



Experiences of Women Activists

Implications for Community Organizing Theory and Practice.

By

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Hyde C., (2001). Experiences of women activists: Implications for community organizing theory and practice. In J. E. Tropman, J. L. Erlich, and J. Rothman. Tactics and techniques of community intervention (4th ed., pp. 75-84). Illinois: Peacock



Current Trends

- Women's Issues
 - Poverty
 - Family
 - Reproductive Rights

Will be on national, state, and local agendas for years.

On women's issues

Where the presidential candidates stand:

| |  McGovern |  Obama |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Pay equity | Has said he supports equal pay for women, but opposed the 2007 Lilly Ledbetter Act on pay discrimination | Voted for the Ledbetter Act, co-sponsor of Paycheck Fairness Act; says stronger efforts against age discrimination are needed |
| Family leave | Supports Family Friendly Workplace Act to allow workers to bank unpaid overtime to use later | Supports extension of Family and Medical Leave Act; co-sponsor of bill to require most employers to provide up to seven days of paid sick leave for workers |
| Child care, early education | Proposes raising child exemption on personal income tax | Supports more funding for Head Start; challenge grants for states to give child care to preschoolers |
| Domestic violence | Voted against Violence Against Women Act in 1994 and 2007 | Would expand Family and Medical Leave Act to add time off for abuse victims |
| Reproductive rights | Wants Roe v. Wade repealed; voted against funding for federal family planning program; supports "abstinence only" sex education | Supports Roe v. Wade and reproductive choice; voted to increase access to family-planning services; supports comprehensive sex education |

Source: Economists' Policy Group for Women's Issues
 Graphic: Lee Hulteng, Judy Treible

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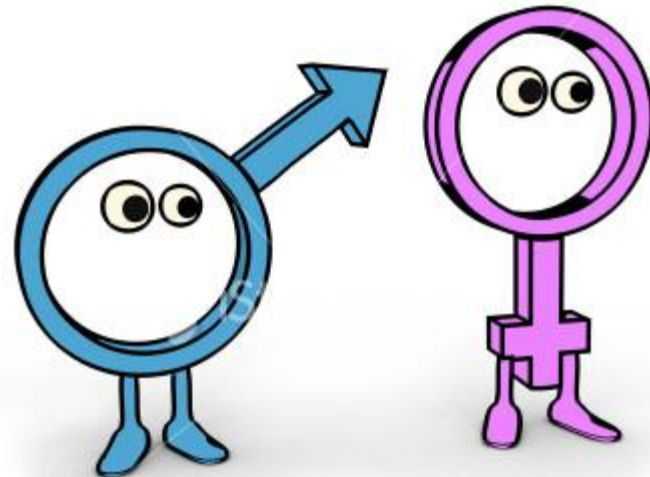
Background and Context

- Five Issues arose from qualitative research
 1. Reason's for becoming an activist
 2. How organizing is accomplished
 3. Structure of organization
 4. Gender dynamics within organization
 5. Type of training



Male vs Female Styles

- Masculine styles
 - Aggressive
 - Task-focused
 - Competitive traits
- Female Styles
 - Passive
 - Interpersonal-focused
 - Cooperative Traits



Reed (1981)

- Three areas gender differences influence the training of group leaders
 1. Assumptions about gender-related behaviors
 2. Gender composition of groups
 3. Group's reaction to female leaders



