

ADVANCES IN
GROUP PROCESSES

Editor: EDWARD J. LAWLER

Volume 2 • 1985

ADVANCES IN GROUP PROCESSES

A Research Annual

Editor: EDWARD J. LAWLER
Department of Sociology
University of Iowa

VOLUME 2 • 1985



JAI PRESS INC.

Greenwich, Connecticut

London, England

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36 Sherwood Place
Greenwich, Connecticut 06836*

*JAI PRESS LTD.
3 Henrietta Street
London WC2E 8LU
England*

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ISBN: 0-89232-524-0

Manufactured in the United States of America

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

<i>Hermann Brandstätter</i>	Institute for Psychology University of Linz Linz, Austria
<i>Peter Carnevale</i>	College of Business The University of Iowa
<i>Gary Alan Fine</i>	Department of Sociology University of Minnesota
<i>Douglas D. Heckathorn</i>	Department of Administration of Justice University of Missouri, Kansas City
<i>Samuel S. Komorita</i>	Department of Psychology University of Illinois
<i>K. Leung</i>	Department of Psychology University of Illinois
<i>Barry Markovsky</i>	Department of Sociology The University of Iowa
<i>Charlan J. Nemeth</i>	Department of Psychology University of California, Berkeley
<i>Nancy M. Norman</i>	Department of Psychology State University of New York, Albany

*Randy Stoecker*Department of Sociology
University of Minnesota*James T. Tedeschi*Department of Psychology
State University of New York,
Albany*John C. Turner*School of Behavioral Sciences
Macquarie University
Australia*David Willer*Department of Sociology
University of Kansas

PREFACE

The preface includes a statement of editorial policy for the series as well as a brief description of the contents of this volume.

EDITORIAL POLICY

The purpose of this series is to publish theoretical, review, and empirically based papers on group phenomena. The series adopts a broad conception of “group processes” consistent with prevailing ones in the social psychological literature. In addition to topics such as status processes, group structure, and decision making, the series will consider work on interpersonal behavior in dyads (i.e., the smallest group), individual–group relations, as well as intergroup relations. Contributors to the series will include not only sociologists but also scholars from other disciplines, such as psychology and organizational behavior.

The series is an outlet for papers that are longer, more theoretical, and more integrative than those published by the standard journals. For example, the editor will be particularly receptive to work falling into the following categories:

1. Conventional and unconventional theoretical work, from broad metatheoretical and conceptual analyses to refinements of existing theories

and hypotheses. One goal of the series is to advance the field of group processes by generating theoretical work.

2. Papers that review and integrate programs of research. The current structure of the field often leads to the piecemeal publication of different parts within a program of research. This series offers those engaged in programmatic research on a given topic to integrate their published and unpublished work into a single paper. Review articles that transcend the author's own work are also of considerable interest.

3. Papers that develop and apply social psychological theories and research to macrosociological processes. One of the premises underlying this series is that the distinction between macro- and microsociological processes is a false one. The series will encourage the development of macrosociological implications embedded in social psychological work on groups.

4. Papers that present theoretically grounded original research of a major nature. Typically, such papers will be more theoretical, include more data and analysis, and develop more general implications than the typical journal article.

CONTENTS OF VOLUME 2

Most of the papers in this volume adopt a critical stance toward an established area of theory and research. The first two papers utilize literature on small groups to analyze and suggest new directions for research on social movements and displaced aggression, respectively. The paper by Fine and Stoecker demonstrates the importance of work on leadership emergence, group culture, and the like to an understanding of social-movement processes. Tedeschi and Norman critically analyze research on displaced aggression and show how effects termed "displaced aggression" in previous research can be interpreted best by social psychological processes such as social comparison and self-presentation.

