DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON VIDEO:

“Holding Ground: The Rebirth of Dudley Street” (60 minutes)

IN THE VIDEO WE SEE TWO KINDS OF MACRO SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE:
• “Community organizing” to build power
• “Community development” to build capacity for programs and services

CONSIDERING THE MAIN CHARACTERS WHO WERE NOT STAFF—NOT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ORGANIZERS, OR PLANNERS—WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE MIGHT COME TO YOU AS A CLINICIAN AND WHAT MIGHT BE THEIR PRESENTING PROBLEMS?
• Elderly resident, as young people moved out of the area and the city abandoned services to the neighborhood
• African American parent, as stench from illegal dumping of rotting meat overwhelmed her family
• Neighborhood resident, when displaced by “Negro removal” and forced to relocate to another neighborhood

HOW CAN WE HELP PEOPLE AND OURSELVES TO UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROBLEMS THAT ARE “OUT THERE” IN THE COMMUNITY AND THOSE THAT ARE “IN HERE” WITHIN THE FAMILY?
• We can ask a series of questions that enable them to analyze the connections for themselves—to wit:
  • What’s the problem? (The stench from an illegal dump.)
  • How do you accommodate the problem? (I keep all of our windows closed virtually all of the time.)
  • How does your accommodation of the problem create pressures for your family? (We don’t have air conditioning, so the apartment is often very hot. The children don’t want to come home after school and do their homework.)
  • How does that pressure affect relationships between members of the family? (There’s a lot of tension between children and I over the issue of
homework and not coming home after school; and there’s also tension between my husband and I because we disagree on the seriousness of the problem and how it should be handled.)

WHAT’S DOES THE VIDEO SAY ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL POWER, ECONOMIC POVERTY, AND INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOSOCIAL PROBLEMS?

WHAT WAS THE ROLE OF SPIRITUALITY, FAITH, AND RELIGION IN THE DUDLEY STREET NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE?

WHAT IS AN “AGITATOR”?  
• Common perception by people in power: a “troublemaker”  
• Macro practice with the powerless: someone who encourages people to recall the injuries and injustices they have experienced and, through their recollection, to motivate themselves to take action

WHAT WAS WRONG WITH THE INITIAL PLANNING PROCESS?  
• Top-down sponsored and directed  
• No local control or ownership  
• Single-issue (physical redevelopment)

HOW DID THE COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING PROCESS DIFFER?  
• Bottom-up sponsored and directed  
• Local ownership and control  
• Multi-issue (“revitalize the whole community”)

HOW WAS THE “ASSESSMENT” DONE TO DETERMINE THAT ILLEGAL DUMPING IN VACANT LOTS WAS THE FIRST ISSUE TO WORK ON?  
• Talking with people one-to-one at their doors.  
• What would be an important byproduct of that assessment method? (RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING)  
• Why is relationship-building important? (LAYS THE FOUNDATION OF COMMUNITY)

WHAT WAS THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF (AFTER THE INITIAL PLANNING FIASCO) TO THE RESIDENTS OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION?
• The administrator, planners, and organizers worked “for” rather “on” the neighborhood.
• They were employees of the neighborhood organization.
• They provided input to the neighborhood organization that, in turn, was on the input side of the political decision-making process.
• Contrast this to the convention top-down planning model in which planners are on the output side of the political decision-making process and neighborhood residents provide input (read non-binding “advice”) to the planners.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN THE ORGANIZER SAYS THAT THE ORGANIZING WAS BOTTOM-UP AND “WE MET TOGETHER IN THE MIDDLE”?
• The price of victory through organizing for power is a constructive alternative—that is, it’s not enough to get the other side to say “uncle,” one must then have a workable proposal that effectively deals with the problem, which is the community development dimension of the process.
• What an organization achieves is not the abject defeat and humiliation of an opponent but a relationship of mutual respect with the decision-maker and a seat at the figurative table where decisions are made.

WHAT IS “EMINENT DOMAIN” POWER AND HOW DID THE DUDLEY STREET NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION MANAGE TO GET IT?
• The power of government to take at fair market value all or part (e.g., an easement) of a private owner’s property rights for the benefit of the public “health, welfare, and morals.”
• They got it because they had built power and because it was in the self-interest of city hall. (What was that self-interest? Increasing the tax rolls by building new housing—which they couldn’t accomplish without the neighborhood organization.)
• They also got it because they could demonstrate an effective way to implement eminent domain takings through “grass-rooting” the process.

HOW LONG DID THE DUDLEY STREET NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE TAKE?
• It’s still going on!
• No community is every cured of all its ills—new ones are always emerging.
• Action by significant numbers of a community’s members is not a burden to be ended as soon as possible but the hallmark of vital community life to be sustained as long as possible.

HOW DO YOU ACCOUNT FOR THE CROSS-CULTURAL AND MULTI-ETHNIC COOPERATION THAT EMERGED THROUGH THE DUDLEY STREET NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE?
• The problems to be addressed came from the bottom up and were widely shared.
• They weren’t selected for intellectual or ideological reasons but because they were in the direct experience of a majority of the neighborhood’s residents.
• Fixing the stinking dumps, for example, served everyone’s direct self-interest.
• When people of different cultures and ethnicities have the opportunity to work together on issues that serve their common self-interest, color and culture tend to disappear.

APART FROM THE “WINS” OF PHYSICAL REDEVELOPMENT IN THE FORM OF NEW HOUSING, PARKS, AND CLEANUP, WHAT WERE SOME OF THE “BUILDS” ACHIEVED BY THE DUDLEY STREET NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE?
• A dynamic civic life in the community
• Development of a cadre of experienced community leaders
• A seat at the “table of power” in Boston city politics
• Community capacity to meet a variety of challenges, present and future
• Cross-cultural, multi-ethnic awareness, tolerance, and working relationships
• Meaningful involvement of young people in the adult civic life of the neighborhood
• Flourishing of personality (i.e., self-confidence and competence) of many individuals through their civic participation
• Improvement in the conditions of family life through removal of various external pressures (e.g., poor housing, dangers trash dumps, etc.)