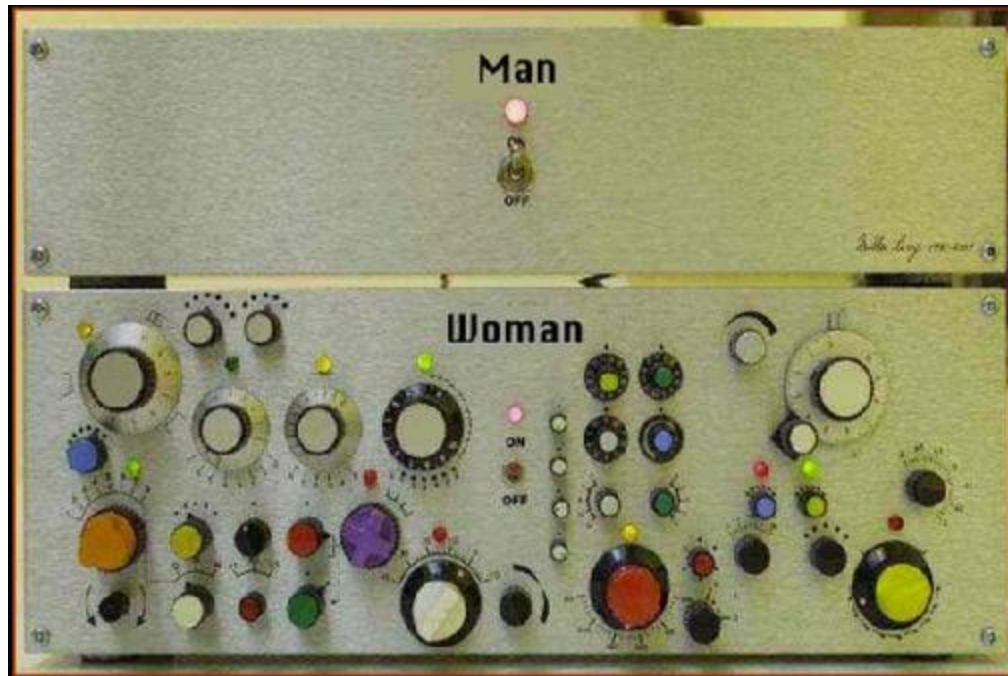
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Community Organizing Enhancement

- Better if greater integration of masculine and feminine characteristic occurred.
 - Stop dismissing feminine traits as weak and ineffective
 - Encourage men and women to acquire a more integrative style in their organizing

Process vs Task

- The Male and Female split



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Process Orientation

- Process orientation focus on HOW things are accomplished.
- Attention paid to development of trust
- Sensitivity
- Empathy
- Support among group members

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Task Orientation

- A product orientation focuses on what things get accomplished
- Efficiency
- Action,
- Rational order
- Task completion

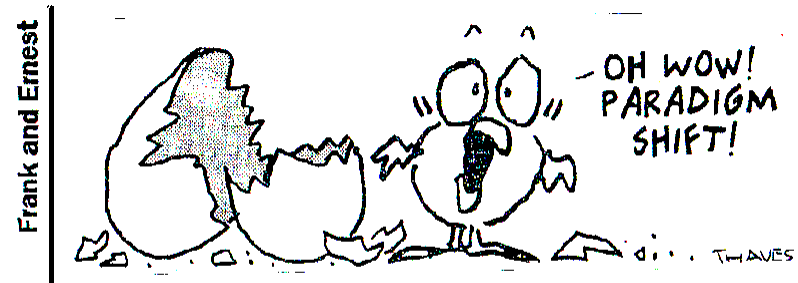


| Done | Name | Priority | Status | Category |
|--------------------------|--|----------|---------|------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Monitor positions in Google for main key | Normal | Created | Daily Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Analyze website traffic | High | Created | Daily Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Track purchase source place | Normal | Created | Daily Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Read software marketing forum | Lowest | Created | Personal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Read marketing articles | Normal | Created | Personal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Meet the sales department | Low | Created | Meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Meet the development department | Normal | Created | Meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Meet the technical support department | Urgent | Created | Meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Meet the president | Normal | Created | Meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Call to Advertising Company | Urgent | Created | Calls |

Emerging Paradigm - The Wholistic Collective Practice Paradigm

- Four Dimensions

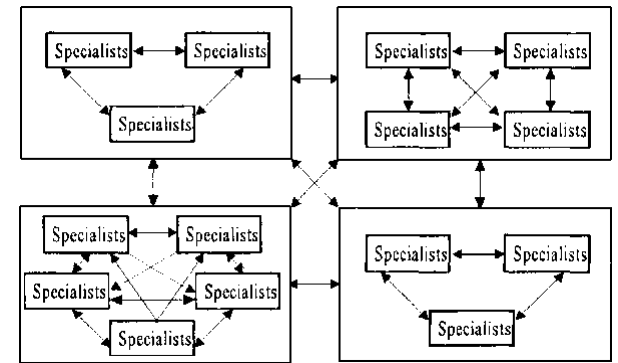
- Structural
- Strategic
- Relational
- Subjective



- Organizing is the process of connecting the four dimensions

Structural

- Focuses on the organization
- Its purpose
- Development
- Apparatus and Positions
- Connections between organizations



Strategic

- Action Aspects of practice
- Emphasis placed on the strategy
- Tactical steps are considered a subunit of this dimension



Themes

- The Wholistic Organizer
 - Total Engagement or investment
 - Alienation felt when emotions were denied
 - Should not focus solely on what is being done
 - We need to incorporate the intellectual and emotional needs of individuals and the collective.



