

NEGOTIATIONS IN ORGANIZATIONS: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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A key assumption underpinning all sociological analyses is that adequate explanations of social behavior must be based on the analysis of relationships within and among the groups that make up a social system. From this perspective, the actions of individuals are seen largely as a reflection of the normative understandings and expectations of behavior that are shared by the social groups to which they belong, and the types and level of resources that are available to members of these groups. Thus, organizational sociologists have traditionally focused their attention on groups within organizations, often concentrating in particular on the power relations among both formal and informal groups (see, for example, Blau, 1964; Etzioni, 1961; Hickson, Hinings, Lee, Schneck, & Pennings, 1971; Mechanic, 1962; Perrow, 1970; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Selznick, 1949; Tannenbaum, 1968).¹

Most of this research is characterized by a preoccupation with identifying the formal structures or resources on which power relationships are based. Surprisingly little attention has been given to the *processes* through which collective (especially nonauthoritative) power is exercised or group conflicts are resolved in organizations. The focus on structural sources of power has led to the relative neglect of some important theoretical issues, including the conditions that give rise to the formation of negotiating groups in organizations, as well as the determinants and consequences of the influence strategies that are pursued by such groups.

However, another expanding area of contemporary sociological research, on social movements, focuses explicitly on the problem of the dynamics of group conflicts, and suggests some important potential points of intersection between the research of organizational sociologists and negotiation researchers. This paper combines the literature from social movement research with traditional studies of power in organizations to offer an analysis of organizational negotiations involving hierarchically-related groups. It focuses specifically on conflicts between top-level decision makers and "protest groups," lower level members who seek to influence higher level authorities in order to bring about some set of organizational changes.² The combination of these two research literatures suggests factors that affect the development and strategies of protest groups in organizations and, ultimately, the nature of organizational decision making and negotiation involving such groups.³

The paper begins by elaborating on the utility of viewing organizational conflict and negotiations in social movement terms, and some of the implications of this approach for negotiations research. It then turns to a review of the traditional sociological literature on power and conflict in organizations, and of current research on social movements, discussing the points of complementarity of these two literatures. Finally, the implications of the combination of the social movement and organizations literatures for research on negotiation are discussed, focusing on the way in which negotiating issues, strategies and outcomes are likely to vary among different types of groups.

Social Movements and Negotiations in Organizations

Social movement research addresses the problem of conflicts and negotiations in political communities, such as cities and nation-states. Although formal organizations differ from such collectivities in important respects (most notably in terms of the existence of explicit hierarchical authority relations among conflict groups) there are also important similarities between organizational conflicts and those that occur in other collectivities. Two examples may be used to illustrate the social movement-like quality of many organizational conflicts and negotiations.

One recent instance of organizational conflict is represented by the efforts of a number of students and faculty at Yale University's School of Management (SOM) to reverse a decision by a new dean to radically alter several of the major departments in the school. This decision entailed the structural disassociation of one department with SOM and the transfer of its faculty members to another department outside the school, and the virtual elimination of a second department in the School by discontinuing its Ph.D. program and refusing to renew contracts of its junior faculty (Cowan, 1988).

A large number of students and some faculty responded to the Dean's decision by organizing a variety of protest activities. These included picketing administrative offices and class boycotts, actively searching for publicity of protest activities in the news media, and launching a campaign among alumni to withhold contributions until the decision was rescinded. Protesters also lobbied the University's central administration to overturn the Dean's decision and to replace him, although the President's response suggests that the decision was in fact made with the consensus of the central administration (Putka, 1988).

A second example is taken from a journalistic account by Kidder (1981) of efforts by engineers at Data General to persuade the company to support their development of a new computer. In response to the decision by higher level management to concentrate funds and personnel for a major research and development project in a new branch of the company in North Carolina, the engineers in the Massachusetts' branch surreptitiously began to mobilize funds and personnel for the development of a competing project.

Higher level management was given minimal information about the new project, and the development of the new computer proceeded largely in defiance of the company's policy plans. However, once the rival project in North Carolina fell seriously behind schedule, the Massachusetts engineers revealed their project and were able to obtain increasing company support, finally laying claim to the distinction of having produced the machine the company required for competitive survival.

