The 1998 Society for Community Research and Action Award for Distinguished Contribution to Theory and Research in Community Psychology: N. Dickon Reppucci

Editor's Note: N. Dickon Reppucci was honored at the 106th annual meeting of the American Psychological Association in San Francisco, California, in August 1998. Dr. Reppucci received the Award for Distinguished Contribution to Theory and Research in Community Psychology, a career award given annually by the Society for Community Research and Action: Division of Community Psychology of the American Psychological Association. N. Dickon Reppucci was introduced by Rhona S. Weinstein and Edward P. Mulvey.

N. Dickon Reppucci

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS IN HONOR OF
N. DICKON REPPUCCI

It is a true pleasure for us to introduce N. Dickon Reppucci as the 1998 recipient of the Division 27 Distinguished Contribution Award for Research. This is an easy task, since Dick is so richly deserving of this honor. There is a seamless integration of Dick's research, his visionary leadership of Division 27, his mentoring and teaching, and simply, the kind of human being that Dick is. To do justice to Dick's contributions to research in community psychology is to speak to each of these. With vision, originality, and the highest standards of empirical research, Dick has defined and shaped a field of inquiry regarding children, mental health, and the law. Underlying this work is a keen love, understanding, and respect for children, a "political" sensitivity to social context, history, and the tides of change, an enduring appetite for hard and interesting questions, and an unabashed honesty.

It is likely that Dick’s keen interest in the ways of political influence was programmed at birth or may have emerged in his early childhood in the North End of Boston. His interest in children came later. These were shaped in part by his Harvard years where, in 1968, Dick received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology for a dissertation entitled "Antecedents of Conceptual Tempo in the Two-Year Old Child," conducted under the mentorship of Jerome Kagan. This early work in developmental psychology (and Jerry’s excitement) stimulated his interest in childhood: its meanings in the society and the effects of its definition on how children live through their different developmental challenges.

But Dick’s embracing of community psychology was nurtured by his intellectual father, Seymour Sarason, during Dick’s early faculty years (from 1968-1976) at Yale and at the Psycho-Educational Clinic. It was lunch at Jimmy’s where it all began. And it is to Seymour that Dick attributes his passion for the larger world, his realization that it is the question not the answer that is important, and his belief that no discipline has the corner on truth. These realizations fueled the kind of scholar, practitioner, and teacher that Dick became at Yale and later at Virginia. Seymour writes of these early days:

When Dick arrived at Psycho-Ed, I predicted that he would be a problem. For one thing, he exuded self-confidence, a characteristic I assumed he assimilated at Harvard. In addition, he never sugar-coated what he had to say; he had a directness that did not bode well for a life in academia where what is between the lines is more important than what is on them. Finally Dick took no pains to hide his generally negative assessment of psychoanalytic theory and therapy . . . So I was wrong! So shoot me, send bullets through me, I love him. Psycho-Ed was an academic crapshoot. Dick never rocked the Psycho-Ed boat on its way to academic heaven.