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REVIEW ARTICLE

Embedding and Associational Organizations: Theoretical Frameworks Drawn from the Ethnographic and Case Study Literature

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is on the operating principles of associational organizations. Associational organizations often are not incorporated, they often are loosely bounded, it may be unclear who owns them or how the hierarchy of authority works. They often are informal, but the main argument of this paper is that usually they are embedded with larger organizations, institutions, or communities. These larger entities have strong norms about operating procedures and the associational organizations we focus on must follow the rules laid out by these larger systems. The problem is that there usually is a functional logic about tasks associations want to carry out but the larger systems in which they are embedded do not allow the associational organizations to develop, or evolve, this functional logic.

This paper examines two bodies of organizational case studies. One is drawn from a study of about 60 faith-based organizations existing within different religious denominations in the United States. The second collection of case studies is taken from studies of a variety of local communities where local movements take on different organizational forms. From these two collections of case studies, this paper develops theoretical ideas and principles about how associational organizations work.

Introduction

This paper presents several theoretical frameworks for understanding what [1] calls "organizations in the wild" and it is particularly concerned with nonprofit, nongovernmental, or third sector organizations see [2] for a discussion of terminology related to these types of organizations). Organizations in the wild are entities that can be called organizations in the sense of having task foci, divisions of labor, and structures of control and governance. Often, but not always, they do not fit the definition of "formal" or what Comas calls "domesticated" organizations. They may not be incorporated, hierarchical, bounded social systems, or systems with codified rules, roles, or accountability systems.

These are associations in the sense that they are voluntary groupings of people who come together in a setting or a context and who join together to advance values, enact symbolic values and rituals, and where expressive, affective, and processual activities often are or more important to participants than outcomes or products of action. This paper will include church-based organizations and they may look like formal, separate organizations but in fact outside bodies may have controlling policy authority and mandate certain operating processes. For this reason, structural-functional reasoning does not help us to understand how they work.

The focus of this paper is on what I call "associational organizations". Associational organizations have the expressive, process-oriented, and non-system bounded qualities of associations. However, they also have the task focus and governance features of more formal organizations. The usual theories used for understanding the management, division of labor, and economic productivity of domesticated nonprofit organizations are not effective when associational organizations are the focus. Some have asserted that we lack theory to describe or to understand associational organizations. This paper disagrees because there is an extensive literature of case studies and ethnographies focused on them. But the theories developed in those studies have not been codified nor have they been presented as an overall theoretical framework for understanding this part of the "third sector".

The key idea in our presentation is that associational organizations are embedded in larger social systems so that their organizational processes are contingent. Traditional organization theory has a central assumption that organizations

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are bounded social systems where defined governance structures own resources, manage a rational division of labor, and oversee foreign relations with consumers, suppliers, and other organizations [3]. Being embedded, associational organizations often must accept decision-making authority from an outside organizational system or community. They often must adopt operational values and procedures that are dictated by the outside organization and its values. They also are likely to develop and pursue strategic agendas that have to do with affecting and changing the outside system, subordinating their own internal organizational needs to these outside system agendas.

Contingency means that an organization's structures and processes are shaped and driven by the traditions, values, and interests of other social systems. The patterns to be discussed for associational organizations will be diverse, defined by certain typical patterns that lead the larger, external systems to generate associations within their spheres of influence.

Conventional organization theory tends to be driven by systematizing or homogenizing organizational processes, following the bureaucratic principles of Weber or perhaps the principles of choice and efficiency that come out of economic theory [4]. Systemic ideas make us feel as though empirical analysis is theoretically integrated and as though the diversity of actual organizational experiences can be understood in terms of a few simplifying theoretical ideas. We do not have that epistemological advantage where contingent, embedded organizations are concerned.

However, we do have two empirical "fields" in which associational organizations have developed: religious institutions and local communities. Within each of these we have distinct historical systems and situations that produce typical patterns. Most of this paper will be focused on describing organizational patterns that prevail within the sub-systems of the religious and the community fields.

Religious Institutions

The discussion of religious institutions given here is based on a study of approximately 60 faith-based organizations rooted in different denominations carried out by Schneider in the United States [5]. Analysis of her organizational case studies shows that there are distinct organizational patterns in Catholic, peace church, evangelical, and main-line Protestant denominations and they vary from what we would expect given conventional organizational theory. We will discuss each of these organizational patterns in turn.

Principles of faith in each denomination will structure the way their church organizations operate. They also lay down rules of process, interaction, interpretation and values. These are expected to be carried out both in worship organizations (churches) and in social services and political organizations that are created as part of the religious work of the denomination. Thus, where we might encounter faith-based organizations that seem to be autonomous, seemingly formal organizations-these might be high schools or hospitals or nursing homes-we also encounter within them operational peculiarities that result from the theological principles of their denomination as well as from complex ownership structures that are part and parcel of what it means for organizations to be based in a specific faith tradition.

Community Patterns

Community patterns are not as regular or institutionally crystalized as are denominations and faith-based organizations. The same principle of embedding operates, however. The communities we have in mind are bounded geographic places and systems fitting Wilkinson's definition of local communities [6]. Generally, they have network structures defined by established relationships that together form what Wilkinson calls an "interactional field". Often this is a collectivity with a self-conscious sense of identity, defined physical boundaries and landmarks, established processes and procedures based on families and neighbors living close to each other, and a capacity to define and act on collective problems. They share in a context defined by specific purposes or values but they have somewhat random interconnections based on raising children, sharing neighborly duties, and developing a shared sense of what challenges and problems confront the community [6]

Yet communities need not be these network-based, local physical spaces. Some network forms grow out of self-interested business or institutional actors working together to achieve purposes or working out of their own self-interest to build a sense of community that will be held by others-by surrounding residents. These systems have organizational dynamics but they need not be either defined by the contours of a physical space or built around networks that grow out of parenting and neighboring tasks [7-11].

Our thinking in this section comes from writing in the community studies literature that focuses on communities as a sort of social organization (in the anthropological sense of social organization). In this literature, authors tend to argue that for communities to grow and prosper, they require a system of associations to exist and to grow as part of their organizing system. In emphasizing the importance of associations, the authors may offer ideas about how the associations themselves are organized or what they do to help organize themselves internally and to help organize the larger community.

