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COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION PRACTICE:
AN ELABORATION OF ROTHMAN'S TYPOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Four change approaches encompass much purposive social change at the community level: locality development, traditional planning, advocacy planning and social action. Locality development and traditional planning are similar on at least six dimensions, as are advocacy planning and social action. On two other dimensions similarities exist between locality development and social action and between traditional planning and advocacy planning. If social change practitioners are to select the most effective strategies for the situations in which they will act, it is essential that they understand the characteristics and assumptions of these approaches.

Introduction

For those concerned with community organization, there is a sense in which the 1950's can be characterized as the decade of locality development and the 1960's as the decade of social action. If current trends continue social planning may achieve ascendancy in the 1970's. This paper takes account of this growing concern for planning and raises the question -- planning for whom? Specifically we are concerned with the growing emphasis on advocacy in social planning and with the implications of this for a heuristic model of social change strategies. Beginning with Rothman's¹ typology, we show how it can be elaborated to more accurately depict current changes in social planning and then suggest some implications of the new model for understanding, selecting and mixing change strategies.

Rothman's Typology

In his important and much cited paper, "Three Models of Community Organization Practice," Jack Rothman² suggested that three models (and combinations thereof) can be used to describe much of the activities of persons and groups involved

¹Jack Rothman's paper, "Three Models of Community Organization Practice," was included in both the 1970 and 1972 editions of Cox, F. M., et al. (eds.), Strategies of Community Organization, Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock Publishers, 1970 and 1972. Both editions of the book were organized around the three models proposed by Rothman.

²Ibid.

in purposive social change at the community level. He called these locality development, social action and social planning.

Rothman's locality development model is basically the "community development" approach which has received much attention in United Nations publications on village level development activities and in the literature in rural sociology and social work.³ Among the important characteristics of the locality development approach are its emphasis on development of indigenous leadership, local initiative, self-help, and participation by large numbers of community members. The roles of the change agents usually include those of enabler, coordinator and teacher of problem-solving skills. Locality development projects usually involve specific task goals (e.g., building a community facility, such as a school), plus more general process goals concerned with developing community problem solving capacity.⁴ Examples of the locality development approach listed by Rothman⁵ include: "neighborhood work programs conducted by settlement houses; village level work in some overseas community development programs, including the Peace Corps; community work in the adult education field; and activities of the allied 'group dynamics' professionals." The locality development approach is further summarized in Appendix Table 1. (Our Table 1 is an elaboration of Rothman's Table 1.1.)⁶

Turning now to Rothman's social action model, familiar examples include much of the early labor union activity, the civil rights activities of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, welfare rights advocacy of the National Welfare Rights Organization, and the work of Saul Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation.⁷ The social action approach:

"... presupposes a disadvantaged segment of the population that needs to be organized, perhaps in alliance with others, in order to make adequate

³An example of the literature on this approach and an article which explores the assumptions behind the community development approach is Sanders, Irwin, T., "Community Development Programs in Sociological Perspective" in Copp, James H. (ed.), Our Changing Rural Society, Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1964, pp. 307-340. See also Dunham, Arthur, "Some Principles of Community Development," International Review of Community Development, No. 11, pp. 141-151.

⁴Ibid.; Rothman, op. cit.

⁵Rothman, 1972, ibid.

⁶Ibid., pp. 26-27. The locality development and social action columns in Table 1 are reproduced from Rothman, the traditional planning and advocacy planning columns are new. Rothman had only one column for social planning.

⁷For a statement of the philosophy behind much social action activity see Alinsky's, Reveille for Radicals, New York: Random House, 1946 and Sanders, Marion K., The Professional Radical, Conversations with Saul Alinsky, New York: Harper and Row, 1965. See also Flacks, Richard, "On Participatory Democracy," in Deutsch, Steven E., and Howard, John (eds.), Where It's At, New York: Harper and Row, 1970, pp. 121-129.

demands on the larger community for increased resources or treatment more in accordance with social justice or democracy. It aims at making basic changes in major institutions or community practices. Social action as employed here seeks redistribution of power, resources, or decision making in the community and/or changing basic policies of formal organizations."⁸

The social action approach is characterized by the use of contest strategies; change agent roles include: activist-advocate, agitator, broker, negotiator, and partisan.⁹ Additional characteristics of the social action approach are listed in Appendix Table 1.

