SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS: GROWTH, DECAY AND CHANGE*

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ABSTRACT

The classical approach to the study of the transformation of social movements (here called the Weber-Michels model) predicts that a movement organization will become more conservative and that its goals will be displaced in favor of organizational maintenance. Using organizational and incentive analysis, the classical approach is subsumed under a more general set of concepts which lead to predictions about growth and change. The movement organization responds to the ebb and flow of sentiment in the larger society, to its relations with other movement organizations and to success or failure. Leadership and schismogenetic tendencies affect the nature and vicissitudes of its goals, and the recruitment and commitment of members. Neither greater conservatism nor organizational maintenance are iron laws.

Social movements manifest themselves, in part, through a wide range of organizations. These organizations are subject to a range of internal and external pressures which affect their viability, their internal structure and processes, and their ultimate success in attaining goals.

The dominant line of approach to the sociological study of the transformation of social movement organizations (hereafter referred to as MO's) has been the institutionalization and goal displacement model of organizational transformation. This model, which stems from Weber[1] and Michels,[2] takes the following line of analysis: As an MO attains an economic and social base in the society, as the original charismatic leadership is replaced, a bureaucratic structure emerges and a general accommodation to the society occurs.[3] The participants in this structure have a stake in preserving the organization, regardless of its ability to attain goals. Analytically there are three types of changes involved in this process; empirically they are often fused. The three types of change are goal transformation, a shift to organizational maintenance, and oligarchization.

Goal transformation may take several forms, including the diffusion of goals, in which a pragmatic leadership replaces unattainable goals with diffuse goals, so that the organization can pursue a broader range of targets.[4] However, according to the Weber-Michels model, whatever the form of goal transformation, it is always in the direction of greater conservatism (the accommodation or organization goals to the dominant societal consensus).

Organizational maintenance is a special form of goal transformation, in which the primary activity of the organization becomes the maintenance of membership, funds, and other requirements of organizational existence. It too is accompanied by conservatism, for the original goals must be accommodated to societal norms in order to avoid conflicts that could threaten the organization's viability.

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[1] H. J. Gerth, and C. W. Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 297-301.

[2] Roberto Michels, *Political Parties* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1949).

[3] F. Stuart Chapin and John Tsouderos, "The Formalization Process in Voluntary Organizations," *Social Forces,* 34 (May 1956), pp. 342-344.

[4] Mayer N. Zald and Patricia Denton, "From Evangelism to General Service: On the Transformation of the YMCA," *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 8 (June 1963), pp. 214-234.

Oligarchization may be defined as the concentration of power, in the Weberian sense, in the hands of a minority of the organization's members. (For our purposes, bureaucratization is that form of oligarchization which stresses a hierarchy of offices and prescribed rules for conducting affairs.) Of course, some MO's begin with a relatively oligarchical structure and de-oligarchization may occur. But the Michels part of the model treats mainly of the movement from democratic decision structures —a situation of dispersed power, to centralization and oligarchy. (This process is typically evaluated as morally wrong and as a prelude to member apathy and organizational conservatism.)

This line of sociological analysis has a distinguished place in the literature—if only for its imaginative concepts—goal displacement, iron law of oligarchy, routinization of charisma, and the like. Nevertheless, as a statement on the transformation of (social) movement organizations it is incomplete. There are a variety of other transformation processes that take place including coalitions with other organizations, organizational disappearances, factional splits, increased rather than decreased radicalism, and the like. And in fact, the Weber-Michels model[5] can be subsumed under a more general approach to movement organizations which specifies the condition under which alternative transformation processes take place.

An essay in theoretical synthesis, here we attempt to specify some of the major factors influencing the direction of change of MO's and to provide illustrative propositions. Each section contains several of these, but only a few propositions and predictions that summarize and sharpen the argument will be listed and set off.

We follow the general sociological approach to organizations most explicitly stated by Selznick and often called organizational or institutional analysis.[6] The approach can be applied to any kind of association or organization, not just those with bureaucratic structures. Briefly, large scale organizations are seen as a collection of groups harnessed together by incentives of various kinds to pursue relatively explicit goals. Both the ends and means of subgroups may conflict with those established by the authoritative elements in the organization; there may be conflict over the distribution of power and rewards within the organization. Organizations exist in a changing environment to which they must adapt. Adaptation to the environment may itself require changes in goals and in the internal arrangement of the organization. This view of organizations treats goals as problematic, and as changing in response to both internal and external pressures. It is especially useful for the study of MO's precisely because it focuses on conflict, environmental forces, and the ebb and flow of organizational viability.[7]

[5] Although Michels' iron law of oligarchy was originally applied to political parties of the left, while Weber's routinization of charisma referred to a more general process, both deal with the adaptation and subsequent accommodation of social movements to the society. We treat them as one general line of analysis. Weber stresses the process of rationalization of organizational structure to a greater extent than does Michels. For any single organization, Weber is more concerned with internal processes than is Michels, who focuses more on goals.

[6] Philip Selznick, "Foundations of the Theory of Organizations," *American Sociological Review,* 13 (February 1948), pp. 23-35.

[7] In academic courses, the study of social movements for a long time has been the province of collective behavior courses. The sociological approach to organizations utilized here helps to bridge the gap between organizational analysis and collective behavior. Essentially, this paper deals with a particular type of complex organization, the social movement organization. Although many textbooks on collective behavior deal with the organization of social movements none that we know of use organizational analysis to systematically account for the transformation of movement organizations. See Neil Smelser, *A Theory of Collective Behavior,* in Ralph R. Turner and Lewis M. Killian (eds.), *Collective Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1959), and Kurt Lang and Gladys Lang, *Collective Dynamics* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1961).