In each of these cases, a coalition of individuals seeks to effect a formal change in organizational policies, and there is a strong analogy to social movements in the larger society. As in the latter, the change seekers are individuals who lack the power or authority to bring about some desired outcome on their own. Change is thus sought through the mobilization of resources by a group in order to collectively influence other members who do possess authority to effect the change, using methods of influence that lie outside institutionalized channels. Also, as occurs in social movements in the larger society, the power of the change-seeking group and its relationship to central authorities affects the methods or strategies used. The different strategies in the two examples described above reflect differences in the types and amount of organizational resources controlled by the change-seeking groups.

Analyses of collective action by social movement researchers, combined with traditional studies of organizational power, can offer important insights into the processes of negotiation in organizations. The common practice in much negotiations research has been to treat negotiations as if they occurred in isolation from specific group interactions and relationships; this approach is likely to obscure some of the critical dynamics that normally drive negotiating processes in organizations (Barley, this volume). Many of the most visible, and perhaps most critical negotiations in organizations result from conflicts between hierarchically-related groups within an organization. Negotiations involving these groups arguably have a more substantial and enduring impact on the organization than the spontaneous, usually short-lived negotiations that occur between individuals in daily interactions. Group negotiations are more likely to involve the allocation of higher levels of organizational resources and to result in the promulgation of formal policies than individual negotiations.

The negotiating issues and outcomes in group negotiations are critically affected by the nature of intergroup relations and, in particular, by the type of resources on which group power is based. It will be argued that the mobilization of different types of resources by protest groups is linked to differences in strategies and relationships in negotiations. Therefore, a more complete analysis of negotiations in organizations requires an understanding of the kinds of resources that may be used by groups, the factors that determine their use and the consequences for negotiations.

Sociological Research on Power and Conflict in Organizations

The continued existence of any organization is predicated on the socially-legitimated right of one or more individuals to control the activities and decision making of others, under specified conditions. Thus, organizations are fundamentally systems of authority relations; the traditional concern of sociologists has been to understand the effects of these authority relations on group behavior and action (e.g., Blau, 1955; Gouldner, 1954a; Merton, 1957). Interest in this problem has gradually led to increased attention to the sources of power among lower level participants in the authority hierarchy.⁴

Classic models of organization (e.g., Simon, 1955; Weber, 1946) are premised on two major assumptions about authority relations. The first is that there is (normally) an unquestioning acceptance of the decisions and directives of superiors by lower level participants. The second is that authority is always completely specified; that is, the distribution of authority in organizations is treated as being both exhaustive (some individual or unit within the organization has the authority to make a final decision) and exclusive (there is no overlap of decision making among individuals or units). Reliance on these assumptions allowed the problem of conflict in organizations to be largely ignored by early theoretical formulations, because it was assumed that the authority system worked without challenge.

However, the dubious nature of each assumption was sharply underscored by a number of later empirical studies of organizational change (Blau, 1955; Crozier, 1964; Selznick, 1949). These studies showed that organizational change, typically occurring in response to environmental shifts, provided the genesis for conflict between hierarchically-ordered groups. For example, Gouldner's (1954a, 1954b) studies of a gypsum mining plant and Lipset's (1950) study of a provincial government in Canada documented the emergence of conflict between subordinate members and top-level administrators as created by changes in organizational leadership and practices. Such changes were generated in the first case by the firm's increasingly competitive economic environment, and in the second case by a major shift in the political administration of the government.

The descriptions and analyses of the resulting conflicts in these studies suggest that unclear and overlapping boundaries of authority among different subunits and individuals in organizations are in fact

common features of organizations. These boundary conditions are often used by subgroups to enhance their own interests, thus contributing to organizational conflict. Moreover, the studies provide strong evidence that, contrary to the assumptions of the classic models, lower-level participants' acceptance of superiors' authority is typically far from unquestioning. Overt and covert disputation of the legitimacy of higher management's efforts to effect changes in policies and practices were shown to frequently result in resistance to and conflict over such change.

Although work in this tradition did not focus specifically on the analysis of sources of power used by lower-level members in organizational conflict, it served as a critical impetus to later studies of the problem. A common focus of more recent work has been on dependence and uncertainty as sources of power in organizations (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Emerson, 1962; Perrow, 1970; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Zald, 1970). Empirical studies have examined how access to critical organizational resources, in conjunction with uncertainty over the continued flow of those resources, enhances the relative power of individuals or subunits within the organization (see Mechanic, 1962; Perrow, 1970; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). These results suggest that analysis of the resources controlled by groups in organizations is important in understanding the distribution of power within an organization and, ultimately, the nature of group negotiations.