The social planning approach is concerned with the application of technical skills and expertise to public problems, with emphasis on rational, deliberative decision making and planning. The approach is task oriented and community participation is usually not emphasized. As visualized by Rothman social planners gather facts, analyze situations, and use their technical skills to develop and implement programs.

"The approach presupposes that change in a complex industrial environment requires expert planners who, through the exercise of technical abilities, including the ability to manipulate large bureaucratic organizations, can skillfully guide complex change processes."¹⁰

Social planning is used at various levels of government and in numerous public agencies.¹¹ In recent years the social planning approach has received much attention in the areas of urban renewal and health planning.

Rothman's framework is useful as a guide both for analysis and for action. It is not without problems, however, and it is our contention that some changes in the framework provide additional insights and make it even more useful.

Elaboration of the Typology

The major problem lies in Rothman's social planning model. Within the field of planning a distinction is increasingly being made between what we will call "traditional" planning and "advocacy" planning. While both approaches are based on

⁸Rothman, 1972 op. cit., p. 24.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 24.

¹¹Lindblom has raised serious questions about the extent to which rational social planning on complex problems does, or even can, occur. See Lindblom, Charles E., "The Science of Muddling Through," in Cox, Fred M., et. al., 1970, op. cit., pp. 291-301.

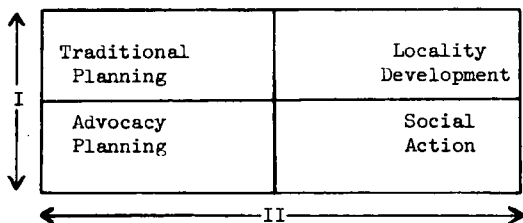
the application of technical skills to the planning process, in other respects they are very different. Some of these differences are indicated in Table 1 in the Appendix. In row 2 of Table 1, we see that while the traditional planner is concerned with substantive social problems such as health and housing, the advocate planner is not only concerned with these but also with disadvantaged populations, with social injustice, deprivations and inequality. In row 4 of Table 1 the traditional planner tends to emphasize collaborative or campaign tactics¹² while the advocate planner is more likely to use conflict or contest tactics. Row 5 indicates that the most significant practitioner roles for the traditional planner are fact-gathering, analysis, and program implementation. The advocate planner emphasizes these but also performs activist-advocate roles. In row 7 traditional planners are usually employed or sponsored by members of the power structure while the power structure is a target for action for advocate planners (even though advocate planners are sometimes employed in "establishment" positions). The traditional planner usually defines the total community as the client system or constituency while the advocate planner is primarily concerned with the interests of a population segment (row 8). The traditional planner is likely either not to be concerned about whose interests are being served or to assume that the interest of community members are reconcilable; to the advocate planner community interests are not easily reconcilable (row 9). And so on ... (See Appendix Table 1). Rothman's model fails to consider these differences.

Splitting social planning into traditional planning and advocacy planning makes it possible to present the four change approaches in a four-fold table. When the approaches are arranged as in Figure 1, some important relationships between the approaches appear. Most importantly we see that on one set of dimensions (the vertical dimensions) traditional planning and locality development are similar and can be paired; advocacy planning and social action can also be paired. On another set of dimensions (the horizontal dimensions) the two planning approaches are paired (similar) and locality development and social action are paired. Examination of these vertical and horizontal dimensions (Figure 1) reveals that the covariation of the dimensions (and thus the pairing combinations) is not merely coincidental.

