conditions of everyday and school thinking and learning and their impact on development. I was excellently trained by Bloom in observational, ethnographic methods of studying children in their everyday settings. I knew developmental psychology well and was skeptical of its value. I had an emerging view of development and learning as social, cultural activities. I was, indeed, ready for the radical departure from tradition that I found in Cole's Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition.

The key methodological issue for us was validity. Specifically, the question we posed was, "If psychological theory and findings are generated in the laboratory (or under experimental conditions designed to replicate the laboratory), how can they be generalized to everyday life?" In other words, did they have any "ecological validity" and, if not, could we develop a methodology for a psychology that was ecologically valid? We considered the laboratory as a methodology and not merely a physical location. For it seemed to us that naturalistic and observational research conducted in everyday life settings was guided as much by the laboratory's methodological assumptions as any research conducted inside a psych lab. Conversely, much of what happens inside the laboratory during an experiment is what happens everywhere — but in the lab, it is ignored because the experimental paradigm disallows it. We hoped our research would not only expose the pervasive laboratory biases of how children's learning and development were studied and understood, but also help us create a new, ecologically valid set of investigative practices. Ultimately, our goal was to impact positively on the inequality and inadequacy of American schooling

The main project I worked on was a two-year study of 8-to-10-year-old children in which we observed and interacted with them in a variety of school and non-school settings in order to see and experience how various cognitive acts, e.g., remembering, problem solving, reading, reasoning, etc., were alike and different in the different settings. When we talked to "regular people" about the project, we said we wanted to find out some things about "how come kids who

are street smart are school dumb."

We went looking for individual cognitive acts in non-school settings, but we couldn't find any — in informal settings, children solved problems and remembered things together, not in isolation from each other. About this time, Cole, along with three of his colleagues, had just finished putting together a translation of some of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky's writings (what became *Mind in Society*, Vygotsky, 1978). We found in Vygotsky corroboration for the positions we were formulating. Cognition is a social and cultural achievement that occurs through a process of people constructing environments to act on the world. It is located not in an individual's head, but in the "person-environment interface." This is what an ecologically valid psychology of learning and development needed to study (Cole, Hood, and McDermott, 1978). From this perspective, when we looked at children who were having problems in school, we didn't see their cognitive or emotional difficulties. Instead, we saw a complex socially constructed cultural scene involving many people and institutions. We concluded that learning disability, for example, does not exist outside of or separate from the interactive work (joint activity) that people do which, intentionally or not, creates "displays" of disability (Hood, Cole and McDermott, 1980; McDermott and Hood, 1982).

All this was very exciting for me. It was a clear alternative to Piagetian constructivist mentalism. It seemed an escape from the trap of the individualist paradigm that dominated developmental psychology. "Context" moved from the background to share equal footing with "person." And yet, a question kept gnawing at me: what did the intellectual exercise of researching development have to do with the life process of children developing? We weren't making generalizations, looking for patterns or applying a model. But was it the case that by studying the concrete and real-life situations children are in, we were studying their actual life process? Eventually I saw the objectification that still remained in the ecological validity approach (and ethnography in general). We claimed to be free of the biases of laboratory methodology because we were studying people in their everyday life situations in such a way that we did not exclude *a priori* those elements that laboratory methodology excluded. And certainly we were able to see new things when we looked at social scenes and displays instead of formal cognitive tasks, and at the person-environment interface instead of at individuals. But while what we saw might have been new, I came to appreciate that our way of seeing was the same. We were still seeing at a distance, as observers with a scientific gaze. For us, the environment was an experimental context after all, one in which we

hoped to get a "true" -- rather than a generalized -- picture of what was "really" happening. But for the children, this was not an experiment — it was a scene in their ongoing life performance. What would psychology have to be, I wondered, to see, show, study and create this performance -- and the infinite other performances people engage in?

When the Rockefeller University phased out its support for psychology in the late 1970s, Cole accepted an offer from the University of California at San Diego and moved the Laboratory out West. Not wanting to leave New York City, I joined the faculty of Empire State College, State University of New York-- then an eight-year-old experiment in non-traditional undergraduate education. I was a "mentor" in human development, educational studies and community services. Again, I had found a niche within--although on the edges of--the mainstream. And, once again, I was working with people who were self-consciously challenging the dominant paradigm, this time as educators. I stayed at Empire until the mid 1990s where I had the freedom to develop many unorthodox (and effective) teaching and learning practices with my students.