The papers by Turner, Nemeth, Carnevale, and Brandstätter critique a traditional area of research on groups and offer some provocative new conclusions. John Turner presents a social categorization theory of groups which questions the traditional view that group formation is based on interdependence or the utilitarian value of group activity. Turner's theory contends that group formation results from shared self-definitions that distinguish ingroup from outgroup. This theory has important implications for a variety of group-related phenomena, e.g., depersonalization, interpersonal attraction, social influence, and cohesion. Charlan Nemeth's paper reviews work on minority influence using John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* as a starting point. The major conclusion is that when a minority is pitted against a majority, group members engage in more "cognitive work" which,

in turn, produces more creative group decisions. Even “incorrect” views by a minority have this positive effect on the quality of group decision making. The paper by Peter Carnevale reviews theory and research on accountability and questions prevailing notions about the negative effects of accountability in intergroup relations. The major conclusion is that “dual” accountability, i.e., high accountability to both one’s own group and to the representative of the opposing group, can produce the most complex treatment of issues and also integrative solutions that reconcile the interests of both groups. Herman Brandstaetter pulls together his extensive research on social-emotional conditions in controversial discussions. The research suggests that responses (e.g., compliance, retaliation, reciprocation) to expressions of hostility vs. friendliness depend on the degree that the person has an “exchange vs. reinforcement orientation.” The paper argues that such orientations are individual differences that warrant greater attention in research on social interaction in groups.

Two papers in the volume critique some facet of social exchange theory. David Willer argues that social exchange theorists have adopted a narrow approach to social relations that transforms all relationships into market ones. He argues that both market and nonmarket relations can be subsumed under social exchange if one distinguishes different forms of property and carefully examines the implications of these forms of property on social exchange processes. The paper by Douglas Heckathorn offers a game-theoretical model of exchange in systems where agreements are not strictly binding. A major conclusion is that high interdependence between actors creates stability in a conflict relationship by preventing tactics that are based on or create distrust.

Two papers criticize theories of justice or equity. The paper by Komorita and Leung suggests that equity norms cannot account for reward allocations in social conflict because such norms ignore the role of power. The paper contrasts norms based on power with norms based on equity and presents some preliminary data on the operation of these norms in coalition situations. One major conclusion is that the proportionality principle for linking inputs and outputs is inadequate. Barry Markovsky posits several criteria for evaluating theories of justice and applies them to three formal justice theories: the status value theory of Berger and associates, the subjective expected inequity approach of Blalock and Wilken, and Markovsky’s multilevel theory of justice. The criteria help identify strengths and weaknesses of the theories and suggest ways to rectify the weaknesses.

Edward J. Lawler
Series Editor

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CAN THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN? SMALL GROUPS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Gary Alan Fine and Randy Stoecker

ABSTRACT

Although small groups and social movements have not often been analyzed in conjunction with each other, such a perspective has benefits for researchers in both areas. Social movements frequently start as small groups and then slowly expand from that base. Social movements can either operate on the basis of creating working small groups (group movements) or have a small group working at headquarters with a mass, diffuse membership, which does not work together except on rare, ceremonial occasions (atomized movements). Although both types of movements require small groups to operate, their structure is markedly different. We also examine the role of small-group culture in social movements. By conceiving culture behaviorally, we can examine the ways in which movements use culture to achieve their own ends. Culture within a movement spreads through social networks, which allows for the unification of seemingly diverse organizations. We conclude by arguing that a greater focus on the small group approach to social movements is crucial for the ethnography of protest.

Advances in Group Processes, Volume 2, pages 1-28.

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ISBN: 0-89232-524-0

I. INTRODUCTION

The words of the old Carter Family standard dealing with the impact of a mother's death on a close-knit family are equally haunting for the study of social movements. How can participants in a social movement keep the unity, the circle, that they desperately need in the face of forces that would tear them asunder? Can the circle be unbroken? Yes, but sometimes the circle gets badly bent. Such an image reminds us of the importance of the group in social movements, and it is this connection that we shall explore in this chapter. That is, how have sociologists recognized that social movements have "groupy" properties?

The recent trend in the examination of social movements has been to describe movements as organizations, emphasizing those ecological and resource implications which are common in organizational studies. This approach to movements explicitly differentiates itself from the traditional approach that emphasizes the strain in a society or the stress on individuals which promotes participation in social movements (e.g., Smelser, 1963; Cantril, 1941; Toch, 1965). This approach is largely psychological, even when considering "strains" in society. It assumes the existence of a problem producing individual distress and assumes that this distress leads to the rise of social movements. The recent trend, which can be broadly labeled as resource mobilization theory (Oberschall, 1973; McCarthy and Zald, 1977), is, in contrast, distinctly sociological, deemphasizing the individual actor to focus on external social constraints and facilitations of action. Resource mobilization theorists treat a social movement organization (SMO) as if it were any organization, with similar sets of problems and solutions. These two approaches to social movements use different metaphors for the movement process and have built these metaphorical foundations into elegant theoretical structures.