C. Wendell King uses a combination of a natural history approach and organizational analysis in accounting for the transformation of movement organization. *Social Movements in the United States* (New York: Random House, 1956), pp. 39-57. Maurice Duverger presents material on the growth and organization of political parties that

Our first task is to define the analytic characteristics of movement organizations—how does an MO differ from other complex or formal organizations? A social movement is a purposive and collective attempt of a number of people to change individuals or societal institutions and structures. Although the organizations through which social movements can manifest themselves may have bureaucratic features, analytically they differ from "full-blown" bureaucratic organizations in two ways. First, they have goals aimed at changing the society and its members; they wish to restructure society or individuals, not to provide it or them with a regular service (as is typical of bureaucracies). For example, proselytizing and usually messianic religious groups, melioristic political organizations, and conspiratorial parties are movement organizations by our definition. Goals aimed at change subject movement organizations to vicissitudes which many other types of organization avoid. For instance, if the society changes in the direction of the MO's goals, the organization's reason for being no longer exists. On the other hand, its goals of change may incur great hostility and repressive action in the society.

Second (and related to the goals of change), MO's are characterized by an incentive structure in which purposive incentives predominate.[8] While some short-run material incentives may be used, the dominant incentives offered are purposive, with solidary incentives playing a secondary role. Organizations which rely on purposive incentives often have the problem of maintaining membership commitment and participation, for the values represented by the MO's goals must be deeply held in order for the organization to command time and loyalty in the face of the competition of work and the demands of family and friends.[9]

As we have noted the Weber-Michels model predicts changes in goals (conservatism and organizational maintenance) and in structure (oligarchization). Although we will comment on the latter aspect of organizational change, we focus more on the transformation of and the interplay of goals and structure. On this point we challenge the Weber-Michels model by limiting its predictions to certain types of MO's, and by suggesting conditions under which alternatives are possible.

In this paper we first discuss the relation of movement organizations to the environment in which they exist—both the society at large and more narrowly the social movement of which they are a manifestation. The ebb and flow of sentiments, the results of success and failure in attaining goals, and the problems of coordination and cooperation among movement organizations are treated. The purpose of the first section is to show how the transformation of MO's is conditioned or determined by factors outside of itself. The second, briefer, section focuses to a greater extent on internal processes related to goals and commitment. There we discuss two topics, the causes of factionalism and schismogenesis and the relation of leadership to organizational transformation.

ENVIRONMENT AND ORGANIZATION

The environment of MO's consists of two major segments. One segment is the broader social movement, which consists of potential

is in part applicable to social movement organizations. *Political Parties* (London: Methuen and Co.; New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1954).

[8] The notions of incentive structure used in this work are based on those of Peter B. Clark and James Q. Wilson, "Incentive System: A Theory of Organization," *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 6 (June 1961), pp. 129-166. Briefly, three major types of incentives can be offered by organizations to harness individuals to organizational tasks—material (money and goods) incentives, solidary incentives (prestige, respect, friendship), and purposive incentives (value fulfillment). Although any organization may be able to offer all three, different types of organization have more of one than the others to offer.

[9] Of course, if members devalue material incentives or have independent access to them and if organizational goals represent central life interests of members, gaining and maintaining membership commitment represents less of an organizational problem.

In a very different context V. I. Lenin recognized that the central problem of movement organization is gaining and maintaining commitment. Where most people think of organizational structure as pyramidal, Lenin described structure in terms of concentric circles of lessening commitment and participation. See V. I. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* (New York: International Publisher, 1929). Arthur Stinchcombe first drew our attention to this point.

supporters—members and financial backers and other movement organizations. The people who identify with the movement represent the potential support base for the organization. The other major segment of the environment is the society in which the social movement exists. The larger society may contain the target structures or norms which the movement organization wishes to change; but even in cases where the MO's goal is to change individuals, members or not, the larger society affects the MO because the attitudes and norms of the larger society affect the readiness of movement sympathizers to become members, and the readiness of members to participate fully.

There are at least three interrelated aspects of the environment of MO's which critically affect both their growth and transformation. Changing conditions in the society increase or decrease the potential support base of an MO; there is an ebb and flow of supporting sentiments. Second, the society may change in the direction of organizational goals, or events may clearly indicate that goals will not be attained; the possibilities of success or failure sharply influence member and potential member sentiments and attachments. Third, MO's exist in an environment with other organizations aimed at rather similar goals. Similarity of goals causes an uneasy alliance but also creates the conditions for inter-organizational competition.

The Ebb and Flow of Sentiments

Any MO is dependent on the readiness for mobilization of potential supporters. This readiness is dependent on the ebb and flow of sentiments toward an organization, which in turn is a function of at least two major variables: (1) the extent to which there are large numbers of people who feel the MO's goals and means are in harmony with their own; and (2) the extent to which groups and organizations in the larger society feel neutral toward, reject, or accept the legitimacy and value of the social movement and its organizational manifestations. The attitudes in the larger society toward the movement and the MO condition the readiness of potential supporters to become actual supporters.

The difference between the ebb and flow of sentiment for a *social movement* and for a given MO has important consequences for organizational growth. Under some conditions there may be a strong sentiment base—at the same time that there is strong hostility to a particular organization in the society. "Front" organizations are attempts to capitalize on such a situation. The dimensions are partially independent. The ideal condition for organizational growth is obviously a strong sentiment base with low societal hostility towards the movement or its MO's. Periods of great religious revival are characterized by this condition. On the other hand, the more interesting case may be when there is a weak sentiment base and no or low societal interest. A petulant stance and organizational decline as in the Women's Christian Temperance Union may be the consequence.[10]

The processes of change predicted by the Weber-Michels model are thus affected by the organization's relations to its environment. Organizational maintenance and other forms of goal transformation are the outcomes of a struggle to maintain membership in the face of changes in the larger society. The changes in the society that threaten the MO's viability may be either favorable (the goal is achieved and the MO seems to lose its *raison d'etre*) or unfavorable (widespread hostility arises).

However, the ebb and flow of sentiments does not effect organizational transformation at equal rates in all MO's. Two dimensions of movement organization mediate the extent to which MO's are effected by the ebb and flow of sentiments: (1) the extent of membership requirements, both initial and continuing, and (2) the extent to which operative goals are oriented to change of member or individual behavior rather than oriented to societal change. These two dimensions are related to the defining characteristics and recurring problematic foci of MO's stated earlier. Variability in them means that MO's can take a broad variety of organizational forms.