Despite the importance of the concept of resources in this work, it is often defined vaguely (if at all), and the implications of the use of different types of resources for the relative power of individuals and groups are not developed. Moreover, the exercise of collective power by groups requires that a sizeable proportion of individuals controlling the resources act in concert, combining them to achieve group objectives. There is little guidance in the extant literature as to the processes or conditions under which this is likely to take place. Thus, although the work of organizational sociologists provides important insights into potential sources of power among protest groups in organizations, it is largely silent on two critical issues: when is the mobilization of resources for the pursuit of group objectives likely to occur and how does control of different types of resources affect negotiating behavior?

Social Movements in Organizations: The Mobilization of Negotiating Groups

The first question has been the focus of much of the recent research on social movements. Because this work provides a useful point of departure for the analysis of protest group activity in organizations, it will be briefly reviewed here. I then draw on studies in this tradition to suggest the conditions that generate conflict groups in organizations.

Contemporary Research on Social Movements

The theoretical perspective known as resource mobilization dominates much of the contemporary work on social movements (Gamson, 1975; Jenkins, 1983; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Oberschall, 1973; Tilly, 1978). This perspective differs in a number of respects from traditional theories and research on social movements, which have typically focused on the role of individuals' psychological predispositions and grievances in explaining the development of, and participation in, social movements (e.g., Blumer, 1939; Davies, 1962; Gurr, 1970; Heberle, 1951; Kornhauser, 1959; Runciman, 1966; Smelser, 1963).

In conscious opposition to the traditional analyses of social movements, the resource mobilization perspective gives short shrift to psychological factors. Work in this tradition strongly disputes older theories that treat social movement participation as a form of deviancy, driven by irrational psychological or social needs. Instead, social movement participants are assumed to be characterized by the same kind of rational decision-making behavior as that of other individuals in

everyday life. If anything, resource mobilization theory treats social movement participants as suffering from hyperrationality (Fireman & Gamson, 1979; Klandermans, 1984; Tolbert, 1981). And although the role of individual and group grievances in motivating participation in social movements remains the source of some debate (Useem, 1981), most theorists downplay their significance. It is argued that all forms of social organization produce inequality (Dahrendorf, 1959), and that grievances and discontent are therefore inherent in any society or organized group. Because grievances are a relatively constant feature of social life, they cannot account for rising and falling rates of collective action.

From a resource mobilization perspective, social change creates the necessary conditions for social movements by making resources available to individuals who have been, or feel they have been, disadvantaged in the existing social system. Studies in this tradition have thus focused on identifying the way in which changes in the distribution of resources in society encourage and enable the mobilization of protest groups, and the effects of different forms of organization and strategies on the likelihood of successful outcomes. McCarthy and Zald (1977), for example, identified several types of resources—money, facilities, labor and legitimacy—whose availability affects the development of social movements. Similarly, Gamson (1975) examined the effects of breadth of formal movement goals, provision of material benefits to members and the use of violent tactics, on the ability of movements to achieve their objectives.

In short, although earlier theorists linked social change to the development of social movements through increasing levels of individual alienation and psychological tension, resource mobilization proponents emphasize its effects on the distribution of resources, and thus on the rational calculus by individuals of chances for successfully challenging the status quo. Potential movement participants, as rational actors, are assumed to join social movements only when they believe that there is a reasonable probability of succeeding (Granovetter, 1985).

By focusing on the problems of mobilizing resources for the exercise of power by groups, this work offers some important insights into the processes of conflict in formal organizations. It draws attention to the important role of organizational change in the generation of protest groups, a factor also suggested in earlier organizational studies (Blau, 1955; Gouldner, 1954a; Selznick, 1949). It underscores the need to examine conditions that affect members' control of critical resources and of their consciousness of group objectives (e.g., frequency of interaction among members, membership homogeneity or solidarity, etc.) in explaining the occurrence of protest activities. Many of the factors suggested by this work as important in the generation of social movements in the larger society have their counterparts in organizational settings and are relevant to understanding the nature of conflict in organizations.

Mobilization of Protest Groups in Organizations

The analysis of social movements in organizations by Zald and Berger (1978) provides a critical link between traditional approaches to power by organizational researchers and current studies of social movements. In their analysis, attention is focused primarily on corporate organizations. These organizations are characterized by a structure in which there is a limited elite group with the formal authority to effect change in organizational policy and practice, and a larger subordinate group who have a stake in the organization but often lack the formal means to influence it directly. I will take the same perspective in my subsequent extension of this work to the study of negotiations.

