

Political Action and Alignments in Organizations

Edward J. Lawler

University of Iowa

Samuel B. Bacharach

Cornell University

Research in the Sociology of Organizations (1983), 2, 83-107

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, organizational scholars have begun to resurrect the broad image of organizations implied by Dalton's (1959) classic case study and Cyert and March's (1963) early theoretical work—namely that organizations are political systems in which individuals and subgroups vie for power and influence (Zaleznik, 1970; Baldrige, 1971; Pettigrew, 1975; Abell, 1975; Kipnis, 1976; Tushman, 1977; Bacharach, 1978; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; and Pfeffer, 1981). Few would question that organizational politics should be a major concern, but, at the same time, few have taken seriously the implications of a political image or model of organizations. Porter et al., (1981) noted that a survey of basic texts in organizational behavior and related fields found that only .2 percent of the page content dealt with organizational politics. In light of the fact that practitioners, themselves, emphasize the role of politics in organizational decision making (see Madison et al., 1980), the relative neglect of organizational politics is surprising.

Organizational politics may be incorporated into the literature on organizational theory as a limited and complementary perspective or as an alternative perspective. To date, most efforts treat organizational politics as a supplement or complement to more traditional lines of work on organizations. This legitimizes organizational politics as a theoretical or research topic while incorporating it within prevailing images of organizations (March and Simon, 1958). For example, Pfeffer (1981) conceptualizes politics as a distinct facet or category of decision making that complements those emphasized in the literature on organizations. To Pfeffer (1981), work on organizational politics is important to account for and understand departures from rational decision making. Mayes and Allen (1977) suggest that politics is the management of *non-*

sanctioned means and ends, and still others construe politics as relevant primarily to how actors use discretion or to upward, rather than downward, influence in organizations (Porter et al., 1981). Efforts to clearly distinguish political from nonpolitical spheres and to interweave the political with existing foci have implicitly retained the connotation that “politics” in organizations is limited, irrational, unfair, or illegitimate.

The second, less prevalent, approach to organizational politics is to offer it as a model which contrasts with prevailing models of organizations. By a model, we mean a perspective or set of concepts, propositions, foci, and questions around which to organize empirical work and with which to recast work, ostensibly outside the emerging area of organizational politics. A political model of organizations suggests a fundamental change in the way scholars approach and analyze organizations, including: (1) a shift in the unit of analysis from the total organization to actors within the organization; (2) a conceptualization of organizational structure as, at once, a result of power struggle and a set of conditions or parameters underlying future power struggle; and (3) a treatment of coalitions as the major tactical mechanisms for gaining, maintaining, and using power in organizations (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980). This paper falls within this second approach and is designed to further develop the political model of organizations.

In the context of a political model, “politics” is a primitive term referring to the efforts of social actors to mobilize support for and/or opposition to policies, rules, goals, and means in which they have some stake. This notion of politics must be applied broadly if we are to realize the explanatory potential of a political model. That is, this definition implies that politics is not restricted to the boardroom decisions of the higher echelons, but is also incorporated into the day- to-day activities at all levels. While suggesting that organizational politics involves actors at all levels of the organization, this definition also implies that politics crosses all decision spheres.

That is, politics is not limited to arenas of discretionary decision making nor to subtle upward influence attempts (Mayes and Allen, 1977; Porter et al., 1981) but may also occur in spheres of formal decision making. Most important, within this definition, organizational politics is not a separate category of decision making that forces departures from rationality (Pfeffer, 1981); rather, it becomes the process through which the rationality of decision making is defined. What is rational for one group need not be rational for another; organizational politics is essentially the struggle of different groups to impose their standards and criteria of rationality on spheres of decision making.

A political model of organizations implies an emphasis on *action* and *alignments*.

Political action consists of the tactics actors use to deal with opposition and to maximize their influence. Political alignments refer to the network of coalitions within which action takes place at a particular time. Political action and political alignments are interrelated. Alignments emerge from action, action modifies existing alignments, and the prevailing alignments constrain and channel political action. The importance of action suggests that a political model be grounded in social-action theory (Weber, 1947; Parsons, 1937; and Schutz, 1967), since political action can best be construed as a type of social action. The “fact” that alignments emerge from political action suggests, further, that we identify basic types of political action and show how these lead to different types of political alignments in organizations.

This paper, specifically, argues that: (1) political action, whether at the individual or subgroup level, is the most appropriate unit of analysis for organizations; (2) a political analysis, grounded in social-action theory, suggests a treatment of rationality as a *form* of thought (not to be confused with the content of thought, particular organizational procedures, or specific inputs to a decision); (3) an analysis of political action requires a tactical approach to power and

conflict, such that tactics and countertactics become the critical elements of the political process; (4) “absorption” and “insulation” are the broadest categories for examining tactical action by subunits in an organization; (5) these tactics— absorption and insulation—are grounded in actors’ subjective evaluation of power; and (6) tactics of absorption and insulation lead to different types of political alignment. This paper interrelates social-action theory (Weber, 1947; Parsons, 1937) with the political model of organizations (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980) and, in this context, conceptualizes absorption and insulation as political processes giving rise to various political alignments. We will begin by discussing the implications of social-action theory.

II. SOCIAL-ACTION THEORY

Social-action theory can and has been used as the foundation for very different approaches to organizations. Phenomenologists use the notion of social action as a starting point for understanding the interpretive, symbolic processes of actors in organizations. The emphasis is on the construction of social order (Weick, 1979; Schutz, 1967). Functionalists, on the other hand, begin with social action and move to the analysis of total organizations as inherently cooperative systems with a life of their own (Parsons, 1937, 1956; Perrow, 1979). In contrast to phenomenologists, functionalists stress the conceptualization of “order already constructed.” Even the political economy-approach of Mayer Zald and associates can be construed as implicitly grounded in Parsons’ theory of social action (Zald, 1970; Zald and Berger, 1978). Social-action theory is at least a subtle theme underlying much organizational theory. Derivations from social-action theory, however, have missed one of the most fundamental points in Weber’s original analysis of social action—namely, that social action, conflict, power, and

politics are inextricably bound together. It is Weber (1947) rather than Parsons (1937, 1956) who takes the initial step toward a perspective that fuses elements of what today we call social-action theory and the political model of organizations.

The Weberian approach to organizations has too often been associated with a narrow focus on the formal structure of bureaucracy. Organization theorists typically treat Weber's concept of bureaucracy as if it is his concept of social system and neglect the role of social action in Weber's theory. A broader examination of Weber's work indicates that political strife among subgroups is a central characteristic of social systems at both the societal and organizational levels. The subgroups have incompatible interests based primarily on their power and status, and social action is the key construct for understanding the patterns of interaction between conflicting subgroups. Thus, it is not structure as "social form" that is the unit of analysis but rather the social action of subgroups; and, it is the notion of action that integrates the particular social actor and the structural context of action. Without a close examination of Weber's notion of social action and related concept of social system, one is left with the impression that Weber construes organizations as static, formal entities removed from rather than reflecting, emergent from, and sustained by component actors. As Collins (1975) indicates, the field of organizations has essentially turned Weber's theory on its head.

