



Feminist Leadership Fellows Final Report
Submitted by the Center on Women and Public Policy
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota
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On January 10, 2008, with the support of the Otto Bremer foundation, nineteen women leaders gathered in Chaska to begin an important journey together. Over the course of the next five months, these women came together in discussions University of Minnesota faculty facilitated to create a powerful learning community that continues to benefit women and girls throughout the state of Minnesota.

“This was one of the most impressive curriculums that I have ever experienced in my 35 year social service history. The staff, led by Sally, was extraordinary, each one of them could write volumes (and apparently have) on the issues of non-profit leadership, effective strategies, and feminism – what a wealth of knowledge that they shared.”

Jeannie Seeley-Smith, President/CEO, Perspectives Inc.

Perspectives is an award winning, multi-program human service agency that provides comprehensive services to hundreds of homeless and disadvantaged families.

“This program has been a lifeline. I have taken so many of the tools back to the organization and am implementing them. This program has given me hope through shared experience and creating a common identity with other leaders.”

Jill Johnson-Danielson, Co-Director, Mujeres Unidas/Women United

Mujeres Unidas is the only Latina women and girls' group in 250 miles, serving the Fargo/Moorhead area since 1989. Mujeres offers culturally-based programs designed by community teens and adults.

“The Feminist Leadership Fellows program has been an irreplaceably valuable resource on so many levels. Professionally, I have had the opportunity to connect with a peer group – a unique opportunity in the feminist non-profit world. Also, I’ve taken away specific techniques, knowledge and ideas that have already begun to positively impact my leadership ability and

organizational vision. Personally, professionally, intellectually and even spiritually, I have grown as a result of this program. What a gift! I can only hope that every woman leader in our Twin Cities community could have an opportunity to participate in a program like this”

Maren Amdal, Executive and Artistic Director, Calliope Women’s Chorus

Calliope Women's Chorus is a feminist chorus dedicated to promoting social change through song. Since 1976, they've been producing concerts and performing for public events to bring quality social-themed music programming to our community.

“Intellectually energizing and fun. I have learned important organizational information, understood things that I ‘knew’ but couldn’t rationalize. I’m ready to continue!”

Gloria Fressia, Managing Partner, Battered Women's Legal Advocacy Project

BWLAP, a Minnesota, statewide, non-profit organization provides legal information, consultation, training, litigation and legal resource support, and policy development assistance to battered women and to criminal justice, legal and social service systems.

Program Success

The Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs’s Center on Women and Public Policy and Public and Non-profit Leadership Center with support from the Bremer Foundation created the Feminist Leadership Fellows (FLF) program to help create more powerful, effective women leaders in communities throughout the state and increase the organizational efficiency of the Minnesota nonprofits they run -- nonprofits committed to helping women achieve full economic and social equality. The Feminist Leadership Fellows (FLF) program accomplished this goal in 2008 by bringing together nineteen executive directors of women-centered organizations for a five-month long leadership and organizational capacity building program led by faculty from the University of Minnesota whose expertise lies in non-profit management, strategic visioning, and feminist social movements. In addition, through collaboration with Wellstone Action, the executive directors increased their capacity for effective advocacy. CWPP and PNLC assembled a diverse group of fellows, including fellows from Greater Minnesota, from diverse ethnic communities, and from within organizations that address various socio-economic and cultural issues.

Table 1 lists the women leaders that participated in the program and the important organizations they lead. As the opening comments from fellows and others included throughout this report demonstrate, the FLF program succeeded in creating a learning community of executive directors that supported and taught each other, as well as benefited from the scholarly expertise and social movement experience of a multi-disciplinary team of faculty from across the University of Minnesota. Ultimately, the nonprofits the Fellows lead and the women they serve are the ongoing beneficiaries of this program.