The social movements literature identifies two general conditions that affect the likelihood of mobilization by protest groups. One is the development of group consciousness, or an awareness of

structural similarities and shared interests. In order to act in concert, members must perceive that they are collectively (rather than individually) disadvantaged by existing circumstances and that collective action is, in the long-run, a more beneficial solution to their problems than individual action (Marx, 1954). The second condition is the development of the belief that collective action can and is likely to be successful in achieving some desired ends (Fireman and Gamson, 1979; Oberschall, 1973). Although members may be aware of their structural relationship to other group members, in the absence of a belief in the efficacy of the group, they are more likely to exercise their individual right to exit (Hirschman, 1970) or simply become passively alienated from the organization (Marx, 1954; Seeman, 1959). These conditions are apt to be equally relevant to the emergence of protest groups within organizations, and each can be linked to specific organizational characteristics.

Group Consciousness

One factor that is likely to affect the emergence of group identity and sense of solidarity is the occupational composition of the organization. The presence of a large proportion of members from the same common, well-defined occupational group provides an important basis for the formation of group identity (Gouldner, 1954a, 1954b; Kerr & Siegel, 1954; Lipset, Trow & Coleman, 1956). In particular, professionals in an organization often possess a common normative or ideological framework that can serve as a foundation for articulating and legitimating group demands. Professional norms have long been recognized as a source of authority, one that often competes with authority based on hierarchy (Freidson, 1970; Parsons, 1968).

The force of professional or other occupationally-based norms in generating protest group activity is likely to depend on the size of the occupational group. That is, in organizations with a highly diverse mix of occupations, the sense of occupational community is likely to be weaker and the strength of specific occupational ideologies is apt to be diluted by the daily interaction of members with different ideological frameworks (Abbott, 1988). The existence of a relatively large occupational group, on the other hand, reinforces the sense of community and commitment to the ideology, thereby laying the basis for protest group formation. Less complex organizations are more likely to have proportionately larger occupational groups (Blau, 1970). Therefore:

Hypothesis 1: Protest groups have a higher probability of formation in organizations that are characterized by low structural complexity.

A second aspect of organizations that may influence the development of group consciousness is the degree of technological interdependence among organizational members. Technology affects group formation by increasing or decreasing the frequency of interaction among group members. Long-linked technologies, such as those in manufacturing and production, often require moderate interaction among members in order to accomplish work tasks, while intensive technologies, such as those in research and development units or construction work, typically involve a high level of interaction (Thompson, 1967). Although these interactions center around work functions, they provide the occasion and opportunity for the exchange of personal information, facilitating the development of social ties among members. In contrast, mediating technologies, such as that of bank tellers or secretaries, characteristically require only minimal interaction among members, thus limiting the formation of informal social ties.⁵

The importance of the development of informal relations among members as a source of shared definitions of and attitudes toward work and organizational demands has been suggested in a wide range of studies (Krackhardt & Porter, 1985; Lipset, Trow & Coleman, 1956; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).

Insofar as technological interdependence increases the likelihood of such relations developing, it is also apt to be associated with the emergence of protest groups. Formally:

Hypothesis 2: Protest groups have a higher probability of formation in organizations that are characterized by a high degree of technological interdependence.

Still a third aspect of organizations that may influence the development of group consciousness is the degree of segmentation of the organization, or the ability of members to move from lower levels of the organization to higher levels (Oberschall, 1973; Zald & Berger, 1978). When the rate and extent of upward mobility from low-status groups is relatively high, a strong sense of group consciousness is less likely to develop. Members who feel they have at least a chance to join the ranks of the elites in an organization tend to identify with that group and to adopt it as a reference group, rather than the group of which they are currently a member (Merton, 1957). Edwards (1979) has argued that this tendency is often intentionally manipulated by organizations, through the creation of internal labor markets and the periodic promotion of lower-status members to relatively high positions, in order to undercut collective organization. In organizations that lack mechanisms of internal mobility, collective consciousness should develop more easily.

Hypothesis 3: Protest groups have a higher probability of formation in strongly segmented organizations.

