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TYPES AND FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNITY AND
REGIONAL SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS
WITH GRASSROOT SOCIAL MOVEMENT
ORGANIZATIONS: A LOOK AT EMERGENT
CITIZEN GROUPS IN DISASTER*

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Introduction

In this paper we explore the relationship between one type of grassroots social movement organization (SMO), emergent citizen groups in disaster (ECG) with other more community or regionally based SMO's. A basic tenet of the resource mobilization approach (e.g., McCarthy and Zald, 1973, 1977) is that SMO's cannot come into existence and maintain their existence without certain material and non-material resources. Grievances are not thought of as being an important variable in the social movement process. Walsh (1981) notes that studies from the resource mobilization approach generally have focused on national or regional SMO's (e.g., see Oberschall, 1973; Zald and McCarthy, 1979). Gambrell (1980) and Walsh (1981) contend that a bias exists against the studying of local SMO's. We attempt to look at the local and community/regional levels of SMO's and the relationship between them in regards to resource distribution. We hope to ascertain how local SMO's, such as ECG's, receive resources.

ECG's as SMO's

A recent approach for studying collective behavior and social movements has been from an organizational or structural perspective. This is in contrast to other earlier and some recent approaches from a more psychological or social psychological perspective. The work of Zald and Ash (1966) was an early attempt of an implicit utilization of the resource mobilization perspective. In their study, SMO's were analyzed from an organizational perspective. It is in this study that the concepts of a social movement and SMO are first differentiated (see Zald and Ash, 1966: 329). From within the resource mobilization approach, a social movement is defined as "a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society." (McCarthy and Zald, 1977:1217-1218) Under the conditions of related populations which are either communally or associationally organized internally, SMO's are more likely to occur (McCarthy and Zald, 1977:1218). A SMO is defined as a "complex, or formal organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals." (McCarthy and Zald, 1977:1218)

The resource mobilization approach can be used in our study of ECG's in disaster. ECG's are conceptualized as neighborhood or local groups formed by private citizens regarding a particular disaster issue. Only those ECG's that are formed before or after a disaster are included in the study; emergency time period groups are not included.

The ECG's in this study have a very definite organizational structure including elected officers, horizontal and vertical division of labor, and goal orientation. Quite easily, ECG's fit within the rubric of an SMO. Not only are these grassroots entities considered in our analysis, but so are community and regional SMO's. These organizations, called "umbrella groups" by ECG members and others, may cover a wide range of issues or give various types of resources to a number of different issue-oriented

neighborhood groups. The important organizational differences of community/regional SMO's, and the relationship between the SMO's and ECG's in regards to obtaining, distributing, and using resources is the focus of this paper.

The data used in this study is from a much broader study of ECG's in disaster. For this paper, 20 ECG's and five community/regional SMO's from six different geographical regions in the United States are studied. These sites were selected, for among other reasons, because of their high risk and vulnerability to hazards, their geographical location encompassing areas on the east and west coasts, the southern, northern, and midwestern sections of the United States, and their rural or urban locations. Such threats in these areas include earthquakes, mud- and land-slides, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, toxic wastes, severe pollution, and massive explosions. Most if not all areas in this study have more than one threat. Specific names of places, groups, and individuals are not given in order to protect the promised confidentiality of our respondents.

Almost 200 interviews were conducted to gather data pertaining to this paper. Some of those interviewed had knowledge of more than one ECG situation. In addition to interviews, a plethora of documents were analyzed: newspaper articles, correspondence between ECG members and various organizations, intra-organizational memos, private notes and memos, newsletters, community data, and videotapes. Observations from the field sites were also utilized.

Type of Community/Regional SMO's

Of the 20 ECG's in our analysis, all but four have had an active relationship with community/regional SMO's. The five community/regional SMO's in our analysis played a role in giving ECG's a number of resources: contacts (for such purposes as networking and legitimization), advice, pamphlets, and encouragement. In a few cases, these SMO's aided ECG's in obtaining money, but generally this was for disaster recovery purposes rather than funds for running the ECG's day to day activities. The community/regional SMO's do receive funding from a number of various institutions (such as churches, foundations, government, and in some cases ECG's) and other sources, which is used to maintain an office, staff, phone, and other necessities. Essentially, except under certain conditions, none of the money received by SMO's goes to the ECG's. Other material and non-material resources do reach the ECG's from the community/regional SMO, but usually in a "trickle-down" fashion. That is, only after the broader based SMO has met all of its own financial obligations does any type of resource material go to ECG's.