While the authors may offer provocative and useful ideas about how associations are organized, they do not give us specific theories of organization that tell us in a complete or whole way how the associations they have observed actually operate. Indeed, the organizational statements they may make have little to say about internal organization at all but rather show us how these associations tie the larger community together. We see this in Warner's *Yankee City* series where "secondary" associations tie together "primary institutions"

[11]. Warner gives us a network image of the system and of the importance of these groups but says nothing about how specific associations actually operate.

Faith-Based Organizations

This paper draws data from an in-depth study conducted by the Faith and Organizations project [12-13]. This study was funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. with research activities beginning in March 2008. It examined the relationship between 81 faith-based organizations (FBOs) and their sponsoring faith communities. An earlier pilot study of 11 faith-based organizations was conducted between 2004 and 2006 in Philadelphia and in the greater Washington Metropolitan area (both cities in the USA).

Both studies focused primarily on the role of the founding faiths in shaping FBO governance, organizational structures, and relationships with program participants. The studies included organizations providing social services, youth development, senior services, emergency assistance, community development, and health care, under the aegis of Mainline Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Evangelicals, peace churches (Mennonites and Quakers), African American churches, and Muslims. The larger study also included schools. One of the Evangelical and one of the Mainline Protestant organizations had been founded by Asians, but both were now connected to faith communities that included whites and African Americans as well.

Milofsky, as part of his work in co-authoring a paper with Schneider [5], read the 81 organizational case studies and wrote an analytic summary of the organizational patterns he saw characterizing each denominational tradition. The present paper gives shortened analytic summaries for Catholics, Mainline Protestants, peace churches, and African American churches since among the organizations Schneider studied, these traditions showed the most distinctive organizational patterns.

Catholic Organizations

We had six Catholic organizations in our study group including a women's service organization, two schools, a hospital system, Catholic Charities, and a housing organization. We also have drawn on research reports related to other kinds of organizations to develop this analysis.

Four main qualities come through with these organizations.

- First, the Catholic organizations operate within a sharply hierarchical system, although the style is often not bureaucratic. The processes of hierarchy create distinctive organizational dynamics. Generally, a diocese under the direction of a bishop controls and directs how organizations within the diocese operate.
- Second, significant Catholic organizations are created and maintained by important sub-systems within the Church founded by religious orders (groups of priests and nuns). This creates counter-hegemonic processes and also complex relationships related to working out hierarchy as it applies to the sub-organizations. Orders of priests and nuns own property and in running programs they do not generally have to seek permission from the diocese or the bishop that otherwise controls their geographic area to carry out actions.
- Third, there tends to be attention to specific Catholic religious values where religious philosophy is oriented to an organizational principle. Thus, for example, Catholic organizations are expected to follow the principle of subsidiarity where the organizational unit closest to the local community is given decision-making power [14].
- Fourth, the Catholic Church takes absolute stands on certain values, like its opposition to contraception, abortion and gay marriage. This prevents Catholic organizations from making choices that other organizations providing similar services might pursue. For example, we were not allowed to advise citizens about how to sign up for the US government's Affordable Care Act (national health insurance) in Catholic settings. The Church opposed that government program since it offered birth control to clients.

Hierarchy

As an Apostolic church where authority is rooted in the Pope, the Bishops, and lower officials, the style of the Catholic Church is one where absolute doctrines and decisions about appointments and whether specific organizations remain open or not are handed down from above. However, these are not decisions based in a notion like Weber's theory of rationality and the division of labor [15]. Rather, decisions are based in philosophical arguments about doctrine and also in political negotiations that go on between different levels of the organization.

One of the distinctive features of Catholic organizations, therefore, is that sometimes there are complicated nested board structures. A given organization may have its own board that is subordinate to a diocesan board while it also competes with the board of another organization at its same level in the hierarchy. [16] describes this sort of governance complexity in her study of a Catholic girls school that had to deal competitively with a boys school, all within a single Diocese. What this means from an organizational standpoint is that actions and decisions have a contingent quality. Decisions based on an internal, functional logic may not work out because of political complexities within the external organizational environment.

While this may seem like a harsh political system that favors certain groups over others, often decisions involve Church principles that have to be interpreted, understood, and discussed. Since the principles are being applied to new situations, there may be real uncertainty about how a given

decision will work out even if it is being carried out in a hierarchical authority system. For example, [17] talk about the centrality of the principle of shared communal responsibility in a Catholic High School. They talk about how these shape the content of instruction and the relationships between teachers and students. The school is situated within a larger parish structure which makes it necessary to pay attention to specific details of that community in school programming. Thus, they cannot just follow educational principles they have worked out as educators in a school. They must alter those principles to fit demands and expectations that come from the parish community. Hierarchy may define and frame basic organizational conditions but, if you take religion seriously, then arguments a nun or lay leader working in the school makes about the importance of a certain practice might carry the day despite resistance from the school principal.

Catholic organizational action happens in a system where hierarchy is the main feature. As an institutionalized system, this means that key decisions may come from the Bishop or a religious order and either may have an impact on internal organizational behavior. While secular, professional concerns that push in the direction of a bureaucratic system also are important, there always is a paternalistic hierarchy—paternalistic meant in the sense of a caring, principled, authoritative presence—shaping the scene. This has the effect of injecting humanism and moral principles into organizational action. In saying this we do not mean say we are accepting or believing in Catholic Church principles or practices. Rather, we mean that hierarchy works as an organizing principle so that any local decision based on technical principles has to be treated as contingent in a way that is likely to inject a set of moral and humanistic concerns into the decision. Where most organizational theory is a-moral and coldly rational [7&10] the Catholic system provides a mechanism for injecting an entirely different orientation into decisions.

For instance, a Catholic Charities affiliate in the study faced a moral and organizational dilemma in its foster care program when the local secular jurisdiction declared that foster care must not discriminate against gay couples and insurance policies were required to cover gay partners. When the Obama administration's new health care policy (The Affordable Care Act) mandated coverage for contraception, the organization faced a similar dilemma. In both cases, government mandates went against church teachings. In both cases, the organization chose to withdraw from offering services and being paid for a contract rather than change to fit government policy. Their foster care system was transferred to another non-Catholic organization while the insurance system for employees was restructured so that new employees would not receive coverage for their partners in order to avoid covering gay partners. The organization is still fighting the mandate for insurance coverage for contraceptive services. These actions are contrary to non-profit management theory in that it involved contracting established services and lowering benefits in ways that might impinge on their ability to compete for employees. Yet religious culture and the Bishop's decisions on these moral issues were more important to the organization.