Although the occupational composition, technology and degree of segmentation of an organization provide important preconditions for the development of group consciousness, a number of organizational studies suggest that the actual impetus for group mobilization is often the occurrence of change in the system of resource distribution within an organization (Gouldner, 1954a; Lipset, 1950; see also Gamson, 1975; Jenkins & Perrow, 1977; Useem, 1981). Environmental shifts that affect an organization's competitive position often result in management decisions to reallocate resources from one group to another.

In the face of such threats to group interests, a latent sense of group consciousness and solidarity is likely to crystallize (Sherif & Sherif, 1953). Moreover, recent policy changes, particularly those involving resource allocation, often underscore the socially-constructed nature of long-standing, institutionalized arrangements, thus increasing the legitimacy of collective action aimed at shaping new arrangements (Cyert & March, 1963; March & Simon, 1958; Tolbert & Arthur, 1988). This suggests that:

Hypothesis 4: The probability of protest group formation is higher in organizations that have recently made significant budgetary changes or undergone other forms of reorganization.

Perceived Group Efficacy

Applying a resource mobilization perspective to organizations implies that the formation of protest groups in organizations depends not only on members' awareness of their common interests, but also on their calculations of success in pursuing those interests. In turn, these calculations are importantly influenced by characteristics that are linked to the distribution and control of critical organizational resources by group members. Two of the most important types of resources that are available to lower-level members of organizations are information and people (Mechanic, 1962).⁶ Groups that are characterized *either* by control of critical information or by control of a substantial number of members of the organization should be likely to see themselves as having a relatively high degree of power in the organization, and thus, have a stronger belief in the potential efficacy of collective action.

The first resource, information, involves possession of knowledge about organizational policies and practices that is necessary for the coordination and control of organizational activities, or knowledge of the operation of technical equipment. The second type of resource, people, involves access to and influence over individuals within the organization. One organizational characteristic that is apt to be strongly related to the role of information or people resources in the formation of protest groups is the proportion of positions within the organization that involve highly routinized tasks.

Routinization implies that the knowledge necessary to accomplish work tasks is widely available and well-understood (Perrow, 1967). Thus, such information is not a scarce resource, and is, therefore, not an important source of power (see Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Emerson, 1962; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). As a consequence, the greater the degree of job routinization in an organization, the less likely is the formation of protest groups that rely primarily on control of information, and the more likely are protest groups to depend on the control of people. Given the existence of general conditions facilitating the development of group consciousness, the following hypotheses are suggested:

Hypothesis 5: The greater the proportion of positions in an organization whose tasks are routinized, the higher the probability of the formation of protest groups based on control of people.

Hypothesis 6: The smaller the proportion of positions in an organization whose tasks are routinized, the higher the probability of the formation of protest groups based on control of information.

Groups whose efficacy rests on one type of resource or the other are apt to differ in both their size and the nature of their relationship to higher authority. These group characteristics, in turn, can be expected to affect negotiating issues and strategies.

Protest Groups and Strategies in Negotiations

As suggested, the value of information as a resource rests on its scarcity— it is a greater source of collective power when few individuals, both within and outside the organization, have the combination of skills, training and experience on which such knowledge is based. Therefore, protest groups whose dominant source of power is control of information will often be relatively small. Moreover, because members' jobs are less likely to be routinized, and insofar as they have control of administrative or technical information relevant to the organization's functioning, they are more likely to have contact with higher level management (Woodward, 1965). Such contacts provide opportunities for the development of personal ties and channels of communication between group members and those with authority.

Hypothesis 7: Protest groups whose power is based on control of information will be relatively small, and the density of social ties between members and higher level management will be high.

In contrast, the effectiveness of the second type of resource for group power depends heavily on quantity, or having a relatively large number of members. Larger groups are likely to have a greater diversity of interests to be represented, as well as a smaller proportion of members who have frequent contacts and direct ties to management.

Hypothesis 8: Protest groups whose power is based on control of people will be large, and the density of social ties between members and higher level management will be low.

These group characteristics have important consequences for the formulation of negotiating issues and the kinds of negotiating stances that are taken. First, groups whose power is based on the

number of members often have goals that are defined in broad and general terms, in order to appeal to as many individuals as possible (Turner & Killian, 1972). Leaders will be hesitant to define a specific set of priorities for fear of alienating one or another segment of the membership, thus weakening the overall power of the group. Although Lewicki and Litterer (1985) suggest that a wider range of issues may facilitate negotiations by increasing concessions and trade-offs, an inability or unwillingness to prioritize issues is likely to decrease negotiators' willingness to use such tactics. In smaller, more homogeneous groups, the issues of negotiation are likely to be more narrowly-focused, and it should be easier to reach consensus on the prioritization of issues. This is apt to encourage greater flexibility by top management (as well as the leaders of the protest group) in the exploration of negotiating issues.