We choose to present, tentatively, a third approach, i.e., to see in the social movement the working out of small-group processes. From this perspective social movements are settings for interaction. This view, which supplements strain theory and resource mobilization theory, argues that social movement participants are continually interacting with each other and are collectively constructing the meaning of the movement and engaging in those actions which are defined as appropriate. Unlike the other two approaches, in the small-groups approach interaction and meaning construction are explicitly considered. We agree with Blumer (1969:99) that social movements require collective action—behavior which is typically played out within the arena of the small group.

Our intention, as evidenced by the location of the chapter in this volume, is to do more than reorder some literature on social movements. Rather, we wish to provide leads for reconsidering small-group dynamics. Whereas

the analysis of social movements has been dynamic and flourishing over the past decade, small groups as an area of study has lost some of its luster. Whether or not we can fairly term small-group research “the light that failed” (Mullins, 1973), it has not received the attention that has been paid to other topics. One reason for this neglect is that small-group research has largely, though not entirely, been unable to translate its research focus from the laboratory or therapy group to the “field.” Our focus is on the small group in everyday interaction. In analyzing some of the literature on social movements from a small-groups perspective, we hope to persuade others to recognize that small groups and social movements are sufficiently similar as to deserve joint treatment.

Anyone with experience in a social movement will recognize that much of the organization of a movement occurs in small groups—groups that are characterized by face-to-face interaction. Although some social movements are best known for their mass rallies and meetings, such rallies and meetings can only occur because of what has preceded them—committees and other small-group activities. Indeed, these mass gatherings do not consist of disconnected individuals, but of small groups and cliques (Aveni, 1977). We argue, generally, that social movements comprise networks of small groups—circles of circles—and it is these connections among groups that gives the social movement some of its power and resilience. By analyzing social movements in terms of small-group interaction, we can examine such important constructs as leadership, social roles, idioculture, encounters, recruitment, and boundaries. This perspective suggests that social movements can never be *only* task-oriented, but must satisfy some of the expressive needs of members. The participant must feel a part of the movement and must attach some portion of his or her identity to participation.

Movements are not identical, having diverse organizational structures, membership, and placements of small groups. But all social movements, as all organizations, function largely on the basis of routine, face-to-face interaction which in practice recognizes the significance of small groups. Whereas Blumer uses the metaphor of a social movement being a society in miniature (1969:114), we prefer the metaphor of the social movement as a collection of small groups and would extend that metaphor to societies as well.

In this chapter we shall not provide a complete literature review on social movements. Our goal is more selective. We shall emphasize a few studies or research traditions which we believe are particularly useful in connecting small groups and social movements. For reasons of conciseness, we shall speak of the concept of the “social movement”; yet there is considerable ethnographic reason to believe that much may be lost in lumping together all social movements, and we wonder how many elements all social movements share. We are painfully aware that the general statements in this

paper do not apply with equal validity to all SMOs but believe that the value of such an inclusive approach outweighs its disadvantages.

We shall first consider how social movements are created and how they grow; the beginnings of social movements serve as a start for our analysis. We then turn to a consideration of leadership in social movements, the values that social movements have for their participants, the development of group cultures and meanings, and the encounters that structure the behavior of social movements.

II. THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Social movements do not spring to life fully formed; organizational development takes time. SMOs develop at different rates, partly as a function of the commitment required and the recruitment strategies used. Sometimes the structure of an organization is outpaced by the number of people who suddenly wish to join (viz. the early growth of the 1984 Democratic presidential nomination campaign for Gary Hart). On other occasions, organizational slots remain empty for recruits. The growth of a social movement is a function of structural characteristics, the meaning of the movement to its audience, and the rewards the movement provides.

Most relevant for our discussion is the recognition that social movements typically begin as small groups. Shlay and Faulkner (1984), describing the development of a tenants union, suggest that the life history of the movement involves a few individuals discovering the problem and then slowly building the base, until there are enough interested persons for action. Hiller (1975) speaks of the first stage of the development of a social movement as the interest phase, which involves the gradual formation of a group of individuals with shared concerns. For example, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) was started by one irate mother who, after her child was killed by a drunk driver, gathered around her a group of like-minded women and expanded outward. While there was concern over this social problem previously, this woman, and later her group, focused the concern into an effective and powerful movement which has succeeded in having legislation passed throughout the United States. In the case of the development of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) as a social problem, the major spur for action were three groups of parents who had lost their children (Johnson and Hufbauer, 1982). Histories of many social movements tell similar stories about a small group which grows through fragmentation or through establishing new chapters.

