

Movements of Revolutionary Change

Some Structural Characteristics

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The study of social organization is not normally something which grabs the average American, excites the ordinary student, or attracts the attention of the mass media. Not many people show much interest in analysis of the segmentary lineage systems of Africa and the Middle East, or even in the presumed matrifocality of black American families, or problems in organizational design in American industry. But in recent years we have noted some considerable interest in revolutionary social movements and their organization. Black power, the new left, women's lib, the counterculture, the Viet Cong, Palestinian liberation, ecology-environmental activism have all come to public attention. They have all stimulated discussions about aspects of their structure.

MOVEMENT CAUSE AND STRUCTURE

As riots and conflict popped up in black urban ghettos across the country, and as black power groups proliferated across the land, people asked: "What is the cause of this?" Some suggested that this must be planned conspiracy stemming from a central headquarters in the United States, or perhaps Peking or Moscow. Others saw it as a basically spontaneous eruption arising naturally and without plan from a common exposure to intolerable conditions. And, probably, many felt that

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sensationalist television and print reporting stimulated the chain reaction of demonstrations.¹ Later, as a range of peace groups exploded in antiwar demonstrations across the land, people asked: "Is this centralized conspiracy, spontaneous explosion by idealistic youth, or a new fad, perhaps a latter-day version of goldfish swallowing?" The sweep of interest and action related to pollution fighting and environmental awareness next prompted similar discussions, as did the rash of bombings and sniping of "urban guerrillas."

It appears that such evaluation of organizational cause relates significantly to ideological bias. The conspiracy thinkers do not approve of movements of change and seek to explain them as the subversive work of outsiders. In sharp contrast the "spontaneous explosioners" seem sure that the eruption of movements of change proves that the United States has serious flaws which must be removed if it is to regain the mandate of heaven and return to a state of equilibrium.

Not all the discussion about movements has been about their cause. Much has focused on their organizational efficiency or seeming lack of it. In time it became clear to all but the most devoted conspiracy thinker that these movements were composed of essentially autonomous, often competing segments, each of which seemed to follow the oft-repeated injunction to "do its own thing." True, at times these segments did seem to pull together in a kind of concerted action and often enough a large number of segments acted in the same ways, and their participants said the same things. But always there was a basic pattern of schism, factionalism, and ongoing segmentation which led movement foes, friends, and participants alike to characterize these movements as disorganized or at least inefficient.

Wherever we examine evaluations of organizational efficiency we find the same bias against segmented structure. According to this powerful bias, centralized, bureaucratic organization with a pyramidal chain of command is efficient, rational, proper, and a sign that the organization is mature and effectively able to mobilize its members and accomplish its objectives. Even if the evaluator dislikes the organization in question, he respects it if it is centralized and bureaucratic and can ridicule it if it does not have these qualities. A movement, or a collectivity which does not have such central structure is either considered unqualified as an organization at all, or, perhaps if the analyst is charitable, it is described as an "organization in embryo," or a "rapidly emergent institution" (Kopytoff, 1964).

Some observers may, indeed, attribute a movement's apparent lack of organization to preexisting defects or limitations among its participants.

We detected such evaluation in viewpoints about the student and black power movements.² Students can be regarded as too young, to immature, or not sufficiently serious. Blacks can be considered still to suffer from family and community disorganization, or simply to have no organizational experience.

There are those who feel that if a movement segments into rival groups this is a kind of betrayal of trust and hope. For example, Roger Kahn (1969) says that he once cheered on SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) as a hope for the future. Then he saw his faith in it dissolve as the SDS "became a house divided" and split into rival factions rather than pulling together in common purpose. Kahn argues that SDS must now be doomed because it "had committed binary fission." His interpretation of binary fission as death rather than growth is quite a twist.

Many are the articles about the Black Panthers which now point derisively to the cleavage and clash between Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver factions. Not only do they chortle that this means "the decline and fall" of the Panthers (Newsweek, 1971), but they suggest that this schism will "destroy the Panther myth," and lose it the support it once enjoyed among blacks and whites (Time, 1971).

John Mecklin (1970) analyzes the Palestinian Arab guerrillas in similar terms, but displays a particular concern. He describes at length the varied types of groups in the Arab guerrilla movement, noting that each has its own leader or leaders who often compete with each other. He explains that every group has its own special tactics and goals. Each does in effect "its own thing" to attack and threaten the Israelis and the Arabs who do not support the guerrillas.

Mecklin (1970) gives the reader every reason to feel that the Arab movement is indeed a significant and quite effective threat to Israel. He goes on to say that "like many new movements the Arab guerrilla movement has been troubled by internal bickering among a dozen different groupings as well as a lack of dynamic overall leadership." He implies that such fission is in part a consequence of traditional Arab segmented tribal structure. He explains that if only the movement would pull together under a central command with a unified set of goals and means, and follow a leader who could speak with credibility for the whole movement, it would be possible to negotiate for peace in the Middle East. In short, what Mecklin does not like about the Arab guerrillas is that their noncentralized, many-celled organization prevents them from being subject to control, manipulation, and prediction. This organization does pose a problem—but perhaps more for those who wish to predict, control,

and destroy it than for those who use it to achieve their ends—not the least of which is survival, and the confusion of their enemies.