Given that organizations to Weber are arenas of political struggle, the structure of organizations is a social-control mechanism made necessary not only by continual conflict but also by the fact that the outcomes of any interest groups are rarely consistent with their expectations and desires (Collins, 1975). The first important element in Weber's notion of structure is that it develops from the calculative decisions of organizational actors (individuals and/or interest groups)—it is not an evolutionary phenomenon outside of the immediate direction

of powerful actors in conflict with other actors. The second basic element of Weber's structure is captured by his analysis of legitimacy. Legitimacy is the major means of controlling actors in the organization and, thereby, constraining the boundaries of the conflict between interest groups. From this interpretation of Weber, organizations must be understood as dialectical systems in which the "first step" is political action of individuals based on the failure of existing structures to be sustained as legitimate by their supporting interest groups. The "second step" is the institutionalization of action in a newly emergent structure; the "third step" is constraining the boundaries of prior conflict by giving the new structure and concomitant patterns of action an aura of legitimacy. This is the implied dialectical process in Weber, and it leads to an image of organizations in constant, but bounded, tension. It also suggests, as we noted earlier, that political action and political alignments are critical dimensions of organizational politics.

There are two major ideas embedded in Weber's analysis of structure and action: (1) social action is subjective, and (2) social action is rational from the point of view of the actor at the moment action is taken. Action is subjective because it is guided by the set of meanings actors bring to the situation, and different meanings by different actors or the same actor across different times are virtually inevitable given the ambiguity and potential variability in social settings (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980). Order is an imputation of actors rather than an objective feature of the structure, and rationality becomes the mode of thought through which actors attribute meaning and order to the world. As a mode of thought, rationality is simply "means-ends" calculation. The basis and nature of rationality on a concrete level may differ—for example, across actors within an organization, across organizations over time, or across different cultures. It is this form of thought, i.e., means-end calculation, that makes action rational rather than the concrete information or content to which the method of thought is applied.

Organizational structure, then, becomes a strategy for objectifying and legitimizing action and the common meanings underlying it. To the degree that organizations and component interest groups face uncertainty and to the degree that political strife cannot be totally enveloped by formal structure, social action remains an important starting point for understanding relations in organizations.

Assumption 1: Political action is the appropriate unit of analysis.

The emphasis suggested by this assumption is action, not the actor. Organizational theory has been too concerned with identifying the type of actor or level in the organization that best serves as the unit of analysis. In contrast, this first assumption is based on the idea that actors are important only to the degree that they are the initiator or inhibitor of social action. Particular units—e.g., individuals, departments, divisions, or total organizations—are important, not because of what they are, but because of their decisions to act (or not) and the consequences of their action for themselves and others in the organization. To conceptualize social action as the unit of analysis, therefore, is to leave open the specific unit of greatest importance to a specific context. This flexibility is important because in some contexts or with respect to some issues, the appropriate units could range from departments, divisions, or occupational categories to coalitions of individuals or groups, or even to individuals only tacitly representing different organizational subgroupings. The unit of analysis is simply social action relevant to a particular issue or decision at a given point in time, regardless of the size or identification of the “actors.” In this sense, a political model, informed by a social-action perspective, essentially transcends some of the historic debate over the units of analysis in the field of organizations.

Assumption 2: Political action in organizations is intentional, i.e., goal directed.

A central feature of political action is that it is directed to some future state of affairs. However, this implication of social-action theory does not imply a concern with organizational goals. With a political model of organizations, organizational goals are an emergent product of internal political processes; multiple goals at the organizational level are a reflection of a multitude of interests vying for power within the organization; and the difficulty of using goals to analyze organizations reflects the pervasiveness of organizational politics. The concept of organizational goals has little place in the social-action approach to organizational politics.

The goals of interest groups could appear to be particularly crucial to a political perspective. However, the basic tenets of social-action theory, found in Weber (1947) and Parsons (1937) for that matter, suggest that the particular goals of particular actors are less important than the mere fact that action is *goal directed*. It is not necessary to specify the wants, goals, etc. of actors in detail or even clearly; we need only emphasize those processes and contexts where actors are engaged in action directed at some goal, regardless of how unspecified or unarticulated the goal happens to be. Goal-directedness becomes a defining characteristic of political action specifying broad boundaries of investigation, rather than an explanatory construct. Social-action theory, thereby, sidesteps the problem of infinite regression when attempting to explain structure or behavior in terms of goals, and a related political perspective on organizations need not get caught in the web of conceptual debates generated by the goals approach (Georgiou, 1981; Perrow, 1979; Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980) to organizations. Consistent with Weber, it is only important to begin with the understanding that organizations

are structures that facilitate, constrain, and channel the goal-*directed* behaviors of interest groups composing the larger organization and of individuals within particular interest groups.

Assumption 3: Political action in organizations is conscious choice.

Political action is choice, and actors are conscious of and reflective about their prospective and actual options. By conscious choice, we simply mean that actors are aware of the fact that they are deciding between two or more lines of action. Other choices may actually be embedded in those actors are conscious of, meaning that an actor choosing between 1 and 2 also might be unknowingly choosing between A and B. The main reason for this is that the choices attended to by actors are not objectively given or presented to them by the environment; the nature of the choice, itself, is the object of interpretive processes of the actor. The choices and options created by actors are as subjectively defined as are their responses to them, and the choices identified by actors do not necessarily exhaust those they are actually making. Furthermore, an actor's definition of available choices and, hence, their actual choice can readily fluctuate over time as a result of successive reevaluations.

A political perspective on organizations suggests that these choice processes are grounded in the actor's interests and, specifically, their conflicting relationships to other actors. Since choices consciously made are intertwined with those not consciously made, both classes of decisions are a part of organizational politics. The tactical value of foresight and anticipation is a reflection of the fact that the choice actually made—because it combines conscious and nonconscious decisions—is often only clear in retrospect. Overall, the incorporation of ideas from social-action theory into a political perspective on organizations leads one to view

intentional or conscious and unintentional or nonconscious decision making as inherently imperfect, subjective, and political.

Assumption 4: Political action in organizations is rational.

This assumption indicates that actors evaluate choices in a rational manner. Social-action theory suggests that rationality is a form or process of thought not to be confused with the content of decision making. Rationality is simply the use of a means-ends schema to evaluate choices, i.e., it implies the specification of goals or ends, identification of options or means, evaluation of the consequences of different means, and the linking of means to ends (Weber, 1947; Parsons, 1937). It is not the content of decision making, e.g., what particular options are considered or even how particular actors link specific means to specific ends, that determines rationality, but the degree to which decision making follows a rational form or process. Therefore, the use or advocacy of different means or ends by different actors is to be expected, and such differences do not necessarily suggest a difference in the degree to which actors are rational. As a process, rationality can and will serve to justify a range of decisions on any given issue, and the selection among a number of equally rational decision outcomes is a political problem, not a problem of sharpening the rationality of the decision making. Overall, this means that judging the degree of rationality from the decision outcome or identifying a particular outcome as rational is inappropriate. The problem for decision makers and for students of decision making is to evaluate how rational principles are translated into concrete means and ends, and a political model of organizations seems imperative to understanding this translation process. It is one of the major bases for conflict and political action, because the specific

standards, elements, and inputs underlying rational decision making are likely to be the result of power struggle.