During the time I was at the Rockefeller University, I also began working with a group of people who had left the campuses and other established institutions in the late 1960s. Guided by a belief that changing schools, health and mental health treatment, and politics has more to do with building new kinds of institutions and community organizing than with having the correct critical analysis or theory, they began to establish free schools, communes and community-based health clinics and therapy centers. These early projects were among the thousands of radical political-educational-therapeutic alternatives that sprang up all over the US at that time.

The leader of this small grouping of radical women and men was Fred Newman, a Stanford University-trained philosopher of science. He taught philosophy at several colleges and universities--getting fired from each one for giving As to all his students to keep the men out of the draft during the Vietnam War. Newman left academia in 1968 to engage full-time in community organizing and radical politics. In the increasingly conservative environment of the late 1970s, when many radical alternatives folded or were co-opted into the mainstream, he and his co-workers intensified their work building independent institutions, focusing initially on electoral politics and psychotherapy. It was during this time that I met Newman. I was particularly impressed by the

passion and respect he had for both intellectual work and the tedious process of organization- building.

A handful of us--myself, Newman, two social workers, a graduate student in sociology, a mental health researcher, and two lay therapists--founded the New York Institute for Social Therapy and Research (the precursor to our current Institute) in 1978. We all had paying day jobs; we built this therapy, education and research center in the evenings and on weekends. The Institute offered social therapy (the clinical approach Newman was developing), held classes, lectures and a speaker series on progressive approaches to politics, psychology, education, health and culture. As the director of research, I planned courses, taught many of them, designed community research projects, and networked with other researchers and academics. With much excitement, I "brought" Lev Vygotsky's new socio-cultural psychological perspective (and the notion of the person-environment interface) from Rockefeller University to the Institute.

Newman, I and our small group of colleagues were attempting to create a self-defining, improvisational community in which its institutions and activities would not be dominated by the constraints and conventions of traditional institutions. Concretely, in building this community, we wanted to take care that whatever traditional institution we were engaging, whether that be therapy, theatre or school, not determine the decisions the community made about how it was going to get better emotionally, produce plays or develop intellectually. We believed that we needed to be financially independent if we were to have a shot at this. We were concerned with how money and institutional affiliation come with strings attached (for example, making the funding sources or institution look good and/or finding the results they desired). But we were equally concerned with the traditional knowledge-seeking and knowledge-producing paradigm (complete with concepts such as proof, hypothesis testing, objectivity, results and evaluation) and with its accompanying institutional arrangements (such as boundaries, categories, definitions, rules and regulations). We were committed to creating environments in which these biases were not built in.

For it is one thing to run an afterschool program to help young people develop alternatives to violence through the receipt of a government or foundation grant, or to research and write when the work is done under the pressure to "publish or perish" and for the purpose of getting tenure. It is quite another thing when the project's history does not include such contractual relationships with the

state. Similarly, building a psychotherapeutic practice that "serves" poor people is one activity when its existence depends on government funding and legislative mandates and requires the use of diagnosis. It is a different activity when the practice does not label and when poor and middle class people are in therapy together by virtue of people with more money choosing to subsidize the participation of people with less money because they believe it is psychologically helpful and/or politically important. So we began to build our therapeutic, educational and cultural institutions without affiliation with any university and without funding from corporate donations, foundation grants or government subsidies

Of course, financial and institutional independence didn't guarantee that we would create anything qualitatively different from what existed. It merely created the possibility for it. For we had come to an important realization -- environments quickly come to overdetermine activity, *unless they are created along with the activity*. This was the basis for our search for a method to create a community-building psychology. Rather than *applying* a particular fixed method, we work to *practice method*, an explicitly participatory activity that involves the continuous, self-conscious deconstruction of the hierarchical arrangements of learning, teaching and knowing and the ongoing confronting of biases, definitions, judgments and assumptions (Newman and Holzman, 1993; 1997).

One assumption we confronted is that all human life and growth require knowledge and systemization, and some method of appraisal, which is abstracted from the ongoing activity of life. Stemming from the misguided attempt to adopt a method developed by and for the natural and physical sciences to the study of human-social phenomena, this assumption is fraught with problems, and has led to a distorted understanding of human beings (Newman, 1996; Newman and Holzman, 1996, Newman and Holzman, 1997).

In our view, in order to create/discover something about people that can be of value to people, we will have to be deliberately "unscientific" and engage in the ongoing creation of non-epistemologically overdetermined, non-systematic and, thereby, potentially developmental environments -- in other words, self-defining, improvisational community.