We conceive of organizations growing in one of two ways. Some social movements develop by simply increasing the number of members in their organization without differentiating these members. These organizations

we call *atomized movements*. Other organizations grow by establishing new chapters, cells, or project groups. These organizations we term *group movements*.

The atomized movement does not depend on the small group to incorporate members within the organization. Many, if not most, members of such large, relatively atomized movements as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), the Moral Majority, or Zero Population Growth never attend meetings. Although these SMOs can in special instances call on their members to attend a major event, more often these members simply provide financial and moral support. While small groups operate in the central office of the organization, as is true for all sorts of organizations, the membership is not divided into groups. In a structural sense it is relatively easy for these atomized movements to grow in comparison with group movements. In such organizations each additional member simply constitutes another organizational contact, another newsletter, another invitation, another call to action, but doesn't require any additional organizational structure. Further, because such atomized movements typically require less commitment than group movements (often only writing a check), it is relatively easy to convince those with other commitments to join.

Group movements have an entirely different structure, at least in their ideal form. Group movements require that each member be assigned to a local group, chapter, cell, work group, committee, or project. These groups, if they are to encourage participation, must be small enough to permit face-to-face interaction and some measure of contact between leader and follower. Terrorist organizations generally are organized on this model: the small group is able to plan operations and divide up labor in an efficient manner that would not be possible in an atomized movement. Further, such groups can better police their membership boundaries, ensuring some measure of ideological consistency. Even without this need for boundary maintenance and secrecy, activist organizations frequently organize themselves into working groups or projects. Demerath, Marwell, and Aiken (1971) described how the Southern Christian Leadership Conference divided their northern workers during their summer 1965 voter registration drive into "projects"—with six the average group size. In such an organization the more volunteers, the more groups that can be formed. However, a rapid influx of new members strains this system. One needs to have groups for these individuals to participate in, and one needs some mechanism for controlling their activities. How is one able to maintain "quality control" in such a situation? Typically, such organizations must become at least moderately hierarchical, with group organizers and others to organize the organizers. Depending on the ideology of the movement, de-

cisions may originate at the top of the pyramid or at the bottom (Barkan, 1979), but whichever the structure of decision making, it still requires greater concern for the needs of the members which the movement has recruited than does atomized movements.

Many social movements represent a mixture of organizational strategies. Mainline political parties, for example, are in some measure atomized movements. Each carefully builds a mailing list of supporters and, on special occasions (such as for major rallies or election days), each can mobilize these supporters. However, in addition to these largely passive supporters are other organizational members: the political volunteers. For them, organization niches must be created which are sufficiently personal that the volunteer has the support of a group and is directed by higher ranking party members. Promotion within the organization is from the ranks of the workers, although some such mixed organizations may choose their board or standard bearers from among powerful or wealthy passive supporters. Boards of directors serve quite different functions from the groups of active decision makers on the staff.

Recruitment

One of the key tasks for any movement is the recruitment of members. We have discussed the relationship of recruitment to the organizational structure; now we turn to how such recruitment occurs. It is well established that much movement recruitment occurs through the activation of the social networks of members of the movement (e.g., Gerlach and Hine, 1970), especially for many group movements. Yet within group movements the level of commitment required by the movement creates variation in the techniques of recruitment. As Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson (1980) note, the Hare Krishna movement recruits most of its new members from public places, and not from activated social networks. Snow et al. suggest that "movements requiring exclusive participation by their members in movement activities will attract members primarily from public places rather than from among extra-movement interpersonal associations and networks" (1980:796). Individuals in such movements have renounced their extramovement networks, replacing their weak, acquaintanceship ties with an intense, but smaller, set of relations (see Granovetter, 1973). Potential recruits who have active social networks typically find less need of such a "total" movement. Although intensive movements are likely to produce very devoted members (in part, as the result of cutting themselves off from the rest of society) (Bromley and Shupe, 1979), they are unlikely to grow rapidly for extended periods (Snow et al., 1980:797). The movement, too, may choose to isolate itself and this may prevent rapid growth.