This rationality assumption captures one of the primary differences between our approach to organizational politics and those found elsewhere (Pfeffer, 1981; Allison, 1971; Porter et al., 1981; Mayes and Allen, 1977). With social-action theory as a backdrop, it is misleading to treat organizational politics as nonrational or, in application to decision making, to argue that rational and political elements are distinct or even distinguishable (see, especially, Pfeffer, 1981). Such a conceptualization of organizational politics confuses the form of rationality with the content of decision making. Part of this confusion can be traced to the notion of “bounded rationality” (Simon, 1976; Allison, 1971), for it implies some absolute standard of rationality (e.g., “comprehensive rationality”) against which to compare the content of decision making. Our political perspective on organizations does not question the value of this concept, but it suggests that a limited search for options or alternatives (bounded rationality) vs. an unlimited search (unbounded or comprehensive rationality) is primarily a difference in content. The question raised by a political mode is: What determines the “boundaries”? The search for alternatives, as well as the other dimensions of rational decision making, should be constrained by what information and positions an interest group requires to combat adversaries and influence a given decision. In this sense, there is nothing intrinsically nonrational about organizational politics and nothing decidedly rational about “nonpolitical” decision making.

To conclude, the fourth assumption suggests that political action is rational in the broad principles it conforms to or general form it takes. Those engaging in organizational politics can be construed as acting rationally, and organizations that permit the infusion of politics into decision making are not necessarily any less rational than organizations which attempt to remove

politics from decision making. The content of decision making and related social action develops in the context of the struggle within which groups contend over how to define and apply standards of rationality for a given decision. The identification of means, evaluation of their consequences, and the linking of means to ends are all embedded in and inseparable from a political process composed of influence tactics and countertactics. Thus, the translation of rationality, as form, into decision making content is a political act with dramatic consequences for subgroups and individuals in the organization and for the organization as a whole.

Tenets of social-action theory, encompassed in the four assumptions, identify the broad parameters and characteristics of political action in organizations. These assumptions represent an initial orientation; beyond them, a political model of organizations must deal more extensively with the *interaction* of actors—specifically, with the tactical nature of this interaction. To expand political perspective in this direction, the remainder of this paper will: (1) examine the nature of relationships between conflicting actors; (2) identify insulation and absorption as the major political processes; and (3) develop a classification of political alignments and show how they are generated by the process of insulation and absorption.

III. CONFLICTING ACTORS

When two or more actors interact, there are various types of social relationships that can develop and be maintained over time. Some relationships induce cooperation, some induce competition, and still others induce a combination of cooperative and competitive lines of *action*. Any image of organizations makes implicit or explicit assumptions about the predominance of competitive and cooperative action, as well as the nature of the *relationship* underlying these

patterns of action. In fact, such assumptions represent a point along which traditional cooperative images (Barnard, 1938) contrast with more recent attempts to construct a conflict or Marxist model of organizations (Benson, 1977). To distinguish a political perspective from alternative models, it is important to examine and specify the nature of the relationship among actors in an organization.

A political model of organizations implies that a given subunit in an organization (whether the subunit is an individual or subgroup) will have adversarial relationships with at least some of the other subunits within the organization (Collins, 1975; Tushman, 1977; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980). Any actor will have relationships with a number of other actors. Some of these relationships will be predominantly competitive, and others will be predominantly cooperative. Moreover, the relationship of a given actor to others must be viewed in an issue-specific manner, because within any given relationship the actors are likely to be adversaries with respect to some issues, tacit or explicit collaborators with respect to others, and uninvolved with regard to still others. The overall nature of the relationship on the competitive-cooperative dimension should not obscure the “fact” that there are likely to be both cooperative and competitive tendencies within any given organizational relationship, even though these *tendencies* are not always manifested in the interaction of the actors. In this sense, virtually an intraorganizational relationship is *mixed-motive* in nature.

A mixed-motive relationship must be contrasted with positive-sum and zero-sum types of relationships (Rapoport, 1966). In a positive-sum relationship, both actors can maximize their payoffs by cooperative action; in a zero-sum relationship, actors’ payoffs are negatively correlated, and, therefore, there is a strong tendency toward competitive action and little room for voluntary cooperation. On the other hand, a mixed-motive relationship simultaneously

contains incentives to cooperate and incentives to compete. Traditional organization theory (see reviews by Perrow, 1979; Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980), portrays intraorganizational relationships in positive-sum terms by assuming that organizations are naturally cooperative systems; conflict theories, developed from the writings of Karl Marx, treat the relationships as zero sum and view any cooperation of workers with the organization as a function of force, oppression, or false consciousness (see, for example, Benson, 1977; Goldman and Van Houten, 1977; Heydebrand, 1977). A mixed-motive conceptualization of actors' relationship is most compatible with a political perspective on organizations.

Portraying organizational relations as mixed-motive has a number of implications for organization theory. One is that intraorganizational relationships should be treated as explicit or tacit bargaining (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Abell, 1975). A positive-sum image suggests that cooperation is natural and inevitable, except where members of the organization are inadequately trained, irrational, or misunderstand their relationship to others. Bargaining between parties, in this context, is unnecessary or superfluous, and conflict resolution is based on education and improvements in communication. A zero-sum image, on the other hand, implies that the conflicting interests embedded in intraorganizational relationships make bargaining, in a strict sense, useless. The only "solution" is for one party to force the other into submission; consequently, the emphasis of Marxist approaches is typically on how management legitimizes the existing relations of production and keeps the workers from disrupting production or from threatening the larger economic system (Benson, 1977; Goldman and Van Houten, 1977). In contrast, a mixed-motive image of organizational relations integrates the implications of traditional theory and Marxist approaches such that bargaining is no longer necessary or useless but intrinsic to the activities of organizations. Given incentives to cooperate and to compete,

mixed-motive relationships inherently involve distrust and instability. It is bargaining, tacit or explicit, that keeps conflict within acceptable boundaries and enables actors to continue to deal with each other on a day-to-day basis. Furthermore, the resolution of conflict is likely to be temporary, and intraorganizational relations are likely to require continual renegotiation because of the persistent potential for conflict in mixed-motive situations. The mixed-motive assumption of a political model suggests that tacit and explicit bargaining capture the primary modes of social action in organizations.