1. Membership requirements. The "inclu-

[10] The effect of attitudes of the larger society towards social movements on member's ideology, self-perception, and on organizational tactics and structure has been discussed by Ralph K. Turner in "Collective Behavior and Conflict, New Theoretical Frameworks," *Sociological Quarterly* (April 1964), p. 126.

sive" organization requires minimum levels of initial commitment—a pledge of general support without specific duties, a short indoctrination period or none at all. On the other hand, the "exclusive" organization is likely to hold the new recruit in a long "novitiate" period, to require the recruit to subject himself to organization discipline and orders, and to draw from those having the heaviest initial commitments. When such an organization also has societal goals of changing society it may be called a vanguard party.

Inclusive and exclusive MO's differ not only in recruitment procedures and requirements, but they also differ in the amount of participation required. The inclusive MO typically requires little activity from its members—they can belong to other organizations and groups unself-consciously, and their behavior is not as permeated by organization goals, policies, and tactics. On the other hand, the exclusive organization not only requires that a greater amount of energy and time be spent in movement affairs, but it more extensively permeates all sections of the members life, including activities with nonmembers. Any single MO may have attributes of both the inclusive and the exclusive organization; even the inclusive movement must have some central cadre.

The ebb and flow of sentiments in the society more markedly effect the inclusive than the exclusive organization. For example, membership figures compiled by Mike Muench indicate that the Socialist party had a more rapid decline in membership than the Socialist Worker's party during the McCarthy era, and a more rapid rise following the Irish peril. This, despite the fact that the SWP's ideology was more left-wing and more subject to charges of un-Americanism.[11] (The Communist party had an exclusive orientation and declined greatly, but it was under heavier and more direct attack than the other two.)

The inclusive MO's membership declines and rises faster than that of the exclusive's because competing values and attitudes are more readily mobilized in the inclusive organization. While members of both organizations may have similar goals, the members of inclusive organizations are more likely to be subjected to conflicts in the face of threats or in the face of competing social movements that appeal to other values. Their allegiances to other groups and values lead them to rather switch than fight.

2. Changing individual and member behavior versus changing society.[12] In many ways, as has often been noted, the religious sect and the vanguard party have much in common and, in our terms, are both exclusive organizations. The separation from other roles or positions, the total allegiance and discipline, the messianic vision are parallel phenomena. But a key distinction is their strategy for attaining fundamental goals: What are they trying to accomplish in the here and now? Some MO's, especially those with religious affiliations, have as operative goals the changing of individuals.[13] As such, they *may be* less threatening to dominant values and other institutions. At least to the extent that operative goals are restricted to membership prosyletization and are not relevant to control of institutional centers, to political action or to central societal norms counter pressures are less likely to be brought to bear on them. Furthermore, the commitment of members in this type of movement organization is less dependent on the external success of the organization. Commitment is based to a greater extent on solidary and/or expressive incentives than on purposive incentives.

Of course, the growth of religious sects is related to the ebb and flow of sentiment in the society. But it is possible that once recruits are gained the organization can maintain its members. First, focusing on member change, the sect may threaten the society less, calling forth fewer punishments for belonging. (In a theocratic state, however, the religious sect would be a direct challenge to the larger society.) Second, if the sect is not milleniastic,

[11] Mike Muench, "The American Socialist Movement: Organization and Adaptation," unpublished paper, Chicago, 1961. The figures presented by Muench are estimates from official publications.

[12] Our distinction follows that of Lang and Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 488, who, following Sighele, distinguish between "inward and outward" movement organizations.

[13] In the case of the temperance movement both the movement and its MO's had both goals at different points in time. See Joseph Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the Temperance Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963).

it is not subject to the problems of success and failure in the environment. Therefore, the rate of attrition is likely to be a function of the life careers of members rather than of wide swings in societal attitudes affecting members. Third, the organization that attempts to change individuals, especially its own members, is less constrained by the definitions of reality of the broader society.

Proposition 1: The size of the organizational potential support base, the amount of societal interest in the social movement and its MO's, and the direction of that interest (favorable, neutral, or hostile) directly affect the ability of the organization to survive and/or grow.

Proposition 2: The more insulated an organization is by exclusive membership requirements and goals aimed at changing individuals, the less susceptible it is to pressures for organizational maintenance or general goal transformation.

Inter-Organizational Competition: The Press to Left and Right. Thus far our discussion of the ebb and flow of sentiment has been presented as if within a social movement there was consensus on goals and tactics. However, there may be many definitions of proper goals and tactics and these may shift over time. Competition among MO's for support requires them to be responsive to these differences and to shifts in sentiment towards goals and tactics. It is our thesis that these shifts are a major determinant of the transformation of organizational goals.

The major thrust of the iron law of oligarchy deals with the internal bureaucratization of MO's; officials gain a vested interest in maintaining their positions and in having a stable and nonconflictful relation to the society. In the process of accommodating to the society, the goals of the MO become watered down. Over time, the prediction runs, MO's shift to moderate goals or even to goals of maintaining the status quo. But the competition for support among movement organizations leads to shifts in goals which may be towards the center, but *which may also be towards the extremes.*

In *An Economic Theory of Democracy,*[14] Anthony Downs argues that in a two-party, issue oriented political system, there are strong pressures to make the difference between parties minimal. If the parties are relatively well-balanced, movement away from the center of the distribution of attitudes by one party means loss of votes to the other party and, therefore, loss of the election. The competition is for election, not directly for long range goals. Only if there are large pools of abstaining and alienated voters at the extremes, does a movement away from the center promise greater support than a movement towards the center. The notion of the distribution of sentiments in social movements permits an analysis similar to that of Downs.

