

## Clinical Psychology *versus* the People: A Reply to Taylor

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I feel I need to apologise to Professor Taylor for not having mentioned what was happening at Victoria University in the way of community oriented clinical psychology. On the other hand, I also feel his paper is a good example of what can happen when the word "community" enters the fray. "Community" is undoubtedly one of today's bandwagon words in the helping services, but it cannot immediately be assumed that its use in conjunction with some activity necessarily makes that activity any better than it was before. This seems to be, for example, largely the case for the American community mental health movement (Chu & Trotter, 1974). The whole point of my paper was that community psychology, at least in the view of some of its more enlightened prophets, represents a major new *philosophy* in applied psychology and as far as clinical psychology is concerned, a refreshing change from the tired old medically oriented mental health model of the past. In the "enlightened" view, the community psychologist is not considered so much to be a "practitioner/scientist", as Taylor suggests, as a "participant/conceptualizer" (Reiff, 1968), which means working alongside people, not "above" them as an

expert or "doctor". Yet there is little in Taylor's paper that suggests that the Victoria course is doing much more than finding a few community settings for people to work in. The nearest thing I see in his paper to "real" community psychology is where educational psychologists are acting as consultants to teachers and parents, and even this is at the "medical model" end of the scale. To repeat the core of the argument made in the original paper: what we need are psychologists who are committed to enhancing the power and resources of ordinary people at the community level, to learning how to operate effectively as system change agents, and to disseminating their psychological skills and knowledge on as widespread a basis as possible. Certainly the Victoria course is a step in the right direction. But what we need now is the journey of a thousand miles.

### References

- Chu, F.D., & Trotter, S. *The madness establishment*. New York: Grossman, 1974.
- Reiff, R. Social intervention and the problem of psychological analysis. *American Psychologist*, 1968, 23, 524-531.