Table 1: Feminist Leadership Fellows

Fellow	Organization	Leadership Role
Zora Radosevich	Girls International Forum	Executive Director
Lonna Stevens	Sheila Wellstone Institute	Director
Susan Keirstead	Zonta International	President, Minneapolis Club
Sarah Taylor-Nanista	womenwinning: Minnesota Women's Campaign Fund	Executive Director
Char Thompson	MN Network on Abuse in Later Life	
Anne Bomstad Miller	Grasstops, Inc.	Executive Director
Mary Angela Baker	College of St. Catherine	Director of the Leadership Institute and Center for Continuing Education
Marilee A. R. Hanson, M.D.	Medical office of Mildred S. Hanson, M.D., P.A.	Medical Director
Cindy Reuther	Laura Jeffrey Academy	Project Lead
Jill Johnson-Danielson	Mujeres Unidas/Women United	Co- Director
Keesha Gaskins	League of Women Voters-Minnesota	Executive Director
Maren Amdal	Calliope Women's Chorus	Executive & Artistic Director
Diane Hendrickson	Nucleus Clinic	Chief Executive Officer
Jeannie Seeley-Smith	Perspectives, Inc.	President/CEO
Maria Gloria Fressia	Battered Women's Legal Advocacy Project	Managing Partner
Robin Yaffe Tschumper	Houston County Women's Resources	Executive Director
Barbara Wiener	TVbyGIRLS	Executive Director
Jen Peterson	ACES Association for Children for Enforcement of Support	Executive Director (volunteer)
Ellie Skelton	Wayside House	Executive Director

Program Structure

The fellowship program supported and challenged existing leadership within feminist institutions. During the fellowship period (January 2008-May 2008), we encouraged participants to develop solid new ideas and approaches, strengthen their leadership capacities, build new and stronger networks to support their work, and develop a critical framework within which to address how topical issues affect both their long-term mission and day-to-day activities.

“I’ve made some major strategic change recommendations based on experiences in the program.”

“Our board has changed – radically – to now be primarily committed activists who understand and support our mission – we’re now excited and forward looking on getting our issues recognized throughout society.”

“I think that it has helped me see more options for how I lead my organization now and in the future even more.”

“I contemplate more of the repercussions of major decisions. If there is one thing I learned it is that just one major bad decision can be a house of cards. Knee jerk responses can be devastating to program, staff and board leadership. Confident leadership, collaboration and good decision making depends on evaluating the various options and implementing the direction with perfect timing. This can be done, as was discussed, with strong, wise and cognitive strategic thinking balanced with great instincts.”

“Brought awareness of problems and pitfalls that must be faced. Many of the ideas have already been implemented.”

Based on the feedback from focus groups conducted with support from a Bremer Foundation planning grant and decades of experience working in, researching, and teaching about the women’s movement and non-profit management, a planning group met over six months to develop the structure and curriculum for a Feminist Leadership Fellows program designed to increase the organizational effectiveness of nonprofits addressing women’s issues in Minnesota. The program included four components.

An opportunity for support, problem solving and relationship building

The program began with an overnight retreat that focused on creating the community and getting participants to think organizationally. Each of the six program sessions that followed (see Table 2) began with a half an hour to reflect on what has happened since the last session and discuss any lessons that have been learned or insights gleaned on the previous session’s theme.

“I gained tremendous value in meeting others who are also in leadership positions of non-profits. It is a rare opportunity to have so many coming together for a common purpose of exchange of ideas and to have a constant dialog. Perhaps the greatest side benefit is the other women I met who share common frustrations and passions.”

“I love how we’ve really developed a community ... incredibly valuable outside the program.”

“This program gave us not only a chance to cross paths, but to really get to know one another and share our experiences and knowledge in a very impactful way.”

Working with a new set of case studies of feminist organizations

Consistent with the program’s goal of creating a learning community of participants and maximizing participation, FLF sessions each included the running of a public policy teaching case, an interactive exercise where participants seek to make a decision about a real world problem that has actually been faced by a similar organization or executive director. Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government developed public policy teaching cases, modeling them on the cases utilized so successfully at the Harvard Business School. Faculty presenters involved in the FLF have experience not only

teaching but writing case studies and the Center on Women and Public Policy has led a pioneering program to produce teaching cases studies on women and public policy. The Humphrey Institute has found that case study teaching is particularly appropriate with adult learners who are hungry to develop concrete problem solving skills rather than acquire greater facility with academic theories.

“Very much enjoyed this approach as it maximizes participation creates parallels and ultimately provides some very intriguing “dos and don’ts.”