A second, and related, implication of a mixed-motive conception is that it suggests more uncertainty and unpredictability in intraorganizational relations than other conceptions. This dovetails with the implications of social-action theory. Actors do not act in terms of the a priori “recipes” embedded in the organizational structure of traditional theory or the political economy of Marxist approaches; they act in terms of subjective predictions they make about others’ action and orientation to the situation. The situation is made predictable and the uncertainty of the other’s action is reduced only through the interpretive or subjective judgments of the actors in the relationship. If relations were naturally cooperative, as portrayed in traditional organizational theory, then these judgmental processes would not be that important—except insofar as they account for the training or other deficiencies of the individuals; organizational structure, itself, dictates cooperative lines of behavior. If the relationships are zero sum, as portrayed by Marxist theory, the problems of uncertainty and unpredictability are not that salient to actors because the structure of conflicting interests essentially dictates competitive lines of behavior. Only the mixed-motive imagery brings this uncertainty and unpredictability to the foreground and begins to grasp the political nature of problems confronted by actors in the organization.

A mixed-motive conception of intraorganizational relations leads to an emphasis on the tactical nature of political action. Political action becomes a choice among tactics based on how others will respond which, in turn, is based on the actor's evaluation of the power relationship. With regard to any particular issue, therefore, the actor will confront several tasks or questions—for example, it must: (1) anticipate what other actors will support or oppose their position on the issue; (2) anticipate how active or forceful prospective opponents will be; (3) examine tactics for minimizing or overcoming the opposition on this issue; and (4) consider how to use this issue to improve their power position on other issues in the future. Traditional theory fails to raise such questions; Marxist theory detracts attention from such questions by attempting to link, by definition, such matters to larger class-related interests; while a political model takes these as major questions to be addressed. The difficulty of answering these questions with traditional theory and research on organizations and organizational behavior suggests the need for a framework on political action and political alignments in organizations.

IV. POLITICAL ACTION

Bacharach and Lawler (1980) develop a general perspective for analyzing the political nature of organizations. They criticize wholistic approaches to organizations and argue that organizations should be conceptualized in terms of interest groups and coalitions. The initial step for analyzing organizational politics is to identify the major interest groups around which political action tends to develop. Interest groups are natural divisions created by the structure of the organization (e.g., departments, divisions, role or occupational categories, professional groupings) or by stratification in the larger social system (e.g., sex, age, race, social class).

Interest groups are grounded in the formal structure, tasks, and manpower intrinsic to the activities of the organization. An emphasis on interest groups, however, is not sufficient to a political analysis because it suggests a primary concern with the relatively static, morphological dimensions of the organization.

The central issue is to understand how interest groups—or individuals explicitly or implicitly representing different interest groups—combine with one another, break apart existing combinations, or recombine in an effort to influence specific decision areas. To Bacharach and Lawler (1980), this implies a focus on coalitions, that is, joint action by two or more interest groups against some target group. Coalitions partition organization members into distinct groups on the basis of common interests. They bind the members with the most common interests together, while pitting those with the most divergent interests in opposition to one another. In any organization, there are likely to be numerous differences among actors, and it is coalitions that crystallize, highlight, and make salient the most critical differences; it is coalitions that represent the primary tactical mechanisms through which individuals and subgroups develop, maintain, and use power. In this sense, coalitions are not just the major units of political action, but also what establishes and defines the political game (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980).

Coalitions in organizational contexts can take many different forms. They may bring together many or only a few interest groups. The alliances may be quite explicit or very subtle or implicit. The coalitions may be short term, deal with only one temporally-bound issue and then disband, or they may involve long-term alliances directed at broad issues that subsume many specific, time-bound issues. Finally, coalitions may combine individuals who explicitly and knowingly represent different interest groups or individuals who only tacitly—or even unknowingly—represent particular interest groups. An image of organizations as a coalition

network does not imply that individual actors are unimportant, but rather than the interaction of individual actors should be viewed in the context of the interest groups and coalitions that prevail within the organization (see Dalton, 1959; Cyert and March, 1963; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980). Coalitions constitute the operative organizational structure and represent the basic units underlying the political action of individuals and subgroups.

Any organizational structure contains a prevailing political alignment, created and modified by coalition processes within the organization. The concept of political alignment implies some degree of stability, while the political nature of coalition processes indicates that the stability of a given alignment is limited. Given that political alignments ostensibly emerge from coalitions within, it becomes critical to examine how coalitions affect the relationship of actors within the organization. There are two fundamental affects that coalitions have on actors in the organization: they (1) bind some actors together *within* the coalition, and simultaneously (2) split these actors off from others *outside* the coalition. These dual effects represent different foci or “motivations” for actors partaking in a coalition. Actor A may ally with B to gain control over B or to protect itself from C, an actor who remains outside the coalition. On the most basic level, this suggests that there are two major political processes underlying coalition formation: *absorption* and *insulation*. Absorption deals with the relationship of actors within a coalition, while insulation deals with the relation of actors in the coalition to those outside.

Absorption and insulation refer to the consequences of coalition processes *over time*. We are concerned here with long-term coalitions, a focus that makes considerable sense because such coalitions are likely to have the greatest impact on political alignments in the organization. Absorption refers to the process by which a given actor within the coalition essentially envelops other actors, thereby making others less distinguishable from itself. For example, if A and B

maintain an alliance over time, the coalition may come to look more like A than like B due to an absorption process. Absorption welds together the interests originally combined in the coalition to such an extent that the coalition comes to look more like an interest group than a coalition. In the most extreme cases, given actors become virtually indistinguishable from one another.

Insulation processes, on the other hand, generate more distinguishable differences between those within and those outside the coalition. That is, insulation sharpens the lines dividing some actors. Taking the organization as a whole, absorption processes blur the formal distinctions between some subgroupings, while insulation processes sharpen or heighten the salience of some distinctions. The major subgroups and political alignment existing at a given point in time, therefore, can be construed as the result of prior absorption and insulation processes.

The relationship of absorption and insulation should be viewed as an empirical issue. The mere fact of a coalition implies some minimal degree of insulation from outside actors, but the degree of insulation can vary considerably and, beyond this minimal level, insulation essentially becomes a tactical issue for the actors in the coalition. Actors within the coalition can use it to insulate themselves from certain actors to a greater or lesser degree depending on their goals and position in the organization. In contrast, the mere fact of a coalition does not imply absorption of one or some actors by others within the coalition. A coalition may or may not lead to partial or total absorption, depending, once again, on how the actors use the coalition tactically. While absorption captures the process of moving together and insulation the process of moving apart, these processes are not bound together inextricably. Overall, the degree of absorption and insulation, as well as the relationship between these processes, is contingent on the manner in which actors use coalitions in a given context.

The concepts of absorption and insulation raise questions for both the micropolitics and macropolitics of organizations. Micropolitics is concerned with the action of particular actors attempting to deal with opposition from other actors. At the micro level, absorption and insulation are tactics for developing and using power, e.g., one way is to absorb the opposition, another is to absorb third parties to protect oneself against the opposition, and still another is to insulate oneself from the opposition. Such tactics have consequences for the particular actors but also for the organization as a whole. Macropolitics is concerned with the latter—specifically, with the nature and operation of the political alignments embedded in the organizational structure. The major task for bridging these micro and macro concerns, then, is to classify political alignments and understand how they are generated by processes of absorption and insulation. To understand political alignments, one must provide a parsimonious way to analyze the sources (antecedents) of absorption and insulation, as well as the effect (consequences) of these processes for the organization as a whole. The antecedents of absorption and insulation should be found in the structure of the organization, and the consequences of prime concern are the modification or creation of political alignments. This implies a reciprocal relationship of structure and social action that is quite consistent with the “dialectical” elements of Weber’s theory, discussed earlier in this paper.

V. POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS

Two dimensions of organizational structure are critical for analyzing the sources and consequences of insulation and absorption: the *number of actors* involved with a given issue or decision area and the *power differentiation* among these actors. Social psychological work on coalitions and sociological analyses of organization dovetail in their historic concern with these dimensions. Social psychologists have developed several theories of coalition formation which attempt to predict how coalition decisions will vary with the number of actors in the situation and distribution of resources across the actors (Murnighan, 1978; Caplow, 1968; Komorita and Chertkoff, 1973; Komorita, 1974). Such theories implicitly cast these dimensions as basic parameters of coalition situations. Similarly, organizational theorists and researchers, through investigations of organizational size, centralization, worker participation and the like, portray related dimensions as basic to the structure of an organization (Perrow, 1979; Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980; Hall, 1982).

A political perspective on organizations implies a particular orientation toward the analysis of the number of actors and power differentiation. The number of actors is not the same as the total number of employees or individuals in an organization but is rather the number of distinct subgroups implicated in an issue or issue area. Traditional measures of organizational size do not qualify as adequate indicators of the number of distinct actors implicated in an issue or issue area. An actor is an interest group or coalition (or individual representing such groupings) that is engaged in distinguishable lines of action on an issue. Social action is the appropriate foundation for identifying relevant actors, and the number of actors will vary across specific issues or decision areas. By power differentiation, we refer to the differences in potential

influence among the relevant actors. At the micro level, this is tantamount to the relative power or resources of an actor vis-à-vis prospective allies and adversaries. At the macro level, power differentiation may be viewed in terms of centralization and decentralization. For our purposes, the most critical aspect of power differentiation is the variance of power across the actors. Low variance in power indicates relatively equal power among the multitude of actors vying for influence, while high variance indicates that there are substantial power inequalities among at least some of the actors. The *variance* of power more readily captures the parameters of power struggle than does the *distribution* of power.

The number of actors and power differentiation are important to insulation and absorption for different reasons. The number of actors reflects the range of options available to actors putting together coalitions. With many actors involved in the issue, there are generally more options or prospective allies, but also more potential sources of opposition. Decisions on what coalitions to mobilize and how to use them, therefore, become more complex, and there is greater uncertainty about the ability of adversaries to respond with coalitions of their own. A context with many actors compels actors to consider how coalitions can be used to make the situation more predictable and orderly. Power differentiation, on the other hand, reflects the problems of control within the coalition and influence outside of it. In general, actors will prefer coalitions with lower-power others because they are likely to have more control over the internal affairs of the coalition (see Caplow, 1956, 1968). Also, such power lays the groundwork for absorbing coalition partners. Power inside vs. outside presents a high-power actor with a dilemma. Coalitions with lower-power actors can forestall alliances of lower-power actors against higher-power ones (e.g., subordinate revolts), but they may not allow one high-power actor to overcome the opposition of another high-power actor.

Our purpose is not to predict what coalition will form but to understand how actors tend to use coalitions and the bearing this will have on political alignments in the organization. The first step is to examine the impact of the number of actors and power differentiation on the tendency of actors' to use coalitions as insulating and absorbing mechanisms. Figure 1 schematically presents the basic relationships. Let us emphasize that these are very basic tendencies that will be modified by other aspects of a given context. Our position is that to understand such modifications, one has to specify the broad patterns on an abstract level.

With regard to the number of actors, Figure 1 posits a positive relationship to absorption processes and a negative relationship to insulation processes. In the context of many actors, absorption becomes a means of making decisions in the particular area more manageable and predictable over time by reducing the number of actors. For higher-power actors (the absorber), this has obvious advantages; for the lower-power actors (ones being absorbed), the close affiliation with higher-power ones facilitates some protection from other actors. The more actors in the situation, the more likely it is that the higher-power actors will attempt and the lower-power actors will accept greater levels of absorption. Over time, this leads to a smaller number of coalitional actors, each of which is highly integrated within by absorption processes.

The positive effect of absorption on insulation (Figure 1) reflects the fact that some degree of insulation is an unintentional by-product of absorption processes. The implication is that the way to successful insulation is through absorption when a large number of actors are involved in the decision. In the context of many actors, insulation as the dominant tactic is likely to be ineffective, because actors should recognize that their opponents also have several coalitional opportunities and, therefore, that attempts to insulate an adversary will typically lead to retaliation in kind. A coalition of A and B, designed to insulate the actors from C, should be

unlikely or short lived if C can readily block the impact of the AB coalition by allying with D. More actors provide all with more opportunities for coalitional action and, thereby, enable all to protect themselves from insulation by others. Thus, with many actors involved in an issue, the use of coalitions as insulating devices should lead to little change over time, that is, they create and maintain standoffs on specific decisions falling within the general area of concern. To the extent that insulation occurs at all under such circumstances, it is likely to occur indirectly through prior absorption processes.

Insert Figure 1 Here

Turning to power differentiation, Figure 1 posits that greater power differentiation among the actors will increase the tendency toward absorption and decrease the tendency toward insulation. This is based on the assumption that actors balance two considerations when evaluating their power vis-à-vis others'. First, actors will prefer coalitions in which they are dominant (see Caplow, 1968). Greater power within the coalition enables them to exert more influence over the coalition and make fewer concessions to maintain the coalition over time. Second, actors will prefer smaller to larger coalitions in order to minimize problems of coordination within the coalition (Riker, 1962; Komorita, 1974). High power differentiation implies that actors with more power have greater opportunity to act in accord with the first consideration, and this should be their paramount concern. Actors with lower levels of power may be particularly amenable to alliances with higher-power actors due primarily to the second consideration, i.e., the size of available coalitions. With all other things equal, a coalition with a high-power actor may be more beneficial to low-power actors who gain entrance to such a

coalition than a larger coalition of actors with actors of less power. Overall, high power differentiation among the actors involved in a decision establishes conditions favorable to coalitions that generate absorption processes.

Insulation is a major foundation for coalitions that develop under conditions of low power differentiation. A situation of low power differentiation leads to coalitions with actors of relatively equal power. Such coalitions will confront serious problems of internal stability over time, because equal power requires members of the coalition to make substantial compromises (see Bacharach and Lawler, 1981 for a discussion of equal vs. unequal power in bargaining relationships). Actors will carefully and continuously weigh the costs of remaining in the coalition vs. the costs of leaving it. In this context, the maintenance of the coalition is less a matter of internal solidarity, per se, and more a matter of what external pressures make the coalition valuable. To the extent that a coalition insulates its members from adversaries, it handles one major source of external pressure. Thus, while the stability of an “absorptive” coalition is based primarily on internal solidarity generated by the absorption process, the stability of an “insulative” coalition is based on the external threat handled by the coalition. Such theoretical reasoning leads to the conclusion that low power differentiation among the actors establishes conditions favorable to coalitions that generate insulation.