Compared with traditional planning and locality development, change agents using advocacy planning or social action are more likely: to view members of the power structure as targets for action rather than as allies or employers (IA in Figure 1), to assume that the interests of the various population segments are in conflict rather than reconcilable (to see issue dissensus rather than issue consensus or issue difference)¹³ (IB in Figure 1), to claim to be serving only a population segment rather than the interests of all community members (IC), to see persons they are serving as victims rather than consumers or citizens (ID) and,

¹²For further consideration of collaborative, campaign and contest strategies, see Warren, Roland, "Types of Purposive Social Change at the Community Level," in Kramer, Ralph M. and Specht, Harry (eds.), Readings in Community Organization Practice, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969, pp. 205-222.

¹³Ibid.



I. Vertical Dimensions

- A. Orientation toward power structure--as allies or employers or as targets.
- B. Extent to which interests of population segments are viewed as reconcilable.
- C. Extent to which client system is assumed to be the entire community rather than a population segment.
- D. Extent to which those in whose interests change is to occur are viewed as citizens or consumers rather than victims.
- E. Willingness of change agents and partisans to use conflict (or contest) strategies.
- F. Degree of commitment required of change agents and partisans.

II. Horizontal Dimensions

- A. Task oriented vs. process oriented.
- B. Emphasis on rational-technical analysis and decision making.

FIGURE 1 A Framework for Analyzing Change Strategies at the Community Level.

thus, they are more likely to use conflict or contest strategies, rather than collaborative or campaign strategies (IE). Because their activities are often controversial and they are subject to reprisals, if they are to continue their activities over an extended period of time, change agents and partisans involved in social action and advocacy planning must have a high level of commitment (IF).

Compared with locality development and social action, change agents using either of the two planning approaches are somewhat more likely: to be task oriented rather than process oriented (II A in Figure 1) and to emphasize rational-technical decision making based on research and expertise (II B).

Because of these pairings of strategies on the two sets of dimensions the likelihood of moving directly from one strategy to another (and the likelihood of mixing strategies) is greater if the two strategies are adjacent than if they are diagonally opposite in Figure 2. This is because strategies which are adjacent are similar on at least some of the eight dimensions discussed above (on one set) while strategies which are diagonally opposite are different on all eight dimensions (on both sets). Thus, for example, change agents using traditional planning would be more likely to move to locality development or advocacy planning than to social action, since either of these moves would only require change along one set of

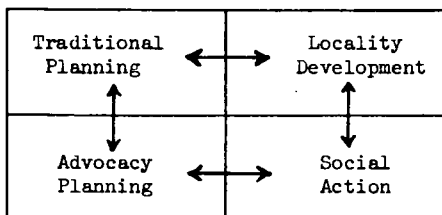


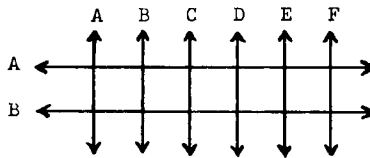
FIGURE 2. Predicted Paths of Movement Among Strategies.

dimensions rather than both. This is not to suggest, however, that change or mixing strategies across the diagonals on Figure 2 is impossible but rather that it is less likely. Even when adjacent strategies are combined this must be done very carefully because of differences between them.

The author's experience in rural places has been that decisions to emphasize social action often result in antagonisms which restrict one's ability to use locality development both concurrently and later. On the other hand, decisions to emphasize locality development usually result in reduced willingness to use the contest strategies which characterize the social action approach, because the use of such strategies might threaten the consensus, "good will," and open communications which are so important in locality development. This is not to suggest that these strategies cannot be mixed but, rather, that if they are this must be done very carefully since the tactics, and the very assumptions on which the approaches are based, are different.

Our presentation so far shares a problem with Rothman's presentation. This is the problem of possible reification of the approaches (strategies). The four approaches are ideal types and are presented as an aid for categorizing, analyzing and understanding activity. In reality, change agents can be expected to mix strategies. And any particular change agent or group of partisans will not necessarily assume the same position on all of the dimensions in either the horizontal or vertical sets. For these reasons it is useful to also present the framework in terms of only the dimensions and without the labels of the four ideal-typical approaches. This we have done in Figure 3.

