GATHER THE PEOPLE

Community and Faith-Based Organizing and Development Resources

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UNIFIED COMMUNITY ORGANIZING THEORY

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The theoretical ideas (or visions) of an organizer are a framework through which he defines his [or her] situation and notes those features of the world that are relevant to the creation of an organization.

—Warren C. Haggstrom

PREFACE

Over the years I have known community organizers who didn't understand the usefulness of theory. To them it seemed a waste of time, boring, or incomprehensible. My own experience, having been caught up in organizing without any training or educational preparation, convinced me that the most basic reason for learning and incorporating theory in our work is that *empirical* knowledge, what we know from direct experience, without *theoretical* knowledge, rarely suffices to achieve significant strategic objectives in professional practice.

What does that mean practically? We can't accurately and fully make sense of our day-to-day experience without placing it in some kind of larger conceptual framework, which is the role of theory. And, conversely, of course, trying to live our lives by larger conceptual frameworks, without grounding them in day-to-day empirical experience—the hallmark of academia—often leads us to nonsensical conclusions. But the most valuable benefits of practice theory are the *roles* it spells out, which tell us what to *do* in our professional practice.

The Unified Community Organizing Theory proposed here is a *practice* theory. To appreciate the usefulness of practice theory, imagine driving from L.A. to N.Y.C. You have your choice of directions on how to make the drive: One set of directions you get from your car's GPS unit—turn-by-turn with mileage markers, and signage between turns. The second set of directions includes the usual GPS information, but also provides detailed descriptions of mountains, rivers, deserts, and forests, and all the different kinds of weather you may encounter, and it provides the best ways to drive through these conditions, even though you can't see them when you begin. Obviously, the second set of directions is much more valuable—and that's what practice theory is like: it lets you see, prepare for, and even influence what's not visible but inevitably will be encountered.

On the front end of practice theory, it defines the "*field of action*"—the arena in which our organizing takes place, the principal players in that arena, and the forces that govern their actions. On the back end of practice theory, it defines very specific roles for our day-to-day work in the action field. It guides our actions in situations when we can't see all the dynamics of the processes we're trying to influence. So the key advantages of practice theory are that generally it allows us to understand why things have happened in the past, why they're happening in the present, and how to make them happen in the future; and practice theory defines very specific roles to achieve those particular future outcomes.

The challenge in devising practice theory to explain the community organizer's field of action is how to make it cover the *full spectrum of experience* we have in our day-to-day professional work. On the one hand, the theory has to cover phenomena from the micro to macro, from individuals to whole institutions and communities. On the other hand, the theory must explain psychological, sociological, political, and economic phenomena.

Suppose four individuals observe the interactions of a "dysfunctional" community with four different theoretical perspectives—psychological, sociological, economic, and political. The four observers certainly do not describe seeing the same phenomena and do not reach the same conclusions about what they observe. All of them are at least partially correct in their observations and conclusions, although typically their initial theoretical

perspectives cause them to ignore the observations and conclusions suggested by the other theoretical perspectives. Moreover, the various theories often conflict with one another. So what's an organizer to do?

As an undergraduate majoring in sociology, I was exposed to a mind-boggling array of theories—most of which I couldn't apply in any meaningful way after graduation when I began professional work. Many years later I discovered that virtually all the theory I had learned was not geared for *practice*—first as a deputy probation officer, and much later as a community organizer. I also discovered that much of it was *stage* or *linear* theory, and the stages described by these theories didn't correspond to most of the situations I encountered in my day-to-day work.

When I began to work as a community organizer, I discovered that the field was almost entirely devoid of systematic *practice* theory. Fellow organizers occasionally used theoretical fragments, like making references to someone's *ego* or to an *elitist power structure* in a community. But the only concepts that remotely had broader theoretical applications were *self-interests* and *values*—in effect, that people would act out of their self-interests or because of their values. I found both concepts useful in practice but hugely over-generalized.

Beyond my undergraduate education, I had the good fortune to learn from Warren Haggstrom at UCLA and Eileen Gambrill at UC Berkeley. Warren, a farm-labor organizer and brilliant thinker, exposed me to the world of *phenomenology* and the social construction of reality, which clarifies how *meanings* are created and influence behavior. Eileen guided me into the world of *behaviorism*, which focuses on the identifiable variables that precede, mediate, and follow observable *behavior*. Once I had been fully immersed in both of those theoretical worlds, a number of questions occurred to me: What did the behaviorists think of the phenomenologists, and vice-versa? How did the literature of each theoretical world relate to the other? What were the practical connections between the applications of the two theoretical worlds?

For the most part, trying to get answers to those questions was a frustrating and disappointing experience. Each of my mentors would acknowledge the existence of his or her theoretical counterpart. But the *main thing*, each would imply, was his or her theoretical world and its explanations.

It occurred to me that both of these theoretical perspectives were valid—each revealed important dimensions of what they observed, analyzed, and predicted. But their exclusive theoretical perspectives didn't captivate me because I didn't have any partisan academic interest in either world—I was a *practitioner*, not a theoretician. I had a practical problem, which was how to provide a comprehensive theoretical explanation for the community organizing field of action. The explanation would have to illuminate every dimension of the action field—not only the psychological and sociological dimensions, but the political and economic ones as well. Moreover, the explanation would have to *account not only for behavioral and phenomenological forces, but their dynamic relationship*.

In other words, it's insufficient to say that people in a certain situation may be acting because of rewards they receive or because of their ideologies—behavioral and phenomenological explanations. But if both of those forces are operating, we need to understand their *relationship to one another*. The latter was a crucial point for me because, as I learned from experience, when I tried to use a grab-bag of theories to explain the action

field of my work, without reconciling their potentially conflicting empirical foundations and applications, I found myself hard-pressed to pick from the numerous theoretical choices. One theory often seemed as good as another under the circumstances, but typically they couldn't be used together. So my question was, assuming that all of these theories have some validity, how are they related to one another?

The challenge was how to formulate a *unified community organizing theory* that would integrate behavioral and phenomenological theories to explain the psychological, sociological, political, and economic dimensions of the action field. Thus the approach of the unified theory presented here integrates four theoretical models: social learning, a behavioral theory; social exchange, another behavioral theory (based on social learning); social construction of reality, a phenomenological theory; and social development, a political-economic theory. The first three theories—learning, exchange, and reality construction—cover the psychological and sociological dimensions of the action field and give rise to the dialectic of social action. The fourth theory—social development—covers the political and economic dimensions of the action field and gives rise to a prescription for organizing and developing bottom-up-sponsored social infrastructure.

But regardless of any supposed benefits of theory, the greatest practical value of acquiring theoretical knowledge comes by *internalizing* the theory. Getting any real value out of theoretical knowledge requires studying it intensively enough to fully understand and mentally incorporate the concepts in one's view of the world, and then using the theory by acting on the theoretical knowledge. In a way, practice theory has to become the lens through which we normally see and interact with the world. The idea is summed up in a Buddhist teaching: "To *know* and not to *do*, is *not* really to know."

INTRODUCTION

Organizers' conceptual understanding of their practice is necessary for many reasons. My most basic assumption is that our knowledge is advanced through praxis, by the interplay of practice and reflection, a continuous give and take between what we do and what we think about what we do. Theory for organizing is not for its own sake but for guiding action, especially in new and unexpected situations, when we have no prior experience, preparation, or knowledge. Theory for practice also allows us to analyze past and current events, and to make predictions about the future. From theory we derive practice roles, testable propositions (hypotheses), and technologies for achieving specific goals.

It is generally accepted that a comprehensive community organizing *practice* theory does not exist. Organizers tend to agree that there has yet to be proposed a set of abstract statements that convincingly describe the totality of relationships between crucial parts of our practice. The practice theory proposed here aids organizing by offering means for seeing apparently random events in their recurring, patterned relationships. Practice decisions then reflect imagined linkages between parts of the setting in which the organizer typically operates but often fails to understand—and thus are theory-based decisions.

A limited kind of theory is present now in community organization praxis, with organizers taking self-interest as the all-purpose gauge of social action. It is a helpful but hugely overly generalized idea.

A major obstacle to development of community organizing practice theory is the scope and complexity of organizing activity. Conceptual understanding must include individuals and collectivities (groups, organizations, and institutions), and explanations are needed for the dynamics of power and ideology. Theory for organizing must bridge traditional boundaries of the social sciences and integrate evidence and insights from psychology, sociology, politics, and economics. To be useful for practice, a theory must set out relevant knowledge, identifying hypotheses and variables, but it must also prescribe action. Practice theory must specify the organizing arena, spelling out objectives and tasks.

This theory is a foundation for practice technology; it underpins it by conceptualizing a framework, with analytic, predictive, and prescriptive propositions that extend the theory to practice. Adding formal theory to praxis does not make contemporary organizing knowledge obsolete or change most of what organizers do. It may, however, dramatically change conceptions of organizing, its purpose, the defined roles of organizers, their tools and technical language.

Field of Social Action

Every theory must have a central concept that can encompass the universe to be explained, connecting all its elements. Because the idea of a field of social action, more than any other, mirrors the main facets of organizing life, it is the heart of this theory. The action field depicts individuals and collectivities, their social processes, structures, and highest goals. It accounts for the functions and relationships of power and ideology in the political economy. Its definition distills psychology, sociology, politics, and economics.

The pivotal purpose of every organization in the action field of political economy is survival. Resources must be accumulated beyond expenditures to ensure maintenance and growth. It is the cycle of cooperation, competition, conflict, and negotiation that, in an environment of scarcity, animates the field of inter-organizational action. Organizations seek resources to establish their domain and to achieve autonomy and movement toward their goals.

The field of social action has two significant facets for which the organizing theory provides explanations. These are (1) *relations of power*—accumulations and flows of resources, with "timely adjustments" by cooperation, competition, conflict, and negotiation; and (2) *socially constructed ideological realities*—norms of social action, shared understandings about appropriate behavior and misbehavior, and their consequences. These action field strands are interwoven in a seamless web. Resources are thus valuable not only for their direct effects, but also as means for orchestrating construction of shared ideologies that specify social action norms.

As already suggested, action field relations may be cooperative, competitive, conflicting, or in negotiation, and are frequently in transition from one status to another. Contrary to the popular view of the urban political economy as unorganized and chaotic, the inter-organizational field is comparatively stable and patterned. Much of the "coordination" is not formal, but through marginal adjustments that are non-cooperative. This activity appears as coordination only from an inter-organizational plane. The bulk of coordination occurs in competition and conflict, and it appears that most formal cooperative arrangements do not produce tangible results and thus waste resources.

Unified Theory

Briefly then, the field of social action is the setting for community organizing and the central concept to be explained by practice theory for organizing. The main characteristics of the field, besides individuals and collectivities, are relations of power and socially constructed ideologies. These characteristics have psychological, sociological, political, and economic dimensions for organizing.

My exposition of the psychological and sociological dimensions of the action field is summed up in the dialectic of social action, based on the interaction of ideological realities and contingencies of learning and exchange. The political and economic dimensions of the field are incorporated in the prescription for organizing social infrastructure, the most compelling imperative to be drawn from many concepts, cases, and commentaries.