To this point, our discussion indicates that actors can use coalitions as tactics of insulation or as tactics of absorption. The choice or emphasis adopted by actors can be predicted from the number of actors involved in the issue and the degree of differentiation among these actors. The more actors or the larger the power differences confronted by the actors, the more inclined they become toward absorption tactics and the less inclined they become toward insulation tactics. However, while we have analyzed the number of actors and power

differentiation in isolation, the basic implication is that the combined or interactive effects of these dimensions is most critical. Specifically, our discussion leads to the following proposition: *With few actors and low power differentiation, actors are likely to use coalitions as tactics of insulation; with many actors and high power differentiation, actors, are likely to use coalitions as tactics of absorption.* The emphasis placed on these modes of coalitional action is important because it has an impact on the political alignments that emerge from coalitions processes. Essentially, this paper conceptualizes the number of actors and power differentiation as the primary independent variables, insulation and absorption as the intervening variables, and political alignment as the dependent variable.

Insert Table 1 Here

A cross-classification of the number of actors (few vs. many) and power differentiation (low vs. high) suggests four major types of political alignment: confrontational, crisis, patronage, and co-optational (see Table 1). These types of alignment must be interpreted with reference to the emphasis actors place on absorption and insulation tactics. Insulation leads to either the politics of confrontation or the politics of crisis, while absorption leads to either the politics of patronage or the politics of co-optation. Each of these political alignments is discussed, in turn.

A. Politics of Confrontation

This form of political alignment develops from the insulation processes that tend to occur when there are few actors of relatively equal power. The prototype is a highly decentralized organization in which there are relatively few interest groups and coalitions. The central characteristics of this political alignment are that: (1) alliances are relatively stable and pit a few major subgroups against one another; (2) the conflict between subgroups is manifested across a large range of issues, e.g., the conflict seems to “pop up” everywhere; and (3) no one group, given the stable alliances, is able to dominate the organization as a whole, although such domination may periodically occur over specific, time-bound issues. The politics of confrontation essentially creates a circumstance where divergent groups and individuals, representing these groups, can and must engage in relatively conscious and explicit bargaining to get things done. Beyond the dominant coalitions defining this form of political alignment, more transient coalitions are likely to develop over specific issues, but these must be viewed in the context of the relatively stable coalitional structure that manifests this form of alignment. Overall, the politics of confrontation give rise to persistent but patterned, predictable, and manageable conflict.

B. Politics of Crisis

This form of political alignment develops when insulation tactics are prevalent in a context containing many actors with relatively equal power. The prototype is the highly decentralized organization in chaos or what Karl Weick (1976) has termed the “loosely coupled” system. The politics of crisis is characterized by unstable, fluid alliances which, because of their instability, are only able to address relatively specific, temporally bound issues. Every specific issue seems to create a new set of alliances, not necessarily predictable from alliances on previous issues. There is some order to the chaos, but it is attributable primarily to the multitude of interest groups created by the formal structure of the organization, rather than to the emergence of a relatively stable coalition structure as in the case of the politics of confrontation. Organizational elites may maintain control over the broadest parameters of the conflict, but the conflict tends to be unpatterned, unpredictable, and unmanageable from the standpoint of the actors, thus creating an “embattled” mentality.

C. Politics of Patronage

This form of political alignment develops from absorption processes when there are large power differences among relatively few actors. The prototype, of course, is the highly centralized organization. The main characteristics are: (1) very stable alliances that crosscut higher and lower levels of the formal organization hierarchy; (2) the appearance of little or no conflict between subgroups, generated by the ability of high-power actors to smooth over differences and subtly “force” consensus on a wide range of issues; and (3) highly constrained, trivialized

patterns of conflict. Conflict tends to be attributed to the personalities of the individuals involved rather than to the divergent interest groups or coalitions that they implicitly or explicitly represent. Conflict is kept in the background, and when it does occur, it is specific or made specific and given the appearance of a temporary aberration. The politics of patronage tend to occur when the absorption processes conceal differences and lead to difficulty in identifying different interest groups or coalitions. An organization that appears on the surface to consist only of two coalitions, labor and management, is often one in which key actors have successfully carried the absorption processes in this direction.

D. Politics of Co-optation

This form of political alignment has its source in absorption processes occurring in the context of many actors and high power differentiation. The existence of many actors encourages those with high power to co-opt actors with lower power and, thereby: (1) solidify their competitive position vis-à-vis other high-power actors; and (2) prevent collective revolts by those with less power (Lawler et al., 1978). Co-optation is a tactic for dividing or forestalling potential opposition while increasing the strength of the coalition in its dealings with other coalitions. At the same time, the existence of many actors gives those who are co-opted at one point the option of defecting from the coalitions in the future. Consequently, the politics of co-optation are manifested in: (1) moderately stable alliances that are subject to continual bargaining because of the defection problem; (2) bargaining that is less explicit (i.e., more tacit) than in the politics of confrontation, but more explicit than in the politics of patronage, and (3) the manipulation of symbols of unity or cooperation, which lends legitimacy to the relationship

between actors and deemphasizes their divergent interests. Schemes for participative management often create this form of political alignment.

This framework for dealing with political alignments can be applied to the internal dynamics of an interest group or coalition (i.e., to micropolitics) as well as to the organization as a whole (i.e., to macropolitics). In application to the micropolitics of particular subgroups, the scheme suggests that the choice of ally and the organizational structure facilitate one of these forms of political alignment. A coalition between actors of relatively equal power will tend to create internal politics of confrontation or crisis, with the attendant problems of longterm stability. To maintain such a coalition over time and use it to address a wide range of issues, members will have to devote more time and effort to the management of the internal politics of the coalition. On the other hand, coalitions between actors of widely divergent power will tend to create politics of patronage or co-optation, depending on the viability of alternative allies to the lower-power actor, the competition between the high-power actor and others, and the particular direction taken by the processes of absorption. Such coalitions may be stable over time, but as coalitions they may have less strength in dealings with other coalitions containing at least one high-power actor.

The scheme also leads to the inference that the tactics for creating and maintaining coalitions in organizational contexts are different across political alignments. Coalitions with patronage politics are based primarily on coercion and threats, made possible by wide disparities in power among allies. Coalitions with co-optational politics are based primarily on the inducements higher-power actors can offer lower-power ones. The inducements are made necessary by the alternatives available to lower-power actors, and typically include a combination of tangible benefit and the symbolic value of affiliation with the particular high-

power actor. Coalitions with confrontational politics are based on explicit bargaining through which actors overcome their differences via substantial, mutual concessions. Finally, coalitions with crisis politics are likely to be based on tacit areas of consensus developed through persuasive argumentation. These tactics for creating and maintaining particular coalitions are also the dominant tactics maintaining political alignments at the organizational or macro level.