This analysis uses as its example the case of the Civil Rights movement. Consider the situation before the Supreme Court's school desegregation ruling in 1954. The goals and tactics of the Urban League and the NAACP were in agreement with most active supporters of the movement. However, the number of actives was relatively small, and there were large segments of the potential supporters who were not active at all—college and high school students, working class Negroes, in both the north and south, and the clergy. After 1954 and especially after the Montgomery bus strike in 1958, the sentiment base of the movement changed—there was an increased readiness for mobilization of potential adherents, adherents expected more rapid change in a wider range of areas, and tactics acceptable to adherents became more militant. Furthermore, new or previously marginal organizations, such as CORE and SNCC, began to compete for the support of the enlarged potential support base. As a response both to the new opportunities for change presented by the society *and* the competition from other organizations, the stance of such organizations as the NAACP and the Urban League became more radical. *Failure* to respond to these pressures would have led to either a smaller relative support base and/or a less prominent role in the leadership of the Civil Rights movement.

This analysis is, of course, too simple. It ignores cleavages within movements; for instance, in the case of the Civil Rights movement differences in sentiment can be found between financial backers and between members of the

[14] Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1957), esp. chap. 8, pp. 115-127.

same organizations, between class groups and generations. Furthermore, it ignores the polarization processes whereby the growth of intense attitudes on the left generates a large number of people with intense attitudes on the right. Lastly, it ignores the very complex problem of the competition and interaction of organizations with different primary goals that draw from the same pool of supporters—for instance, SANE, NAACP, and ACLU. Nevertheless, the essential point is clear.

Proposition 3: Goal and tactic transformation of a MO is directly tied to the ebb and flow of sentiments within a social movement. The inter-organizational competition for support leads to a transformation of goals and tactics.

Failure and Success in Achieving Goals[15]

The first problem of MO's is to gain support. But, a MO, like any organization, must have a payoff to its supporters. Aside from the joys of participation, its major payoff is in the nature of a promise; its goals or at least some of them must appear to have a reasonable chance of attainment. In a sense, the perfectly stable MO which avoided problems of organizational transformation, goal displacement, and the like, would be one which over time always seemed to be getting closer to its goal without quite attaining it.

A MO succeeds when its objective is attained; a MO is becalmed when, after achieving some growth and stability, its goals are still relevant to the society but its chances of success have become dim; a MO fails when the society has decisively rejected the goals of the organization and the MO as an instrument is discredited. Although the sources of the change in MO status differ in the three cases, in all three cases incentives to participate decline and the survival of the organization is threatened. Survival depends, partially, on the ability of the MO to muster solidary, material, or secondary goal incentives.

Success. There are various kinds of movement success. At the very least, one must distinguish between the actual attainment of goals and the assumption of power assumed to be a prerequisite to attaining goals. The analysis of the transformation of the MO ends when it or the movement it represents accedes to power; at that point, analytic concepts applicable to party structure and governmental bureaucracy become more relevant. The operating dilemmas of MO's that have assumed power have been well described by S. M. Lipset and others.[16]

But what happens when the goals of the MO are actually reached; what happens when a law is enacted, a disease is eradicated (for instance, women get suffrage, the threat of infantile paralysis is drastically reduced), or social conditions change, thus eliminating the ostensible purpose of the organization? Two major outcomes are possible: New goals can be established maintaining the organization or the MO can go out of existence.

The establishment of new goals to perpetuate the organization is more likely to occur if: (1) The MO has its own member and fund raising support base. (2) There are solidary of short-run material incentives that bind members to each other or to the organization. In order to continue obtaining such rewards, the members support a new goal. It must be noted that lacking such support, the organization leaders cannot maintain the organization. It is not the existence of a bureaucratic structure and office holders per se that guarantees continuance, if the rank and file or the contributors

[15] Success or failure in goal attainment effects the ebb and flow of sentiment toward the social movement and its organizations. We treat the topic separately because (1) it represents a determinant of the ebb and flow of sentiment, not just a dependent consequence; (2) success or failure may be the result of organizational activity, whereas we have been treating the ebb and flow of sentiment as to a great extent being a resultant of the conditions in the larger society; (3) success or failure may question the validity of a given organization regardless of the sentiment for the social movement, and (4) because we have a lot to say about it.

[16] S. M. Lipset *et al.*, *Agrarian Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950). The organization in power is limited by its coalition dependencies—its links to other organizations; it is limited by the range of variables outside of its control, such as the general state of world economy; it is limited by lack of experience and competence, by its dependency on the holdover office holders; and whereas incentives were earlier of a purposive and idealistic sort, now material incentives become the rules of the day—the organization loses its romantic idealism.

do not share the desire to continue the organization.

In some cases, however, the solidary and material incentives alone become sufficient to hold the allegiance of some of the members. This is the extreme case of a shift to organizational maintenance. Such an organization can hardly be classified as a part of a social movement, since it has abandoned both defining characteristics—purposive incentives and change goals. The remains of the Townsend movement represent such an ex-MO. The New Deal and old-age pensions cut away much of its programs and goals. But its solidary incentives, minimal membership requirements, and material resources from the sale of geriatric products allowed it to maintain itself, albeit at a minimum level of functioning.[17]

Several propositions about the relation of organizational change to success follow:

Proposition 4: MO's created by other organizations are more likely to go out of existence following success than MO's with their own linkages to individual supporters.

Proposition 5: MO's with relatively specific goals are more likely to vanish following success than organizations with broad general goals.

Proposition 6: MO's which aim to change individuals and employ solidary incentives are less likely to vanish than are MO's with goals aimed at changing society and employing mainly purposive incentives.

Proposition 7: Inclusive organizations are likely to fade away faster than exclusive organizations; the latter are more likely to take on new goals. (These predictions apply to the failing as well as to the successful MO.)

The Movement Becalmed. Many MO's do not represent either successes or failures. They have been able to build and maintain a support base; they have waged campaigns which have influenced the course of events; and they have gained some positions of power. In short, they have created or found a niche for themselves in the organizational world but their growth has slowed down or ceased. Members do not expect attainment of goals in the near future, and the emotional fervor of the movement is subdued. As in the case of the successful organization, it is the existence of extra-purposive incentives which is a fundamental condition for maintaining the organization.