When summarizing the theories that are brought together to describe the action field, since all the activity is nothing more than an extension of individual behavior, it is helpful to begin with social learning. Learning covers the main psychological factors of individual behavior: environmental cues that precede action, cognitions (thinking and knowing), and rewarding and punishing consequences. To avoid explaining sociological processes with psychological theory, and building directly on principles of social learning, we turn to social exchange. Exchange introduces sociology of collective action, acquisition of resources and power, and injustices in their distribution. While both learning and exchange theories admit the importance of shared, valued ideas that are linked to

centers of power—such ideas usually are called ideologies—they leave this realm unexplored, taking its effects as given but beyond understanding or control. Theory for social construction of reality makes it possible to connect ideology with learning and exchange—and thus to posit the dialectic of social action.

Concepts of social development lend to the description of the action field important features of local, regional, and national political economy. The priority action prescriptions are for balanced social advances, not only economic but also social and political, by investment in social infrastructure. In industrialized states this development is achieved primarily through redistribution—and thus there is an implicit prescription for bottom-up-sponsored organizing of social infrastructure.

Seeking to mesh learning, exchange, reality construction, and development concepts in a unified theory for organizing, describing the field of social action, I have not tried to resolve or even explore all their discontinuities. My approach has been to indicate possibilities rather than look for contradictions. I have also avoided any attempt to outline or merge existing knowledge of organizing.

Summing Up

Social action is a dialectical outcome of continuing and complementary interaction between contingencies and ideologies. Contingencies of learning and exchange—people, events, objects, etc., on which action is contingent—are regarded as rewarding or punishing, profitable or costly, according to socially constructed ideologies. For the collective acts of ideology construction to continue, there must be explicit learning and exchange contingencies, such as cues, cognitions, consequences, conditions of power, distributive injustices, and so on.

To fully understand social action, then, it must be understood that good and bad events are experienced as such because of ideologies that define their meanings. The source of the ideologies is not a mystery but human construction, either by shared history or shared language experience. The everyday behavior that is necessary to construct ideologies does not occur without suitable incentives, contingencies of learning and exchange, which are in turn valuated by ideologies. It goes round and round: it is not only that both contingencies and ideologies are operative, but that they are inseparable, that explanations of social action are incomplete without reference to their interaction.

The prescription for social development specifies bottom-up investment in social infrastructure. Requirements for developmental organizing in industrialized states call for democratization of the political economy, a strategy of redistributive development, by establishing institutionalized roles for social self-management.

SOCIAL LEARNING

Overview

Social learning ideas are valuable to organizers for understanding, predicting, and influencing individual behavior, and as underpinning in a unified practice theory. It is through the contingencies of social learning—cues, cognitions, and consequences—that we can best understand individual behavior. Basic assumptions about learning are also a part of exchange theory, and they are significant in explaining construction of reality.

Self and personality are defined in social learning theory as repertoires of complex behavior patterns, primarily products of learning history. The self, in a reciprocal relationship with the environment, can launch counter-controlling initiatives that offset external forces. It is this capacity, among others, that demonstrates the basis for exchange relationships.

New behavior is learned mostly by the operation of contingencies in the observation of models. Whether modeling is planned or inadvertent, it is a pervasive influence in practice.

Social learning explanations do not fully account for behavior that creates ideological meanings, nor do they illuminate the playback of ideology on its creators. These matters are taken up later as a part of the social construction of reality.

Respondent & Operant Behavior

The distinction of social learning theory for understanding individual behavior is a preoccupation with verifiable acts. The theory does not deny inner psychological or biological processes, but it does reject unobserved, unverifiable mental states. While environmental forces are powerful in learning, equally important are thinking and emotion.

Two types of behavior are identified in learning—respondent and operant. Respondent behavior is learned through prior cues and is generally thought of as emotional. Naturally pain- or pleasure-producing cues exist in the everyday world—other people, circumstances, information, etc.—that condition responses. These can also be paired with neutral elements in the environment that then acquire a similar capacity to arouse pain or pleasure. A citizen who once attempted to speak out at a public hearing and was belittled by an arrogant official may feel uncomfortable when entering the same building in the future. The neutral public building assumes a negative value by pairing with the unpleasant personal attack. On the other hand, a newly emerging citizen activist who participates in a protest demonstration that succeeds in gaining concessions may in the future have pleasant feelings in planning a mobilization. Respondent behavior, then, is what we generally call emotional and is understood in environmental cues that precede it in time.

It is operant behavior, however, that is of special interest to community organizers. Behavior that changes the environment, thereby producing rewards or punishments for the actor, is termed operant. It involves easily visible actions (walking, talking, etc.) that are under conscious self-control, and it is influenced mainly by consequences that follow it in time.

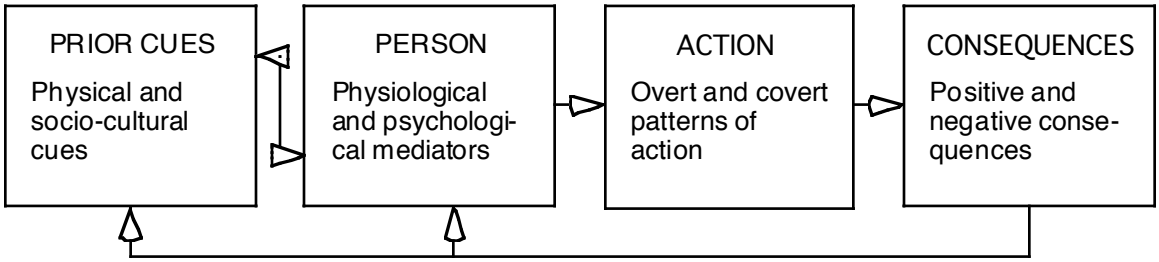
The review of social learning begins with the contingencies of operant behavior, the events on which such behavior is contingent. After that we cover social learning ideas about the self, modeling, and the interaction of social learning and ideology.

Contingencies of Learning

The social learning view of behavior is that people are neither impelled to act by inner forces nor buffeted helplessly by the environment. Instead there is reciprocity between human behavior and the external conditions that influence it. This is an image of the environment as a behavioral creation that acts back on the behavior of the actor(s) who created it. To understand individual action, social learning looks to (1) cues that occur prior in time, (2) mental processes (cognitions) that mediate the cues, and (3) rewarding or punishing consequences that follow. Social learning theory also identifies feedback from consequences to cueing and thinking for future behavior. Taken together, these are the social learning *contingencies*. Figure 1, adapted from learning applications in organizational theory, shows them schematically.

Figure 1

INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR MODEL[1]



The most powerful contingencies of operant behavior are rewards and punishments. An increased probability exists for behavior that has been rewarded (reinforced) and a decreased probability exists for behavior that has not been reinforced (punished). Reinforcement is intensified or diminished by psychological deprivation or satiation that originate in cultural and material facts of life and that are an integral part of learning. To the extent that one possesses a great deal of something, its value as a reward is lessened, and vice versa. But value, as we shall see, also has socially constructed ideological origins.

Prior cues.— Human actions are controlled partially through cues that suggest probable consequences—rewards or punishments—that either inhibit or encourage behavior. The point is made by a red traffic signal's cueing effect, a reminder that not stopping may lead to an accident or ticket. This foresight stems from direct experience, learning by observing others, and symbolic information (via language). We control our own behavior by predicting the probable consequences of particular actions. Consider an illus-

tration of the cueing effect, a poster or flyer announcing an upcoming organizational action or campaign. Based on prior social learning, the organization's allies and adversaries differ drastically in the consequences they anticipate and the actions they initiate.

Thinking and knowing.— Social learning acknowledges human cognition, the capacity for thinking (sensation, perception, and conception) and knowing (recollection of the past, consciousness of the present, and anticipation of the future). The potential for insight and foresight is emphasized. Behavior change is viewed much differently if it is assumed that regulation is mainly through external events, or, in the alternative, partly by thinking. Because of cognition, behavior is contingent on mediated rather than direct reality. We do not "passively register" the world as it really is, but construct what we call "reality." Mental processes guide behavior: Memory, the mental encoding and storage of symbols for external events, exists as symbolic representations of the environment to direct subsequent behavior. Options for action are tested by explorations in thinking that imagine future consequences. Hypotheses are generated and, to the extent they are proven out in action, they continue to guide future behavior.

Rewarding and punishing consequences.— The lodestone for understanding and predicting what individuals do is reinforcement that follows behavior. Reinforcement can occur without awareness; however, because it has several potential functions—information, motivation, and reward—learning is more effective when contingencies are known. Reinforcement not only increases the probability that the same action will be repeated in similar circumstances, but it serves to bring the particular behavior under the influence of a matching environmental cue. The caution here is that neither the prior cue nor the rewarding consequence creates the behavior, but both increase its probability.

Consider as an illustration of reinforcement the mid-1960s Welfare Rights Organization member who attended a first meeting and follow-up protest at a welfare office, anticipating the rewarding prospect of immediately receiving a special grant for household goods and winter clothing. If the hoped-for benefits were won, a rewarding outcome, not only was similar action more probable in the future, but cues for such behavior were more potent.

Self

Self-management.— The role of thinking in social learning takes the explanation beyond environmental factors. The thinking process in self-management is such that we set standards for ourselves, matched by self-rewarding or self-punishing outcomes according to the quality of our performances. We find two kinds of continuing outcomes when people are self-managing: internal (mental) self-evaluations and external (environmental) consequences.

Self-management is recognizable in "autonomous" people. The independent, differentiated person, with exceptional dedication and self-discipline, may be recalled as an outstanding example of self-management. The heroic figures of Mohandus Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., the best-known modern proponents of aggressive nonviolence, come to mind.

Self-reinforcement systems are learned by earlier selective reinforcement. We learn to judge our own behavior partly from how others react to us. Standards are conveyed by the approval and disapproval of significant others. Observing models is another route to self-management, with standards for self-reinforcement learned by observation and imitation. We adopt standards offered by exemplary models. Regardless of how it is acquired, self-managed behavior is sustained by external reinforcement because most societies reward high standards for self-reinforcement.

Self-management is accomplished not only by control of cues and consequences, but also by symbolic, cognitive contingencies. Potential outcomes are translated into mental symbols that are reinforcing. An organization leader may self-reinforce difficult or unpleasant behavior through a tangible reward, say spending extra time with family or going to a movie, or through a symbolic reward, like allowing oneself a sense of successful self-reliance for adhering to difficult but valued standards. The strength of self-management by symbolic contingencies may be enough to maintain behavior with only minimum external rewards, and to override conflicting tangible reinforcers.

In addition to self-management by control of reinforcers, the same result may be realized by manipulating prior cues in the environment. Using an organizational example, a collective decision to prohibit alcohol at certain activities eliminates an important cue for inappropriate behavior.

Self and personality.— While risking the confusion of seeing pictures within pictures, there is an unavoidable question: What is the "self" in self-management? The self is understood as a constellation of interrelated behaviors. It is an individual's repertoire of learned actions—a history of social learning—to survive and thrive in a changing social environment. Personality characteristics or, more precisely, behaviors that are characteristic to a person, are linked to complex patterns of cues, cognitions, consequences, deprivation and satiation. Although it is often thought that behavior is determined by personality, the personality characteristics themselves, while enduring, are learned. We acquire complex repertoires of behavior, one leading into another, with their relative permanence creating the mistaken impression of internal psychodynamic causation.