Moreover, influence efforts by large groups are usually highly visible both to members of the organization and to outsiders as well. Leaders of groups that are based on control of people typically seek to publicize their conflict to external constituencies in order to gain support, and thereby enhance the group's power base (see Zald & Berger, 1978). Thus, organizational negotiations involving such groups usually have a broad audience. Research on audience effects suggests that the increased visibility of negotiations increases the likelihood of the adoption of a distributive, nonconciliatory bargaining stance by negotiators (Carnevale, Pruitt, & Britton, 1979).

In contrast, because protest groups whose power rests on control of information are smaller and because members usually have more avenues of direct communication with management, influence activities are often less public. Although actors outside the organization may be mobilized by the protest group, this is likely to simply take the form of encouragement of requests for products or services (Zald & Berger, 1978); the role of such requests in creating pressures on higher level management and producing changes desired by the group may not be made explicit. As a consequence, outsiders and even other members of the organization are less likely to be aware of the conflict and negotiations. Hence, negotiation and decision making can proceed in relative privacy, without pressure to perform for an audience.

The strength of the ties between protest groups and higher level authorities also affects the negotiating stance that is adopted. The higher frequency of interactions between members of groups controlling information and authorities increase the chances that points of intersection in the interests of each will be perceived, and this is likely to lead to the development of higher levels of trust between the groups. These factors enhance negotiators' propensity to search for mutually beneficial solutions (Kimmel et al., 1980).

Because the members of groups based on control of people are more likely to be in routinized jobs, and thus have less contact with members of higher-level groups, the chances are greater that group interests will be perceived as being in direct opposition. Therefore, the motivation to search for jointly satisfying solutions is likely to be lower.

As suggested in the two preceding hypotheses, the different kinds of resources that are dominant in protest groups are linked to conditions that affect the development of negotiating issues and stances. Therefore, two final hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 9: Protest groups whose power is based on control of people are likely to adopt a distributive negotiating stance.

Hypothesis 10: Protest groups whose power is based on control of information are likely to adopt an integrative negotiating stance.

It is worth noting that the two cases of group conflict described at the outset of this paper provide some evidence for these hypotheses. However, it is clear that more systematic research on all of the hypotheses proposed here is warranted.

Conclusions: Directions for Further Research

Although there is a large body of sociological research devoted to the topics of power and conflict in organizations, most of this work has focused on the description of structures and sources of power. Relatively little effort has been given to the examination of issues relating to the actual exercise of power by groups within organizations, or the processes through which conflict is resolved. As a consequence, there initially appears to be few areas of intersection between organizational sociology and contemporary negotiations research.

The aim of this paper has been to provide a stronger link between these areas of study, by combining research on social movements with research on organizational power. This combination provides a framework for research on the formation of protest groups in organizations and processes of negotiation between hierarchically organized groups. Based on these literatures, a number of specific hypotheses regarding these issues have been suggested.

The sociological approach to the study of organizations sketched here draws attention to a major lacuna in current research on organizational negotiations. It suggests that the investigation of the larger context of group relations in which organizational negotiations occur is critical to a full understanding of negotiating processes and outcomes. Although there is some existing research on audience effects (e.g., Brown, 1968; Carnevale, Pruitt & Britton, 1979) few attempts to systematically relate group characteristics to negotiating processes have been made.

Arguably, the most important negotiations that take place in organizations (in terms of enduring impact on organizational functioning) are those involving group interests rather than individual interests. Such negotiations are more likely to involve high levels of resources and to result in relatively long-lived agreements and arrangements. It should be noted that most group negotiations in organizations occur between hierarchically-related groups. Even when the origin of a conflict lies in the relations between two vertically-equivalent groups, the resolution of such conflict almost always entails decisions by higher authorities (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Thus, more attention is needed to the organizational conditions and group characteristics that affect the processes and outcomes of negotiations between hierarchically-related groups.

