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Zander, A. (1971). Motives and goals in groups. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

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ABSTRACT

There is a wide range of potentially practical information from social psychology on community group formation and functioning. Relevant areas include attitude change and social influence; leadership; group dynamics; negotiation, cooperation, and competition; task vs. social orientation; equity theory (including cost-benefit analysis); decision-making; comparative norms; cognitive social learning theory; ecological psychology; and social ecology. This book represents a valuable contribution toward filling the gap in applying social psychological knowledge to community problems and community organizations. It includes chapters on the types of groups that engage in social action (e.g., groups tied to particular social movements, personal or societal improvement associations, political pressure groups, locally organized community action groups and pseudogovernmental councils, and welfare rights organizations), conditions favoring the formation of groups (e. g., perception of a shared problem, ideas for improvement, and expectancies of success), group characteristics (e.g., group structure and style), the motives of group members, and strategies for leaders to use in mobilizing members. The book has several limitations, however. Although Zander succeeds in hitting a midrange target between his research and community leader audiences, it is not clear how well he does in the exceedingly difficult task of reaching both simultaneously. He does a much better job of citing many of the important sources on citizen participation, empowerment, and community action than Alinsky would. However, one weak point is that for a book that attempts to cover so much ground, it also ignores quite a bit of recent literature in those areas.

**Social Psychology as Social Action**

If you are like many psychologists, you may volunteer some of your time and energy to assisting a citizen group, such as a PTA, block, neighborhood, or tenant association, environmental or crime prevention group, or advisory council. But do you ever consult the psychological literature to help a community group become more effective and efficient, or do you see your involvement as something you do, or would like to do, in your spare time as strictly an "outside" (i.e., nonprofessional) activity? Most people who are involved in community groups, even psychologists, have generally ignored the relevant research findings in social psychology. By doing so, they have failed to take advantage of a wide range of potentially practical information on group formation and functioning. Relevant areas of social psychology include attitude change and social influence; leadership; group dynamics; negotiation, cooperation, and competition; task vs. social orientation; equity theory (including cost-benefit analysis); decision-making; comparative norms; cognitive social learning theory; ecological psychology; and social ecology.

This book represents a valuable contribution toward filling this gap in applying social psychological knowledge to community problems and community organizations. It includes chapters on: the types of groups that engage in social action (e.g., groups tied to particular social movements, personal or societal improvement associations, political pressure groups, locally organized community action groups and pseudo-governmental councils, and welfare rights organizations); conditions favoring the formation of groups (e.g., perception of a shared problem, ideas for improvement, expectancies of success); group characteristics (e.g., group structure, style); the motives of group members and strategies for leaders to use in mobilizing members. Zander considers the "heart" of the book to be the chapters covering 11 methods that groups can use to influence people in power. These methods range from gently persuasive (such as disseminating information) to cooperative problem solving to such coercive tactics as protest actions, threats, and even taking hostages. (Although the book discusses violent tactics, it neither advocates nor discourages their use.) For each method, Zander describes typical examples, why the method is chosen, its effects, and how it can be used effectively. Then he discusses how to select the appropriate method for a particular group and how the targeted decision makers may respond to the various methods community groups use. The last chapter provides a summary and a provocative list of research questions for researchers interested in small groups and group dynamics.

Zander wrote the book for two audiences: for members and leaders of community voluntary associations and for researchers interested in the organization and operation of such groups. Zander focuses on group dynamics issues and also on important leadership and tactical approach issues. He has written a book that appears to be based on personal experience and a scattered selection of the relevant social science literature (from social and community psychology, political science, sociology, and the field of community development). By doing so, he offers a more complete and practical understanding of many causes of success or failure of community action organizations.

Perhaps the strongest aspect of the book is the author's ability to view social action dynamics from the different perspectives of group members, group leaders, and "target" change agents (i.e., decision makers). Other books on organizing (e.g., Alinsky, 1971; Kahn, 1982) have done a good job in prescribing methods of organizing and methods of social action, especially for leaders. But few have been able to effectively put the reader in the shoes of interested, but independent allies, or opponents of change.

The book has several limitations, however. Although Zander succeeds in hitting a mid-range target between his research and community leader audiences, it is not clear how well he did in the exceedingly difficult task of reaching both simultaneously. He does a much better job of citing many of the important sources on citizen participation, empowerment and community action than an Alinsky would. But one weak point is that, for a book that attempts to cover so much ground, it also ignores quite a bit of recent literature in those areas (e.g., Boyte & Riessman, 1986; Kramer & Specht, 1983; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). (Also, much of the social psychological works cited are old, which may be more of a comment on when the relevant social psychology research was conducted.)

Although a thorough review of the current state of the relevant research literature is needed, we admit that that would be a tall order. And Zander may have made a conscious decision not to overload a hoped-for non-academic audience with voluminous discussion and documentation of the many complexities and nuances in the research literature. But the result of this aim for accessibility is that the book has a tendency to overgeneralize its points into something of a cookbook of rules as to how "people behave" and prescriptions for how to use or change that behavior. This may make for a handy quick reference guide for practitioners of community action, but social scientists may want to take exception with the lack of qualification of some of Zander's statements.

The book describes why community groups have generally organized in the past. It is limited, however, in that it assumes their organization and citizens' involvement in them as a precondition. There is some wisdom in this insofar as small-scale voluntary organizations tend to have a life and death of their own and do not often lend themselves to easy external manipulation. But the dust jacket claims that the book shows "how individual citizens with little vested authority can and do generate meaningful changes in their communities by creating and sustaining effective social action groups." If this were true, it would truly be a major contribution to the research literature on citizen participation and empowerment and to practice in community organizing and community development. But, although Zander does briefly discuss incentives for participation, he does not really start with the isolated individual citizen. He takes the active organization more or less for granted. He may be correct that the citizens he focuses on have little in the way of officially "vested authority." But the leadership is usually democratically elected among the membership and the members have a clearly vested interest in community action and change. One could argue that this gives them implicit "bottom-up" authority. In this regard, the book could have done more to explore methods of citizen organization and motivation prior to the existence of an active, functioning group.

Despite these limitations, Zander has given researchers, community group participants, and researcher-participants a valuable book that begins to develop a social psychology of small-scale, social action organizations. But it is only a beginning. Recent resources for psychologists include Heller (1990) and Wandersman and Florin (1990). It is our hope that, as an isolated handful of community and applied social psychologists have been doing for years, other psychologists will make their own connections between their professional knowledge and their community group activities, and use those connections to develop new ideas for both research and application.

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