Counter-control.— Notwithstanding the importance of environment in forming the self, there is—to repeat—a reciprocal relationship between behavior and the contingencies that control it, which arises from thinking and the capacity for self-management. It is through this reciprocal relationship that counter-control is understood. Experimental studies demonstrate, as organizing practice does, that hostile and aggressive actions bring about like responses in others, counter-offensives.

Counter-control is possible because of mutuality in relationships, a form of exchange, giving participants in social interactions some power over each other. The principle holds even between rich and poor. Although the wealthy may withhold resources, people with low incomes have the leverage of nonviolent direct action—protest, strike, and resistance—and physical force.

Aggressive attempts to control people usually result in strong emotional responses, such as fear, anxiety, rage, and depression. Counter-control has been labeled the "screw you" phenomenon. It is identified with lack of choices, heavy coercion or manipulation, and being exposed to models that are themselves unresponsive to rewards and

punishments. It may also be that counter-controlling behavior is self-reinforcing because of the autonomy it signifies.

Modeling

Most new behavior is learned by observation of models. This is especially true of complex behavior in natural settings. New patterns are learned in large segments, not piecemeal. Learning that occurs through direct experience, then, can almost always be achieved indirectly by observation of others' behavior and its consequences. This process is identified as modeling, observational learning, imitation, copying, identification, and so on. It may be overt, as commonly understood, or covert. In the latter, learning takes place by imagining modeling situations, without using actual external models. In either case, the effects of modeling are from the actions of the learning contingencies already described.

Competent models reduce the risk of learning new behavior because, usually, actions guided by following good examples are more likely to be successful. This type of learning is not exclusively imitative but can result in innovative behavior when opportunities exist to observe diverse models.

Effective observational learning relies on four practice keys: attention to modeled behavior, representation of the behavior to be learned in verbal or image form for long-term retention, physical ability to perform the desired behavior, and reinforcement for overt performance. The last point is important because there is a break between observational learning and actual performance. Although new behavior can be acquired by observation of a model, *performance* of what has been learned may not take place without reinforcing incentives. Observation without performance leads to acquisition of the modeled behavior in cognitive, representational forms (images or language symbols). Cues are encoded into memory and serve as mediators for later responses.

People are selective in the behavior they reproduce, an indication that imitation is as much due to imagined utility as it is to immediate reinforcement. Not all models are copied, only those whose behavior is judged to have some usefulness, based on past social learning. Observers learn to appraise models on situational cues, such as socio-economic indicators, age, sex, etc.

Beyond acquisition of new behavior, exposure to models may inhibit or disinhibit previously learned responses. Inhibitions are strengthened or weakened by vicarious experience of a model's rewards and punishments. Vicarious punishment diminishes the probability for similar behavior, even when the punishment is self-administered by the model. In vicarious positive reinforcement, seeing modeled behavior that is ordinarily disapproved go unpunished has the same motivating influence as observing rewards for that behavior.

While modeling is frequently inadvertent, and thus often inimical to organizing objectives, its conscious use by organizers is essential in practice. For example, modeling in one project was used to upgrade problem solving in meetings of a board of directors. The meetings had been fragmented, chaotic, and generally unproductive. The remedy was to teach board members to identify and isolate problems, specify and evaluate alternative

solutions, make decisions, and plan follow-up actions. The successful training used behavioral modeling, plus role-playing and systematic reinforcement.

The probability for successful modeling is enhanced by the following procedural steps: specific identification of the desired behavioral outcome, selection of an appropriate model, determination that the "learner" has the necessary skills and resources to perform the desired behavior, creation of a favorable learning environment, modeling the desired behavior and its consequences, giving rewards for progress in learning, and strengthening new behavior by scheduling future reinforcers.[2]

Social Learning & Ideology

For decades there has been fluctuating interest in questions about how valued meanings in thought relate to behavior. One concern is that while social learning shows how behavior is learned, it often fails to give insight into why a particular circumstance is found rewarding by members of one institution, organization, or group—even with different individual social learning histories—and punishing by individuals in others.

Learning theorists accept that symbolic meanings are transferred through language. Words elicit meanings (in thought) that, in turn, influence behavior. It is also known that meanings given to things in the environment can change solely through language experience, by spoken or written words. The relationship between contingencies of social learning and valued meanings in thought is apparent in collective ideologies that determine whether an event is rewarding or punishing. Such ideologies come about through shared history, or vicariously through verbal experience, without any other direct action, and they are selectively promoted by mass media.

Valued meanings have two origins that are of interest here, both only approximated in any individual life. These two origins are intimately related to mental activity. In both cases, consequences of behavior—events, circumstances, information, etc.—gain their shape and influence through ideas of good and bad, right and wrong, winning and losing, etc. Thus, thinking often accounts for whether an event or other consequence of action is experienced as rewarding or punishing.

The first source of valued meanings is accumulated personal experience of rewards and punishments, individual learning history. For instance, the prospect of attending an organizational activity may be good—involvement seems likely to be rewarding—because of an individual's prior experience in the same circumstances. But it is the second source of valued meanings, flowing from social (collective) construction of ideological reality, which is especially of interest to organizers. It is ideological reality that defines one kind of killing as murder and another kind as patriotism. Familiarity with this process allows organizers to understand, predict, and act more effectively in the development and impact of ideologies, particularly beliefs about social problems, goals and methods for change, the players and processes involved, and even so-called facts and tools for measuring them.

The point, one we will return to and treat at length, is that social learning contingencies—cues, cognitions, and consequences—are valued, that is, derive their valued meaning, from thought, following social construction of ideological realities. The same phenomenological process is found in exchange relations, to which we now turn.

SOCIAL EXCHANGE

Overview

Based on social learning and simple economic principles, social exchange theory gives organizers a systematic explanation of power relations in an action field of scarcity. The theory accounts for cooperation, competition, and conflict as transitory phases in a process to survive, accumulate resources, and achieve autonomy and instrumental goals.

Exchange theory sheds light on the relationship between social injuries and injustices and the emergence of reform and revolutionary movements. The theory also specifies the conditions of power—to both achieve it and remain independent of others that have it—and identifies areas of tension between those in superior and subordinate positions.

Like social learning, however, models of exchange have largely ignored the role of socially constructed ideologies in relations of power.

Fundamentals

To make the theoretical leap from individual behavior to social exchange requires that we imagine two or more people in a field of social action, where the operant behavior of each has an environmental impact, each serving as a source of positive or negative reinforcement for the other. Almost magically, social power appears as the ability to control others by arranging contingencies in exchange relationships, reflecting control of resources.

Exchanges include not only two-party transactions, but also multi-party arrangements with indirect repayment. Two types of these complex exchanges are common, illustrated by group aid to individuals, as with neighborhood crime watches, and when individuals provide for group needs, as when private homes are volunteered on a rotating basis for organization meetings.

Various characteristics of exchanges have been confirmed experimentally. It has been found, for example, that threats are resisted when punishment for refusing to comply is no greater than cost for compliance. Picture a seventeenth century New Englander subject to a fine for not attending town meeting, but ignoring the cost out of need to harvest a crop at a critical time, the loss of which would be a far greater cost.

Organized Power

Exchange and organizations.— Given the axiom that organization potentiates power, the conditions of generalized exchange (by organizations) are of particular interest to community organizers. When people combine for common purposes, they significantly increase their resources, exceeding by a large margin those of any individual participant. Organized groups use their resources to specialize in production and distribution of contingencies that influence the actions of others, both individuals and groups. Looking to

how contingencies work as incentives, organizations can be classed as utilitarian, solidarity, and purposive.[3] As with all ideal types, they are only approximated in practice; but each, whether in near pure or hybrid form, gives a different slant on organizational exchanges.

Utilitarian organizations, such as profit-making corporations, rely on material rewards for incentives to members. Priority is given to accumulating tangible resources to underwrite incentives, and conflicts tend to center on their distribution. Formal social goals are mostly ceremonial, as with a pesticide company's public promise to protect the environment. Internal conflicts in such organizations are usually resolved through bargaining, because tangible benefits can be divided and it is accepted practice to compromise on their distribution.

Solidarity organizations are service-oriented, and either public or private. Their most important incentive is the organization's public image; it is the currency of exchange for attracting new clients and other resources. Attaining formal purposes is more important than in utilitarian organizations, and they are most often non-controversial "causes" rather than "issues."

Purposive organizations rely almost entirely on their formal purposes and goals to recruit members and contributors. These organizations are sometimes called ideological. Examples are reform and protest groups.

Competition for scarce resources.— The drive for capacity to control contingencies as incentives is tied inevitably to cooperation, competition, conflict, and negotiation over scarce resources. During these activities, power becomes divided unequally. While some writers draw a distinction between exchange and what they call competition or conflict, most treat the latter as a "special case" of exchange, that is, where zero-sum conditions are present and one party's gain is another's loss (+1-1=0).

The topic of competition and conflict for scarce resources has drawn out conflicting lines of thinking. While few deny that competition *is* an underlying if not dominating feature of past and present social relations, there are differences of opinion on its inevitability. Some believe that the advance of material technology portends the end of destructive conflict to acquire strategic resources.

Scarcity, however, is related not primarily to economic limits but to socially constructed meanings. These ideological realities serve interests of organized individuals who have shared histories, common backgrounds in thought and action. An example of socially constructed scarcity is the use of social status to include and exclude groups from access to resources, thereby reducing or expanding the supply for others, as with institutionalized discrimination in housing. So long as social life differs for different groups, even with the advent of universal affluence, so too will there be divergence in ideological realities, accompanied by competition and conflict.

Power.— Considering its origins, power is best pictured not as a possession but a by-product of social relationship and action. The confusion stems from its visible manifestation, the ability to compel the actions of others despite their resistance, through arranging contingencies. Power relations originate in the competition for resources and the resulting dependency of less successful competitors. The primary factor in that dependency is the need for things that are controlled by another party. Thus, possession of stra-

tegic resources, any means critical for achieving vital objectives, is a prime dimension of power.

The capacity to give, to initiate exchange, also signifies power. It denotes a superior status by obligating others. Benefactors are not peers but people who create dependencies. Failure to repay compounds the dependency and establishes lesser status. To the extent that one who receives a benefit does not possess resources that are attractive to a "benefactor," has no alternative source of benefits, cannot coerce the giver, and cannot do without the benefits, the advantaged party is in a position of power, able to compel compliance.

Exchange relations at this point have a balance-imbalance ratio in respect to unequal reinforcement between the parties. As the dependency of one party increases, so too does the power of the other, that is, the second party's ability to decrease rewards or increase costs. Such power is never dormant when more resources can be obtained by its exercise and they are not offset by their acquisition costs.

Costs in acquiring resources include counter-costs imposed by exchange partners, and the ability to levy counter-cost is itself power. One view of exchange is that imbalance or dependency encourages people to explore options, leading to balance. A wider perspective is that benefits for one party—whether romantic suitor, business corporation, or government—are hooked to costs for another, although not necessarily in a zero-sum relationship. So-called balance is always calculated according to the interests of an individual, organization, institution, or class that seeks to subordinate the interests of others. While superficial balance may exist in the sense of compliance given for benefits received, this apparent equality rests on an imbalance of dependency and power.