Following the Arab plane hijackings in the summer of 1970, other Western writers also observed rather wistfully that if only the Arab guerrillas would be united it would facilitate negotiations for release of planes and hostages, and increase the ability of the affected nations to predict guerrilla actions. It does not take a counterinsurgency expert to appreciate that guerrillas gain tremendous advantage by acting in constantly unpredictable ways, but still the experts act as if segmentation and factionalism is a limitation rather than a capability.

This sentiment against segmentation is nothing new. Preserved Smith, a historian writing some five decades ago (1920) looks upon the Reformation in the sixteenth century as a movement which transformed the Western world and ushered in a “new season in the worlds great year” (Smith, 1962). He likens this transformation to the sudden blooming of spring after a long and dreary winter. So he certainly approves of the Reformation. But he finds great fault in the “weakness which finally proved fatal to their [the Protestant] cause.” And what was this weakness? “lack of organization and division into many mutually hostile sects” (Smith, 1962: 115), sects which compete with each other for leadership and power. What, we can wonder, did Preserved Smith think that the Protestant cause could have achieved had it been centralized? Can we not say instead that segmentation into competing sects contributed to the very real success of the Protestant movement? Far from being fatal to its cause, segmentation and competition were probably the key to the overall Protestant triumph—just as they are the key to the success of all movements of change.

We have considered but a few examples of opinion about movement cause and structure. The reader can readily provide many more of similar nature. Let us briefly summarize these opinions. Some people suspect that movements are injected into our society from the outside and do have a kind of secret command structure stretching back perhaps to Moscow or Peking. Others see such movements as a natural and spontaneous explosion whose very presence proves that all is not right in the land. In time it does become rather obvious to all but the most conspiracy-minded person that movements are not centralized, but are segmented and have many leaders. As people have done over the ages and in respect to many movements, most Americans find this segmented structure quite defective. They deplore movement segmentation, factionalism, and schism as weakness; they call ideological diversity and competition divisive; and denigrate

undirected proliferation of movement groups or segments as a wasteful duplication of effort.

We find much that is faulty and misleading in such analysis. Our research³ leads us to say that a movement is neither a centralized conspiracy nor an amorphous collectivity, a spontaneous mass eruption. Instead, it has a definable structure which we term "segmentary, polycephalous, and reticulate" in structure. Such structure is not inefficient but rather is highly effective and adaptive in innovating and producing social change and in surviving in the face of established order opposition. It is also possible that such segmented, many-headed and networked organization will be adaptive not only for social movement, but also for established orders in business, industry, and government as they seek to modernize for the future ("futurization process").

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

In the balance of this essay let me describe and analyze the main organizational characteristics of social movements as we have studied them primarily in black power, environmental activism which we call participatory ecology, and in the new-Pentecostal religious movement, which some call the charismatic renewal. We regard such movements as examples of a class of events which we call movements of personal transformation and revolutionary social change.

We are less concerned about the causes of these movements than about how they are structured and how they work to transform individuals and produce social change. In other publications, including two films (Gerlach, 1968, 1970a), a book (Gerlach and Hine, 1970b), and various articles (Gerlach and Hine, 1970a, Gerlach, 1970b, Hine and Gerlach, 1969), we have examined movement structure and function according to five factors:

- (1) movement *organization*
- (2) means of *recruitment*
- (3) the process by which movements enculturate and *commit* new participants
- (4) movement *ideology*
- (5) movement perception of and response to *opposition*

We discuss how these factors interrelate dynamically in mutual causation of the type described by Maruyama (1965).

In this paper we shall focus only on the factor of movement organization, described as "segmentary, polycephalous, and reticulate."

- (a) *Segmentary*: a movement is composed of a range of diverse groups, or cells, which grow and die, divide and fuse, proliferate and contract.
- (b) *Polycephalous*: this movement organization does not have a central command or decision-making structure; rather it has many leaders or rivals for leadership, not only within the movement as a whole, but within each movement cell.
- (c) *Reticulate*: these diverse groups do not constitute simply an amorphous collection; rather, they are organized into a network, or reticulate structure through cross-cutting links, "traveling evangelists" or spokesmen, overlapping participation, joint activities, and the sharing of common objectives and opposition.

Let us now examine each of these in turn.

Description of Spectrum of Segments

Observation of any of the movements which we have studied in detail (i.e., black power, participatory ecology, the charismatic renewal), shows them each to be made up of organizationally distinct, often rival, units which tend to proliferate by setting up "daughter cells." Still other segments in a movement are large bureaucratically organized national groups which have predated the emergence of the movement but which identify with it (or in some cases, claim to have initiated it). All movements have expanded suddenly, proliferating exponentially from a core or base which has long been present in this country. One is tempted to see this core as a kind of persistent mutation from which exponential growth then took place under a set of appropriate conditions and selective pressures.

It is possible to range the various groups in any movement along a continuum of conservative to radical according to means and goals, or according to degree of institutionalization. Simply stated, there is more obvious growth and agitation at the radical end. This action is often deplored by older, more conservative cells who characteristically have ambivalent feelings about all of the attention paid to the "impetuous newcomers." Participants in the conservative groups claim that the radical activists will "ruin all of the things that we have accomplished and lose us

the good will of the public we have so painstakingly cultivated." But, characteristically, the more middle-range and conservative groups, either purposely or inadvertently, use this radical action to spearhead their own drives and make their own demands and actions seem *comparatively* reasonable.

We have elsewhere described the various types of groups in each of the movements we have studied. Here I need but roughly point out the general outlines of the continuum in the black power, the Pentecostal, and the ecology movements.