At the macro level, the scheme fosters a political perspective on centralization and decentralization. Insulation processes tend to underlie decentralization, which can take the form of either the politics of confrontation or the politics of crisis; absorption processes underlie centralization, which can take the form of patronage or co-optational politics. Centralization and decentralization are thereby construed as the emergent product of political action. However, we have consistently argued in this paper that there is a reciprocal relationship of action and structure, and this is also important to the analysis of centralization. The processes of insulation and absorption do not simply create different levels of centralization, they also occur within some existing level. The foregoing scheme implies that highly centralized organizations tend to create the politics of patronage or co-optation; therefore, they tend to be more stable than decentralized organizations which, in contrast, create confrontational or crisis politics. A centralized organization fosters conditions favorable to political action like absorption, while a decentralized context facilitates action such as insulation. Our framework, thus, suggests the importance of a dynamic, political approach to centralization based on the assumption that the existing structure produces political action that, in turn, reinforces or modifies that structure.

The framework also has implications regarding the prevalence of interest- group politics and coalition politics. Bacharach and Lawler (1980) indicate that organizational politics are most likely to be organized around interest groups when the subgroups in the organization have *both*

divergent functional goals and ideologies—for example, when different professions represent major segments in the organization. Coalition politics, on the other hand, are most likely when both the goals and ideologies of some subgroups are compatible. While the types of political alignment identified in the present paper may involve either or both interest group and coalition politics, there is reason to expect the following patterns: interest-group politics will tend to be associated with both confrontational and patronage alignments, while coalition politics will be associated with crisis and co-optational alignments. Confrontational politics implies a situation where irreconcilable differences (e.g., in both functional goals and ideology) are made reconcilable by bringing the conflict to the foreground and explicitly dealing with it. Patronage politics implies a situation where irreconcilable differences are pushed into the background through the ability of a high-power group to absorb a low-power group. Crisis politics implies a situation, not where differences are irreconcilable, but where they are essentially difficult to define and manage. It is not clear exactly which differences are irreconcilable and which are not; it is only clear that there are many differences manifested in so many groups without consistent, regular patterns over a multitude of issues. Coalitions are often born of such chaos and offer the only clear mechanism for self-protection and partial management of the conflict. Co-optational politics similarly implies a situation more complex and uncertain than confrontational and patronage politics for many of the same reasons—one of which is that there is not necessarily a clear divergence on both ideology and functional goals among the many groups implicated in the conflict. Overall, the prevalence of interest group vs. coalition politics should be affected by the existing political alignment in an organization.

VI. CONCLUSION

A political perspective on organizations proposes a particular approach to the analysis of intraorganizational relations. First, it is necessary to identify the relevant actors, that is, those who are involved in or attempt to influence an issue or decision. The actors may be individuals, work groups, interest groups, or coalitions. While we emphasize coalitions, it is not the particular type of actor that is the most critical but what actors are responsible for the major lines of social action relevant to the issue. A political perspective recommends that we be wary of interpreting conflict as a manifestation of personality or focusing on individuals. Individuals in conflict typically represent—if only implicitly—divergent interests of subgroups within the organization. What appear to be personality or individual conflicts are often manifestations of conflict between organizational subgroupings.

Second, a political perspective suggests that organizational politics are issue specific. For each issue within a general decision area and for each decision area, there is likely to be some difference in the set of relevant actors. By the same token, the political alignments may shift across issues or decision areas. This paper has developed a general framework for analyzing political alignments, but its concrete application must take account of the issue specificity of organizational politics. While we believe that there are dominant alignments that pervade an organization, this is ultimately an empirical question because the degree to which a given alignment is maintained across issues is likely to vary within and across organizations. Only by adopting an issue-specific approach can one determine the overall power of given actors and the generality of a particular political alignment.

Third, a political perspective stresses the tactical nature of intraorganizational relations. The relations of specific actors over a given issue are manifested in their efforts to overcome or reduce opposition from others and to maximize their influence over the decision. There are innumerable tactics that might be adopted and also innumerable ways to categorize and conceptualize them (Kipnis et al., 1980; Tedeschi and Bonoma, 1972; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Pfeffer, 1981). This paper has treated insulation and absorption as tactics for using coalitions and examined the impact of these on political alignments.

Fourth, the tactical action of concern to a political model must be considered in the context of the organizational structure. This paper treats the number of actors and power differentiation as basic dimensions of the organizational structure within which to examine insulation and absorption tactics. Other facets of organizational structure, such as formalization and complexity, must also be integrated into the concerns of this paper. Our position is not that the number of actors and power differentiation are the only structural dimensions of importance, but that these are the broad parameters to which other dimensions of structure should be related.

Fifth, a political perspective suggests that political alignments condition and channel organizational processes, such as communication, innovation, decision making and conflict management. The traditional foci of organizational work, therefore, should be viewed and interpreted in the context of the political alignments. Communication patterns, innovation, etc. are outcomes of a political process and should reflect the prevailing political alignments. By the same token, the impact of the environment on internal organizational processes should be mediated by political processes and alignments such as those examined in this paper.