Bargaining among exchange partners may be direct, as with an offer of exchange, or indirect, as in attacking an opponent to obtain a concession. Exchange theories sometimes exclude physical coercion, one writer citing armed robbery as something other than exchange activity. Overall, three main types of exchange have been proposed,[4] one of which includes physical coercion (or a close approximation): Reciprocal exchange includes "gift-giving," where the obligation to repay is indefinite or vague; balanced reciprocity, where the quid pro quo is immediate and fair; and "negative reciprocity," such as stealing. Distributive exchanges are one-way economic transfers, involving a central "mechanism," government or private organization, and sometimes considered granting activity. Lastly, there is simple market exchange.

Conflict and exchange of punishments.— Conflict, as already noted, is commonly seen as zero-sum exchange, where winning and losing are directly related. The experience of The Woodlawn Organization (TWO), when it tried to take over what had traditionally been Chicago's municipal authority, is a clear historical illustration of the transition from cooperation to conflict.

When TWO's power became sufficient to effectively challenge City Hall in the control of local, neighborhood affairs, there was no longer any slack in their relationship. TWO's victories became the City's defeats. This characterization is somewhat overdrawn, however, since such competitors may always undermine the winner-take-all outcome by agreeing in advance to an artificial distribution of rewards and costs. The incentive for such an agreement, as with the Republicans and Democrats, may be to exclude others from the competition, thus ensuring minimum division of limited resources.

In any event, conflict in organizational life—among nation states, political parties, national and statewide grassroots federations, or neighborhood associations—realigns relations of power, reflecting new distributions of resources, and typically leads to cooperation and temporary stability through negotiated compromise.

Conflict and cooperation in exchange.— The quality of actual exchange is a changing mix of cooperation, competition, conflict, and negotiation. It is contained within the surface calm that was pictured in an anonymous Czech writer's description of the relationship between the citizens and the government when it was a Soviet vassal state.

He noted that most citizens were neither defenders nor detractors of the system. They were instead partners in an institutionalized compromise. In exchange for relief from fear that their privileges or mundane pleasures would be withdrawn by the authorities, or that far less likely harassment or jailing would occur, they agreed not to be publicly disruptive, to forego embarrassing the government and endangering others, including co-workers, friends, and family—and only rarely did they violate that agreement. In fact, all those behaviors occurred—from cooperation and competition to conflict and negotiation.

Management of Resources

Accumulations and flows.— Previous discussion of competition for scarce resources mentioned the pivotal organizational goal of getting more resources than giving. When options exist, the choice of most exchange partners obviously is calculated to maximize gain and minimize loss. A second, less apparent implication is that organizations are partially controlled by their environments, by external forces in their action fields. They occupy an "ecological niche" because of their dependency on acquiring inputs for "production" and on distributing whatever they produce.

Several helpful propositions, taken together, translate knowledge about the environment into an internal organizational principle: resources for internal organizational incentives are, by definition, scarce; individuals join in organizational life because of such incentives, which consume resources; an organization's strategy for internal distribution of incentives must match the resources it gets from the outside and those it uses for production; and an organization's primary purpose in making decisions is to ensure a net surplus of resources for incentives by distributing them internally to maximize a favorable ratio of inputs to outputs.

In this conception, change in internal organizational priorities is interpreted as modifying incentives to meet environmental changes that shape resource flows. Stated more simply, organizations deal with two kinds of incentives, external and internal, with the character of the first usually determining the character of the second. A citizen action association that is rewarded for service delivery with large grants will react in part by redefining both its culture and structure to solidify such funding prospects.

Dependency problems.— The character of each organization determines its specific dependencies on external resources, and the degree each dependency is problematic. A statewide political organization will have different problems with funding, staff, and targets than a neighborhood association.

Two related hypotheses may be helpful to novice organizers: (1) Organizations are controlled by, or at least are vulnerable to, individuals and collectivities, internal and external, that command their most critical or problematic resource inputs. (2) To the extent that targets or consumers of an organization's resource outputs (whether political action, service, planning, or some other) are fragmented and dispersed, they are less able to influence the organization's actions.

Social & Economic Exchange

Social exchange differs from the economic variety insofar as obligations for repayment may be vague and not exclusively economic. A reciprocal obligation is created but often is not specified, unlike economic exchange where mutual obligations are specific at the outset of a transaction. Social exchange creates more "diffuse future obligations," because the "commodities" that are exchanged ordinarily do not have precise, agreed-upon values. Another difference between social and economic exchange is the character of opportunities foregone by using scarce resources. Social esteem, for example, is practically limitless, whereas land, stocks, and gold are not. In practice, of course, exchanges involve complex socio-economic mixes.

The distinction between social and economic exchanges can be seen in income maintenance programs that, in economic language, are granting activity, one-way transfers, but which are better understood as social exchanges. Motives for giving public assistance are an example. Assistance is given for social harmony and orderly change, and poor relief and public assistance create permanent unfulfilled obligations for repayment by recipients. Thus there is a serious distortion when welfare programs are defined as unilateral economic transfers instead of social exchanges.

Exchange theories largely reject the idea of giving gifts, what we might call pure love. While entirely selfless effort for others, without any thought of self-interest, is feasible, it is also exceptional, the behavior of saints. For most people, unselfish acts are contingent at least on the prospect of social acknowledgment. The principle has been put even more firmly for collectivities in the dictum that organizations have no permanent friends, only permanent interests in survival and achievement of goals.

Exchange Accounting

Measuring value exchanged.— The two standard measures of the value of things exchanged are value foregone and quantity. The value of something exchanged is known partly by the value of other things—commodities, opportunities, etc.—necessarily foregone because of commitment to a particular relationship that entails use of resources. As an organization's environment changes, marking shifts in its action field, so too does the value of foregone possibilities change.

Measuring value by quantity is reflected in the principle that, the more we have of something, the less we value possession of still greater quantities. This "declining marginal utility" in exchange corresponds to deprivation and satiation in social learning. From the "benefactor's" perspective, as the supply of resources decreases, the value

placed on additional expenditures goes up. The two effects converge to reduce benefits for all participants, with the relationship ending when rewards diminish below what each partner expects to gain from the next most valued activity available.

Currency of exchange.— Many references have been made to "things" in exchange, to convey the broadest possibilities—transactions not only of rewards but costs or punishments, both material and intangible. We have yet to define, however, the qualities of things actually being exchanged.

Beginning with the obvious, tangible commodities with monetary value may be exchanged—money, gems, art objects, stocks, etc., or opportunities easily converted to monetary value and consumable (such as purchase options). A second class of rewards that may be consumed includes goods and services that are not negotiable. These are a middle ground between economic and social exchange. Many government services fall into this category, with negotiable vouchers for public education an exception to the rule. Social rewards encompass innumerable intangibles, from approval and esteem to status and ideology. Ideological rewards, as in purposive organizations, often take the form of objectives and victories that serve as incentives for participation, especially during formation stages and in crises. Compliance with another's demands is the universal currency of social exchange. It is a generalized means, like money, for attaining diverse goals.

Justice in distribution.— Distributive justice refers to equality in the distribution of rewards and costs, to fairness for all participants in an exchange. The basic rule is that parties to exchanges expect rewards in proportion to costs, and net rewards (profits) in proportion to total investments—for everyone. The issue leads to the question of whether one party is able to impose a "hard bargain" by monopolizing something of value. Within organizations, the value of rewards a participant receives should be in proportion to the value contributed in all areas. Applied to individuals, this condition is thought to be reinforcing in itself, enhancing social cooperation and productivity.

When tangible and intangible goods are monopolized, demands by those with a superior position become excessive and the result is unjust distribution of profits and costs. This failure, when one party's rewards constitute disproportionate costs to others, thereby intensifying their relative and absolute deprivation, has an emotional impact on all participants (reminiscent of counter-control in social learning). "Winners" are elated; "losers" are angry and resentful.

Distributive injustice leads not only to emotional reactions but broad social movement to avoid the same fate in the future. Communication among the victims generates retaliatory aggression toward established power, a tendency solidified by mutual reinforcement from talking about common injuries. This shared discontent leads to opposition movements and their ideologies.

Exchange theory, for the most part, accepts the idea that evaluations of distributive injustice and feelings of relative deprivation are purely local, with each party to an exchange comparing gains and losses with those enjoyed or suffered by immediate partners. But comparisons can also be made with "generalized others," and the results may lead to markedly different conclusions about deprivation and injustice. These remote reference points, however labeled, are sometimes no more than individual recollections of

personal history, but at other times they are reflections of socially constructed ideologies, more about which shortly.

Conditions of Power

Both equitable and inequitable exchanges continue if they are more rewarding than other alternatives. Individuals and groups have several options when they need resources possessed by others: If they have attractive resources of their own at the start, they may trade what they have for what they want—engage in reciprocal exchange. If not, but alternative sources exist, they may obtain the needed resources elsewhere—opt for new exchange partners. Without optional partners, they may try to use coercion to get what they want—initiate conflict ("negative reciprocity"). Unable to manage that, they may resign themselves to do without. If none of these possibilities are workable, compliant subordination may be the only means to obtain the needed resources. These are the conditions of power *imbalance* and *dependence*.

Logic dictates that the conditions of power *balance* and *independence* are possession of strategic resources, presence of alternative exchange partners, ability to coerce, and capacity to forego satisfaction. These conditions all point to exchange-based principles for organizing. For instance, social change ideology that places positive value on reduced need and consumption bolsters autonomy and resistance to power imbalances. The table below suggests other possibilities.

Table 1

CONDITIONS OF POWER BALANCE & IMBALANCE[5]

REQUIREMENTS OF POWER	CONDITIONS OF INDEPENDENCE	ALTERNATIVES TO COMPLIANCE	STRUCTURAL IMPLICATIONS
Indifference to what others offer	Strategic resources	Supply inducements	Exchange and distribution of resources
Monopoly over others' needs	Available alternatives	Obtain resources elsewhere	Competition and exchange rates
Materialistic and other relevant values	Ideologies lessening needs	Do without	Ideology formation

To maintain superior power, the dominant party in an exchange must avoid vulnerability to costs imposed by other participants. This is accomplished by continuously acting to keep resources from out-groups that are potential opponents, securing needed resources from third parties, and encouraging "competition" (fragmentation) among, and a maximum number of, "suppliers" (needy subordinates). The occupant of the dominant position must monopolize resources required by others. Protest organizations seek to "monopolize" the means of socio-political harmony and stability, and thereby possess a

strategic resource for exchange. Another condition of holding power over others is ensuring their need for the monopolized resources.

Beyond distributive injustices, tensions between those with dominant and subordinate roles in exchanges, played out in competition and conflict, stem from four kinds of activities, all related to the conditions of power. They are actions by the subordinated to pool their resources, to create options for acquiring resources, to coerce those in dominant positions, and to promote ideologies that justify demands for additional resources.

Exchange & Ideology

The conventional approach in the literature on exchange is to accept cultural values as given. Perception and other cognitive processes by which things in exchange gain meaning or value are typically ignored. It is recognized, however, that exchange is not motivated exclusively by rewards of absolute value but for "socially mediated" values as well.