In the cities where we have conducted field research in 1967-1968, black power ranges from such groups as the NAACP and the Urban League—by 1968 considered conservative—through a middle spectrum of church-based and community centers, parapolice patrols, campus black student groups, to radical and militant groups such as the Black Panthers, and various segments which were trained in guerrilla warfare.

Similarly, the participatory ecology movement as we studied it in several cities in 1969-1970 ranges from such essentially conservative organizations as the Audubon Society, the Conservation Foundation and the Sierra Club, through such middle-spectrum segments as Friends of the Earth, and the John Muir Institute, which evolved through a 1968 split in the West Coast Sierra Club. These latter were once considered radical deviations from the established conservation groups, but since 1970 there have sprung up many activist segments calling themselves such names as the Peoples Architects, the Food Conspiracy, Ecology Action, Ecology Freaks, and Ecology Commandos.

In the ecology movement conservatives and radicals are divided primarily over their view of the established order or "the system," and the ability of this established system to change its course and save itself from ecocatastrophe. Radicals believe that one cannot work within the system to change it since it is, by its very nature, responsible for not only pollution, but also the major ills of poverty, racism, and war-making. In a series of articles in *Natural History* magazine we have discussed ecology (Gerlach, 1970c) and surveyed and analyzed ecology attitudes (Gerlach and Hine, 1970c, 1970d).

Similarly, Pentecostals can be ranged along a continuum reflecting intensity of involvement in personal religious experience and degree of institutionalization. As a basic distinguishing characteristic Pentecostals seek to receive the "gifts of the spirit" which are recorded in the New Testament as fundamental to first-century Christianity. These include such ecstatic manifestations as tongue speaking, prophecy, and interpretation.

We explain elsewhere how such manifestations serve as commitment ritual and are not usefully analyzed as indicators of personal or group deprivation or psychological problem (Gerlach and Hine, 1970b). Assemblies of God represent the conservative, institutional end of the Pentecostal spectrum. Many are literally and figuratively the grandchildren of those who participated in an earlier wave of Pentecostal revivals which did appeal primarily to blue-collar workers. The opposite, cutting, growing edge of the movement is composed of small home-meeting groups of "underground" or "hidden" church-type, attracting primarily new converts from middle- and upper-middle-class Americans. Between these polar segments range a variety of independent churches and storefront groups of varying sizes.

Segmentation Process

Observation of the segmentary nature of movement organization suggests four basic ways in which cells split, merge, or proliferate:

- (1) Movements characteristically include in the ideology a concept of personal power. In religious movements, this involves beliefs concerning the direct access to God from whom power is derived. In the black power movement, this concept is expressed in terms of "doing your own thing." Each individual as well as each small group is credited with and encouraged to "do his own thing" and to take initiative in acting to promote movement goals he considers important. This results in organizational splits over ideological or methodological approach and stimulates the gathering of new recruits to support each new venture.
- (2) Preexisting socioeconomic cleavages, factionalisms, and personal conflicts are carried over into the movement and increase the so-called "fissiparous," or splitting nature, of the movement organization.
- (3) Movement members, especially those with leadership capabilities, compete for a broad range of economic, political, social, and psychological rewards. For example, black power leaders are continually vying with one another for funds which whites contribute through fear, guilt, or a genuine desire for social change. Similarly, Pentecostal evangelists compete for the honor of leading a large revival and ecology spokesmen contend for media and student attention. This personal competition leads to continual

splitting of cells, realignment of followers, and intensified efforts to recruit new participants and broaden bases of support.

- (4) Segmentation of movement organization occurs over ideological differences. As we have pointed out in other papers, a truly committed movement participant experiences an intensity of involvement over ideological differences that the ordinary person feels only for events which threaten his immediate well-being, his family, or home. For instance, we indicated above how differences in opinion about the "system" and its ability to change are a basis for significant organizational fission in the ecology movement.

Decentralization and Polycephalous Structure

Leadership in the movements we have studied, in Weberian terms, is charismatic more than bureaucratic. Power and authority tend to be distributed among several of the most able and dedicated members of a group, of which one is recognized as *primus inter pares*, the "first among equals." This is similar to the pattern of leadership in various African, Asian, and Middle Eastern societies which anthropologists have characteristically called segmentary and *acephalous*. The term *acephalous*, or "headless," indicates the strong bias which scholars have had against such noncentralized organization. If the tribal organization has many leaders, Western observers call it headless. We prefer the term polycephalous. A typical leader in a polycephalous tribe or in a movement achieves his status by building a personal following and displaying abilities and characteristics pertinent to situational needs and the expectations of his adherents and potential recruits. He must prove and continue to demonstrate his worth to maintain his position.

In his study of segmentary lineage systems, Sahlins (1961) points out that leadership in such systems is often situation specific and hence ephemeral. A man who proves himself as a war leader over a confederation of segments fighting a common foe is not necessarily able to work as a leader of this confederation or of its components in peace.

This situational aspect of leadership is characteristic of the movements we have studied, especially black power. Those qualities which enhance the leader's reputation in some types of militant and action-oriented operations may not be pertinent to assure maintenance of leadership under different conditions. A person may secure leadership over a group or collection of groups by his ability to "sock it to Whitey," or mobilize and lead a short-run militant operation and obtain concessions from the establishment. But he may not have the ability to lead these groups in the

more routine consolidation of gains, and hence might fade, at least for a time, into the background while persons with more pertinent organizational skills assume control.