However, the goals of the MO are still somewhat relevant to society. Thus, the organization is able to maintain purposive commitment and avoids losing all of its purposively oriented members to competing causes.

It is such a becalmed movement that is most susceptible to processes predicted by the Weber-Michels model. (1) The lack of any major successes produces periodic bouts of apathy among the members. Membership is maintained, but attrition takes place over time and no new blood is attracted. (2) Leadership becomes complacent, resting on its control of material incentives. The leader's control over access to such material rewards increases their power, perhaps to the point of oligarchization. (3) The leaders become more conservative, because the pursuit of the MO's initially more radical goals might endanger the organizations' occupation of secure niches by provoking societal and, perhaps, members' hostility, consequently endangering the power of the leaders and their access to material rewards.

Proposition 8: A becalmed movement is most likely to follow the Weber-Michels model because its dependence on and control of material incentives allows oligarchization and conservatism to take place.

Failure. Where the successful organization loses members because it has nothing more to do, the failing MO loses members because they no longer believe their goals can be achieved with that instrument. The leadership cadre may attempt to redefine goals and to define external reality as favorable to the organization; nevertheless members are usually not fully shielded from societal reality and have independent checks on the possibility of attaining goals.

A MO may also fail because its legitimacy as an instrument may be discredited. Discreditation may happen rapidly or make take several

[17] Sheldon Messinger, "Organizational Transformation: A Case Study of a Declining Social Movement," *American Sociological Review,* 20 (February 1955), pp. 3-10.

years. Central to the discreditation process is the MO's inability to maintain *legitimacy* even in the eyes of its supporters. Discreditation comes because of organizational tactics employed in the pursuit of goals. For instance, many moderate organizations have lost support when they appeared to accept support from extremist groups. The consequences of failure are not discussed by scholars using the Weber-Michels model.

One consequence of the failure of a MO is the search for new instruments. Where the member leaving a successful movement may either search for new goals and social movements or lapse into quiescence, different alternatives seem to be open to members leaving the failing organization: Either they search for a more radical means to achieve their goals within the movement, decrease the importance of their goals, or change the focus of discontent. A Mertonian analysis of anomie might be relevant to this point.

Interaction Among Movement Organizations

Under some conditions the tactics of a MO in attempting to succeed or avoid failure involve it in direct interaction and coordination with other organizations from the same social movement. Above we discussed competition among MO's, but our analysis did not focus on direct interaction and exchange. Here, in our last topic under the heading of the relation of MO's to their environment, we treat of mergers and other aspects of inter-MO relations. Such relations could be treated as an organizational outcome. But we are chiefly concerned with how interaction affects member commitment and ultimately the goals of the involved organizations.

We distinguish three types of interaction: cooperation, coalition and merger. Typically, cooperation between MO's is limited. Except during full scale revolutions or total movement activities, MO's do not engage in a complex division of labor. It occurs primarily in situations where special competencies are required for legislative lobbying or legal work, and a simple symbiotic relationship may develop that does not lead to transformation in either organization.

More interesting are the creation of coalitions and mergers,[18] for here the interaction may lead to new organizational identities, changes in the membership base, and changes in goals.[19] The coalition pools resources and coordinates plans, while keeping distinct organizational identities. It will take place if it promises greater facilities, financial aid, or attainment of goals. Thus coalitions are more likely when MO's appear to be close to the goal than at other times, for then the costs of investing in the coalition seem small in comparison with the potential benefits.

Some coalitions resemble mergers in that only one organization retains an identity. However, within the MO the old MO's retain identities and allegiances. Such coalition-mergers are most likely to take place when there is one indivisible position or reward at stake, e.g., one governor or president can be elected, one law is required.

Each organization then may have a distinct role in the overall plan of attack. The coalesced organization is ruled through a committee or umbrella organization. Such an organization may be riven by factional positional jockeying if the leadership is not fully committed to the coalition. Furthermore, not all MO's are equally capable of mergers or coalitions. The level of outgroup distrust and the unlikelihood of shared perspectives makes it difficult for an exclusive MO to participate in mergers or coalitions.

A merger or coalition leads to a search for a common denominator to which both parties can agree. The more conservative party to the merger finds itself with more radical goals and vice versa. The goals of the more conservative party can remain nearly the same only if both

[18] For a general discussion of alliances among political parties see Duverger, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-351.

[19] By and large, mergers and coalitions require ideological compatibility. Although extremist parties from both sides may work for the overthrow of the government (as in the Weimar Republic, for instance), they do not engage in planned coordinated attack. They do not support the center against the other extreme, and they independently work against the established government. For the role of ideological compatibility in coalitions see William Gamson, "Coalition Formation at Presidential Nominating Conventions," *American Journal of Sociology*, 68 (September 1962), pp. 157-172.

organizations are trying to persuade a broader and even more conservative public.[20]

A true merger leads to the suppression of previous organizational identities. Because of the likelihood that the basic stance of the MO's involved will change, a true merger does not necessarily broaden the support base for its program. The more conservative members of the conservative partner and the more radical members of the radical partner may find that the goals (or tactics) of the newly formed organization are no longer congenial. Both extremes drop away. Furthermore, now only one organization speaks for the movement, whereas before several voices clamored for change. The merging of movement organizations may make the movement appear smaller from the outside.

Since true mergers may have such potentially drastic effects on the support base, it is possible that they only occur when the leadership of one or both MO's feel their cause is lost, there is growing apathy, or the like. Then the merger appears as a way of preserving some vestige of vitality.[21]

Proposition 9: Inclusive MO's are more likely than exclusive MO's to participate in coalitions and mergers.

Proposition 10: Coalitions are most likely to occur if the coalition is more likely to achieve goals or lead to a larger resource base—when success is close or when one indivisible goal or position is at stake.