Thus seemingly irrational behavior may be explained by reference to higher values that override immediate rewards. But the weakness of exchange theory in explaining value formation and influence shows in its failure to adequately account for social inaction, despite gross distributive injustices. It does not explain why people who are subjected to massive social and physical injuries—even with sufficient resources for counter-initiatives—remain indifferent and even hostile to opposition movements and ideologies.

This fact can be well understood, however, by augmenting exchange concepts with theory for construction of ideological realities. The social construction of these different ideologies is our next subject.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

Overview

Theory for social construction of reality takes its imprint from face-to-face conversations, where subjective experience is "objectified" by mutual consent. The ideological meanings, once constructed, lend value to the contingencies of social learning and exchange.

The incentives to participate in the construction of ideological realities range from tangible to covert rewards. Most important is that the social construction of ideology is a necessary condition for organizational movement and exercise of power. It explains, justifies, and enables decision-making for action.

Ideological realities are grounded in institutions and their sub-worlds. They are attached to centers of power and influence, such as governments and corporations, and they are transmitted to successive generations through socialization.

Realities

Social commentators and theorists have proposed several variations on the idea of socially constructed reality. They've drawn on philosophical, psychological, and sociological thinking and research. They understand that there is no "real" world, that social reality is of human manufacture and not immutable. It may be a good bet that some of the best known pathologies of social life in bureaucratized industrialized states—boredom, collapse of internal values, helplessness despite resources, normlessness ("mass betrayals of responsibility") and anomie—originate in the disintegration of "mythical" or ideological realities.

Socially constructed political ideologies give substance and meaning to the disparate interests and direct the actions of citizen groups, unions, corporations, governments, and the like. The most powerful interests use language media to structure beliefs about power and its distribution, to guarantee uncritical acceptance of the status quo. The aim is to foster compliance, to discourage questioning. It is usually no more or less than political myth-making to rationalize unconscionable benefits for special interests. There are too, of course, competing and conflicting political ideologies constructed by the people who suffer most from the society's shortcomings or those of its governments and corporations.

Construction of reality.— "How is it possible that subjective meanings become objective facticities?" is the question asked in *The Social Construction of Reality*.[6] The answer, vastly oversimplified, is that people meet and construct their social realities by sharing subjective meanings, and then they confirm and objectify their realities by mutual consent.

Social realities congeal in face-to-face relations. It is there that "objectification" takes place, transforming subjective experience and its expression into the building blocks of an objective social world. The glue in the construction of social reality is lan-

guage. It provides semantic categories for shared experience and gives rise to a commonly held stock of knowledge about social life. Marriage is a simple yet telling illustration of what happens and how. Marriage partners reconstruct the social world during their endless conversations. Each spouse contributes a picture of reality that, together with the other, is talked through, over and over again, until the new world is objectified. Socially constructed realities within marriage, as in other settings, stabilize or harden in time, are reified, a matter we will return to.

The idea of socially constructed reality has already been mined for praxis, as a means to political, economic, and social liberation. Reality as such must be understood and managed as a social construction if people are to escape oppression and achieve authentic liberation. This works through a person-to-person process that mixes individual ideas into a social whole. As each person tells how a particular event was perceived, the exposition challenges the perception of every other individual, forcing reconsideration of subjective realities, until consensus emerges. By discussion, mutual agreement is reached on a definition of the event, what parts and players in it mean, and how to act together about it.

Once created, the socially constructed reality, by valuating the contingencies of learning and exchange, constrains and spurs the actions of individuals and organizations. It may be surmised as a rebuttable presumption that when the collective definition of a shared experience does not subsequently influence individual or group action as might be expected, the situation was not experienced similarly, not fully shared in some important respects.

Everyday reality, then, is a collective objectivation of individuals' subjective experiences, with language as the connector and binder. Language, having standardized categories of ideas that are widely understood, permits mental reconstruction of social worlds that are removed in space and time from the here and now. It is these semantic classifications that transform or objectify personal and social history into shared stocks of knowledge.

The social construction of reality is a three-part drama: it begins with externalization—surfacing of individual experiences and perceptions; moves through objectivation—person-to-person interaction, using language, to transform subjective meanings into consensually validated objective reality; and ends with internalization—realities played back, through socialization, and thus acting on their creators' behaviors.

Maintenance of reality.— Realities are maintained in the consciousness of individuals partly by the repetitive routines of daily acts, and their associated contingencies, and partly through face to face conversations with significant others. Endless repetition and consistency reinforce the remarkable insistence of social reality when defining it in daily conversation. Social meanings are taken almost entirely for granted in casual talk.

Constructing and maintaining social realities with language requires "plausibility structures." The conversations that maintain reality must be grounded in living institutions, organizations, and groups. These settings, with their vital contingencies of learning and exchange, including disincentives for questioning basic social meanings, underpin the maintenance of reality in consciousness.

Contingencies and realities.— Several traces of learning and exchange can be found in the social construction of reality. These reflect contingencies for the three acts of reality construction—externalization, objectivation, and internalization. The question is, what are the specific contingencies that account for participation in reality construction? What are the incentives to create and accept realities that give weight and salience, meaning, to social life?

Behaviorists have considered learning and exchange contingencies for social construction of reality directly and indirectly. Social consciousness has been described as the outcome of mutual cueing (inter-stimulation), a series of interchanges through which individuals acquire social meanings. Behaviorists have also observed that socialization, particularly the transmission of valued meanings between generations, occurs in direct social interaction and through language media (e.g., press and radio). The most widely accepted behavioral hypothesis about socially constructed reality is that the solidity of social reality, its degree of reification, is directly proportional to the singularity of shared perceptions of it. However, any individual's idea of reality not reinforced by other people will, generally, become unstable and eventually disintegrate.

Group communication leading to collective ideas of social reality has been linked to opinion consensus, importance of subjects of disagreement, and group cohesiveness. Successful deviation from group reality requires resistance to both ideas and incentives. A classic 1932 experiment demonstrated the impact of shared group perceptions on individuals' ideas of reality, giving explanations for different degrees of acceptance. The extent of group influence on members varied according to the ambiguousness of the events being judged and the number of individuals not accepting the collective reality. An earlier but still informative study outlines additional sources of resistance by individuals to group definitions of reality. The most striking are stronger competing pressures from another group and lack of sufficient incentives. It may also be that new realities are resisted because in accepting them the security of one's familiar social reality is lost.

The outcomes of group directives in reconstructing subjective social realities have been explained by group social power. Included are rewards and punishments, legitimization, coercion, approval and esteem, and expertise. Many additional covert contingencies have been identified for participation in construction of reality and for its adoption as a source of ideological meaning in social life. Shared social meanings reduce environmental complexity for each individual who subscribes to the collective reality. The practical result is to diminish uncertainty and emotional tensions. Another covert incentive for constructing realities is reduction of "cognitive dissonance," ending the mental clutter of ongoing inconsistencies in thought and the accompanying uncomfortable feelings.

The social construction process, overall, serves to improve the economy of decision-making by reducing complexity and uncertainty. It is much easier to make decisions when the meanings of things are known than when they are not. One implication of the resulting economy is that it becomes possible to anticipate reality. It is this predictive capacity that stimulates action and movement of organizations in space and time, their locomotion. Organizations' goals and methods, rules for inclusion and exclusion, collective action, and much more, are not possible without shared realities. But with them, hopelessness is relieved and organized individuals act to remedy the causes of past and present injuries and injustices.

Still broader contingencies can be enumerated for this social behavior: acting with others to shape reality elicits group approval, while holding onto dissonant meanings raises the threat of group rejection; and constructing realities that control the actions of others is rewarding in itself—it denotes possession of resources and power.

Long-lived changes in individual behavior and collective action, following construction or reconstruction of social realities, must also be based on changes in contingencies of learning and exchange. New realities disappear, disintegrate, if not supported by desirable outcomes in the actions they target.

Roles & Institutions

Roles represent institutions.— Institutions are represented not only in actual, recurring patterns of behavior but in language symbols too. Although institutions come to life through roles, the roles exist in language descriptions that reside in thought and that have been consensually validated as objective. Social life is realized through the objectified roles, and they are the vehicles for participation in the world of socially constructed realities. Because roles are a representation of institutions, internalizing them makes the mythical institution meaningful for the individual. Only by reflection in actual role performance can the institution be manifested in human experience.

When newly forming institutions are limited to the interaction of two people, their joint act to transform subjective experience into objective reality, by mutual consent, remains tenuous, almost airy, certainly subject to ongoing changes. The two people, say marriage partners, alone have constructed their world, and they may change or abolish it. Since their cooperative construction has occurred during a shared history that they both recall, their creation is completely transparent to them—they understand their world as their own social construction, as a puppeteer understands the action on a puppet stage in a way unlike an enthralled audience of children.

Reification of roles and institutions.— The transparency of social life is altered radically when passed to another generation. Institutions then "thicken" and "harden," not only for the inheritors but their creators too. What was once spontaneous personal style becomes irrevocable practice. Examples exist everywhere in social life—in religious, political, economic, educational, even corporate institutions. Founders and charter members know that the life of the organization is bound up in their continuing effort, that without their regular investment it ceases to exist; while second and later generations of members are inclined to regard the organization as somehow a separate, non-human production, something permanent, apart from human activity. The paradox is that people are able to produce a world that they experience as something other than their own production.

This reification, perceiving human activity as non-human, literally dehumanizes the socially constructed world. In the reified world, the human fabrication of social institutions is lost from consciousness. Institutions are experienced as unchanging and unchangeable, manifestations of nature, cosmic law, or divine will. While this may have a humorous ring, the fact is that when the roles that constitute institutions become reified, individuals feel compelled to act in particular ways, believing that choices are not possi-

ble. It is common to see people destroy themselves and others on the basis of such beliefs.

Power—Resources & Realities

Each institution is divided into smaller social worlds that together make up the whole—each producing separate yet interlaced social realities. The definitions are always grounded in collectivities or networks of individuals. To comprehend the institutional world and its prospects for change, it is necessary to know its origins in organizational life.

When a particular social construction of reality is attached to a center of power, to an organized group with resources, it becomes an ideology. Organizations in the action field have ideologies that explain and justify their existence, purposes, and styles of action. They establish ideological meanings that interpret social facts as problems or solutions, and mark other actors as allies, adversaries, or third parties. The individual ideologies, reflecting unique and distinct histories, often compete and conflict in defining how scarce resources should be apportioned.

In large and small conflicts we see several ways that socially constructed ideologies value events in the action field. Because ideology determines whether events are rewarding or punishing, profitable or costly for particular groups and organizations, it rationalizes both social tensions and actions to relieve them. Each group seeks to perpetuate itself, its own ideology and the interests it serves, and to eliminate or at least enervate opposing groups and their ideologies.

"Deviant" competitive ideological meanings are constructed to challenge the established realities when the social world of an organization or institution is imperfectly passed on to another generation, when socialization is less than completely successful (as it always is). These threats are repressed, often by active conflict, sometimes violence. The outcome is more a matter of resources and power than intellectual ingenuity: "he who has the bigger stick has the better chance of imposing his definition of reality."[7]

Experts who claim a monopoly on ultimate definitions of reality impose ideological meanings that prop up large power centers. They respond to challenges with therapy and nihilation. Therapy "treats" the deviant and develops a comprehensive body of literature for that purpose, much of which is aptly described as variations of social control. Unlike therapy, which is designed to return so-called deviants to normalcy (in the context of the established ideology), nihilation seeks to liquidate everything external to the conventional universe: deviants are treated here too—but as less-than-human outsiders, subject to unlimited punishment for the benefit of dominant interests.