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The Wholistic Organizer

- Avoids the power dynamic between organizer and group.
 - That puts too much emphasis on the organizer as expert , leads to burnout
 - Where a group becomes too dependent on organizer expertise
 - That closes the door as far as the organizer’s learning.
- Delegation, support, interdependence and acknowledgment that everyone can contribute something.



Fulfillment through Organizing

- Not just a goal – is a fulfilling process in and of itself.
- The learning and support gained while organizing become as meaningful as achieving the product



Personal as Political: the Indigenous Organizer

- Not just organize and leave.
- Became involved because of the problem or issue was personally experienced
- Driven by the need to gain knowledge and disseminate that knowledge

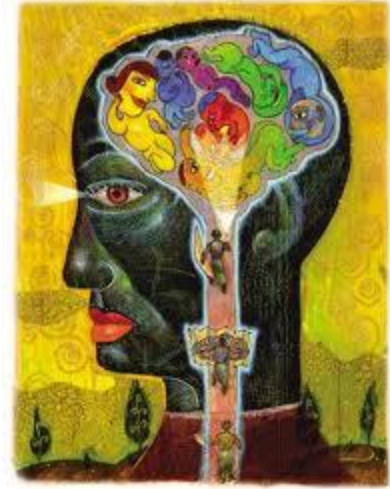


Problems with male dominated organizations

- Early participants in the women's movement endured degrading and humiliating treatment within the leftist and student movements of the 60s.
- Demands for equality were scoffed at and ignored.
- Women caucuses began to be formed – springboard for the feminist movement.



Use of Emotions



- In many organizing efforts, emotions, provided the cornerstone.
- Women stressed the importance of bonding
- People getting to know each other
- Attention to emotional or personal needs improves the overall organizing effort.
- “I learned if a person feels important, they will help and get involved.” (Is this a feeling?”

Attention to the Environment

- “Safe” environment was essential to developing these interpersonal sides of organizing.
- Trust, respect, equality, and validation of an individuals experiences.
- Most of the women stated that a safe environment was “all female”.



Safe environment has conflict

- You have to take considerable time in determining a consensus style that was accessible and available to all participants.
- Feelings get heard resulting in subtle adjustment in the actual plan.



Gender Dynamics

- Men seem to be dealing with power issues, of wanting power.



- Women are more trusting, more sensitive, more able to communicate and relate to others.



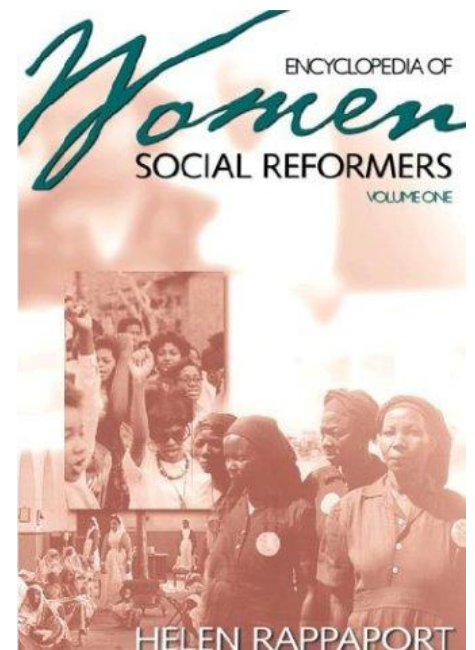
Bridging the Difference

- Confront one's own biases –don't ignore them.
- Internal group prejudices are addressed.
- Failure to address your own prejudices will lead to divisiveness, anger, frustration, and, ultimately, disintegration.



Women's Culture and History

- Every women had a female role model who served as a source of inspiration and courage.
- Community organizing needs to rediscover the female organizers or it's past.



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Training

- Concern to the field of community organizing is the resentment felt toward the increased professionalization of the field.

“All I’m getting is a piece of paper that says I’m qualified.”