“Promotes valuable dialogue and builds relationships in addition to a great teaching style.”

Reading and discussing relevant literature in non-profit management, from working with boards to founder’s syndrome

We assigned articles, reports, and chapters from the program text to read for each session and related questions were provided in advance.

“I feel I have a broader framework to play out new frames for problems.”

“Guided intellectual inquiry!”

“Specifics like learning about organizational structure and framing positioning, as well as case studies have given [me] new tools for how I think about leading and growing.”

“Excellent intellectual challenges and interactions.”

“Very relevant, easy to read and applicable.”

Hearing from experts in particular areas

After the case discussion, we would devote approximately one hour and fifteen minutes to a lecture by our individual topic expert, situating the readings. After a lunch break, we would divide participants into small groups to work on discussion questions. The final hour of each session would be spent in a facilitated discussion of the whole. Appendix A provides brief bios for each faculty member.

“The highlight to me was such a vibrant and knowledgeable faculty – getting to know Sally Kenny was my highlight. She totally connected with her Fellows – and her wisdom, depth, humor and passion for the work was fabulous and just made the classes a whole lot of fun. However, all the Faculty were great; supportive, knowledgeable and very open to discussion.”

“Such an impressive faculty!”

Table 2: Session Details

Session Topic	Date/Time	Faculty
Orientation Retreat: Getting to Know You, Getting to Know Your Organization, and Thinking Organizationally	Thursday, January 10, 5 p.m. thru Friday, January 11, 2 p.m.	Sally Kenney Dara Strolovich Jodi Sandfort Melissa Stone
Governance	Friday, February 1 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.	Melissa Stone
Money and Its Consequences	Friday, February 22 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.	Jodi Sandfort
Diversity, Intersectionality and Organizational Framing	Friday, March 14 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.	Dara Strolovich
Identity Politics in Organizational Settings	Friday, April 4 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.	Zenzele Isoke
Advocacy	Friday, April 25 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.	Wellstone Action! (Pam Costain)
Conflict, Schisms, and Trashing	Friday, May 16 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.	Sally J. Kenney

Next

“I feel like we’re really connected about now, here at the end of our sessions. I’d love to see a continuation of this group in some other format perhaps, but some way to keep us connected.”

The faculty will also be meeting to discuss the possibilities of providing Fellowships to another cohort of women leaders and possible sources of funding. Current Fellows had the following advice for colleagues considering a potential future program:

“Don’t let anything stand in your way of participating in this program!”

“Commit to the time or you will miss out on some of the best information and fellowship you will ever have.”

“Yes, yes, do it! And don’t let others take/eat away at your time – important resource to develop yourself and [your] organization.”

Appendix A – Feminist Leadership Fellows Faculty



Zenzele Isoke is currently a University of Minnesota Postdoctoral Fellow in the Departments of Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies and Political Science. Her research is on U.S. Black women's contemporary activism in urban communities. She studies how Black women utilize social networks to enable political mobilizations in American cities. Isoke received her doctoral degree in Women's and Gender Studies from Rutgers University, and her master's degree in Political Science at the University of Michigan.

Isoke bridges her academic scholarship with grassroots political activism. In 2004, she founded the Progressive Women's Caucus of the National Hip Hop Convention, rallying over five hundred women of color behind a gender progressive political platform. This work included politicizing economic violence, sexual violence, reproductive justice and misogyny among the 5,000 predominantly Black, Latino and Asian students, artists, performers, educators and activists who attended the Convention. In 2006, Isoke spearheaded the Critical Race Feminisms Reading Group (CRFRG), a multidisciplinary collective of women of color scholars on the Rutgers University Campus. She has won several awards for her ability to synthesize the study of politics with real-life struggles for social justice. In 2005, she was awarded the Governor's Executive Fellowship of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University and the Graduate Merit Award of the Executive Women of New Jersey. In 2007, she was selected as a Melon Fellow of the Future of Minority Studies Project at Cornell University.