Society's authority structures are thus maintained by orchestrating ideological realities—myth-making to shape consciousness and conscience. Dean Rusk, former Vietnam-era U.S. Secretary of State, revealed the extent to which ideologies can be orchestrated by application of resources. Said Rusk, "We made the decision not to start up any war feeling in the country because we thought it was too dangerous." Even national crises are socially defined—those who benefit from them invent stories that mask their contributions and incentives and that befuddle the mass public.

Socialization

It is socialization, carried out by significant others, that brings about internalization of the objective social world for second and later generations. Definitions of ideological meanings are imposed on the individual's situation, potentiated by resources that are marshaled to arrange contingencies as incentives for acceptance. Not only are ideologies, roles and institutions transmitted, but an entire social universe. Developing in increments, realities that first take form in consciousness—socialized by individuals—are transformed, taking "generalized others" as their new reference points. The realities become internalized, no longer linked in consciousness to another individual but to an organization, institution, or society at large. Challenging authority becomes a social wrong, not just something that angers one's parent or teacher.

Early in primary socialization, significant others enter the lives of children, without having been asked. Because the young people are exposed for an extended time to a single social world, primary socialization is deeply embedded in consciousness. Secondary socialization inducts an individual, whose basic personality is already socialized, into more complex sectors of the objective world, usually by socially constructed roles. Both primary and secondary socialization, the latter when designed to fundamentally transform (alternate) an individual's subjective reality that is already set, require a plausibility structure and emotional attachment to the socializing agent.

Successfully alternating people to new realities requires not only trust but also legitimization, as a stamp of approval for the new reality, for the transformation process itself, and for the abandonment and repudiation (nihilation) of old realities. Legitimization does the explaining and justifying, providing essential rational and moral reasoning. The break between old and new ideological realities in the biography of an individual is bridged with variations of a basic language formula: "Then I thought . . . now I know." Old personal history and biography are nihilated by being placed within the framework of legitimization for new realities. The language formulas all have similar beginnings: "'When I was still living a life of sin,' 'When I was still motivated by those unconscious neurotic needs,' 'When I was still caught in bourgeois consciousness.'"[8]

The effectiveness of socialization is dependent on the similarity of objective institutional or organizational realities of the individual being socialized. The match is improved by simplicity of labor division and narrow knowledge distribution. Socialization is increasingly problematic in complex, heterogeneous, highly industrialized societies that have specialized divisions of labor and sophisticated mass communications. Contrariwise, simple division of labor and minimal distribution of knowledge confront individuals with more potent, less fragmented ideological realities. Socialization failures may also result from too many significant others, with different ideological perspectives, as socializing agents; and from presentation of substantially different, even conflicting ideologies by significant others.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Overview

With the psychological and sociological aspects of the action field sketched in contingencies and ideologies, we now consider the political economy of the field. It is in concepts of national development that the salient features of politics and economics encountered in practice are disclosed. Development concepts go beyond description, however, to prescriptions for action.

Conventional economic theories envision national development in linear stages, with success defined as economic growth. But contemporary development economists do not regard economic growth as a valid measure of social well-being, with the U.S. an example often cited. Much of the problem is that the theme of capitalist development, both foreign and domestic, has been "civilizing exploitation." Even with record-breaking affluence, there is an impacted culture of poverty and a growing inventory of social pathologies.

Social development, replacing the narrower economic conception, contemplates human advancement on many fronts. This notion of development relies on institutionalizing roles for social self-management in industrialized states by redistribution of resources. The most promising strategy is long-term, bottom-up-sponsored investment in social infrastructure. The vehicle is infrastructural organization and culture that is politically and economically empowering, creating public space and enterprise through which the general citizenry can enhance overall social well-being.

Concepts of Development

Economic development.— National development has been defined mostly in narrow economic terms. Its theories suffer from limiting constructions of reality. Both capitalists and socialists envision a series of linear stages, with total social evolution given an economic interpretation. The best-known model for capitalist development outlines five stages: traditional society, pre-conditions for takeoff, takeoff, drive to maturity, and high mass consumption.[9] Marx identified stages of feudalism, bourgeois capitalism, socialism, and communism.

Monumental differences exist, of course, between these two conceptions. Capitalist development is self-described as a non-conflict process, with less-developed nations on the same track as those now highly developed. The neo-Marxists interpret underdevelopment as the flip side of capitalism, sustaining an exploitative division of labor, and related primarily to class conflict over ownership of the production machinery.

The main problem with these models is that a diversity of conditions rather than any specific sequence of stages account for successful development. Problematic too, especially for the capitalist model, is that the strongest variable in unsuccessful development is political-economic power and its distribution.

"Dual mandate" in capitalist development.— The beginnings of contemporary capitalist-oriented development were in British colonial programs of the early twentieth century. They were based on benevolent paternalism and self-interest, the dual mandate of civilizing exploitation. After World War II, British development initiatives in India sought to upgrade rural life without disturbing relations of power, despite the effects of caste and property. Far less defensible, mid-century U.S. development strategies abroad made large expenditures to blunt indigenous liberation movements in Southeast Asia and Latin America. U.S. aid programs acquired a well-deserved reputation for sponsoring vicious but mostly ineffectual counter-insurgency by entrenched elites that are self-enriching through cooperation with foreign interests.

The core of capitalist development ideology was colonial, based on proprietary political and economic self-interest. Historically, it served to boost declining profits in the domestic economy by exporting capital abroad, to maintain cheap supplies of raw materials and to ensure profitable export trade in manufactured goods. Over the past decades, parallel incentives have been present for the civilizing exploitation of U.S. domestic urban development programs.

Economic growth and underdevelopment.— Development economists generally agree that economic growth alone is at best a mixed blessing. But the idea of growth as an index of development is still a popular idea, although expanding gross national product (GNP) is not usually reflected in share of income or employment, two good measures of development. GNP growth rate is for the wealthiest sectors of society. It is seriously misleading because it ignores distribution goals. Even with rising GNP, distributive injustices and living conditions change little for people on the lower social rungs. While economic growth occasionally improves income shares for populations in poverty, income as a quality of life measure frequently does not give insight into social pathologies such as alcoholism, family violence, and crime.

Not surprisingly, the U.S. has been named repeatedly to show that GNP and similar measures are not good indicators of social development, even with historic material prosperity. Besides alienation and privatization in proportions not known previously, commitment to a narrow ideology of economic growth has led to gigantic consumption and depletion of resources, to unmanageable wastes and environmental pollution.

Three dominant ideologies rationalize the failure of social development in economically advanced, industrialized societies: (1) that science, material technology, and hierarchical organization will eventually guarantee full development (ignoring social needs and local problems); (2) that GNP growth in the industrial sector will trickle down, ending unemployment and poverty and their secondary effects (contrary to all evidence); and (3) that education is the key to long-term prosperity (not recognizing educational problems—some seemingly insurmountable—and needs). The continuing underdevelopment is not only a matter of selective material poverty and restricted opportunities—a punishing combination—but widespread social powerlessness. A ponderous segment of the population remains permanently vulnerable, defenseless against intrusive and exploitative power, public and private.

Apart from the question of whether growth is a good measure of development, and assuming the usefulness of rising GNP for social health, about half of economic expansion cannot be explained by economic development theory. Unexplained residual fac-

tors are operating—not exclusively economic—to influence productivity. Yet both capitalist and socialist development models, for different reasons, ignore radical reform of non-economic, social and political factors, those structural arrangements that harbor the vested ideologies and interests of governing regimes.

Social development.— Broad socio-political as well as economic change, for meeting the widest range of human aspirations and interests, is expressed as social development. Economic growth is but one of many means to uplift the human condition. Social development refers to across-the-board movement—social, political, and economic. Raising the human condition is no longer a final goal of development but part of its instrumentality. The capacity to act in the political economy must be realized as a condition of this development. Thus socio-political restructuring neither leads nor follows development but reinforces it in a process of "continual mutual causation."[11]

Social development is concerned not only with terminal benefits, but also with the way change occurs. More than sensible policies and efficient administration are needed. Socio-political empowerment is also necessary, widening control over the forces that generate wants and that allow humane ways of satisfying them. Institutionalized roles for each citizen to act in self-governance are necessary for social development, for attaining substantively better overall allocation of the society's benefits and costs.

Development in the U.S.— While most economic development literature has focused on the Third World, the concepts and strategies have also been applied to industrialized nations. Despite the remarkable U.S. economic growth that followed World War II, allocation of income and wealth has become shockingly unequal. Income statistics show that growth in the U.S. has not reduced poverty as an economic fact, and it certainly has not diminished the culture of poverty that is a seedbed for social catastrophe. Urban centers have continually set records in the recent decades for breakdown in every institutional sector, from structural unemployment and continual crises in public education to a devastatingly depleted housing stock and exorbitantly expensive health care. In recent years hope has faded for Federally sponsored programs to halt the decline, with health care being a possible exception.

The culture of poverty remains, with dramatic growth in income inequality, because the marketplace and market interests guide growth. Production is geared to demand and profit, a mandate for more weaponry and luxury goods, while specific social conditions and general quality of life deteriorate. No one expects cures to emanate from the private sector, even with ideology about the wonders of private initiative, and thus no one is disappointed by the continued deterioration. But the failures of public jurisdictions, the centralized representative governments and their agencies, state and national, hamstrung by their own institutional and ideological biases and a countervailing political tide, are far more difficult for most of the society's members to understand and accept.

Development as Redistribution

Social development is constrained initially by unequal allocation of assets such as land, charters and licenses, bonds and stocks. Ironically, development aggravates the ine-

quality because initial unequal allocation imposes unequal opportunities for secondary benefits such as education, health care, legal representation, and credit. In the credit market, for instance, assets and credit-worthiness go together. Permanently improving the allocation of political-economic resources for the general citizenry is possible only by greater production or redistribution. These are respectively the major developmental tasks for less-developed and industrialized states.

The traditional defense of the status quo is that redistribution is antithetical to growth, that by improving patterns of resource allocation, growth will suffer irreparably. The assumption is that the rich save (and invest) and the poor consume. But exceptions (and compensating mechanisms) are numerous. Salaried classes, with their pensions, and land-owning agricultural classes, are generally poor savers. Landed and other wealth-owning groups often make sizable unproductive investments in gold, gems, art objects, etc. The poor but self-employed tend to be good savers. The old argument is less compelling too in a highly industrialized state where the purpose of development investment is often not growth in economic productivity, at least directly.

Three basic strategies are labeled as redistributive, although only two of them actually lead to redistribution: (1) transfers of income or other forms of consuming power through the fiscal system (via taxation, grants, subsidies, etc.) or by direct distribution of consumer goods; (2) transfer of existing assets, as in land reform and nationalization programs; and (3) channeling capital investment into human resources.

Several obstacles prevent redistribution by transfer payments. While they are necessary at some level to protect children, the aged, disabled, and others who are dependent, income transfers do not reach the culture of poverty and do not offer a solution for epidemic health, employment, education, and welfare problems. Transfers of purchasing power have only short-run payoff—they are exchanges rather than investments. Even when they are maintained indefinitely, they offer no prospect for reforming the undesirable characteristics of proprietary industrial capitalism.