INTERNAL PROCESSES AND ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

All of the topics discussed in the previous section have dealt with the effects of external events or problems on the growth and change of movement organizations. However, external events are not the only causes of change. Emerging bureaucratic structures, internal ideological factions, leadership styles, and other, essentially, internal factors also cause organizational transformation. Here we focus on MO factions and on leadership changes.

When discussing external factors the task of separating dependent from independent variables was relatively simple. The effects of the environment are mediated through membership recruitment, requirements, and incentives, or through the organizational structure, and ultimately affect goals. But here we deal with the influence of internal variables on each other; the cause and effect sequences cease to be analytically (much less empirically) distinct; vicious circles as well as casual chains are possible. Consequently we can no longer so clearly distinguish goals as our dependent variable. However, we still offer alternatives to the Weber-Michels model and point to a broader range of organizational outcomes.

Factions and Splits

Schismogenesis and factionalization has received but little attention from sociologists.[22] A faction is an identifiable subgroup opposed to other subgroups, a split occurs when a faction leaves a MO. There are two major internal preconditions for splits and the development

[20] Following Osgood and Tannenbaum one might even argue that the merged movement will be perceived as more extreme than it really is. They hypothesize that if an associative bond is perceived between two objects of evaluation, the object that was originally more neutrally viewed will gain a more extreme evaluation while the extremely viewed object will lose very little of its polarized evaluation. C. Osgood, and P. Tannenbaum, "The Principle of Congruity in the Prediction of Attitude Change," *Psychological Review* (1955), pp. 62, 42-55.

[21] These problems have arisen in the recent attempt to merge two MO's oriented to military disarmament, SANE and United World Federalists. These two organizations have differed in that the UWF has had historic attachments to the upper class, to Quakers, and to proper institutional types. It has been more educative and persuasive in technique. SANE has had a nervous, more alienated, liberal base, and has used heavier handed propaganda techniques. The proposed merger has been sharply questioned by members.

[22] Norman Miller, "Formal Organization and Schismogenesis," unpublished paper, Chicago, 1963. See also a most neglected minor classic by Walter Firey, "Informal Organization and the Theory of the Schism," *American Sociological Review,* **13** (February 1948), pp. 15-24. For a history of the American Socialist experience that focuses on its proneness to factions and splits see Daniel Bell, "The Background and Development of Marxian Socialism in the United States," in *Socialism and American Life* (eds.), Donald D. Egbert and Stow Persons (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952).

of factions, heterogeneity of social base and the doctrinal basis of authority.

The role of heterogeneity in creating conditions for organizational splitting needs little discussion. Richard Niebuhr's discussion of the role of class and ethnic factors in denominationalism remains the classic statement of the need for internal homogeneity in a MO with no ultimate and accepted internal authority.[23] Consciousness of kind and the solidary incentives gained from homogeneity lead to the development of schisms.

What is true for religious sects and denominations is also true for political MO's. The early history of the American Communist party as described by Theodore Draper, was marked by fights based on disputes between the left and the right and connected to the European (particularly, Dutch, Lettish, and German) versus American base of the party.[24] In this case, factions within the party were only finally suppressed by the use of the great external authority and legitimacy of the true revolutionaries, the Bolsheviks.

Factions and schisms occur not only because of the heterogeneity of a MO's support base, but also because of concern with doctrinal purity. MO's concerned with questions of ultimate ideological truth and with theoretical matters are more likely to split than MO's linked to bread and butter issues. It is not concern with ideology per se that is central to this proposition, but rather that ideological concerns lead to questioning the bases of organizational authority and the behavior of the leadership. Miller has argued that the difference between Catholic sects which remained in the church and those which left depended on the acceptance of the ultimate authority of the Word as revealed in the Bible, and interpreted by the Fathers of the Church, versus the word of contemporary church authorities: The Montanists of second century Phrygia and the Feeneyites of twentieth century Boston both rested their authority on the former and left the church, whereas St. Francis bowed to the latter.[25]

Unless the nonreligious movement organization possesses the prestige of success and material incentives, as did the Bolsheviks in relation to the American Communist party, the bases for authority are difficult to establish. In this respect, the inclusive organization with its looser criteria of affiliation and of doctrinal orthodoxy is more split-resistant than the exclusive organization. The inclusive organization retains its factions while the exclusive organization spews them forth. Given internal dissension, it may be that the inclusive organization retains its support base, but is crippled in its capacity for concerted action. Splitting, of course, leads to a decrease in membership in the original movement organization. For a short period of time, at least, it leads to higher internal consistency and consensus. As such, it may also transform organizational goals away from a conservative or organizational maintenance position, for the remaining remnant is not encumbered by the need to compromise.

Proposition 11: The less the short-run chances of attaining goals, the more solidary incentives act to separate the organization into homogeneous subgroups—ethnic, class, and generational.[26] *As a corollary, to the extent that a becalmed or failing MO is heterogeneous and must rely heavily on solidary incentives, the more likely it is to be beset by factionalism.*

Proposition 12: The more the ideology of the MO leads to a questioning of the bases of authority the greater the likelihood of factions and splitting.

Proposition 13: Exclusive organizations are more likely than inclusive organizations to be beset by schisms.

Leadership and Movement Transformation

Initially we suggested that the Weber-Michels model is a sub-case of a more general set of

[23] Helmut Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1929).

[24] Theodore Draper, *The Root of American Communism* (New York: Viking Press, 1957). There were also factions within these groups.

[25] Miller, *op. cit.*

[26] It may be that the relation of splitting and developing factions to chances of attaining goals is curvilinear rather than linear. As movement organizations approach gaining power, latent conflicts over means, ends, and the future distribution of power, which have been suppressed in the general battle, rise to the fore.

concepts explaining MO transformation. Using such concepts as the ebb and flow of sentiments, potential and actual support base, membership requirements, incentives, and goals, we have attempted to explain a number of organizational processes. In simplified terms, the Weber-Michels model predicts changes in organizations stemming from changes in leadership positions and leadership behavior; it also predicts what organizational changes lead to changes in organizational behavior. If our more general approach is to be of value, it must be able to deal with the same problems.

