Introduction:

Influencing public policy is an ambitious undertaking. To influence or implement policy, Community Psychologists (CPs) need methods or strategies that work for you.

As you develop your plan, one key opportunity is to influence policy directly through rules, regulation or legislation. This route, while challenging, should be of keen interest to CPs who often pursue second order or system level change* to implement a permanent improvement in the status-quo.

* Heller et al (1984); Duffy & Wong (1996); Dalton, Elias & Wandersman (2001) etc.

Background

* MA Community Psychology 1994

* Part time independent researcher ARNOVA; ISTR & SCRA

* Volunteer experience:

Chair Legislative Committee from 1999-2011 and Board member of a disability nonprofit representing 1400 families of families with disabled member; testified twice before NY State Legislature as disability advocate.

* Work experience:

Testified ~ 30 times as staff member of NY State Agency- consumer advocacy and public policy regulation of utilities. Also, MA level practitioner Employee Assistance Program Coordinator (part time) for Agency of ~500 employees administering its workplace wellness program for 20 years.

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Purpose:

The purpose here is to promote policy influence through rules, regulations or legislation to advance core or hallmark values of the field of Community Psychology. This effort may be applied at national, state, local or organizational levels of community.

This approach is designed to assess existing policies or legislation, enabling CPs to formulate, draft or promote legislation that is strongly aligned with, or advances, core Community Psychology values.

Applying this approach, legislation and policies were examined at state, county, village and organizational levels from the states of New York and Wisconsin.

Community Challenges & Issues Addressed:

All communities face serious challenges.

The following issues were selected due to their severity, prevalence or urgency of need to prevent or remediate serious consequences on communities:

* toxic chemical exposure of children
* gun violence
* exploitation of low wage workers
* cyber bullying of children
* race based harassment in schools: offensive names/mascots "Redskins"

Community Challenges & Issues Addressed:

   Why were these issues selected?

   These challenges apply widely, across most communities.

   Also, many CPs would likely be concerned with such issues and may seek opportunities to influence policy in their own communities to help prevent or remediate such serious and challenging problems.

   One of the opportunities presented by studying policies and legislation in other jurisdictions is that such analysis can lead to

applying or improving practices adopted in other states or regions.

Problems well solved in one community can be applied to others.

What is "Model Legislation" to a Community Psychologist?

"Model" legislation means different things to different people.

Members of the *American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)* develop "model" legislation for use in various states*. While "non-partisan", its core values include: limited government, free markets and federalism. This creates a conservative bias in what it views as "model".

"Model" legislation or policies understandably reflect core values.

"Model" policies or legislation, from a CP perspective, necessarily would reflect core values of the field, the approach proposed here.

* other organizations include: National Association for Attorneys General; American Bar Association;

National Consumer Law Center; National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws etc.

What values are reflective of the field of Community Psychology?

Various values commonly held as basic to the field include*:

* primary prevention   * early intervention
* second order change   * system level change
* social justice   * empowerment
* citizen participation   * diversity
* respect for all cultures &   * empirical grounding
    community members

* such as described by: Heller et al (1984); Duffy & Wong (1996); Dalton, Elias & Wandersman (2001) etc.

What is the view of Model" Legislation or policies used here?

For the purpose of identifying "model" legislation or policy,
these values are considered core or hallmark values of the field and
properly considered in assessing or developing "model" policies*.

* primary prevention   * early intervention
* second order change   * system level change
* social justice   * empowerment
* citizen participation   * diversity
* respect for all cultures &   * empirical grounding
       community members

* CPs are free to apply additional or different values or standards than proposed and applied here.

Summary of "Model" Cases Examined:

Issue	Rule Type	State	Jurisdiction
toxic exposure of children	legislation	New York	Albany County
gun violence	legislation	New York	State
gun violence	legislation	New York	Village
exploiting low wage workers	legislation	New York	State
cyber bullying of children	legislation	New York	Albany County
raced based harassment	legislation	Wisconsin	State
(in schools; offensive mascots	policy resolution	New York	School District

and sport team names like "Redskins")

Value Assessment: Does it qualify as "Model"?

Legislative Bill

Hallmark Values of CP*	#_____	#_____	# _____
Prevention (primary)			
Second Order Change			
Social Justice			
Empowerment			
Citizen Participation			
Diversity			
Respect for All Cultures			
Empirical Grounding			
Model Legislation?			

Value Assessment: Does it qualify as "Model"?

Legislative Bill

 Hallmark Values of CP*   #_____   #_____   # _____

Prevention (primary)

Second Order Change

Social Justice

Empowerment

Citizen Participation

Diversity

Respect for All Cultures

Empirical Grounding

Model Legislation?

Value Assessment: Does it qualify as "Model"?

Hallmark Values of CP*	Legislative Bill Examples		
	Law J/Toxic Chem. Ban	NY Safe Act 2013	Village Gun Ban
Prevention (primary)	+	+	+
Second Order Change	+	+	+
Social Justice	DNA	DNA	DNA
Empowerment	+	+/-	+
Citizen Participation	+	--	+
Diversity	DNA	DNA	DNA
Respect for All Cultures	+	--	+
Empirical Grounding	+	--	+
Model Legislation?	YES	NO	YES

<u>Conclusion:</u>

Influencing policy is a powerful way to advance the values of Community Psychology. Just as others use "model" legislation or policies to advance their prerogatives, CPs may do the same.

Assessing existing legislation using core values of CP will help illuminate whether proposed legislation advances public interests and may reveal changes to substantially improve its impact on communities. This can lead to modifications or-- *the creation of new legislation.*

"Model" legislation is highly usable by both practitioners and academics, and is in a language readily understood by policymakers at national, state and local levels for CPs who seek public policy influence to advance the public good.

Can this approach to policy influence be helpful to you? If so, how?

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