Even where leaders have both charismatic-action and bureaucratic-administrative capabilities most will find it difficult to employ both at one time. Administering the ordinary activities of many of the black power groups often implies working to some degree with whites, taking their advice and funds (often with some strings attached or implied) and reducing overt manifestations of militancy. This leads other blacks to brand such leaders as Uncle Toms and accuse them of being coopted by the system. Similarly, some environmental activists wind up working with government or industry and experience similar problems of identity. Of course, a few gifted individuals will actually thrive in such situations, and switch back and forth from administrative to militant role, playing one off against the other with deceptive ease.

Although certain particularly charismatic and able leaders, such as Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, Dick Gregory, Eldridge Cleaver for black power, or Paul Ehrlich for ecology activism, or David Wilkerson for Pentecostalism, may be highly revered and widely influential at any moment, the newest convert to the movement can perceive them more as "soul brothers" than as "commanders of the faithful." Each has organizational power only over his own segment of the movement, and this only for a limited time. To outsiders, such men often appear to be the key individuals without whom the movement would grind to a halt. But not one of them could be called the leader of the movement as a whole, because:

- (1) they quite clearly disagree upon such crucial matters as the goals of the movement and the means by which these goals should be achieved.
- (2) not one of these leaders has a roster, or even knows about all of the groups which consider themselves participants in the movement.
- (3) they can make no decisions which are binding upon all or even a majority of the participants in the movement.
- (4) this is most frustrating for representatives of the established order: none of these leaders has regulatory powers over the movement. In the case of black power, city officials are often upset when well-known leaders whom they assume to have incited a riot, cannot control it, even when they are obviously working tirelessly to do so. Officials then conclude either that the leader is not

sincere in his efforts to stop the riots or that it got out of hand and beyond his original orders. In one riot in Miami in 1968, city and state officials called in a well-known black power leader, who had been speaking in the area, to plead for an end to the violence. Local black leaders said afterwards that they felt this only made the situation worse. The assumption that local groups were under his control angered them. In the environmental issues established authorities frequently want the ecology protesters to centralize, hire a lawyer to represent them, and negotiate.

- (5) Another manifestation of the polycephalous, segmentary nature of the movement is that there is no such thing as a card-carrying member of the movement. That is, there are no objective requirements to qualify a person as a movement member, although some groups do have such membership requirements. Participants in the movement share a common history and experience and recognize each other through bonds of objectively perceived commitment. This means that there is no leader who can determine objectively who is or is not a member of the movement, let alone direct, regulate, or speak for the movement as a whole.

Reticulation

The decentralized, segmentary, organizational structure of a movement owes its cohesion to linkages among the autonomous cells. Through these linkages the various cells intermesh to form a network which, following Mayer (1966), we regard as essentially "unbounded." That is, the network ramifies extensively throughout society and there are no well-defined limits to such extension. We identify five types of such linkages:

- (1) Lines of kinship, friendship, and other forms of close association between individual members of different local groups. Often a single individual will be an active participant in more than one group as well. Even after an organizational split over some issue, previous ties of friendship tend to form loose linkages between the resulting splinter groups. Such ties form the basis for potential cooperative action in the face of future large-scale opposition.
- (2) Personal, kinship, or social ties between leaders and other participants in autonomous cells form networks that sometimes extend beyond the local community and tie together independent groups in distant cities. Such ties are extended and facilitated by telephone and letter. Circulating newsletters play such a role in Pentecostal and ecology movements.

- (3) Every movement has its traveling evangelists who criss-cross the country as living links in the reticulate network. Abernathy, McKissick, Cleaver, and others are only the better known of hundreds of black power spokesmen whose influence spread beyond their own local groups. For participatory ecology we can mention such noted ecoevangelists as Paul Ehrlich and Barry Commoner. When such an evangelist-organizer comes to town, members of many different local segments bury the hatchet temporarily to hear him speak and often act in concert under his ad hoc leadership in a specific activity such as a demonstration or march. Ordinary movement participants can also travel along the movement network. For example, a university student and ecology activist from Minneapolis traveled along such an ecology network up and down the West Coast. Everywhere his ecology contacts gave him housing and food, shared ideas about ecology and change with him, and sent him on to new contacts in his next stopping-off place. As he traveled, he disseminated his growing information, like Johnny Appleseed, sowing seeds to bear tomorrow's fruit.
- (4) Closely related to the rally or the revival meeting of the traveling evangelist are the more permanent cross-cutting activities of the areawide, regional or national "in-gathering." One example of the regional and national in-gathering for black power was the Poor People's March. Another, somewhat earlier example, was the open housing demonstration of Father Groppi and the "Commandoes" in Milwaukee. For the ecology movement the April 1970 Teach-Ins not only helped to bring ecology and related counterculture groups together, but also generated new awareness and poured it out across the land.
- As the local committees of such area, regional, and national associations continue and become more permanent organizations, they become roughly analogous to the age sets in polycephalous African societies which cut across loyalties to the lineage segments (Eisenstadt, 1959).
- (5) A crucial cross-cutting linkage providing movement unity are those basic beliefs which are shared by all segments of the movement, no matter how disparate their views on other matters. All movement ideologies are split in the sense that there are a few basic themes and an infinite variety of interpretations and emphases. The variety of interpretation is the ideological basis for fusion, enabling members of warring factions to conceptualize themselves as participants in a single movement or revolution. Sometimes these unifying tenets spread as powerful integrating concepts, such as the concepts of ecosystem, interdependence, limited resource base,