Many less intensive movements rely on personal recruitment and these

movements can grow quite rapidly. Recruitment through one's social network may involve activating dyadic relations, such as marital partners (Goldstein, 1978) or acquaintances. Unfortunately, we are not aware of any studies which focus on group recruitment, but some recent research by the first author on fantasy role-playing games, such as *Dungeons and Dragons*, relates to this point. Leisure fads can perhaps be likened to expressive social movements. In the early development of fantasy role playing, much recruitment occurred among groups of war gamers, who collectively decided to switch to this new leisure activity, sometimes at the instigation of a single person who had played or heard of the game previously (Fine, 1983:48–49). If the group accepted this innovation, the members would continue to play. In the early stages of a subsociety, recruitment is frequently collective in that participation requires the presence of others. In the case of collective action and social movements, roommates or “consciousness-raising” groups may collectively decide to take action or attend a meeting of a social movement. Just as Aveni (1977) recognized that crowds are not composed of lonely individuals, so too may social movement recruitment be based on clumps of new members.

Interestingly, all of the movements discussed by Snow and his colleagues involve active member participation; we hypothesize that if one examined atomized movements, recruitment to these SMOs would more likely occur through the mass media, including direct mail solicitation. Such “membership” will typically be less intensive than that found among group movements. Most members of atomized movements do not have to put their bodies on the line, whereas members of group movements are more personally involved.

III. LEADERSHIP

Perhaps the area of small-group research that can most easily be translated to social movements is the study of leadership. We shall consider leadership in a social movement chronologically, beginning with the emergence of leaders and the structural problems and functions of leadership, following changes through the life cycle of a social movement and, finally, considering special types of leaders related to structural properties of social movements.

The emergence of leaders and the emergence of a social movement are part of the same process. Hiller describes a movement as arising out of a “gradual aggregation of individuals similarly interested in a common course of action or interested in common ideas” (1975:346–47). Discussion and the emergence of a common world view ensues and new members are recruited. Out of this aggregation emerges a core group of those who are defined as being most intimately involved with the establishment of the movement.

Within the core group—a small group—leaders arise or, alternatively, a leader forms this small group around himself. Understanding how this operates involves taking account of both the skills of potential leaders and the needs of the social movement. Shaw, in studying small groups, hypothesized that the person who “possesses special skills (abilities, knowledge, information) relative to the group task usually is more active in the group, makes more contributions toward task completion, and has more influence on the group decision” (1971:183). This is similar to what Gamson and his colleagues refer to as group “assets” (Gamson, Fireman, and Rytina, 1982:85–88). Fisher (1980) expands on this view by describing a three-stage model of leader emergence. In the first stage, one or more contenders may drop out of the running, indicating they will follow the leader—whoever that may be. In stage two, other contenders drop out and the noncontenders begin to align themselves with the remaining contenders. In the final stage, if more noncontenders are aligned with one contender than the other, that contender for leadership typically is widely accepted.

Three important points to consider in understanding the emergence of leadership is that (1) gender roles (and other demographic assets) are influential in the selection of a leader, (2) leader roles may not be present in a social movement, and (3) leaders may create SMOs rather than the reverse. On this first point Lawson and Barton’s (1980) study of tenants groups found that men were more likely to be in leadership positions the further away from the grassroots the leader role is located. In the organizations in individual buildings, women were more likely to be organizers and leaders, explained by the fact that women were more likely to make intrabuilding contacts and that female socialization provides women with more of the skills necessary for grassroots organizing. However, neighborhood organizations require leaders with more bureaucratic planning experience (skills men are more adept at because of socialization and career experience) and more contact with external political parties who are more accepting of male leaders. This approach focuses on the skills which are necessary to become a leader, also a major component of the small-group approach to leadership (see Hare, 1976:278ff). Assertiveness and competitiveness, both to become a leader and then to deal effectively with other leaders or institutions, is a prerequisite for success. This is congruent with the finding (at least from data from the 1950s and 1960s) that men are more successful in using these skills in groups (Shaw, 1971).

Not all groups have leaders, however. Barkan (1979) in analyzing the protest movement against nuclear power and Carden (1978) when discussing the feminist movement suggest that decentralization may militate against the development of leaders—a point we shall consider later.

In some instances, a leader may create a movement. Karsh (1970) describes how union activists look for situations in which workers are dis-