Analysis of leadership phenomena are an even more crucial aspect of the study of MO than of other large scale organizations. Because the situation of the MO is unstable, because the organization has few material incentives under its control, and because of the non-routinized nature of its tasks the success or failure of the MO can be highly dependent on the qualities and commitment of the leadership cadre and the tactics they use.[27] Three aspects of leader-organization relations are discussed—the organizational transformation following the demise of a founding father, the factors affecting the commitment of leaders to goals, and the consequences for the organization of differences in leadership style.

The Replacement of Charisma. Following the death of a charismatic leader, several changes in MO's can be expected. But the more bureaucratized the MO the less the replacement of a leader causes organizational transformation. Three kinds of change are likely in the less bureaucratized MO's.

First, there is likely to be a decline in membership and in audience as those drop away whose commitment was more to the man than to the organizational goal and sentiment base. Furthermore, we would expect the outer circle of those who were weakly committed to drop away first.

Secondly, the death of a charismatic leader can lead to factionalization. The divergent tendencies of subgroups and the power struggles of lieutenants may have only been suppressed by the authority of the leader. His "word" now becomes one ideological base for intra-organization debate as the factions seek their place in the distribution of reward and the definition of goals and tactics.[28]

Finally, there occurs the professionalization of the executive core and the increased attempts to rationalize the administrative structure of the organization that is heir to the charismatic leader's own organization. The routinization of charisma is not only an institutionalization and rationalization of the goals and guiding myths of the organization but also a change in the incentive base of the organization—from gratifications related to the mythic stature of the leader and the opportunity to participate with him to the gratifications afforded by the performance of ritual and participation in a moral cause. Rationalization also produces a routinization of material incentives.[29]

Proposition 14: Routinization of charisma is likely to conservatize the dominant core of the movement organization while simultaneously producing increasingly radical splinter groups.

Goal Commitment of Leaders. More relevant to the Michels argument than the problems discussed above are the organizational changes attendant on officers' increased attachment to their offices and perquisites. While attachment to office may lead leaders to be more interested in organizational maintenance than pursuit of goals, organizational maintenance seems to displace radical goals following the creation of a bureaucratic structure only under three prerequisite conditions: (1) A base of support independent of membership sentiment; in labor unions the payroll checkoff insures a constant flow of funds and permits the leadership to remain in office and to replace the original goals of the MO (the union) by the goal of clinging to their own relatively lucrative offices. (2) The commitment of leaders (and followers)

[27] Herbert Blumer, "Social Movements," in A. M. Lee (ed.), *Principles of Sociology* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1955), pp. 99-220.

[28] See the discussion of succession in S. M. Lipset, "The Political Process in Trade Unions," *Political Man* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1960), pp. 412-416.

[29] Analogously, such processes may take place in student and other highly age-graded movements. The graduation of the founding generation parallels the death of the charismatic leader. See Charles Goldsmith, "The Student Peace Union" unpublished paper, University of Chicago, 1965.

to other goals—to social position, to a stable life, to a family (as Jesus Christ recognized); leadership concern with the maximization of non-MO goals is a major cause of decline in intensity in any organization.[30] (3) The co-optation of leaders by other groups with subsequent transformation of goals; co-optation is the most extreme result of what Gusfield terms "articulating leadership." The growth of "statesmanship" in labor unions is one example of articulating leadership producing changes in goals and tactics of a MO.[31]

However, none of these three conditions is in itself sufficient to produce a long range change in goals or tactics. A necessary precondition for leaders to become concerned with organizational maintenance is a change in member sentiment—a growing lack of interest.

Under some conditions, however, a decline in member interest may actually allow a movement to grow more radical. As members permit other concerns to tempt them away from the MO, they insist less on their right to participate in decision making. The decision-making apparatus of the organization thus falls into the hands of the persons with the greatest commitment to the movement goals. In some cases, these persons may actually form a cadre of professional organizers. As the MO becomes oligarchical, contrary to Michels, it may become *more* rather than less radical in its goals.[32]

Proposition 15: If a leadership cadre are committed to radical goals to a greater extent than the membership-at-large, member apathy and oligarchical tendencies lead to greater rather than less radicalism.

Leadership Style. Gusfield distinguishes between the articulation function of leaders and the mobilizing function.[33] In brief, mobilization refers to reaffirming the goals and values of the organization and building member commitment to the goals, while articulation means linking the organization and its tactics to those of other organizations and to the larger society. There is an almost inherent dualism and conflict between these roles, for mobilization requires a heightening of the ideological uniqueness of the MO and the absolute quality of its goals, while articulation often requires the uniqueness of the organization to be toned down and an adoption of the tactics of compromise. In the simple interpretation of the Weber-Michels model mobilization is followed by articulating leadership. But, as Gusfield has shown in the case of the WCTU, no such simple progression holds—indeed, demands from the membership required Francis Willard, an articulating leader, to use a more mobilizing leadership style. And at a much later date, when organizational needs changed, more articulation followed the retirement of a mobilizing leader.

Not only is the notion of a simple and inevitable progression from mobilizing to articulating a false notion of leadership transformation, but different kinds of MO's make different demands on leaders. For instance, the exclusive organization is restricted in its possibilities of articulation.

Proposition 16: An exclusive organization is almost certain to have a leadership which focuses on mobilizing membership for tasks, while the inclusive organization is readier to accept an articulating leadership style.

Proposition 17: The MO oriented to individual change is likely to have a leadership focused on mobilizing sentiments, not articulating with the larger society. Organizations oriented to changing the larger society are more likely to require both styles of leadership, depending on the stage of their struggle.

[30] Alvin W. Gouldner, "Attitudes of Progressive Trade Union Leaders," *American Journal of Sociology*, 52 (March 1947), pp. 389-392.

[31] Joseph Gusfield, "Functional Areas of Leadership in Social Movements" in A. W. Gouldner and R. de Charms (eds.), *Studies in Leadership* (rev. ed.), forthcoming.