Some may find Figure 3 more satisfying than Figures 1 and 2 since Figure 3 more explicitly suggests variation along continua rather than discrete categories of action. Figure 3 suggests that in characterizing a change program it may be more accurate to describe it in terms of the eight dimensions rather than simply in terms of the four categories or approaches. Many, if not most, change programs will involve substrategies or tactics which will differ from each other on one or more of the eight dimensions.



- I. Vertical Dimensions
 - A. Orientation toward power structure -- as allies or employers or as targets.
 - B. Extent to which interests of population segments are viewed as reconcilable.
 - C. Extent to which client system is assumed to be the entire community rather than a population segment.
 - D. Extent to which those in whose interests change is to occur are viewed as citizens or consumers rather than victims.
 - E. Willingness of change agents and partisans to use conflict (or contest) strategies.
 - F. Degree of commitment required of change agents and partisans.
- II. Horizontal Dimension
 - A. Task oriented vs process oriented
 - B. Emphasis on rational-technical analysis and decision making.

FIGURE 3. Paired Dimensions of Social Change

A Note on Advocacy Planning

In a recent book edited by Cloward and Piven,¹⁴ Piven is very critical of advocacy planning, arguing that while advocacy planning is growing as a method of practice, so far it has accomplished little for the poor and the movement is potentially detrimental to their interests.

"Although the language is new, this kind of advocacy follows a long tradition of neighborhood councils in the sums, ... In the past such participation absorbed slum leadership and rendered it ineffective. That may well be the chief result of current planning advocacy. It deflects conflict by pre-occupying newcomers to city politics with procedures that pose little threat to entrenched interests. It is a strategy which thus promotes political stability in the city. But if the force of the poor depends on the threat of instability, planning advocacy does little to promote equity."¹⁵

¹⁴Cloward, Richard A. and Piven, Frances F. (eds.), The Politics of Turmoil, New York: Random House, 1974.

¹⁵Piven, Frances F., "Whom Does the Advocate Planner Serve?" in Cloward, Richard A. and Piven, Frances F., ibid., p. 48.

Piven's reaction is in part a reflection of her notion of advocacy planning. In her view, advocacy planning is long on planning and short on advocacy. In the framework of this paper, her conception is one which emphasizes similarities to traditional planning (the two horizontal dimensions) and de-emphasizes similarities to social action (the six vertical dimensions). That this is her view, is further suggested by the examples of advocacy planning she cites and by the following:

"Implicit in the advocate planner's view also is the notion that the urban poor can influence these decisions once they are given the technical help of the planner -- or better still, once they actually learn the technical skills of planning."¹⁶

Thus, it appears that Piven is criticizing only some forms and applications of advocacy planning rather than the idea itself. Our reaction is shared by Hartman¹⁷ and Arnstein¹⁸, both of whose views of advocacy planning emphasize social action.

"It seems to me, however, that she is describing only one kind of advocacy planning and that her observations ought to be considered not as a put-down to advocacy planners generally but as a corrective, at a time when the movement is still in its formative stage, to what clearly can be reactionary results from their work."¹⁹

Arnstein²⁰ suggests that in comparison to an older model of advocacy planning, "which was conceived and originally promoted by well-meaning, socially oriented city planners and architects," newer approaches have developed which view "the planning process per se as only one prong" in a three prong community change approach.

"Such an advocacy planning model does not preclude street strategies. On the contrary, it incorporates them into a community group's spectrum of possible actions and reactions to be drawn upon when appropriate. It recognizes that the issue is not whether the poor need sticks or pencils to achieve social equity. The fact is that they need both: sticks to gain and hold the attention of powerholders, and pencils to articulate their priorities and aspirations."²¹

¹⁶Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁷Hartman, Chester A., "The Advocate Planner: From "Hired Gun" to Political Partisan," in Cloward, Richard A. and Piven, Frances F., op. cit., pp. 59-63.

¹⁸Arnstein, Sherry R., "But Which Advocate Planner," in Cloward, Richard A. and Piven, Frances F., op. cit., pp. 54-55.

¹⁹Hartman, op. cit., p. 59.