Sub-Systems

Within the Catholic system there exists a variety of religious orders and these have their own, internal values and operating principles. These included the Jesuit schools and Catholic hospitals led by orders of nuns. While these organizations follow central church teachings, they also have their own powerful, internal resources and make decisions specific to the group. In terms of internal organizational behavior, we saw a tension between the decisions of the order or a centralized administrative body for multiple organizations and the decisions of the local bishops.

For instance, women's health programs in an order-sponsored hospital system differed by locality based on the local archdiocese's interpretation of policy related to family planning and abortion. But the expectations of the local archdiocese are moderated by the power of the Order, resources, and the moral authority of the Order's own mission. For instance, the Jesuit schools offered a different approach to infusing Catholic values in education than the parish schools.

Catholic Teachings

Coming into this project we anticipated that in some cases there would be certain religious principles that were tied to values about organizational structure and that these values would give a distinctive form to religious organizations. In the Catholic tradition two values we have recognized are the principle that schools are voluntary communities built around mutual responsibility [17] and the principle of subsidiarity [14&18], which we see operating both in international programs and in situations where domestic Catholic organizations accept government grants. In both of these cases strong religious values intentionally work at cross-purposes to the functional imperatives that guide the way bureaucracies normally operate.

Bryk [17] uses the social community argument to explain why Catholic schools build up strong social capital. He builds off [19] argument that Catholic schools are particularly effective because students learn within a structure built around overlapping and mutually supportive social networks. Bryk extends this argument by saying that Catholic social teaching, which is built into the curriculum of Catholic schools, presents students with the idea that they are part of a community where each person should recognize the whole-person identity of each other person. Recognizing others as whole people then means that everyone should appreciate and recognize the special qualities of each person. Also, individuals should work to support the community as a whole in their volunteer work and in behaving in pro-social ways.

Bryk [17] argues that this creates a community service ethic that is strikingly different from the "private" orientation and

the competitiveness that prevails in public schools. Public schools are built around an ethic in which people strive to maximize personal advantages. They only volunteer if they stand to gain in some explicit way from that service- [20-21] call this a "community of limited liability". Catholic schools build into the structure a "gift relationship" [22] orientation. This creates a structure where teachers, support people, and students all are rewarded for articulating an ideology of mutual support in community and this allows people to resist the economically self-interested ethic that dominates in most bureaucratic organizations.

Subsidiarity is a principle that program policy and implementation procedures should be developed in partnership with organizations and individuals at the lowest structural level possible. This also supports the idea of government funds being given to faith-based organizations to serve populations based on the non-profit's operating principles.

This idea seems to run counter to the dominant theme of hierarchy in the Catholic Church. In international development organizations, pushing decisions down to the lowest local level possible helps partners of big international charities like Catholic Relief Services develop their own approach to carrying out programs conceptualized and designed at a higher level of organization. This helps individuals from the local community and workers operating at that level to develop organizational capacity as well as a deeper understanding of Catholic moral principles (like what CRS calls "the justice lens" as a moral framework for implementing social programs [18]). Subsidiarity also puts a premium on helping local partners to develop techniques for implementing programs that their local neighbors will accept and support so that the intervention CRS sponsors will endure [14]).

These principles build strong anti-hierarchical practices into an organizational structure that otherwise would give priority to decisions and practices that originate at the top of the structure. Organizations from a variety of religious traditions, not just Catholic ones, view hierarchy and impersonal decision-making as antithetical to their work. Their objectives focus on encouraging individual participants to feel empowered, to see their organizational action as a ministry or a personal moral action, and for the egalitarian practices to be structured into the organization.

Subsidiarity also explains the consistent use of government funds in Catholic organizations. This includes the various Catholic Charities organizations, schools participating in voucher programs, and use by hospitals of publicly funded medical care. However, similarly to the Catholic Charities example above, subsidiarity implies that these organizations will only take government funds with the expectation that the grants will not impinge on the values of the organization. Choices to withdraw from government sponsored services or to restructure benefits when government impinges on Catholic teachings also reflect subsidiarity. When government does not allow the Catholic non-profits freedom to design their programs according to Catholic teachings, the organization refuses to provide services.

Main Line Protestant Organizations, African American Churches, and Peace Churches

Main-line Protestants, some important African-American Churches, and Quaker service systems share two things. Social services grow out of the internal organizational dynamics of congregations. Social services also are an enactment of the theological principles of the denomination so that the work of participants represents a way individual members engage in personal religious expression. Because social action work involves personal ministries for church members, congregations and their members must be directly involved in the work of faith-based organizations. While there may be external funding for programs and FBOs may respond to requests for help from governments or communities, those external connections cannot supersede the internal, practical theology and practices of the churches that are involved and that sponsor and initiate programs. Churches resist any feeling that they are being exploited by a political agenda. Programs also must navigate through what often are complicated intergroup negotiations among congregation activists who have chosen to play a role in developing or supervising specific service programs.

Mainline Protestants

Many Protestant faith-based organizations are not organizationally unique because, despite being church-related, they tend to embrace secular social work values in their style of providing services. That is, while you might see a bible and a cross in main rooms of program offices, you may not hear any religious doctrine voiced. No one is likely to encourage others to join in prayer. Social work values that emphasize making clients comfortable so that rapport can be developed govern the setting. Protestant organizations as functional systems implementing a division of labor tend to look like any other bureaucratic system.

Where Protestant organizations are unique is in the way congregations are organized and in the emphasis placed on congregational social dynamics operating as a part of worship. This, in turn, maps onto the reasons congregations would create and work to support social services. We include African American Faith-Based organizations in this section because some of the most important examples in that category follow the congregational pattern, but do so in a way that is more intense and extensive than we find in most Main Line Protestant congregations.

