

ABSTRACT

WOMEN IN POLITICAL "MOVEMENT"

Doctor's dissertation at the Department of Sociology,
University of Gothenburg, Karl Johansgatan 27, S-414 59 Göteborg, Sweden.
Monograph no 37, 1987. ISBN 91-7900-283-8. ISSN 0072-5102.
English text, 144 pages.

Keywords: women's political potential, women's culture, new social movements, empowerment.

These collected articles contribute in various ways to the development of a theory of women's political potential, as well as to the development of the methods through which we can access women's political potential. Women's political potential is defined as the mobilization of power by women, together with women or together with men, with the expressed purpose of changing the historical societal situation. Rather than approaching power in its traditional "negative sense" as domination and control, the emphasis here is upon power in its "positive sense" as effective interaction and energy, that is, as EMPOWERMENT. Women's political potential is thereby the process whereby power is actualized in new and emancipatory forms and mobilized through the formation of groups of women (or women and men) with collective identities and purposes. Women's political potential, in this emancipatory sense, poses a challenge to political structures and institutions based on dominance and offers alternative visions for their transformation.

The study begins with an analysis of the context of women's socio-political values, i.e. women's culture, as well as an analysis of the political articulation of these values. The gender-sex dimension is offered as a taxonomy of potential political interests and issues whereby quantitative empirical differences between men's and women's political values and activity can be organized. This static approach to an understanding of women's political potential is complemented and reformulated with an action approach which focuses upon women's political praxis in social movement politics. It is argued that by following the population women in their path of social movement activity we can ascertain the changing collective socio-political identities upon which women are actively formulating changing visions and alternatives for the future and whereby they are applying changing political strategies for their achievement. That is, we can attain a dynamic understanding of the process of power mobilization by women, i.e. women's political potential.

Women's political potential is even empirically analyzed with studies of women's involvement in the peace movement and in the environmental movement in Sweden. This involvement is analyzed as a politics of reproduction which leads to conflicting strategies exemplifying contradictions inherent in the wider Swedish women's movement, as well as contradictions inherent in the women's movement throughout the world today.