spaceship earth, no-growth economy. Sometimes such concepts become slogans which transcend initial meaning and epitomize the movement. The term "ecology" is one example of this. Black power gives us a splendid instance of the condensation of ideology into battle cry and unifying slogans: Black Power, Black is Beautiful, Racism is Whitey's hang-up, Green Power through Black Power, and the like. The concepts of ecology, system, interdependence, limited resource base, spaceship earth, have interpenetrated the ecology movement. Such statements express the core beliefs which make possible the system of intercell leadership exchange, temporary coalition on specific actions, a flow of financial and other material resource through nonbureaucratic channels, and an often surprising presentation of a united front in the face of external opposition. They are comparable to the common ancestor or common religious concepts of the Arabs, Nuer, or Tiv, and Somali peoples, who unified on this basis when necessary.

Extramovement Linkages

This movement structure articulates and gains strength from various significant extramovement linkages. We can identify two such linkages to groups, organizations, and persons in the established order, and linkages to other movements. Here, again, those links ramify in an essentially unbounded, expanding web. For example, participants in the black power movement will have various white or black friends, associates, and other contacts who are not involved in the movement. These relationships may have been established through or quite independently of black power activities. A participant in any one movement cell may prevail upon his extramovement friends and associates to aid him in ways which directly or indirectly help the movement locally or nationally. Through their relationship with any one participant, or cell, nonparticipants may be influenced to support the movement by word or deed. In turn, many such nonparticipants will use their own networks of friends, relatives, or associates either directly or indirectly to help them provide such support. As an example of these extramovement linkages, we can note that personal associations of varying intensity among several dynamic black militant spokesmen and various white churchmen, community leaders, students, and university faculty members in one urban center provided the primary and initial channels through which these black leaders were able to obtain financial and political support to establish a unique and controversial community center in one city where we conducted research.

As is well known, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) often seeks to join in common cause with militant black power groups. In part they do this because black power activities so often zero in on the gap between the noble ideals expressed in the "American Dream" and the harsher manifestations of real life in the United States. Thus, black power causes provided SDS with ideological motive and justification for implementation of confrontation tactics. In a similar fashion the radical segments of the Ecology movement overlap with various SDS groups and counterculture groups providing the latter with a useful ideological club--racism, pollution, and the Vietnam War. All are considered caused by the same evils inherent in the established order. Yet white radicals also warn that the established order wishes to use the seemingly safe ecology issue to deflect interest from antiwar and antiracism activities. Some activists, seeking to remake established church structure and purpose, are also becoming involved in the ecology movement. In a very few cases Pentecostals are also involved in ecology, black power, and antiwar concerns.

As yet we do not note significant overlap between black power and ecology. Our survey of *Muhammad Speaks*, the Black Muslim newspaper, indicates that Black Muslims suspect the concept of zero population growth as a device of genocide. Black militants can also argue that ecology represents a white establishment cop-out from issues of racism and war. But there is some basis of mutual interaction, represented in the statement that blacks suffer more from urban pollution than anyone else.

Adaptive Functions

As we have noted, there is a popular bias, often shared by movement participants, against such a segmented, polycephalous structure as inherently weak. We have found, however, that these characteristics of segmentation, ideological diversity, and proliferation of cells are highly adaptive in situations of social change. Bureaucratic centralization, while efficient, is not noted for producing rapid organizational growth, for inspiring depth of personal commitment, or for flexible adaptation to rapidly changing conditions. All of these are necessary to a successful movement aimed at implementing personal and social change. A decentralized, segmented, reticulate social structure is adaptive for seven major reasons:

First, it prevents effective suppression by the opposition. Multiplicity of leadership and lack of centralized control ensures the survival of the

movement even if leaders are jailed or otherwise removed. In fact, such action stimulates emergence of new leadership, because of heightened commitment in the face of opposition. Autonomy and self-sufficiency of local cells make effective suppression of the movement extremely difficult. For every cell that is coopted into the establishment it can indeed appear like the hydra of mythology. Also, the behavior of the movement cannot easily be predicted. An article in *Newsweek* (1970) indicates that indeed the FBI is having trouble coping with radical groups primarily because of this decentralized and antibureaucratic structure. Certainly it cannot easily collect intelligence information on such groups by its traditional methods. In comparison, the FBI could much more easily infiltrate the Communist Party USA with its bureaucratic structure and predictable methodology, or the bureaucratic "Mafia." By penetrating any level of such a bureaucracy the FBI can learn about activities throughout the entire organization. We can hypothesize that in response to the polycephalous, segmental nature of movements the established order would find it necessary to seek to penetrate almost every movement segment, and indeed, in some cases, even to establish cells of its own. In short, the intelligence agencies of the established order will respond to a polycephalous, segmented structure by establishing a polycephalous, segmental counterintelligence structure. This will lead to the same characteristics of factionalism and competition for which movements are noted. It could be expected that interagency rivalry and factors of security would prevent such segments from cooperating in an effective network or under a central administration even though intelligence data are centrally collected. Perhaps the proliferation of army intelligence activities within the United States is a response to such movement segmentation. This response threatens individual freedom, and is of such importance that I deal with it at more length later in this paper.