[32] A current example of oligarchization attended by radicalization is the growth of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement which appears to have begun as a representative coalition of campus groups but developed into a mass movement coordinated by an oligarchical executive committee. The committee was composed of leaders with the strongest commitment to "radical" mass tactics (and also apparently, the most concerned with the ultimate issues of alienation rather than the immediate issue of free speech).

[33] Gusfield, *loc. cit.*

CONCLUSIONS: THE RELATION OF GOALS AND STRUCTURE

While there is often an association between growing institutionalization and bureaucratization *and* conservatism, there is no evidence that this is a *necessary* association. Instead it is a function of the cases examined and the frame of reference with which scholars have approached the study of social movement organization. In particular, many of the studies of movement organization have been conducted out of a "metaphysical pathos" of the social democratic left.[34] Left-leaning scholars have noted that the radical organizations of their youth have changed their goals and structure. The concepts they employed or which "caught on" both summarized the movements' trend *and* implied the emotional evaluation of the trend. In this paper we have attempted to work out of a relatively neutral frame of reference to account for organizational transformation. Furthermore, we have used a fairly general approach and set of concepts which, we think, allows us to examine the transformation of any MO, whatsoever.

To briefly recapitulate, we have examined the impact of a number of internal and external processes on the transformation of MO's. By examining the ebb and flow of sentiments and incentives available to organizations and interrelating these with the structural requirements for membership and the nature of organizational goals, two crucial analytic factors, we have made predictions about how different movement organizations will grow and decline and in what direction their goals will change. We have paid less attention to the internal authority structure, although it would be relatively easy to incorporate such analysis into our framework. We see one of the main advantages of our approach as raising to the center of sociological analysis a number of phenomena that have only rarely been at the center. For instance, the problems of mergers, of factions and schisms, of alternating leadership styles, and of inter-organizational competition all deserve greater attention than they have been given.

Our focus has been on organizational change, and we have examined the sequence from the environment and sentiment base to goals *and* structure rather than from goals *to* structure. But, the organizational leadership's commitment to a set of goals may also influence the structure. In some cases, goal commitment can act as a deterrent to the process of bureaucratization. To implement the more radical goals, an appropriate structure can be imposed on the organization: Members must invest more time and effort, sometimes to the point of professionalization; members are recruited from groups that have low commitment to a family or a career; workers are paid little and are frequently transferred to prevent attachment to the material rewards of office, and to prevent the creation of local support or empire building; the MO has a localized branch or even a cell structure with frequent meetings. In short, the militant MO is given a quasi-exclusive structure not only to implement goals, but also to maintain them in the face of pressures to become more conservative. The organization of CORE and SNCC illustrate some of these structural devices against goal displacement.

In focusing on change of organization we may have introduced our own metaphysical pathos; we have not looked at the other side of the coin, organizational stability, although the conditions are often the obverse of those discussed for change. However, some differences would enter in. For instance, Gusfield has discussed the problem of generations in the WCTU.[35] There, the circulation of elites in an organization is related to the rate of growth and the the organization's relation to the larger social movement as well as to internal structural and constitutional conditions. As a general problem, the problem of stability can be encompassed within our framework.

We have proposed some general hypotheses specifying conditions of membership, goal type, success and failure, environmental conditions, and leadership that determine the extent and nature of the change of organizational goals. We have illustrated our propositions, but illustration is not proof. What is now needed is a

[34] Alvin Gouldner, "Metaphysical Pathos and the Study of Bureaucracy," *American Political Science Review,* 49 (June 1955), pp. 496-507.

[35] Joseph Gusfield, "The Problems of Generations in an Organizational Structure," *Social Forces,* 35 (May 1957).

systematic testing of the propositions, using large numbers of historical and contemporary case studies—in short, a comparative analysis of social movement organizations.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE DECISIONS AND THE LARGER SOCIAL SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY IN SOCIAL CHANGE*

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ABSTRACT

Sociologists have not paid much attention to short-run variations in marriage and divorce rates, though they can be revealing of changes in both of these phenomena, as well as of changes in the larger social system. An analysis of these variations reveal an increasing degree of interdependence for both marriage and divorce decisions in the last century. It is suggested that this increased interdependence can be attributed to increased short-term variations in the socioeconomic conditions of the country; to an increasing interdependence of the different parts of the country; to an increasing sensitivity of these decisions to macro-socioeconomic conditions. The analysis revealed that only the last two factors could be retained. They are themselves tentatively interpreted as the result of the process of urbanization and industrialization.

As far as we know, few sociologists have taken as problematic short-run variations in marriage and divorce rates. Moreover, rarely have they used, as in Durkheim's *Suicide,* rates of demographic phenomena—not to speak of their short-run variations—as keys to understanding the functioning of larger social systems.

When however we look at graphs of rates of phenomena like marriage or divorce, it is evident that in addition to the more apparent long-term trends there are also short-term variations (see Figure 1). We are apt to dismiss these short-term variations as statistical artifacts and concentrate on explaining the "big social drifts." But randomness does not explain why the marriage and divorce rates in the United States, the theme of this paper, appear to fluctuate more and more over time, since the population of the United States has increased, and size alone would dictate smaller variances in rates.

This indicates that marriage and divorce decisions are increasingly affected by common factors, which lead more and more people to *take their decision concurrently,* so that one can speak of increased *interdependence* of marriage or of divorce decisions.

It is the contention here that a study of these short-term fluctuations in marriage and divorce rates can prove revealing not only about marriage and divorce but also about the changes in the functioning of American society beyond the kinship sphere. It is the aim of this paper to develop this argument, and by implication to suggest the substantive importance of short-term variations in other sociological areas.

MEASUREMENT OF SHORT-TERM VARIATIONS

But first an accurate measurement of these short-term variations is needed. This is provided by a statistical model elaborated by James S. Coleman. It is based on the variance and is essentially as follows:

$$\frac{N}{N^*} = \frac{\sum_{i}^{n} (r_i - \hat{r}_i)^2 \cdot N}{(n-2) \cdot \hat{r}_{av} \cdot q}$$

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