For Protestants, a core idea is that congregations should be self-organizing voluntary associations. Professional clergy are present and they are key personnel in making policy decisions and keeping congregations focused and organized [23-24]. But congregations are built up from personal commitments of faith

expressed by members. Each member joins and participates in church because that person is expected to have a personal ministry. When a congregation creates or participates in a faith-based organization it does so as an expression of personal worship by the members.

This means that Mainline Protestant organizations need to provide opportunities for church members to volunteer or otherwise carry forward their personal ministries. We see organizations meeting this mandate in a variety of ways. For example, a Lutheran refugee resettlement organization asks congregations to sponsor refugees while a Lutheran Children and Family Services affiliate turns to congregations to find foster parents. The many soup kitchens, clothing pantries, and other emergency services offered through Mainline Protestant initiatives relied on congregation members to donate goods, cook for people served by the organization, and offer direct service as volunteers handing out meals or other supports.

Some of the Mainline Protestant organizations in our organizational sample were consortia of congregations. It was important for leaders to understand that their consortium was not just a central office with a number of subordinate branches as we see with some franchise-form charities or nonprofit movements. Rather, all of the congregations expected to be full participants in the sense that when they participated in some part of the total activity, this congregation would create and carry out their part of the activity-perhaps building a house for Habitat for Humanity or providing volunteers for the organization.

African American Churches

Among African American churches, we sometimes saw this same Protestant pattern but expressed in its fullest form. The congregation as a whole identified certain social action goals as important for the church and for each individual in the congregation. Each individual felt that supporting the church mission was also a personal mission that had the highest priority [25]. A result was that members contributed a large fraction of their personal resources to the congregation's work and individuals also contributed a great deal of labor as in-kind donations to the work of the congregation.

The result was an organization where members' lives were completely organized around the congregation and the congregation had great cohesion and solidarity. The congregation as a whole succeeded in directing a surprisingly large volume of resources to their chosen projects despite having members who were of modest means and despite perhaps being relatively small in terms of total number. By participating in the congregation as whole people, the church magnified the wealth available and the work that could be accomplished compared to what you would expect from an organization of that size.

Faith-based organizations created by African American churches often showed the strongest links between congregation and organization. The pastor was usually a key leader in the organization, organizations were closely held by congregations rather than hiring employees members did not know, and congregation members participated as both volunteers and paid staff. Congregation members may also be served by these organizations. This was true for schools, senior services and other initiatives.

Peace Churches

Like the other denominations in this section, peace churches and most particularly the Quakers make service and caring for the personal and emotional development of members as well as of people in the community a fundamental aspect of worship and of the collective religious life of the community. For Schneider's project there were case studies from eight organizations as well as one partnership that was included with the Mainline Protestant cases. The organizations included three senior citizens continuing care communities, a community program for senior citizens, two schools, a crime victims service organization, and an American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) affiliate. All of these organizations were intertwined with each other.

This organizational entanglement is both a distinctive feature of Quaker organization and a manifestation of the unique social processes that exist within this denomination. Two senior citizens' organizations and the school all were creations of a single Quaker meeting (or congregation) in Baltimore. It is difficult to discuss any one organization without understanding the history and dynamics of this congregation. But the congregation was also implicated in the city-wide organization of Quaker congregations and the history of the other congregations in the city. The service organizations and the congregation also were involved in the social justice and development organization founded by Quakers, the American Friends Service Committee, which is at once an important organization in the denomination but also separate from the "church"—the Meetings, and the regional and national denominational bodies. We think of bureaucratic organizations as bounded social systems where legal incorporation, ownership of property, and a division of labor that valorizes administrative officers give each organization autonomy. Quaker organizations are entangled and interconnected so that it is not possible to break off one service-providing unit to analyze it in isolation.

This deep entanglement happens because Quakers as a religious body are deeply committed to effective dialog, mutual respect, and joint accountability. It is important to recognize that organizational complexity here is a direct product of values and deep spiritual conviction. As such what we see with the Quakers is a distinctive style of assembling organizations that comes out of the doctrine of faith in this denomination.

The hallmarks of peace church organizational structures are relatively flat organizational hierarchy and involvement of

program participants at all levels of staff in decision making. For example, the organizational chart for one Mennonite housing program for developmentally disabled adults pictured the executive director and core staff in one circle at the center supporting houses with their staff and program participants. Even the most hierarchical organizations-the schools and retirement communities-had multiple committees that included students or residents and all levels of staff. These committees were vital to organizations' operations.

Programming focuses on respect for and the unique attributes of the individual, similar to the Quaker practice of seeking the light within each person. At a community level, programs are developed with the community to reflect their perceived needs and to express a strong focus on social justice and equity. As a result of these principles, schools featured high levels of creativity and individualized instruction programs. Service committee programs reflected the justice visions of local community residents and the crime victim's services organization worked toward reconciliation between victim and perpetrator.

Quaker organizations tend to take a very long time to make decisions and they involve many staff, board, and significant other participants, many of whom make important contributions to the shared dialog. Quakers also prefer continuing a discussion until consensus is achieved. In fact, consensus is not always achieved, but when this happens the discussion is likely just to be continued or the decision will be put off to avoid cutting off any channel of significant input. For example, one senior citizen's organization had been the subject of debate regarding its management structures, financing and mission for many years. At least three Meeting-sponsored committees had sought solutions to issues related to this organization, including an initiative that occurred during the research project. In each case, consensus could not be achieved and, while some organizational changes occurred, no final resolution was reached.

While these organizations seem cumbersome to people used to the briskness of more bureaucratic organizations, it is more important to see that the Quaker system grows out of a commitment to egalitarian treatment of and respect for the personal commitments of each member. This attitude makes egalitarian treatment of participants a core value and sets up a positive antagonism to core features of bureaucracies. Although Quaker services are efficient in their way and they are administered in a highly professional way, there is reluctance to allow expertise to become a source of hierarchy and power. As a result, professional staff are expected to follow Quaker interactional processes and people who are outside of the professional division of labor are likely to have a strong voice on how decisions are made within an organization that seem to involve complex, technical issues. In this, Quaker organizations share with feminist organizations a determination not to allow specialization to serve as an excuse for domination of others [26].