The second function of such organization we call multipenetration. Factionalism and schism facilitate penetration of the movement into a variety of social niches. Factionalism along lines of preexisting socioeconomic cleavages provides recruits from a wide range of socioeconomic and educational backgrounds with a type of black power group with which they can identify. The variety of ideological emphases and types of organizational structures produces an organizational smörgåsbord which has something for everyone, no matter what his taste in goals or methods might be. A segmented social structure is designed for multipenetration of all sociological levels and psychological types. As Sahlins (1961) explains for segmentary lineage systems, this type of social structure is well adapted to "predatory expansion."

Third, the resultant multiplicity of cell types maximizes adaptive variation during a time of marked environmental change. As each cell does its "own thing" in its own way, each contributes synergistically to the success of the whole. While it is popular to stress the need for centralized unity in black power, some astute black spokesmen and movement participants note the advantages derived from segmentation. Nathan Hare (1968), a militant black sociologist, takes a somewhat Machiavellian approach to diversity and argues in a *Negro Digest* article that black power can utilize "even Uncle Toms" to accomplish black power goals. A young black community organizer in Miami explains that some blacks who superficially appear to be "Uncle Toms" may in fact be what he terms "Uncle Bobs"; that is, persons who pretend to play the white man's game while in reality working for the black cause. "They all play their part," he says.

In a *Playboy* interview, Jesse Jackson (1969), heading Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) Operation Breadbasket in Chicago, rejects the newsmen's claim that the civil rights and black movement is fragmented and thus confused and weak. He acknowledges that there is diversity in the movement, and that the various main organizations—NAACP, SCLC, Urban League and Black Panthers—operate in different ways. But he notes that each is, in fact, doing its thing in a way which contributes to the success of the movement as a whole and which shows that the movement is together. He says that it is America which has problems of disunity, and it is America which must join the various black groups and black movements in order to accomplish "the resurrection of her soul."

In a special issue of *Ebony* (1969), the editors and their authors focused on the "Black Revolution" in the United States, a revolution which they define as transforming personalities and "promoting a sudden, radical or complete change" in black as well as overall American society. On the one hand, they illustrate the great variation which exists in the ways in which blacks perceive, generate, and react to this radical change. On the other hand, they emphasize the synergistic unity which exists among blacks, irrespective of their diverse approaches to the black revolution. For example, they explained that while the Black Panthers may seem poles apart from members of the Urban League and the NAACP, they are bound together in common cause, drawing from a common heritage of blackness, of white oppression and discrimination. They constitute, in fact, complementary, mutually enhancing, components of one movement.

The fourth function of such organization is that it contributes to system reliability. While diversity of function produced by multiplicity of cell types is an obvious and adaptive characteristic of movement organization, it is also significant that some groups duplicate and overlap the functions of others. While this duplication is often seen as inefficient by the many exponents of movement centralization, it in fact helps assure that one group is available to accomplish necessary tasks even if another falters or fails. For example, when one community center retires from its role as the spearhead of militant protest, another group is there to move in and quickly take its place. When tensions and conflict potential were high, more than one group existed to serve as community parapolice, and more than one organization was available to isolate and counter dangerous rumors. In this context it is worth noting that political scientist Martin Landau (1969) uses the work of mathematician John von Neumann (1956) to show how duplication, overlap, and redundancy of components in a system increase system reliability. Landau argues that it is possible to build an organization which is more reliable than any of its parts by adding sufficient redundancy. This, he claims, is a more practical approach than attempting to assure reliability and efficiency by ordering and perfecting each of its parts. To achieve such success through redundancy it is of course necessary that the system be so arranged so as, when parts fail, they do so in such manner that they cannot and do not impair other parts. If, on the other hand, a component is not independent of the failures of another, which duplicates its role, then the addition of this counterpart imposes a liability. Similarly, Landau shows how reliability is built into biological systems by the property of "overlapping" or equipotentiality. That is, some system components are sufficiently generalized or adaptable to take over the functions of a range of other more specialized components which have been damaged. Landau applied these propositions to criticise the efficiency experts who believe that they can improve the operations of government and industrial organizations by streamlining through the elimination of redundancy and overlap. These propositions can equally be applied to the analysis of movement organization and reliability. However, we would add that the factors of redundancy, duplication, and overlap are adaptive only in a segmentary, polycephalous, and reticulate structure, in which the failure of one part does not harm the other parts. A centralized bureaucracy would seem to link the duplicated parts in such a way that the liabilities of each are maximized. If one part of a bureaucracy is faulty this impairs all parts either laterally or through the center.

A fifth function of such a decentralized structure is what we have called the escalation of effort. This sometimes, but not always, involves personal competition between leaders. When a militant segment of a movement acts, a host of more moderate groups benefit. On the grounds that they agree with the goals but not the means of the militants, representatives of the affected established order make concessions. In the end, overall movement goals are achieved. This inspires a sort of escalating dynamism. Today's radical is tomorrow's Uncle Tom, no matter what the movement. As one segment of a movement goes militant and attracts public attention, other segments are motivated to step out and upstage it. Thus, demands or concepts which were once viewed as outrageous, soon appear as relatively moderate and reasonable. Gains for the whole movement are thus consolidated. For example, establishment whites contribute money to a radical black power community center because they are warned that if this center is not funded angry militants will become even more radical and join ever more threatening groups such as the Black Panthers.