Beholden to no one but our clients, students, and individuals who financially supported our work with no strings attached, we were able to alter radically what we were doing in a matter of moments. We could be inclusive and allow new people to reshape the totality of what we were doing. If we believed, as

many clinicians do, that diagnosis is an impediment to helping people with emotional pain, we could refuse to diagnose. If we believed that learning how to learn is more important than acquisitional learning, then we could choose not to grade students or measure learning (Holzman, 1997). Our effectiveness would be judged by those involved in the work, not by any outside evaluative body.

As the facts and figures of the various projects I described earlier show, the community has grown substantially over 25 years -- from a handful of people to tens of thousands, from one apartment complex in New York City to a multi-faceted cultural, educational and psychological project that intersects academia, the social services and health care industries, cultural workers, the not for profit sector, corporate America, inner city families, and ordinary -- uncategorized -- people.

How did -- and do -- we do it? I have already suggested that being independent from traditional knowledge producing, knowledge-controlling and funding institutions has been key. However, the psychological approach we developed was equally essential.

The approach is what is called activity-theoretic in reference to the work of Lev Vygotsky and the contemporary movement of socio-cultural psychology begun at Cole's Rockefeller University lab (Newman and Holzman, 1993). In activity theory, the object of study is neither the isolated individual and her or his behavior nor groups of individuals and their behavior, as it has traditionally been in psychology. The object of study is human activity. The term activity focuses on human life as continuous process (not discrete products, stages or moments) and as fundamentally relational. People live, create, learn, love, hate, build and destroy through socially constructing environments that make it possible for us to do these things. In other words, in activity theory environment is not a context or background for what people do, but a social practice inseparable from what people do "in" them. So, not only aren't we isolated individuals separate from each other; we're not even separate from our environment! While we surely can be (and are, in Western cultures) *distinguished* from environment and from each other, this does not mean we are *separate from* either environment or each other. Instead of two separate entities, there is but one, the unity "persons-environment." In this unity, environment "determines" us and yet we can change it completely (changing ourselves in the process, since the "it" includes us, the changers). People are social-cultural creators and changers, first and foremost. Growth, learning,

change and transformation don't happen *to us*; we create them.

In Western culture, this unity persons-environment and the human activity that shapes and reshapes (and reshapesä) it are very difficult to see because we are socialized to see only products (things, objects and results). We tend to see, experience and respond to people as products (identities, labels and members of a category) rather than as ongoing process. We see ourselves and others as "who we are" (products) and not as simultaneously "who we are" (which includes our history of becoming who we are) and "who we are becoming." Yet, each one of us is, at every moment, *both being and becoming*. In an important way, the psychology I have been part of creating is one of understanding the dialectic being and becoming, and of helping people self-consciously to "practice becoming." One of the things we've learned from our work is that "becoming" involves doing what we don't know how to do, and that doing what we don't know how to do involves being other than who we are. This may sound if not impossible then at least very difficult. I think it both is and isn't. Each and every one of us did it in our infancy and early childhood -- if we didn't do things we didn't know how to do, we wouldn't be here today! We all have the capacity to do things in advance of ourselves, to go beyond ourselves, to be who and what we're not, to perform as other. Babies who cannot speak perform as speakers -- with their caretakers, they jointly create an environment in which they play with and learn language. They and their families perform conversations and, through this ensemble creative activity, they become who they're not -- speakers.

This capacity to perform—to take "who we are" and create something new—is central to our psychology and to our community building. All of our work is oriented toward reinitiating people's capacity to create new performances, including the performance of community. We practice a methodology of collectively creating new performances, new ways of relating, new forms of organization and association by creating environments inseparable from the "use" of these environments. In theatrical language— which we prefer to psychological language—participating in creating the performance "stage" and performing on it is how we can go beyond ourselves to create new experiences, new skills, new intellectual capacities, new relationships, new interests, new emotions, new hopes, new goals and new forms of community. For us, performance is more than a metaphor; it is our approach to community building.

Let's take a look at how performance builds community in therapy. Social

therapy is a group modality, not only in form but also in focus. The task of the group is to build the group as an environment in which people can grow emotionally as a way to change their relationship to and thus better deal with their pain and problems. Group members don't build a therapeutic community in the 60s sense of the term; they create their therapy by building community. This is essentially a cultural activity. Building the group is creating an ensemble, a stage on which to perform and the performance itself. Like the babbling baby and its caretakers, social therapy groups members exercise their capacity to perform as other than who they are emotionally. As Newman, social therapy's founder and a prolific playwright, describes it:

When people come to therapy, I'm not looking to get to the deeper interpretive inside of who a human being is. What I try to do is see if I can get a grouping of people to perform, to create a performance, to play a game. We don't have to be who we are, we don't have to accept someone else telling us who we are, and most importantly, we don't have to accept ourselves telling ourselves who we are. We don't have to sit back and say, "I can't do that, or I can't do this because that's not who I am." That's the wonder of life. In some ways, therapy to me is very much like directing a play. It's not that I don't have some ideas of what I'm looking for when I am directing, but what dominates is the creative impulse of the cast, the technicians and myself as director. By creative impulse, I mean a desire to take what we have collectively — the ideas, the talents, the presuppositions, the tastes, the energies — and to create something new with these inputs, something other than any or all of the inputs. I've come to see the therapeutic work I do as close to the theater work in this sense. I believe that we effect "cure" by creating something new together. (Newman in Holzman and Mendez, 2001).

Creating something new together is not only how we effect "cure." It's how we build community. We're not particularly interested in building bridges between diverse groupings but rather in making it possible for diverse people to come together and engage in an activity, a process of creation, the outcome of which are new, often unimaginable, forms of association and action. For example, the All Stars Talent Show Network is an ongoing process of creating new forms of association by and between poor (mostly Black and Latino) young people, theatre artists and middle class and wealthy (mostly white) professionals. What goes on in the All Stars is but one example of the day to day unity of our psychology and our community. I have only skimmed the surface of the

complex dynamics of such a process.

But let me stop here and leave you with a summary statement of sorts. For us, psychology is not primarily a treatment for malfunction. Neither is it an accounting for human behavior or action. Rather, it is a way of building the community it serves, even as it helps the builders live their lives in ways that build community.

References

Cole, M., Hood, L., and McDermott, R. P. (1978). *Ecological niche-picking: Ecological invalidity as an axiom of experimental cognitive psychology*. New York: Rockefeller University, Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition.

Friedman, D. (Ed.). (1998). *Still on the Corner and other postmodern political plays by Fred Newman*. New York: Castillo International.

Friedman, D. (2000). Castillo: The making of a postmodern political theatre. *Theatre Symposium, Vol. 8*, 130-140.

Fulani, L. (2000). Race, identity and epistemology. In L. Holzman and J. Morss, *Postmodern psychologies, societal practice and political life*. New York: Routledge. (pp. 151-164)

Hood, L., McDermott, R. P. and Cole, M. (1980). "Let's try to make it a good day"--Some not so simple ways. *Discourse Processes*, 155-168.

Holzman, L. (1997). *Schools for growth: Radical alternatives to current educational models*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Holzman, L. (Ed.), (1999). *Performing psychology: A postmodern culture of the mind*. New York: Routledge.

Holzman, L. and Mendez, R. (2001). *Psychological investigations: A clinician's guide to social therapy*. (In press).

Holzman, L. and Morss, J. (2000). *Postmodern psychologies, societal practice and political life*. New York: Routledge.

McDermott, R. P. and Hood, L. (1982). Institutional psychology and the

ethnography of schooling. In P. Gilmore and A. Glatthorn (Eds.), *Children in and out of school: Ethnography and education*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, pp. 232-249.

Newman, F. (1994). *Let's develop! A guide to continuous personal growth*. New York: Castillo International.

Newman, F. (1996). *Performance of a lifetime: A practical-philosophical guide to the joyous life*. New York: Castillo International.

Newman, F. and Holzman, L. (1997). *The end of knowing: A new developmental way of learning*. London: Routledge.

Newman, F. and Holzman, L. (1996). *Unscientific psychology: A cultural-performatory approach to understanding human life*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Newman, F. and Holzman, L. (1993). *Lev Vygotsky: Revolutionary scientist*. London: Routledge. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.

[1] Delivered as the Keynote Address, APA Division 27/ Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) Conference, Boston, March 2002. Email:

lholzman@eastsideinstitute.org, Address: East Side Institute for Short Term Psychotherapy, 500 Greenwich St, New York NY 10013, www.eastsideinstitute.org

[2] See Newman and Holzman, 1996, Chapter 7. Psychology and Human Development: The Ideal(ist) Marriage for a discussion of the history of concepts of development.

[3] See Fulani, 2000, Race, Identity and Epistemology for discussion of the All Stars Talent Show Network and the Development School for Youth.

[4] See Friedman, 1998; 2000, for history and analysis of the Castillo Theatre.

[5] Books on social therapeutic methodology, its historical underpinnings, its relationship to intellectual movements, and its use in clinical and educational settings include Holzman, 1997; 1999; Newman, 1994; 1996; Newman and Holzman, 1993; 1996; 1997.