Evangelical Christians

Evangelical Christians are diverse since they may not work within a denominational context. Schneider's case studies included one Christian school, a chain of Christian service centers, and three small organizations that provided services to specific populations. As is the case with many evangelical organizations, these were not part of a denomination. Instead they relied on a network of supporters from many congregations, independent churches and denominations drawn to the ministry by an interest in its mission. This support system through individuals unattached to congregations is typical of what are termed network systems of organization [27].

When organizations in this category are part of a denomination like Baptists, there tend to be clusters of specific projects, each operating with its own energy and direction, loosely connected into the whole, and operating with a shared conviction that all are working for the community and that all are working to advance a Christian message. There may not be a lot of discussion about exactly what the community is or what it means to work for it [28]. Similarly, there may not be a lot of mutual discussion about what exactly people mean by being Christian and how they know whether or not members and groups all believe the same thing. This is not meant as a criticism of Evangelicals but rather an observation of what happens when the primary rationale for action is a personal faith commitment, where external authority is seen as a force that interferes both with a personal connection to God, and also with meaningful connections between individuals.

We have found it useful to think of Evangelical organizations as based on a network model where activity and resources come because individuals choose to connect with a node of activity that provides a setting for work and a way of distributing resources. One principle that is important in many Evangelical organizations is that there is a strong effort by people of faith to connect on a human level, especially with others perceived to be in trouble. For outsiders it can seem ironic that Christian activists who often believe in Biblical literalism and who assert strongly conservative values where they allow for little relativism in their ethics-can also be remarkably open, available, and caring to people who are in trouble.

Evangelical organizations tend to stress working with people one-on-one, with an attention to the whole person and this may include aspects of faith. While some organizations did share faith-for example a teen program that focused on "godly" behavior-more often counselors would use religious discussion and prayer only when a client talked about faith first. This was particularly true in the pregnancy clinic, where volunteers had pamphlets on religion available but only used them when an opening from the person being counseled occurred.

An important attribute of Evangelical organizations is that individuals who provide services and lead centers often view the interaction in which service is provided as itself a process

of worship. Thus, we find that leaders of homeless shelters may well live in the shelter with the homeless people and that all of the activities of the shelter staff incorporate prayer and worship. Since activity is also built around providing deep human regard for the people receiving services, joint worship is likely not to feel like an obligation to adhere to religious doctrine. Rather, prayer may be expressed as shared meditation, carried out while holding hands and touching, seeking an inner peace or a connection with God that is not directive or coercive. Mutual participation and a caring connection are qualities that make the process work well. It also means that outside organizational rules, constraints, or controls may not be created or used to direct what happens in programs. One of our organizations noted that they never register clients, and this might be the case because an objective record simply is not important.

These organizations work because they are emergent, meaning that the organizational structure is created as people do the work. Organizations do not pursue or cultivate resources. Resources just appear as a matter of divine inspiration. The process works because members of the faith network believe that a service ought to be provided and they contribute money, time, and skills. The act of giving is simply important. They are not likely to worry about whether the service is rational in some objective, means-ends way. Because of that, those people who are providing services and who are not giving time or attention to resource mobilization are able to keep going because the resources just materialize when caring members of the network show up and make a donation [25].

Evangelicals create organizations in the sense that they operate out of regular spaces, may be formally incorporated, and may follow formal professional procedures (we saw this in the pregnancy clinic run by nurses and in the Christian school). But often these are not set up in the way we expect to be the case with organizations since goals, procedures, methods, and boundaries may not be defined with much precision. It is important for organization theorists to see that despite a lack of interest in resource mobilization, significant and meaningful resources still may be mobilized by operating out of an assets-based community development (ABCD) philosophy [30-31]. It also is important to see that there may be considerable regularity in the form services take because the providers are all operating out of common philosophical frame, drawing on a shared base of knowledge and faith.

Associational Organizations and Communities

The aim of this section is to present a group of ideal types of associational frameworks that are distinct in structural form and that have interdependent relationships to communities they are part of. Like the religious examples, each type is going to be linked to examples that will help us to visualize the nature of the ideal type.

Most of the examples come from a talk [31] gave at the Foundation Center in Washington, DC, where data came from case studies carried out by students in his advanced seminar on nonprofit organizations. The student cases are not meant to be fully-developed, professional ethnographic studies. This is partly because they were carried out in a single semester by students who did not have advanced research training. Their lack of development as ethnographies comes as well, however, because in many of the cases the organizations themselves are fluid and little structured so that it is hard for them to be described with the depth and complexity we expect of ethnographies.

What comes out of each example (some cases have several examples) is an ideal type-a characterization of a distinctive organizational form that can be found and recognized in many settings [32-33]. In each example, there is a characterization of what "community" means in that instance and how it is that associational organizations play a central role in making that particular community real. The idea for this part of the paper comes from the many community studies that find associations to be central and essential for the phenomenon of community to occur [34]. These studies are not consistent in telling why associations are central nor do they share a common definition of what community is.

This conceptual inconsistency is not important for the purposes of this paper because each of the examples is built up out of empirical material that creates an operational understanding of what is meant both by "community" and by "association". We recognize that the term community is used in many ways and in ways where different meanings are not consistent with each other [6].

This paper is concerned with the organizational nature of what the examples describe and this will be emphasized as we develop each ideal type. We will focus on the following elements of organization:

- There must be a myth or belief about what the organization does, what it is meant to achieve, and why it exists [35].
- It must be embedded in or relate to a community that usually is larger than the organization and there must be an explicit kind of structural relationship between the associational organization and its surrounding community.
- There must be activists who take primary responsibility for the organization's action and who often have a feeling of ownership for it and membership within it [36].
- There is a division of labor oriented towards completing a task, producing a product, providing a setting for community activity, or enacting symbolic procedures.

Points 3 and 4 in this list are meant to draw from the conceptualizations of organization that we find in [37-38]. For these theorists, organizations are instruments of economic production that transform inputs into outputs. The outputs

are sufficiently valued by organizational constituencies that they legitimate the existence of the organization and provide inputs that allow for continuation of organizational activity. They say nothing about a need for legal incorporation, the formalization of rules, the existence of hierarchy, or ownership of the organization. These things may become functional necessities as the productive process goes forward but they are not definitional.