Isoke has a demonstrated history of exerting responsive leadership in social justice organizations including the Black Radical Congress, the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and the National Hip Hop Political Convention. As Program Director of Mothers of Many Family Development Center, Isoke managed a non-profit collective of low-income African American mothers in Selma, Alabama. She was also director of Liberation Summer Project sponsored by Twenty-First Century Youth Leadership Movement.

Dr. Isoke has served as a consultant for the North Star Fund, the New Jersey Department of Health and Human Services, the Southern Center for Studies in Public Policy, and the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan. She is currently a member of the program faculty for the Center on Women and Public Policy at the Hubert Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.



Sally J. Kenney, Professor, directs the Center on Women and Public Policy. Kenney joined the Humphrey Institute faculty in 1995 after holding joint appointments in Political Science, Women's Studies, and Law at the University of Iowa. Her research interests include judicial selection, feminist social movements, the European Court of Justice, exclusionary employment policies, and pregnancy discrimination. She earned her M.A. and Ph.D. in Politics from Princeton University, a B.A. and M.A. in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics from Magdalen College, Oxford, and a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Iowa. She is the author of *For Whose Protection? Reproductive Hazards and Exclusionary Policies in the United States and Britain*, and is the co-editor of *Politics and Feminist Standpoint Theories* and *Constitutional Dialogues in Comparative Perspective*. She is currently working on a book on gender and judging.

Kenney worked to pass the Iowa Equal Rights Amendment and re-elect Senator John Culver (both without success) in 1980. She helped staff an abortion referral line, was a member of a collective that produced the feminist newspaper, *Lilith*, and ran a women's group in Oxford, England. She was a Women's Research and Education Institute Congressional Fellow from 1986-1987 working on civil rights and employment discrimination. She has written about her personal experience of the difficulty in being a feminist political scientist and academic discrimination more broadly. She has been an active member of the Women's Caucus for Political Science, the book review editor of *Women and Politics*, and the co-convenor of an international network of scholars who work on gender and judging within the Law & Society Association. She is active in the community working to elect more women to public office, including the judiciary. She has served on the boards of the Minnesota Women's Campaign Fund, WATCH, the University of Minnesota Press, and the DFL Feminist Caucus. She is an avid ballroom dancer and novice birder.

As director of the Center on Women and Public Policy, she heads the concentration on women and public policy at the Humphrey Institute and teaches and advises Masters students. She teaches courses such as Feminist Organizations, Women, Law, and Policy in the United States, and Women and Politics. The Center's many projects include encouraging young women to prepare to run for public office, running a women and politics reading group, securing the appointment of women to the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, running a postdoctoral program on race, gender, and public policy, and creating public policy case studies on women's issues.



Jodi Sandfort is an Associate Professor at the Humphrey Institute. Dr. Sandfort's research, teaching, and practice focus on improving the implementation of social policy. Her passion is creating high quality, engaged training and development sessions for busy professionals engaged in public affairs.

Jodi's current research and practice projects include examinations of nonprofit organizational finances, strategic philanthropic investment, and management and organizational effectiveness within human service organizations. At the Institute, she teaches courses in public and nonprofit management, government-nonprofit relationships, and social policy implementation. She is an active member in the Humphrey Institutes Public and Nonprofit Leadership Center, where she directs the development of professional development training programs. Dr. Sandfort also is a Senior Fellow at the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits where she develops and implements a state-wide leadership development program.

Most recently, Jodi was the director of the Children's & Families program at the McKnight Foundation in Minneapolis, where she managed a portfolio of nearly \$20 million in annual giving and a team of professional staff. She also has worked as an Assistant Professor of Public Administration at the Maxwell School at Syracuse University, research staff at the Children's Defense Fund in Washington, DC and as members of national and state-based research teams concerned focused on family policy topics.

In addition to these appointments, Dr. Sandfort has fifteen years of extensive consulting and training experience. She has done substantive analysis of social problems and developed staff training programs for national and local private funders, including the Kresge Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Great Twin Cities United Way, and Minnesota Council on Foundations; she works regularly with national and state public policy think tanks. She also consults with nonprofit and public human service organizations throughout Minnesota. Jodi has a PhD and MSW from the University of Michigan and a B.A. from Vassar College. She lives in St. Paul with her husband and two sons in a lovely 100 year old home with a big front porch.