In the case of ecology, a leader of the Isaac Walton League urges legislators to pass a bill which will protect the wilderness by saying that if the "kids" do not see that they can save the environment by working within the system, they will lose faith and will join really radical groups that "act only on emotion." A leader of an old established conservation group was amazed when he heard a young ecology activist call him an Uncle Tom on conservation efforts. His initial reaction was to say that he and his association were saving the environment when the young radicals were still in diapers. But he is spurred on to greater effort by this accusation to prove that he and his colleagues are as active as anyone.

Similarly, different Pentecostal evangelists from the United States and Latin America compete for the honor and challenge of controlling large revival meetings in Bogotá, Colombia, just as North American Pentecostal evangelists in Haiti compete with each other for funds from the Pentecostal contributors to support "their fight against Voodoo." As each seeks to outperform the other, the Pentecostal movement presses forward.

Much the same is the case for the Palestinian guerrillas. Typically, a *Time* article (1970) about these guerrillas focuses on the way in which competition among Arab leaders is "devouring their central command." The article explains that such schism has come about because the guerrillas grew numerous and became prosperous, and implies that the segmentation will wreck the cause. But can we not just as plausibly argue that it was because of segmentation and competition that members were recruited and more funds secured?

The dynamics of small group structure also contribute to the escalation of effort. Most movement segments are small enough to permit face-to-face interaction among participants in it. Participants can observe, evaluate, praise, or condemn the contributions of other participants to the operations of their small group. Participants can also observe how their own activities help or hinder these operations. This contributes to the striving of each segment, which, in turn, carries the whole movement forward as segments and leaders compete. Our findings here corroborate Mancur Olson's (1965) observation that small groups are more effective in mobilizing energies of members to achieve shared objectives than large collectivities within which individual efforts or lack of effort can go unnoticed. Furthermore, our concept of movement network or reticulate structure explains how these individual energized segments combine in a large-scale effort.

It promotes innovation in the design and implementation of social, economic, and political change. This, from the standpoint of society at large, is the most significant and the most broadly adaptive function of segmentation and decentralized control. The climate of such a social structure fosters entrepreneurial experimentation. For example, black power sensitivity training groups are using innovative techniques in communicating the need for change across previously formidable barriers. As noted above, black action has stimulated the development of a multitude of white or interracial "positive response groups," which are experimenting with ways to make adaptive social change and facilitate face-to-face interracial communication. These efforts require social innovation, for existing institutions have not provided channels through which these people ordinarily meet on a face-to-face, talk-it-over basis.

Black groups are experimenting with communal ownership of businesses, with tutorial programs in schools, and with the use of extraparty political organizations in certain localities. Parapolice forces of black youth are springing up with varying degrees of success in many cities. The trial-and-error approach to social change facilitated by the segmented social structure of the black power movement has inspired a similar type of social innovation among white positive response groups. All such innovators are finding that it must be a grass roots attempt; using one-to-one communication and personal initiative not normally found through bureaucratic channels.

Similarly, ecology groups have generated important new ideas about resource use, about interdependence, and the concept of ecosystem. They

have promoted a range of new approaches to teaching about ecology and total systems, and have involved Americans in various attempts to recycle goods, to reduce population, and to control energy consumption. They have pushed some industries to seek less polluting technologies and have led some economists and government representatives to reevaluate conventional priorities and question even established worship of growth.

The seventh feature of such a social structure is closely related to the fourth. Innovation through trial and error results in a variety of adaptive and successful social "mutations." It also results in many failures. In fact, if social processes are at all analogous to natural processes, there are a good many more failures than successes. Under the pressure of selective adaptation, the maladaptive variant simply passes out of existence. This can only occur on the social level, however, within a decentralized, segmented social structure where the errors of one group have little if any effect on another. Members of a group who failed to find a viable answer to a problem can disband, reform under new leadership, or simply be absorbed into another group. The life of the movement continues unabated. A social innovation that fails affects only those closely associated with it, and may indeed benefit others by showing them what will not work. Information about success and failure of such experiments flows rapidly through the reticulate network of a movement and across extramovement linkages to other movements and established orders.

Premovement Social Structure

At first it might appear that segmentation and polycephalous structure in such movements as black power, the Palestinian Arab guerrilla movement and the American Indian movement stems from the disunity and disorganization which has been presumed to exist among these groups throughout their recent history and often in consequence of white control and manipulation. But this same segment action and decentralization characterizes all of the movements which we have studied, not just black power. In this paper and elsewhere we describe such organization for the charismatic renewal movement and for the participatory ecology movement. Most of the participants of these two movements are white, establishment, middle-class North Americans. This comparison also points up the fallacy of the argument that segmentation and centralization among the new left and SDS are signs of the immaturity, weakness, or special ideological bent of movement members.

Such segmentary, polycephalous organization seems a generic characteristic of social movements, at least in their developmental stage. Centralization may be a characteristic superimposed upon this basic organization, as for example in Communist revolutionary movements, or when a movement is suppressed. More research is necessary to determine the conditions under which centralization occurs. This analysis also leads us to make another point, in this case chiefly about the black power movement. It may be that some peoples, such as American blacks and students, do lack experience in forming large-scale corporate organizations: this is subject to research. But even if correct, it is also true that black Americans have over the years developed extensive interpersonal and intergroup networks for communication, aid, migration, and survival. These kinds of networks are not as visible as centralized corporate organization, but they can be very effective in maintaining survival under oppression and in gaining advantage in time of change. We would suggest that detailed analysis of such premovement or extramovement networks among black Americans would display a powerful organization for adaptation and coping—and give a picture much different from that presented by those who focus on disunity and broken or matrifocal families.