Theories we will present are: Primordial ooze organizations; the community of limited liability; network organizations; and intermediate organizations. We also will discuss [21&24] community of limited liability; Wheeldon's network switching theory; Powell's network organizations (27&39); intermediate organizations from pluralist theory [40-43] "primordial ooze" organizations [44]; social-problem-based entrepreneurial organizations; captured organizations; and [45] inter organizational field.

Primordial Ooze Organizations

We hear that the first forms of life took shape in a rich chemical soup that included organic chemicals and the right components for one-celled organisms to assemble themselves and then reproduce-the primordial ooze. Similarly, we have an image of family and neighborhood life and the informal connections that arise when people live close to each other and interact providing a rich social environment out of which associations may coalesce. Associations do not appear spontaneously but they are created when individuals and collectivities have tasks or problems or group activities they think need to be addressed and for which individuals take responsibility. The ooze imagery works when community members create associational organizations that address issues that concern them, where the organizations then disassemble when the problem is resolved. [46] calls this the "dark matter of the nonprofit universe".

One sort of example occurs when community movements develop in response to a social problem. Intensely focused, tightly organized movements can materialize with startling speed and effectiveness and then dissipate when the issue of concern is resolved. Milofsky (1988c) documents such a case where a rural community created a movement with thousands of members in response to a proposal to site a hazardous waste incinerator in a small rural valley that had experienced two previous proposals to build noxious facilities. The community had mobilized to oppose both and lost, but leaders had emerged, networks were well established, and in the waste incinerator case citizens started sending cash contributions to the most prominent leader before he had even heard about the proposed facility. The community waged a political fight for three years, won the battle, and then the active movement dissipated leaving a small permanent organization behind.

[47] Gives us the example of a small community center project in an isolated "coloured" community in Rhodesia where a series of tasks had to be completed in an effort to build a new building. The leader ingeniously and effectively recruited volunteers based on how their personal skills and personal career goals fit particular tasks as the project moved along. The leader had experience in this small, tightly structured community and knew people well so she knew who to ask for help. People would provide help in part because the work fit their personal and career self-interests. The leader then had to be skilled at "disinviting" volunteers when their skills were no longer needed or at folding volunteer groups when members began to lose interest. We have seen this pattern in other situations where a locality or racial group desperately needed a community center as a place to gather and to provide activities for children, senior citizens, or others but where the organization itself lacked funding, coherent administrative structure, or stable leadership that could build the organization [48].

A different version of this form comes when individuals and allies have an intense social or ideological interest and committed individuals create an organization for a purpose that requires widespread, informal involvement and support from community members. We have seen this with no-kill animal shelters, where individuals contribute space and are willing to be on site most of the time. To prosper, however, the project requires a widespread community support network of people who will donate animals, give volunteer time to care for them, and donate cash and in-kind resources to keep the project going. Governance structures in the organization often are inconsistent and highly personalized. We have found it nearly impossible to examine and understand financial records. Yet the organizations persist and remain an intense focus of activity for the people who care about the concern. The organizations lack formal structure but are maintained by the external network structure of the community and concerned volunteers who monitor and help out with the operation.

Primordial ooze organizations presume that a multiplex [49] community exists providing a venue for such organizations to emerge. People have recurring, strong tie network relationships that have nothing to do with the issues that will cause the primordial ooze organization to take shape. These ongoing, meaningful relationships create a climate of trust and reciprocity in the community that [50-51] and Coleman (1994) tell us are the defining qualities of social capital. The declining social capital [52-53] worries about refers to a thinning of social ties and trust within community networks of the sort that make primordial ooze organizations possible.

Community of Limited Liability Organizations

When [52-53] talks about declining social capital in communities he is voicing a familiar concern. As industrial society has advanced, individuals organize their lives more and more around self-interest, career advancement, and economic opportunity while the moral and symbolic bonds that grew out of and that held together traditional communities erode [54-56]. In this context, if individuals join voluntary associations they tend to do so only if they see clear personal

payoffs coming from their involvement-or to use [20-21] language they join aiming to limit their liability to be involved in unnecessary or peripheral volunteer commitments. In the community of limited liability, associations are based on rational economic payoffs and as a consequence the kind of "gift relationship" based communities [22] talks about and that are necessary for primordial ooze organizations to emerge seem to be impossible [57-58].

[21] Presents a mechanism for resolving this collective action problem by recognizing that there exists a large number of organizations whose economic self-interest depends on others living near-by to believe that they are part of a community. When they believe they are a part of a community that has personal symbolic significance and where they believe they should give to the collectivity without looking for immediate return benefits, then people are likely to support local businesses and institutions in order to support the well-being of their community. Janowitz builds this argument out of his question of why neighborhood newspapers persist when they cannot compete with large urban newspapers in terms of the scope and sophistication of their news coverage. They thrive because local residents want to chronicle small-scale personal events and accomplishments and because small local businesses like grocery stores, real estate agencies, churches, and youth clubs want to appeal to local residents who might become customers or participate in local.

There is a sort of manipulativeness in the behavior of local organization leaders who want to see a symbolic community grow up around their operation. They create local activities and civic events not because they personally have a special interest in these activities but because they hope that residents will see them as emblematic of community or they may raise social and political issues that can become a focus of community organizing and political action [59-60].

On the other hand, despite the self-interestedness of their actions community might not happen unless these leaders created activities and sought out issues that would energize local residents to mobilize as a local community. Furthermore, when that community is created the organizations that sought to create cohesion might become venues where community is played out. Communities need settings and spaces where symbolic and ritual actions can be enacted, where interaction can occur, and time can simply be wasted in the company of others. These activities may make the sponsoring organization prosperous and events successful [61].

[24] Found an example of this sort of organizing in a small, failing rural church that hired a new pastor who explicitly followed the strategy outlined in the preceding paragraph. His current parishioners were elderly and not motivated to bring in new members but the pastor knew more numbers and a younger congregation was needed if his church was to survive. His strategy was to seek out social and political issues in the local community that would inflame social concern. He sought to be out front in identifying the issues, expressing the concerns of the community, and organizing meetings where the community could come together and take actions. Being a leader, he hoped he could attract members of the community movement into his congregation. Also important, he wanted his church building to be a place where organizing meetings and social events would be held so that the local community members would build stronger relationships and develop a commitment to the overall well-being of the town. He believed that churches are venues within which community sentiments are developed and played out. The process of worship in his perspective was inherently a community activity so that people who worship together would feel a strong sense of community together. Building the outside community would interact with a process of building the congregational community [23].