Revolutionary transfer of assets—nationalization of land and industry—is an authentic strategy for redistribution. But such revolutions have not been particularly successful in modern industrialized countries. Social conditions are rarely punishing enough, for large numbers of people, to ensure support for vanguard parties and other "instruments of preparation." The closest we have come to it in this century was the labor movement during the Great Depression, which was revolutionary only at the fringes. Revolutionary strategies are also problematic in industrialized countries because, whether capitalist or socialist, their ruling governments typically employ massive resources to arrange contingencies and ideologies to undermine threatening opposition movements.

That brings us to social infrastructure as a means to achieve redistribution in an industrialized state. Redirection of investment into human resources, as social infrastructure, is an authentic redistribution strategy. It spreads political-economic resources by an incremental but nonetheless structural alteration of the state, by forming new institutions. Ironically, even bottom-up investment in infrastructure, while not gaining immediate returns for its sponsors, has trickle-up effects that benefit owners of wealth by improving the productivity and consuming power of moderate- and low-income groups.

Social Infrastructure

Infrastructure, physical and social, is the substructure or foundation of the national state. Physical infrastructure refers to utilities, transportation, and communications systems; social infrastructure refers to organized human resources. The latter concept is derived from economic development theory and describes social overhead capital, the human base of national political economy.

Social infrastructure includes organizations—in the political realm, local governments, parties, opposition groups, special interest organizations, and nonpartisan associations; plus their cultural fabric, which exists as ideological realities, roles, and norms for action. Thus expenditures for social infrastructure may be directed at both ideologies and institutions.

Economics of infrastructure.— The economic purpose of investment in human resources, as with inanimate assets that yield benefits, is to improve the state's political-economy. In strictly economic terms, the investment is justified if returns (benefits) after costs exceed the general rate of interest or if the additional benefits yielded are greater than the costs to obtain them. This apparently clear calculus is instantly muddied, because social infrastructure is neither a precise nor exclusively economic enterprise. The relationship between investment in social infrastructure and political-economic benefits is not mechanical. Part of the problem is that these expenditures do not produce short-term benefits. They are investments rather than exchanges.

The universal features of social overhead capital—long-term gestation and payoff, "lumpiness" or indivisibility,[10] and indirect returns—make governments the main investors in social infrastructure. The public sponsorship gives unearned benefits to private capitalists. These spillovers from the public to the private sector subsidize capitalism's externalized costs (e.g., pollution, unemployment, and poverty) with extensive resources, such as a healthy and educated labor force, only a small part of which is recovered through taxation.

Infrastructure for democratization.— In making a case for significantly increasing investment in social infrastructure, it must be said that it is not a panacea for retarded development. Although social infrastructure is not a sufficient condition for social development, as the most promising redistribution strategy it is indispensable to the vitality of a mature capitalist society. The purpose of investment in social infrastructure, suggested in the following five brief summaries of critiques of industrial society, is political-economic democratization.

History of social welfare is A.H. Halsey's point of departure.[12] Small social communities arose from England's new industrial working class in the nineteenth century. Local associations developed—burial societies, cooperatives, and labor party clubs. Although "localized and communalized," they had national impact on Parliament and successive governments. The nationalization of these associations in the early twentieth century, and the unanticipated loss of their fraternal ideologies, left most citizens with little enthusiasm for the bureaucratic welfare state that followed. The remainder is an alienated majority that has deserted party politics in particular and public life in general, becoming increasingly affluent and privatized. Halsey proposes that the way to deal with

bureaucratic welfare statism, and the most likely means to redistribution, is re-creation of the small social welfare communities in what he calls "community governments."

Denis Goulet makes a parallel argument that the way out of the development failures of centralized planning is "democratic dialogue," exchanging top-down goals for "multiplying agents of human promotion."[13] Goulet's view is that abundance of goods is not the best indicator of "the good life." Participation must be enlarged so that all people become "agents of their own social destiny."

Speaking to the theme of social welfare and development in the East and West, Eugen Pusic states that much of it is unsuccessful because of existing allocations of resources.[14] He suggests that excessive concentrations of power in industrialized societies are a "grave danger to the very survival of humanity." His course for development is decentralization throughout the social structure. What is needed, says Pusic, is democratization, institutionalized structures for social self-management. These must be designed from the bottom up, allowing dispersion of powerful interests.

Alan Wolfe has a more economically oriented view of U.S. development problems.[15] He refers to the contradictory capitalist state expenditures for promoting private capital accumulation and for legitimization to ensure mass loyalty and externalization of the system's high costs in social pathologies. The outcome is a fiscal crisis of the state, a systemic incapacity to adequately finance both costs. Wolfe's antidote is to democratize capital accumulation. "What we should be working toward," he says, "is the creation of new structures, not new programs. . . . to let the American people in on the discussion."

The challenge of attaining social equality, the realization of genuine democracy, liberty, and individuality, is what David Gil proposes as the goal of social development.[16] Rejecting the current institutional forms of industrial capitalism, Gil argues that social development requires constructing new ideologies and organizing new institutions. "Self-governing" units, small enough to constitute authentic social communities, but sized to satisfy political and economic considerations, would be linked in federations—local, regional, national, and eventually global.

Sponsorship and ideology.— The basic outlines of social infrastructure can be drawn as institutional functions that are ideologically neutral, as with planning and service delivery. But specific investments in infrastructure invariably reveal ideological bias.

Table 2 (below) shows some of the political and economic ideological flooring of bottom-up and top-down expenditures for social infrastructure. The typology is exaggerated in casting ideal types; it contains, as social life itself does, some obvious contradictions. In practice we frequently find (bottom-up) demand for (top-down) service, notwithstanding the bottom-up ideology of self-help. Similarly, (top-down) distribution often has the practical effect of encouraging, if only temporarily, (bottom-up) demand, even with the top-down ideology of having experts define need. Top-down-sponsored infrastructure typically is foundation for capital-intensive enterprise, while bottom-up sponsorship favors labor-intensive activity.

Table 2

OPPOSING IDEOLOGIES OF INFRASTRUCTURE SPONSORS

Bottom-Up	Top-Down
SOCIAL CONTRACT	DIVINE RIGHT
Governments are formed and exist by consent of the governed.	Certain individuals and classes rule because of special qualities.
COMMUNITY	MASS ORGANIZATION
Face-to-face relations are best for preventing and treating pathologies of modern social life.	Hierarchical organization is necessary and best to manage complex industrial societies.
POLITICS	TECHNOLOGY
Solutions to problems of social life are mainly political.	Technical expertise is the best way to alleviate social problems.
DIRECT ACTION	SOCIAL CONTROL
The public good requires large numbers of citizens to act directly in self-governance.	Citizen participation must be "guided" to ensure continued (private) capital accumulation.
SELF-HELP	SERVICE
Local initiative and cooperation best satisfy programmatic needs.	Mass organizations must provide programs and services under professional management.
DEMAND	NEED
Public resources should be allocated according to citizen demand.	Public resources are best distributed by expert definitions of need.
REDISTRIBUTION	DISTRIBUTION
Resources should be *redistributed* to permanently alter relations of power.	Resources should be *distributed* to relieve extreme human suffering and to buffer citizen discontent.
DEMOCRATIZATION OF SURPLUS	EXTERNALIZATION OF COSTS
Surplus accumulation from labor productivity should benefit the general public.	Public expenditures should continue to subsidize private wealth by assuming externalized costs.

Decisions about infrastructural solutions to political-economic problems vary according to the ideologies of organized investors, whether they are established or challenging. Studies examining the effects of sponsorship on social change activities confirm unequivocal restraints on the autonomy of change agents. There is an inverse relationship between dependency on outside resources and independence of action. This seems to be universal, a general condition of community organization and development, with the source of resources determining action styles, decision-making, selection of objectives, and accountability. Initial staff recruitment and selection is aimed to maximize correspondence between the sponsor's values and interests and the practitioner's professional ideology and practice techniques. The sponsor's influence extends to self-serving defini-

tions of community problems and needs, conflicting with professional values and stimulating tensions and job security anxieties for practitioners.

The opposing ideologies of citizen action and participation (direct action versus social control) in Table 2 are manifested in equally opposed institutional responses. Ongoing tension exists between top-down-sponsored agencies, seeking to control forms of participation in public life, and bottom-up-sponsored organizations, attempting to control the agencies and polities, to make them more responsive and efficient.

The purpose of social control through "participation" is to accommodate citizens without modifying or inconveniencing established power centers. An unmistakable emphasis is put on issues that can be resolved with education, public information, and other non-political approaches, exclusive of pressure tactics. Sponsorship from the top down is a force for system maintenance, not institutional change. Participation is expected to be "responsible," focusing on distribution rather than redistribution issues.

Bottom-up-sponsored citizen action organizations are typically self-legitimated. They generally reject top-down ideologies—recognized as class-based and biased—that are out of touch with the experience and history of ordinary citizens. They also refuse to accept administrative and technical ideologies that rationalize and protect top-down-sponsored organizational domains. Citizen-action issues focus on power transfers for community control, income and benefit redistribution, and similar goals.

The effects of sponsorship direction can be seen in planning. Apart from differences in priorities and action styles, there are other opposing characteristics. In top-down-sponsored planning, success is defined as decision-making speed and accuracy. Citizens provide advisory input to planners who are themselves, for the most part, on the output side of political decision-making. In bottom-up-sponsored planning, success is defined as maximum scope of citizen engagement in the exercise of public power. Planners provide advisory input to citizens who are, in turn, on the input side of political decisions.

Top-down sponsorship of social infrastructure, when oriented to structural change, inevitably results in zero-sum conflict, leading to cut-off of resources, the loss of power by the community organization, and its subsequent collapse or severe displacement of goals. This scenario has been repeated again and again.

Functions of infrastructural organizations.— Organizations that constitute infrastructure adopt or evolve one or more manifest functions. These are political, economic, religious, planning, and service. Latent functions of infrastructural organizations include socio-maintenance—reality construction and socialization, which we have already reviewed; and socio-therapy—social bonding and personality development.

Infrastructure is central to political culture, to positive ideologies and action pathways for democracy. In top-down-sponsored political infrastructure, with its ideology of guiding citizen participation, administration and social control are the most important tasks. As carried out by urban governments, these include information gathering, promotion of state and Federal policies, implementation of programs and services, and generally managing contingencies and ideologies to protect resource flows and domain.

Bottom-up-sponsored political infrastructure, sustained in part by citizen-action ideology, is designed to generate permanent and legitimate roles for social self-management, public space in the language of political philosophy. The theme is that political freedom is a deception if there is no room or way for individuals to make public

contact with the lives of others in matters of collective concern. Public space translates into institutionalized roles in the state's political-economic structures, mainly governments, which are defined behaviorally, for people to act effectively in their public capacity, as citizens.

The direction of sponsorship also colors the institutional and ideological profile of economic infrastructure. Top-down-sponsored economic goals are to protect capital accumulation, to ensure an adequate labor force, to enable central government to buffer with distribution (forms of patronage) demands for redistribution, and to control resources by connecting and coordinating peripheral and central markets. Economic infrastructure serves both top-down and bottom-up interests by revenue collection and regulatory activities. Bottom-up purposes extend, however, to articulation of demand, capital accumulation, and labor-intensive enterprise.