As far as we can ascertain, such preexisting networks and the capacity to form them have often been well utilized in the growth and operation of the black power movement. From this approach, perhaps black Americans have special ability to develop efficient reticulation in movement organization. Instead of searching for limitations in corporate social organization which hinder blacks in their search for centralized unity, we might look for capabilities in networking which contribute to effective movement organization. The same might be said for our analysis of student interpersonal networks and their adaptation to movement organization.

To conclude this evaluation of segmentary, polycephalous and reticulate movement organization as adaptive in an environment of change, we can profitably refer to a recent proposition advanced by sociologist and industrial consultant, Warren Bennis. Bennis and Slater (1968) suggest that to cope with the problems and prospects of tomorrow, established industrial and governmental organizations must change their structure. These organizations must move from a bureaucratic, centralized mold and assume a structure which Bennis labels agricultural, but which we would call "segmentary, polycephalous and reticulate."

Perspective on Organization

As we have suggested, movement organization parallels in many ways the well-known segmentary lineage systems found in many African, Middle Eastern, and Asian tribal societies. L. Bohannan (1958), P. Bohannan (1954), Evans-Pritchard (1940), Eisenstadt (1959), Fortes (1963), Gluckman (1959), Middleton and Tait (1958), Lewis (1961), Kasdan and Murphy (1959), Sahlins (1961) are among the scholars who have described and analyzed such systems. They may pose puzzles and ask how can tribes without rulers be ruled, or how can there be peace through the feuding of rival groups. But they put it together by showing how autonomous segments are linked through cross-cutting ties, and kept in dynamic balance by processes of fusion and fission. Furthermore, some of these scholars have explained or suggested that adaptive utility in such structural features.

To paraphrase Sahlins, these processes provide a mechanism for expansion into the domain over which others have established control. The segmentary system divides to push into the living space of its neighbors and then pulls together to apply concerted pressure and consolidate its gain.

Just as outsiders find it difficult to control movements, so do they find it difficult to control segmented lineage systems. British administrators in the earlier days of colonialism, attempting to come to terms with or dominate certain segmentary African tribes, probably felt as if they were reaching in to grasp the center of a bowl of jelly, as vainly they sought to find a single paramount leader through whom they could operate. As we have noted, officials in contemporary American cities have had some of the same feelings as they have attempted to locate a "responsible" black leader who represents the black power movement. The term acephalous, or headless, has usually been used to describe such decentralized political organization, indicating a strong bias against such organization by its analysts. Polycephalous, or "many-headed," seems to be more appropriate.

While similar to segmentary systems in characteristics of fission-fusion and polycephalous leadership, movement organization is different from such systems in a significant aspect. Unlike the segments in a tribal structure, movement cells tend to vary among themselves in form and often in function. They vary in tactics and specific goals, in membership and appeal. No segment or group within the movement contains all the roles, functions, means, and goals found in the movement as a whole. Indeed, the opposite is often true. This diversity among segments helps the

movement to accomplish the broad range of tasks necessary to its purpose and to influence the broadest spectrum of society. On the other hand, there is also duplication of function and form among a number of groups found in any one area, and this increases reliability of the whole. Movement segments are not simply copies of one another, but if any one falters, fades away, or fails, another is usually available to take its place.

SUMMARY

Social movements are characteristically *segmentary*; that is, composed of many groups of varying sizes and scope. And they are *polycephalous*; that is, their varied groups have many competing leaders. Popular opinion has it that such organization is at best inefficient—at worst it is no organization at all, but an amorphous collectivity. But the diverse cells which and the many leaders who compose a movement in fact weave together to form a network or *reticulate* structure. In short, movements are well described as segmentary, polycephalous, and reticulate.

Segmentation and proliferation of groups within a movement occur because of a belief in personal access to power, because of preexisting social cleavages, because of personal competition, and because of ideological differences.

Leadership is ephemeral and weakly developed above a local group level just as organized activity above this level is ephemeral. As in polycephalous, segmentary societies, leaders “build a name” and establish a following on the basis of personal qualities and skills and personally established social links and bonds. In spite of these centrifugal characteristics, these varying groups manifest sufficient cohesion and ideological unity to be perceived as a large-scale movement. Such cohesion is obtained through a range of integrating, cross-cutting links, bonds, and operations, including ties between members and group leaders, by the activities of traveling evangelists, or spokesmen, large-scale demonstrations and “ingatherings,” sharing of basic ideological themes, and collective perception of, and action against, a common opposition.

Such organization is adaptive in implementing social change and helping the movement survive. It makes the movement difficult to suppress; it affords maximum penetration of and recruitment from different socioeconomic and subcultural groups; it maximizes adaptive variation through diversity; it contributes to system reliability through redundancy, duplication, and overlap; and, finally, it encourages social innovation and problem-solving. Such organization appears to generate countermovement intelligence activity of a segmentary, polycephalous nature.

NOTES

1. As one aspect of our research, we surveyed popular media accounts of movement events and these are the views we delineated. Among papers surveyed were the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, *Miami Herald*, *New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*. Magazines include: *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*. We have collected, analyzed, and coded this information. News reporters and executives themselves showed awareness that they played a role in affecting events. Furthermore, the President's Riot Commission report discussed these alternatives, as does the President's Commission on Student Unrest.

2. These data were adopted from media survey.

3. Research began in 1965. Research methods have included participant observation, interview, questionnaire, and media survey.

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