It often is a formally constituted organization, guided by economic self-interest, that seeks to manipulate local residents into believing that they are part of a symbolically meaningful community to which they make gift-relationship type contributions [62]. Yet how the leaders of these organizations proceed and what civic organizations must be set up to foster the emergence of symbolic communities is entirely contingent on the social, economic, geographic, and historical context in which the locality is situated.

This is something [59-60] recognized with great sensitivity. He described the organizations he sought to create as "people's organizations" because what they were and how they operated depended on the social and political contexts and needs of the people he was working with. Ultimately, the organizations would only succeed if the residents took ownership and guided the organizations themselves. The organizer might initiate the development of a people's organization but the character of the organization that emerges is contingent upon the latent community that is present and that must control the activities, direction, and flow of the organization that results. The same is true if the organizer is a pastor or a newspaper publisher or a school administrator who needs to wrap his district in a real, committed, living community.

Intermediate Organizations

Intermediate organizations link primary organizations in the community, economy, and political structure [63-64]. In the formulation of [11] primary organizations include the family, churches, larger businesses, political institutions, and larger, incorporated social services institutions. [45] call those in social services work "community decision organizations" (CDO) and together they are a network of institutions that provide services that address basic needs, resolve community problems, engage in socialization and community maintenance, and carry out economic production. The primary institutions operate in relative isolation from each other-today we talk about "silos"-and in our research professionals within them have strikingly little connection to professionals in other CDOs and very little knowledge of professional philosophies or policy issues in institutions other than their own.

Intermediate organizations provide an important linking function being positioned between primary institutions, linking them together, fostering coordination, and providing venues where informal social relationships and support functions for citizens can develop.

One example we have seen is the Social Services Coalition in one of our focal counties. This is an association made up of about twenty social services organizations set up as a loose information and social groupings (so outsiders like University service learning staff can participate) that meets monthly for a breakfast meeting where there is an informational speaker. Over the years members have gotten to know each other well and have come to understand the function and structure of each other's organizations well. However, they do not have intense relationships with each other and the Coalition has little in the way of organizational structure. However, when a large flood occurred, the coalition members came together, coordinated services that were needed by the community, and different member organizations repurposed financial and in-kind resources so that there was a quick, effective, well-informed disaster response [65-66].

[11] Use the term "secondary organizations" to describe small voluntary organizations like a Catholic church men's group that are linked to primary organizations but may have overlapping memberships with other primary organizations. They suggest that these organizations are small and fluid so that they are hard to describe. They also do not strike observers as intrinsically important so researchers would not think to do specific studies of such organizations [67]. They are similar to primordial ooze organizations in that they are anchored in intense, extended, strong tie community networks. However, primordial ooze organizations are transient, coming into existence when a community problem arises and must be resolved. Intermediate organizations have a permanent presence serving the network function of linking primary institutions. Individuals may be intensely involved in them but the organizations tend to borrow their formal structure, if they have any, from the primary institutions that they are part of.

We encountered such a group in a troubled low-income neighborhood where none of the elderly men who belonged to the local Catholic parish showed up at the senior center or knew anything about drug dealing or child supervision problems other residents complained about in the neighborhood. The strong network ties in the town involved these elderly men in a series of voluntary groups, fraternal associations, and social activities (like the volunteer fire companies) that completely occupied their social lives in such a way that they just did not notice troubling factors that affected the local physical neighborhood. Their worlds seemed to fit descriptions of working-class neighborhoods where strong ties that have grown out of family, ethnic, work, church, and local residential history create tightly bounded and totally sustaining personal social worlds for residents [68-70].

All of the examples we have given so far refer to "horizontal" linkages but "vertical" linkages [71] have gotten more attention even though there are few case examples and little discussion of how vertically linked intermediate organizations work [72&9]. In political theory, intermediate organizations are important for linking local organizations to regional and national ones as part of the process of democratic representation. [40,73,41,53,74].

Examples more relevant to this paper are organizations that pull local organizations together into metropolitan-level or regional associations providing technical support or institutional oversight [39&43]. These organizations tend to have a formal organizational structure (so they do not fit the category of associational organizations well) but generally observers find it hard to figure out what they do or how they are structured or what their central tasks are. This is what makes them similar to the horizontally oriented intermediate organizations.

Network Organizations

Following Powell's article on network organizations, I did a chapter in *Smallville* on the medical community as a network organization. Network organizations are systems organized as a division of labor where tasks are passed from person to person or entity to entity without there being any formal organizational structure. The needs of the task and the need to pass a partially completed task on to the next actor, which may be nonprofit, for profit, or government, or not organized at all, is what gives the system structure. Network organizations are useful because they fit my idea at the beginning of this section that [37-38] have a definition of organization that defines them as systems of economic production focused on a division of labor. Structure becomes relevant to the extent it is needed by the division of labor but it need not exist for an organization to fit the definition.

[27] Conception of the network organization is similar to the idea of an organization existing as a bounded, owned, autonomous social system. He was thinking of collections of software companies that partnered together to create a system or product. This makes it seem as though the surrounding context or community is irrelevant. In reality, however, many network organizations are only possible because the members or units are part of an institution or professional community within which the network organization operates.

This applied to my example of the local medical community as a network organization in a period of time when professional organization was central to the provision of medical care [75]. My focus is on the way physicians pass cases from doctor to doctor as patients require different kinds of treatment or as they move into an institution like the hospital. But the system exists within the institution of medicine which supplies a cultural logic, training institutions, and the American Medical Association as an overall organizing body. The relationships

and technical logic of the medical community as a network organization was contingent on the professional community within which it was embedded.

Discussion

The starting point of this discussion is the perception that nonprofit scholars lack a theory of voluntary associations. I started with two explanations for that perceived lack. One is that there is a literature of case studies that provide lots of theoretical fragments that could go into a comprehensive theory, but that these examples are not widely known nor pulled together anywhere. This paper is partly intended to do that pulling together.