²⁰Arnstein, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

²¹Arnstein, ibid., p. 55.

The issues raised by Piven are important because whether the impact of advocacy planning is reactionary or not may well depend on the extent to which "pencils" rather than "sticks" are used. At one end we have traditional planning which tends to be reactionary; at the other is social action. When the two are combined we have advocacy planning, in which, as Hartman suggests, "above all the advocate planner should employ his professional skills as a node around which political organizing can take place."²² That such an approach can bring about important social change is exemplified by the experiences of the Health Policy Advisory Center (Health-PAC) in New York.²³

Selecting Strategies

If community change practitioners are to be effective, it is essential that they select strategies on the basis of careful and realistic assessment of the structure and dynamics of the situations in which they will act. To do this they must be aware of the range of approaches which are available to them and of the characteristics and assumptions of these approaches. Hopefully they will be more effective in the selection of tactics and action if they carefully consider the four approaches and the eight dimensions discussed here.

²²Hartman, op. cit., p. 62.

²³For more on Health-PAC see Ehrenreich, Barbara and Ehrenreich, John, The American Health Empire: Power, Profits, and Politics, New York: Random House, 1970 and Rosen, Sumner M., "Sumner M. Rosen Comments," in Cloward, Richard A. and Piven, Frances F., op. cit., pp. 48-51.

APPENDIX

Table 1

FOUR APPROACHES TO SOCIAL CHANGE AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL²⁴

	Locality Development	Traditional Planning	Advocacy Planning	Social Action
1. Goal categories of community action	Self-help; community capacity and integration (process goals)	Problem-solving with regard to substantive community problems (task goals)	Problem-solving with regard to sub-community problems, shifting of resources (task goals)	Shifting of power relationships and resources; basic institutional change (task or process goals)
2. Assumptions concerning community structure and problem conditions	Community eclipsed, anomie; lack of relationships and democratic problem-solving capacities; static traditional community	Substantive social problems: mental and physical health, housing, recreation	Disadvantaged populations, social injustice, inequity	Disadvantage populations, social injustice, deprivation, inequity
3. Basic change strategy	Broad cross section of people involved in determining and solving their own problems	Fact-gathering about problems and decisions on the most rational course of action	Fact-gathering about problems and decisions to represent interests of client population	Crystallization of issues and organization of people to take action against enemy targets
4. Characteristic change tactics and techniques	Consensus: communication among community groups and interests; group discussion	Consensus	Campaign or contest	Conflict or contest confrontation, direct action, negotiation
5. Salient practitioner roles	Enabler-catalyst, coordinator; teacher of problem-solving skills and ethical values	Fact-gatherer and analyst, program implementer, facilitator	Fact-gatherer and analyst plus activist-advocate, partisan	Activist-advocate: agitator, broker negotiator, partisan
6. Medium of change	Manipulation of small task-oriented groups	Manipulation of formal organizations and data	Manipulation of data and of program support by client population	Manipulation of mass organizations and political processes

Table 1 (continued)

	Locality Development	Traditional Planning	Advocacy Planning	Social Action
7. Orientation toward power structure(s)	Members of power structure as collaborators in a common venture	Power structure as employers and sponsors	Power structure as target for action	Power structure as external target of action: oppressors to be coerced or overturned
8. Boundary definition of the community client system or constituency	Total geographic community	Total community or community segment	Community segment	Community segment
9. Assumptions regarding interests of community sub-parts	Common interests or reconcilable differences	Common interests or reconcilable differences	Conflicting interests which are not easily reconcilable: scarce resources	Conflicting interests which are not easily reconcilable: scarce resources
10. Conception of the public interest	Rationalist-unitary	Idealist-unitary	Realist-individualist	Realist-individualist
11. Conception of the client population or constituency	Citizens	Consumers	Victims	Victims
12. Conception of client role	Participants in interactional problem-solving process	Consumers or recipients	Constituents and consumers or recipients	Employers, constituents, members

²⁴This table is an elaboration of Table 1.1 in Rothman, 1972, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.