Figure 1

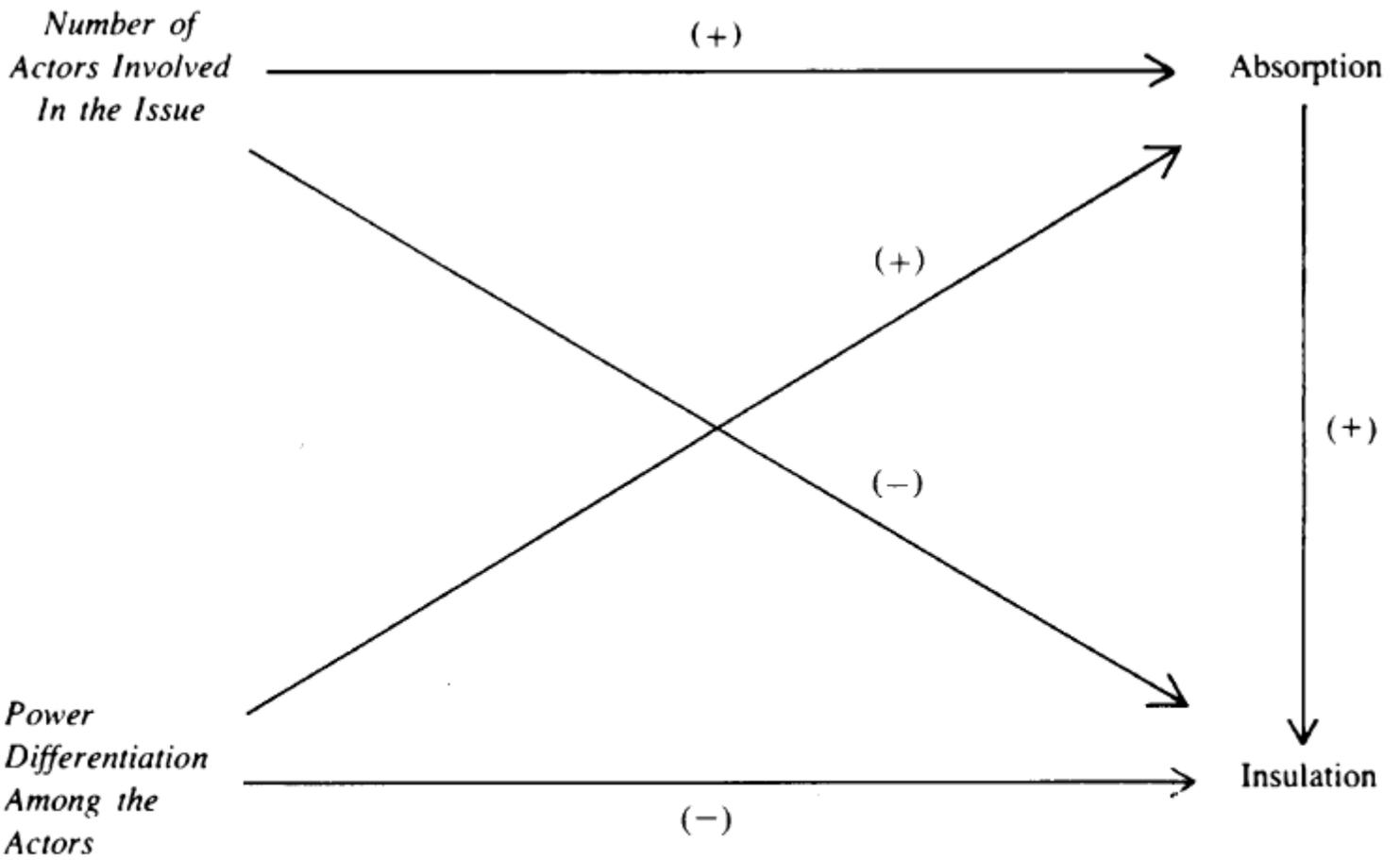


Figure 1. Impact of the Number of Actors and Power Differentiation Among the Actors on the Tendency Toward Absorption and Insulation.

Table 1

Table 1. Type of Political Alignment by the Number of Actors and the Power Differentiation Among the Actors

		<i>Power Differentiation</i>	
		<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Number of Actors</i>	<i>Few</i>	Politics of Confrontation	Politics of Patronage
	<i>Many</i>	Politics of Crisis	Politics of Cooptation

References

- Abell, Peter. (1975). *Organizations as Bargaining and Influence Systems*. London: Heinemann.
- Allison, Graham T. (1971). *Essence of Decision*. Boston: Little Brown and Company.
- Bacharach, Samuel B. (1978). "Morologie et processus: une critique de la Recherche intra-organisationnelle contempo- raine." *Sociologie Du Travail* (June).
- Bacharach, Samuel B. and E. J. Lawler. (1980). *Power and Politics in Organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bacharach, S. B. and E. J. Lawler. (1981). *Bargaining: Power, Tactics and Outcomes*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Baldrige, J. V. (1971). *Power and Conflict in the University*. New York: Wiley.
- Barnard, Chester I. (1938). *The Functions of the Executive*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Benson, J. K. (1977). "Organizations: a dialectical view." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 22:1-21.
- Caplow, T. (1956). "A theory of coalitions in the Triad." *American Sociological Review* 21:489-493.
- Caplow, T. (1968). *Two Against One*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Clegg, Stewart and David Dunkerley. (1980). *Organizations, Class and Control*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Collins, Randall. (1975). *Conflict Sociology*. New York: Academic Press.
- Cyert, R. M. and J. G. March. (1962). *A Behavioral Theory of the Firm*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

- Dalton, Melville. (1959). *Men who Manage*. New York: Wiley.
- Georgiou, Petro. (1981). "The goal paradigm and notes toward a counter paradigm." In *Complex Organizations: A Critical Perspective*, Mary Zey-Ferrell and Michael Aiken (eds.), Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Company.
- Goldman, Paul and Donald R. Van Houten. (1977). "Managerial strategies and the worker: a Marxist analysis of bureaucracy." *The Sociological Quarterly* 18 (Winter): 108-125.
- Hall, Richard H. (1982). *Organizations*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Heyebrand, Wolf. (1977). "Organizational contradictions in public bureaucracies: toward a Marxian theory of organizations." *The Sociological Quarterly* 18 (Winter):83-107.
- Kipnis, David. (1976). *The Powerholders*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Kipnis, D., S. M. Schmidt, and I. Wilkinson. (1980). "Intraorganizational influence tactics: explorations in getting one's way." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 65:440-452.
- Komorita, S. S. and J. Chertkoff. (1973) "A bargaining theory of coalition formation." *Psychological Review* 80:149-162.
- Komorita, S. S. (1974) "A weighted probability model of coalition formation." *Psychological Review* 81:242-256.
- Lawler, E. J., G. A. Youngs, Jr., and M. D. Lesh. (1978). "Cooptation and coalition mobilization." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 8, no. 3:199-214.
- Madison, D. L., R. W. Allen, L. W. Porter, P. A. Renwick, and B. T. Mayes. (1980). "Organizational politics: an exploration of managers' perceptions." *Human Relations* 33, no. 2:79-100.
- March, J. G. and H. A. Simon. (1958). *Organizations*. New York: Wiley.

- Mayes, B. T. and R. W. Allen. (1977). "Toward a definition of organizational politics." *The Academy of Management Review* 2, (4), (October):672-678.
- Murnighan, J. K. (1978). "Models of coalition behavior: game, theoretic, social psychological, and political perspectives." *Psychological Bulletin* 85:1130-1153.
- Parsons, Talcott. (1956). "Suggestions for a sociological approach to the theory of organizations -I." *Administrative Science Quarterly* (June):63-85.
- Parsons, Talcott. (1937). *The Structure of Social Action*. New York: Free Press.
- Perrow, Charles. (1979). "Complex Organizations." Glenview, 111.: Scott, Foresman and Company.
- Pettigrew, Andrew M. (1973). *The Politics of Organizational Decision Making*. London: Tavistock.
- Pfeffer, Jeffrey. (1981). *Power in Organizations*. Marshfield, Mass.: Pitman Publishing Co.
- Porter, L. W., R. W. Allen, and H. L. Angle. (1981). "The politics of upward influence in organizations." Pp. 109-149 in B. M. Staw and L. L. Cummings (eds.), *Research in Organizational Behavior*, vol. 3, Greenwich, Ct: JAI Press.
- Rapoport, Antol. (1966). *Two-Person Game Theory*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
- Riker, W. H. (1962). *The Theory of Political Coalitions*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Schutz, Alfred. (1967). *Phenomenology of the Social World*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Simon, H. A. (1976). *Administrative Behavior*. New York: Macmillan.