Laboratory studies in which negotiating processes are divorced from group power relations can offer only limited insights into such negotiations. Although it is possible to design experimental studies involving ongoing relations and conflicts among groups (see Krackhardt & Stern, 1988), fuller examination of the effects of protest groups on negotiations in organizations requires research in naturalistic settings. The difficulty of conducting such research is that, like social movements, the development of protest groups in organizations is an unpredictable phenomenon. However, there are a number of approaches that may be useful for studying this phenomenon. One involves ethnographic field studies. Because both the social movement and older organizational research suggest that protest groups are most likely to form in response to major social or organizational change, one strategy for this kind of research is to identify situations where such change is anticipated, or has recently occurred (see Barley & Tolbert, 1988). Observational and interview data may be gathered from members of the organization on their evolving perceptions of such change, the nature of the relationships between

lower level members and top management, patterns of interaction and relations among lower level members, and other factors that may influence the development of collective responses to change.

A second, related approach involves the identification of past protest group activity in an organization and the collection of detailed, retrospective histories from members on the causes and sequence of events involving the protest group. Use of a wide range of informants from a variety of levels in the organization can provide a general, nonidiosyncratic description of the relations between the protest group and higher authorities, protest group actions, and managerial counteractions.

Still another approach, often used in recent social movement research (Gamson, 1975; Shorter & Tilly, 1974; Snyder & Tilly, 1972), is to trace and collect information on a sample of past conflicts covered by the popular press and other archival sources. Content analysis and other systematic data collection procedures can then be used as the basis for the analysis of typical patterns in the evolution of protest group activity, negotiations, and organizational decision making involving protest groups. Although this approach usually precludes insights into the more subjective, evanescent interpersonal relations that shape social action gained from ethnographic or interview research, it permits broader comparative analysis and the systematic testing of hypotheses.

Each of these methodologies has its own set of strengths and limitations. What should be stressed here, however, is that they offer new opportunities for the development and expansion of negotiation research. Within the past decade, there has been an impressive accumulation of laboratory studies of negotiations, identifying a wide range of influences on bargaining and negotiating behavior (see Bazerman & Lewicki, 1983; Lewicki & Litterer, 1985; Rubin & Brown, 1975 for general references to this voluminous literature). While this work has made important contributions to the understanding of negotiation, further development requires exploration of alternative theoretical and research frameworks and methodologies.

Notes

1. Classical sociological theory concerns the nature of society, seeking to identify and explain widespread patterns of social behavior. The empirical study of whole societies, however, proved a difficult endeavor. One of the initial impetuses for sociologists' fascination with formal organizations is that they represented observationally-manageable social systems (Blau, 1955; Merton, 1957), providing the opportunity for comparative, empirically-based analyses. Consequently, much of the early sociological study of organizations was devoted to group relations within a particular organization. More recent research has shifted levels of analysis, examining interorganizational relations within some subset or population of organizations.

2. The terms, "conflict groups" and "protest groups" (used interchangeably here), refer to collectivities that are organizational coalitions, as defined by Stevenson, Pearce, and Porter (1985; Pearce, Stevenson, & Porter, 1986). They are, however, a particular type of coalition—one whose objectives specifically involve influencing higher level members in order to bring about desired organizational changes. The majority of research on coalitions has focused on two issues: which individuals are likely to form coalitions and how coalition members divide up collective benefits (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Kelley & Arrowood, 1960; Kormorita, 1974; Miller, 1980; Murnighan, 1978). In contrast, in this study the focus is on the types of resources that are available to coalition members, and the way in which such resources affect negotiations involving coalitions.

3. This analysis is heavily indebted to the original and insightful work of Zald and Berger (1978) on social movements in organizations.

4. The tasks of defining the concept of power and identifying its various forms (e.g., influence, authority, coercion, etc.) have occupied many sociological researchers (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Bierstedt, 1950; Blau, 1964; Etzioni, 1961; Emerson, 1962; Weber, 1946). "Authority" is usually defined as a specific form of power, one based on the legitimate right of individuals to invoke social sanctions in order to ensure compliance. The generic term "power" is applied both to the (potential) use of non-legitimated force and to the use of personal persuasion, independent of individuals' authoritative sanctioning ability.

5. The fact that female-dominated occupations often involve the use of mediating technology may account for the traditional resistance of such occupations to union organizing efforts.

6. Mechanic (1962) distinguishes among people, information and instrumentalities (facilities and equipment) as different types of resources available to lower level participants. However, instrumentalities rest either on members' access to and control of a large number of persons that are responsible for managing facilities and equipment, or on information about the procedures for using them. Thus, the mechanic's distinctions can be reduced to two basic types of resources.

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