It is not necessary to do more than note the processes of socio-maintenance, reality construction and socialization. The socio-therapeutic functions of infrastructure, social bonding and personality development, are latent yet prime functions of infrastructural organizations. The nineteenth century social philosophy of idealism identified the relationship between personality and social community—in effect, that the former flourishes in finding a meaningful part to play in the latter. Early proponents of community organization in social work looked at organized group life as an exercise in mental hygiene. Contemporary studies along these lines generally confirm that civic activity offers an effective means to combat the alienation of modern society, while simultaneously contributing to community improvement.

Social Infrastructure in the U.S.

Because the United States was a frontier nation during its first century, much of its development involved transcontinental movement of small, newly formed, self-governing communities. Settlers crossing the continent in clusters adopted political compacts for the course of their travel, not by chance or personal predilection but for survival. Public space was created from necessity—marked by democratic election of officers, establishment of rules, and subscription to mutual obligations, to answer the conditions of an historic migration. Disbanded at their destinations, they were often replaced by another informal and temporary political form.

"Claim clubs" and similar associations were organized to confirm, give notice of, and protect claims, filling the institutional void between settlement and formation of towns. These groups began with community meetings, subsequently drafted constitutions and bylaws, elected officers, established procedures for selecting juries to settle disputes, and in some places evolved into recognized local governments. Equally common was the organizing of some variant of town government on the New England model, departing ever farther from the original as the country's second century and westward settlement progressed, but never entirely forsaking councils, schools, law enforcement, and the other accouterments of public life.

Paralleling the older cities of the East—Boston, New York and Philadelphia—small self-governing towns fed the growth of Midwestern and Western metropolitan centers. Neighborhoods in Chicago and Los Angeles, and many cities between, had their

own governments, were independent political units making decisions about zoning, taxes, and other matters of public concern. Some, as in New England, sent representatives to state legislatures.

During the nineteenth century, when America's rural and urban populations were reversed from their present distribution, small- and moderate-sized towns had usable public space. This was not always by explicit political right—there was little institutionalized direct democracy outside New England—but through social and physical arrangements that fit the geo-political scale of the period. The time was marked by a great deal more opportunity for, and actual participation in, public life by individuals, far less privatization.

Beginning in the middle of the 1800s and continuing onward, waves of immigration and the domestic population movements fueled urbanization and the growth of urban poverty neighborhoods. Historically impoverished populations peopled the local enclaves. They had come first from Europe, later from the Atlantic Coastal Plain, the Black Belt and Delta regions of the South, the Cumberland Plateau, and the high plains of central Mexico. Desperate to flee what for most had become an oppressive rural life, they were as cut-off from power in the political economies of the cities as they had previously been in rural communities.

The partisan parties began to monopolize mid-nineteenth-century urban politics through the political machines. The machines isolated policy-making from local political demands and conflicts, most of which originated in race- and ethnicity-conscious populations, those most victimized by urbanization and industrialization. The trademark of the machines, like all top-down-sponsored-infrastructure, then and now, was to express volatile redistribution issues in more placid distribution terms.

The "progressive" or municipal reform movement, dating from about the turn of the twentieth century, was a somewhat ironic top-down reaction to machine corruption, urban deterioration and instability, which threatened economic growth. The reformers were liberal, Protestant, upper and middle class. The reform ideology was efficiency and economy. The strategy was administrative centralization in bureaucratic organization and rational policy-making by technical experts. The result was to remove public administration not only from the corrupting influence of machines but from authentic political control generally, ending any semblance of local self-governance by unceasing municipal annexations and consolidations. The centralized urban polities and their bureaucracies quickly became mechanisms of social control, sublimating politics, permanently discrediting political process and transferring its functions to mass organizations. The municipal reform movement, responding to political machines no longer able to manage urban stability and protect economic growth, led to bureaucratic gigantism and institutionalized the demise of public space.

Political scientists and commentators differ in their thinking about how much public space existed in the past and, for those who believe there was more, the reasons for its decline. But there is little argument that in our time the available public space is not sufficient. Permanent social infrastructure that is politically and economically empowering for the general citizenry is almost nonexistent—grassroots organizations are mostly too fragile for sustained mass citizen action—and thus the urban political movements of the mid- to late-twentieth century are interpreted as attempts to construct (or reconstruct) public space.

Social Work Investments in Infrastructure

Since the beginnings of social work, the profession has had an implicit commitment to invest resources in organizing social infrastructure. Different practitioners and agency sponsors over the decades, notwithstanding divergent social philosophies, objectives, and action styles, have in common putting their energies into programs that established necessary organizational foundation to upgrade social life.

Neighborhood committees of local residents and representatives of relief and welfare agencies were required for achievement of the most important charity organization principle, coordination of welfare services. The charity organization society (COS) movement viewed neighborhood organization as crucial to cooperation between providers and recipients, and also as necessary to energize the idea that urban ills could be cured by revitalization of local social life. The COS district office was also to be a neighborhood community center, a "village meeting house."

Jane Addams linked the pathetic state of urban life at the end of the nineteenth century to the circumstance that citizens lacked local traditions, public spirit, and social organization. The settlement purpose, in functional terms— stripped of philosophy and goal statements—was to create local organizations that would improve social life.

Social work contributions to building infrastructure continued in the early decades of the twentieth century. Community practitioners attempted to establish "village life" in urban neighborhoods by forming block and neighborhood associations. Local neighborhood defense councils were organized throughout World War One to mobilize resources for the war effort. The short-lived Cincinnati Social Unit Organization is another example of social work-oriented infrastructure development to expand local citizen action in public life during this period. Less than ten years later, during the Depression, neighborhood councils were organized. After the councils the neighborhood organizing of the 1940s supported the new war effort. The locality-based activities of the 1960s were the last major social work investment in infrastructure.

Social work sponsorship of community organizing has had a checkered history, often serving top-down interests and ideologies. It has been marked by self-conscious avoidance of politics and conflict, resulting in the well-known political irrelevance of the profession's mainstream practitioners. The thing to notice, nonetheless, is that building infrastructure is a traditional task of social work. It is now an essential activity in mature industrial societies that lack public space. Consequently, social workers are challenged to find ways and means to invest in infrastructure for bottom-up interests and ideologies.

SUMMARY & APPLICATIONS

Unified Theory

The main features of the organizing action field—power and ideology, and their effects on individuals and collectivities—have been specified by drawing together concepts of learning, exchange, reality construction, and development. They reveal a theoretical unity in both their tout ensemble and their comprehensive accounting of the action field characteristics.

The theory explains individual behavior as a reciprocal product of actor and action field. Learning and acting new behavior are contingent on prior cues, thinking and knowing, and rewarding and punishing consequences. These contingencies are encountered directly, by observation of others, and through symbolic information.

Concepts of exchange, underpinned by learning principles of mutual reinforcement, self-management, counter-control, and deprivation/satiation, explain collective behavior in the action field. Exchange gives a simple yet inclusive view of collective behavior that originates in cooperation, competition, and conflict, to maximize scarce resources. Attention is given to absolute and relative deprivation in the unequal resource distribution, power and conditions of its use, and distributive injustices. The pivotal objective of a political-economic organization is survival in its action field, with decision-making designed to manage resource flows for longevity and attainment of goals.

Learning and exchange concepts largely ignore collective ideologies and their impact on individual behavior and organizational action. But ideological realities account for why and how an event is perceived as rewarding by virtually all members of one collectivity and punishing by the whole of another. The social construction of reality explains the creation and effect of valued meanings that, when attached to centers of organized power, become political-economic ideologies. Formed with language in face-to-face interchanges of subjective experience, they are the collective standards against which learning and exchange contingencies are judged rewarding or punishing.

The ideologies are grounded in actual institutions—recurring patterns of behavior—and their subdivisions, lesser organizations and groups of individuals with shared histories or common language experience. The social construction of ideologies continues because of covert contingencies for individual and group participation, such as reducing environmental complexity and thus enabling organizational action, and more personalized rewards.

The juxtaposition of learning and exchange contingencies and ideological realities shows their inseparability in social life. Knowing their dialectical relationship, it is impossible to imagine social action as the singular product of one or the other.

Concepts of social development complete the unified theory as a description of the action field. Although many obstacles hinder development in industrialized capitalist states, the most important are proprietary interests and their allies in public organizations who oppose institutionalized citizen action for redistribution. The most promising strategy for democratizing the political economy is long-term, bottom-up-sponsored investment in social infrastructure, creating permanent public space for citizens to act in their own self-interest.

Theory-Based Roles

The unified theory implicitly pictures four major roles for practitioners. Learning, exchange, reality construction, and development suggest generic practice roles that have applications for many different organizing styles, settings, and sponsors.

Social learning, based substantially on observation, points to creating, testing, and refining models for micro to macro objectives, whether for instrumental, structural, or process objectives. Learning and exchange both underline the importance of the organizer's role in identifying and planning contingencies, including analyses of power distributions, strategic resource flows, profits and costs in exchanges, and distributive injustices. Concepts of reality construction indicate the organizer's role as *demiourgos*—"the maker of the world"—in facilitating understanding of and participation in social construction and playback of ideologies. Lastly, the prescriptive role suggested by the theory is to organize permanent social infrastructure for redistributive development by democratization of the political economy.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Adapted from Fred Luthans, *Organizational Behavior* (2d ed.), (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977), p. 104.

[2] Fred Luthans and Robert Kreitner, *Organizational Behavior Modification* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1975), pp. 140-41.

[3] I've borrowed liberally from Clark and Wilson's incentive theory and typology of organizations. See Peter B. Clark and James Q. Wilson, "Incentive Systems: A Theory of Organizations," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 6(2):129-66 (September 1961), pp. 138-48.

[4] The basic schema is suggested by Neil Smelser in *The Sociology of Economic Life* (2d ed.), (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963, 1976), pp. 120-22.

[5] From Peter M. Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964), p. 124.

[6] I am indebted for much of the material in this chapter to the work of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor/Doubleday, 1966, 1967).

[7] Ibid., p. 109.

[8] Ibid., p. 160.

[9] See W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (2d ed.), (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971, 1974).

[10] The benefits of investments in infrastructure, whether in physical or social capital—public utilities or public organizations—usually can't be divided: a *complete* water works or government must be built.

[11] Paul Streeter, "The Use and Abuse of Models in Developmental Planning," in (Kurt Martin and John Knapp, eds.) *The Teaching of Developmental Economics*, The Proceedings of the Manchester Conference on Teaching Economic Development, April 1964 (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1967), p. 59.

[12] A.H. Halsey, "The Future of the Welfare State," lecture given at the School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley, November 10, 1978.

[13] Denis Goulet, *The Cruel Choice* (New York: Atheneum, 1971, 1975).

[14] Eugen Pusic, *Social Welfare and Social Development* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1972).

[15] Alan Wolfe, "Capitalism Shows Its Face," *The Nation*, 221(18):557-63 (November 29, 1975). Also see James O'Connor, *The Fiscal Crisis of the State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973).

[16] David S. Gil, *The Challenge of Social Equality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishers, 1976).

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