Dara Z. Strolovitch is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Minnesota. Strolovitch joined the UMN faculty after spending a year as a research fellow at the Brookings Institution, a Washington, DC think-tank. Her research interests include interest groups and social movements, the causes and consequences of American political inequalities, and the politics of race, class, gender, and sexuality. She received her B.A. from Vassar College and her Ph.D. from Yale University. She is the author of *Affirmative Advocacy: Race, Class, and Gender in Interest Group Politics* (University of Chicago Press 2007), and is co-editing the forthcoming *CQ Guide to Interest Groups and Lobbying*. She has also published several articles on topics including hate crime, anti-discrimination policy, and Hurricane Katrina. She is currently working on a book about the challenges and opportunities facing advocacy groups in times of national crises, and is also collaborating on studies of attitudes toward the use of post-9/11 interrogation methods and to whom voters look for representation in national politics.

Strolovitch has also worked and volunteered in several nonprofit settings: She has run an after-school program at a youth center in Montreal, helped to staff two sexual violence hotlines and centers, and worked for an organization that serves children and adults with developmental disabilities. She was a faculty fellow at Georgetown's Center for Democracy and Civil Society, and she currently on several boards, including the advisory boards for the University of Minnesota's Institute for Advanced Study and Steven J. Schochet Center. She is a member of the UMN's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs Center on Women and Public Policy, a Senior Fellow at the UMN Law School's Institute for Law and Politics, and a member of the Editorial Advisory Board for the Thora Institute's publication *Black Directions*. She has also served on the American Political Science Association Women's Caucus Mentoring Committee, as Faculty Consultant to the UDFL (University Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party), as a Volunteer Researcher for OutFront Minnesota, as a panelist for a DFL panel on "Diversity and Political Participation" at the 2002 Minnesota State Fair, and volunteered with Election Protection during the 2004 election. A Canadian citizen who grew up in Montreal, Strolovitch has also served as a facilitator for discussions about Canadian and American politics for the interns at the State Capitol and their counterparts from the Manitoba Provincial Parliament.

At the University of Minnesota, Strolovitch teaches courses including American Democracy in a Changing World, Interest Groups and Social Movements; Social Science Approaches to the Study of Race and Gender; Interest Groups, Social Movements, and the Politics of Race, Class, and Gender; and Inequalities, Representation and Group Politics.



Melissa M. Stone is the Gross Family Professor of Nonprofit Management and the Director of the Institute's Public and Nonprofit Leadership Center. She is an Associate Professor of Public Affairs and Planning at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota and also the Director of Graduate Studies for the University's post-baccalaureate certificate program in nonprofit management. She has a Masters degree in Public and Private Management and Ph.D. in organizational behavior from Yale University and a B.A. in political science from the University of Pennsylvania. Her teaching and research focuses on governance and strategic management of nonprofit organizations, government-nonprofit

relationships, and collaborations as policy implementation tools. She has recently published "Acting in the Public Interest? Another Look at Research on Nonprofit Governance" in *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* and "Governance: Research Trends, Gaps and Future Prospects" in *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*, both with colleague Francie Ostrower of the Urban Institute. She is currently working on a research-driven framework for understanding nonprofit board governance and an in-depth case study of the Urban Partnership Agreement, a public-private partnership formed to reduce congestion in metro transportation systems. Before joining the Humphrey Institute in 1997, Stone taught at Boston University's School of Management and the Yale School of Management. While at the Institute, Stone has won several teaching awards.

Prior to her academic career, Stone founded and led two nonprofit organizations in the field of youth and family services in Alaska. As part of this work, she was active in advocating legislation and pursuing legal avenues to stop incarceration of runaway and neglected youth. She helped form a statewide network of youth serving agencies, bringing together urban and rural Alaska nonprofits to advocate for stronger prevention and crisis intervention programs for youth and their families. It was from this work that she developed a passion for understanding organizations, governance and the intersections between nonprofits and their "public" environments.

From her graduate student days at Yale in the mid-1980s, Stone has also worked to develop the field of nonprofit studies. She has held positions on the board of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action and currently serves on the editorial board of *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, the editorial advisory board of *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, and the board of the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council.