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Community Activism and Feminist Politics. Nancy A. Naples (Ed.). Reviewed by Cheryl Hyde, San Francisco State University

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Nancy Naples (Ed.), *Community Activism and Feminist Politics*,
  New York: Routledge, 1998. $75.00 hardcover, $23.99 paper-
  cover.

Community Activism and Feminist Politics is a fascinating and
impressive collection of scholarship on women's efforts to secure
some measure of social and economic justice. With feminist theory
as the foundation, this book sits at the intersection of research
on social movements, community building, empowerment, and
grassroots mobilization. Perhaps more important, the contribut-
ing authors demonstrate how to theorize across race, class and
gender in integrative and dynamic ways.

The book is organized into four sections: challenging cate-
gories and frameworks, transforming politics, networking for
change, and constructing community. A broad array of issues
is covered—domestic violence, wage equity, labor organizing,
housing, immigration rights and the environment. While all cases
are set in the United States, there is remarkable diversity of popu-
lations and experiences. The reader learns of attempts to organize
a Korean women's hotline, build and sustain lesbian culture,
engage in school reform in an African American community,
challenge toxic dumping through the actions of white working
class women, fight for decent labor conditions as Latina immi-
grants and domestic workers, and so forth. Even though these
campaigns occur on the community level, one is struck by the
impact that globalization has on everyday lives.

The shared thread among these cases is that all "challenge
deeply rooted patriarchal and heterosexist traditions, [and] con-
front the limits of democracy in the United States". Not all efforts,
however, are successful; though one is amazed (and perhaps
humbled) by the continuing struggles in the face of sometimes
widespread adversity. It should be noted that because of the
condition of including campaigns that "challenge patriarchy",
mobilization by women of the New Right is absent from the
book. While not suited for this collection, the organizing efforts
of this population are also worthy of study. The rightwing has
experienced considerable success on local, regional and national
levels; gender politics, specifically the role and participation of
women, has been central to these efforts.

It is obvious that this book is well suited for macro practice in social work. The many facets of grassroots social change can be quite complex and the efforts presented help in understanding the intricacies of organizing. This collection successfully challenges the traditional community organization models within social work. These accounts do not fit into neatly defined paradigms that seem to be the mainstay of many c.o. texts.

Many of the chapters are also appropriate for HBSE, policy and research. There is, for example, considerable attention paid to the development of new relationships (as women join together) and the renegotiation of others (mostly with husbands and children). Many of the struggles aim at changing policy on organizational, community or state levels. The contributors employ qualitative techniques and in doing so demonstrate the depth of insight that can come from this methodology. Virtually all are activists and scholars, thereby bringing a unique perspective to the research.

Perhaps the greatest use that this book has for social work is in its multicultural framework. Gender, race, class, sexual orientation and citizenship are woven together, not treated as separate categories. The contributors illustrate how, through these collective struggles, the various facets of culture inform, challenge, and subvert one another. Much of the research on cultural identity within social work tends to treat these dimensions as "add-ons" (first women, then women of color, etc.). This collection suggests the power of a more holistic approach, in which no one signifier is reified. This is a much more complicated, and often slippery, means of conveying and understanding multicultural identity. In the end, it provides greater depth and insight.

Despite this dovetailing with social work, there is little use of relevant social work scholarship. In fact, none of the recent work of women's community organizing is cited (social work is similarly guilty, since that research often neglects sociological research). This is more than an unfortunate lack of borrowing across disciplines. Ultimately, the lack of an interdisciplinary lens, on both sides, means a loss in fully understanding the struggles of grassroots activists.

Nonetheless, as editor, Nancy Naples should be commended for assembling this collection. It is a compelling blend of theory

and practice through a feminist lens. It demonstrates the richness of using a truly multicultural framework for analysis. This book is a testament to the hard fought struggles for justice by "everyday" women.

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Meredith Minkler and Carroll L. Estes (eds.), *Critical Gerontology: Perspectives from Political and Moral Economy*. New York: Baywood Publishing co., 1999, $ 35.00 hardcover.

Some contemporary social science research and policy analyses seeks to explain who gets what, when, where, how, and why by examining the interdependency of social, economic, political, and cultural factors that shape policies. The emphasis on systemic factors is characteristic of various models used to analyze social policies for economically vulnerable populations, such as welfare recipients and many of the elderly. One impetus for comprehensive macro analytical frameworks in research and analysis is the growing recognition of dynamic and complex processes that form the basis of poverty for any population, including: inadequate social programs, low wages, single parenthood, mental illness, drug and alcohol addictions and abuses, discrimination, inadequate education, and other factors that contribute to marginalization. Thus, macro analytical tools are helping to reshape conceptualization of poverty by examining the characteristics of low-income individuals who are "socially excluded." While there is no single explicit definition of social exclusion, it generally refers to an individual's restricted access to employment, cash transfers and personal social services, as well as to avenues of participation in decisions about programs and policies that affect them.

Analytical frameworks, such as those concerned with issues of social exclusion, examine diverse causal factors that tend to view the concept of poverty as multidimensional. They are particularly attentive to the constantly evolving environmental factors that can prolong economic and social dependency. Recent studies on social exclusion of low-income groups in Europe, for example, use analytical methods that seek to understand social features