The other reason I saw for a perceived lack of theory is that theories are metaphors that hang together. If we have a bunch of separate cases or examples that each make a theoretical statement, people could say we lack a theory if they cannot see how these fragments are brought together into a coherent story. So, we might have theories but not a theory.

I addressed this lack of a strong theoretical metaphor by calling out what I call the default organization theory that traces back to Weber and to economic theories of the firm. I want to bring out that theory because it does provide both a clear image and a system of propositions that fit into each other so that specific cases can be used to illustrate, confirm, and extend the master metaphor. When people say we "have" a theory of nonprofit organizations, what I think they are mostly referring to is that there is a "familiar tune they can hum". When the tune does not work, or as in the case of associations the cases systematically clash with the default model of organizations, it seems as though we "don't have a theory".

This paper gives a number of strategies for dealing with this "lack of a theory" problem. The first is to say that the default model is based on an overly constrained definition that implicitly requires that organizations be legally incorporated, bound by formal rules, owned by someone, and hierarchical. Using [37-38], the argument is that the feature that makes things organizations is a productive division of labor. All other features of formal organization build off of that basic attribute. But we also can see that the division of labor may not require formal rules, centralized control, or even boundaries. Thus, we could have a discussion of certain principles of organization that involve those "organizations" that only have a division of labor-and those are the network organizations.

The second theoretical strategy used in this paper is to talk about embedding. The starting point of an embedment theory is to say that we have organizations that *would* evolve into standard bureaucratic organizations but the external system explicitly blocks developments or structural arrangements that would move an organization in the bureaucratic direction.

Faith-based organizations provide several nice examples. Catholic organizations are blocked from evolving naturally as firms because they are controlled by Diocesan ownership and governance that may have little concern for the internal functional logic that could drive the development of particular firms (Catholic schools or hospitals). Rather the Church mandates that their decisions and procedures fit the larger organizational values and practices of the Diocese. We get into a discussion of how bureaucratic organizations might function were they to have multiple boards and control systems as well as master values that are supposed to guide all practices regardless of what the functional demands of practice might require (the principle of subsidiarity is an example here).

Peace churches are interesting because the theology of the church has evolved to some extent as an effort to systematically challenge, undermine, and block "moves" that would make organizations more bureaucratic. This shifts organizations in a direction that emphasizes full participation of all members in decision making and that leads to endless discussion. African American and Protestant churches have other variants on theological practices that block bureaucracy or an emphasis on economic production and accountability rather than on the process of organization valued for its own sake.

In the community embedment section of this paper, the main imagery is of communities built on strong-tie networks where that structure is so robust that they can surround and frame specific division of labor systems. Primordial ooze organizations presuppose a strong-tie network community that must solve problems. When they must solve problems, a few members can take ownership of setting up the division of labor but then the workers and the resources and volunteer work comes out of the strong tie network system. That system sustains the organization in terms of tasks and resources and expertise. But the relationships are voluntary and short term so that the thing disassembles when the task is done leaving the strong tie system within the community as a residue.

Community of limited liability organizations have to do with building up strong tie network communities whose members share a collective identity as a communion [76&6] that then can produce primordial ooze or enduring intermediate organizations. We might also say that the strong ties exist but members must redefine their collective relationships as "community"-this could be understood as the symbolic construction of community, [77&8] the collective thing that citizens are part of even though they have not yet defined the reality of that entity.

Intermediate organizations can be understood as the maintenance system for the strong-tie network community. Primary organizations are anchor points but the network ties only work if they cut across the dominant organizations of the system.

Conclusion

[4] Explains that Weberian organizational theory has built into it a conviction that organizations evolve in a direction that makes them more rational and efficient. She argues that Weber's

theory actually allows for evolution beyond bureaucracy into democratic, collectivist styles of organization that have been the main focus of her work. But for this paper, the idea that democratic movements and organizations evolve in the direction of becoming hierarchical and bureaucratic, following [78] "Iron Law of Oligarchy", implies that organizational theory works because it simplifies the complexity of Comas's idea of "organizations in the wild". Organizations evolve from a world of diverse, chaotic variety and diversity into a form that is homogenized, simple to understand, and where structure is consistent across the tremendous variety of activities organizations carry out.

Management theory has concentrated on this domesticated type of organization, attempting to tell practitioners how to efficiently manage their world. The function of theory in the world of management academics is to come up with stories that are easy to keep in the mind so that practitioners have guidance in discerning the plot line they are working within.

When we say the world of associational organizations lacks theory what we mean is that there is no single set of unifying metaphors that researchers and practitioners can share. But this paper has shown that theories, in the sense of being helpful, guiding stories and plotlines, certainly exist. A master idea is that many associational organizations are embedded in larger organizations or communities that have developed strong conceptions of how organizations do work and should work. If someone is involved in an associational organization and wants to figure out how to make their enterprise work better, a first lesson is for them to discern what community or system their project is part of and then to learn what imperatives govern or drive organizations within that type of system.

Another important lesson is that for many associational organizations the process of organizational activity is more important than the product of their work. This somewhat runs counter to the idea that a division of labor is the central defining characteristic of any organization. Divisions of labor apply a series transformation to raw materials turning them into finished products. Generating the product would seem to be the reason the organization exists. But for religious organizations and also for many residential neighborhoods, task-oriented activities are useful because they bring people together and get them to talk in a focused, coordinated way. It might not matter much what they get done. The point is that they are together, forming groups, generating meaning and a feeling of communion, and maybe reflecting on the reasons they wanted to do the work in the first place-they have ministries.

Another key idea is that when there are many associational organizations functioning a geographic space or training their attention on an issue or institutional area, their activity creates a collective presence that some have called a "field" [79,70&6]. There is a density of purposive action going on simultaneously with many different foci of interest that collectively makes up civil society. The greater the density of this activity, the more social capital is present. The thinning of associational life has been a major concern of theorists like [52-53]. A purpose of this paper is to give some specific guidance to those who would like to build up associational density and civil society. Just as traditional management theory gives pointers to those running businesses and bureaucracies. The hope is that writing like that provided in this paper will give suggestions to people who want to "manage" associations and make them more enduring and successful.

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