Two basic structures of the community/regional SMO's exist. One structure, or type, consists of solely disaster related ECG's. We call this an indigenous coalition since membership is restricted to ECG's involved with a specific type of disaster impact. The other type we call an exogenous coalition since there is one central organization which ECG's and other issue-oriented grassroots groups are associated. A detailed

discussion of the description and relationship of these organizations follows.

The Indiginous Coalition

Of the five community/regional SMO's in this analysis, two fall under this category. These coalitions form during or after the emergence of the local grassroots groups. Also, this type of structure occurs after a disaster has occurred and has been defined a disaster by not only the victims, but the governmental agencies or departments involved as well. In this situation, ECG's come into existence with each other over one specific issue (such as the effects of toxic wastes or a tornado) through a networking process. The networking among ECG's is generally facilitated during public meetings over the issue at hand. At these meetings, purpose, goals, ideas, and strategies between ECG's leaders or potential leaders of possible groups occur. In addition, other discussions may occur in more informal situations, such as a coffee shop setting. Generally, the ECG members determine that it is to their best interest if the ECG's that have formed also construct one larger organization, an "umbrella group," to help coordinate efforts. The people involved in this process believe that such a tactic helps to legitimize their own group's actions, strengthens each group's claims they may have, and gives the appearance of a broader constituency to the public officials. Other related community or regional SMO's aid with advice and provide contacts to facilitate the formation of indiginous coalitions. Officers of the indiginous coalition are officers from the various ECG's, and the new SMO quickly becomes an incorporated unit, unlike most of the ECG's involved with the indiginous coalition.

ECG's that have formed indiginous coalitions have been much more successful than ECG's belonging to exogonous coalitions in obtaining resources, specifically money. Only ECG's associated with indiginous coalitions have received money. This money was used to aid in recovery from the impact of the disaster, and in the one case, facilitate an ECG to further mobilize and operate as a political unit. Due to the "indiginous" aspect of this type of coalition (that is ECG members make up the coalition), each group made sure that its own ECG benefited from the relationship in as many ways possible. The goal of maintaining economic resources of the indiginous coalition, at least initially, is not a high priority.

Once the indiginous coalitions in these two instances have formed and have existed for over a year, and have had some degree of success, this type of coalition will attempt to expand its goals and activities to other social issues. These issues may include crime-watch programs, park building projects, environment, and perhaps a more general approach to hazard mitigation.

Even though there is contact between the ECG's belonging to the indiginous coalition (this contact often being frequent and at times intense) regarding their combined efforts in the coalition, each ECG maintains its own autonomy, boundaries, and individual group goals.

Mergers between ECG's are not considered. Of course, conflict exists at times between ECG's in regards to the coalitions' tasks and goals, but usually this is at a minimum and amicably resolved. No ECG, to our knowledge, has yet to leave an indiginous coalition.

Figure I illustrates the structure of the indiginous coalition SMO. The focus of this illustration is to represent the general pattern of resource distribution. Various institutions give money to both the coalition and the ECG's. Cases do exist that some funds go directly to local ECG's. Other regional SMO's may be responsible for distribution resources to the coalition or ECG's, but these resources are non-monetary.

The Exogonous Coalition

The remaining three community/regional SMO's fall under the category of exogonous coalitions. During the initial formation stage of ECG's over a particular disaster related issue, these groups use a "shotgun" approach of attempting to make contacts to determine who should be approached in order to remedy a perceived dangerous situation. In using this shotgun approach, ECG's not only come in contact with each other, but also discover already existing exogonous coalitions. Exogonous coalitions usually cover a broad range of issues, which may include crime-watchers, jobs, civil rights, environment, and "meals on wheels." Financial support is generally provided from institutional grants. However, funds from individuals or businesses do occur.

Membership to exogonous coalitions include various issue-oriented ECG's: churches, businesses, and other community/regional SMO's. The leaders of the exogonous coalitions in our three cases all have had previous organizing experience throughout various parts of the United States. The staffs are quite small, but yet in comparison to the indiginous coalitions, are larger and appear to have on paper more structure. Although in reality, the latter may not be entirely true.

The exogonous coalitions usually vary in activity, with one issue the prime focus. For example, if a disaster issue is at hand, those ECG's in disaster become active, with the help of the exogonous coalition, while the other neighborhood groups under the coalition remain inactive, except for giving the ECG's their political support. Unlike the ECG's within an indiginous coalition (which have a tendency to expand goals and issues), ECG's under exogonous coalitions generally maintain one direction, and after success is (usually) achieved, they have a tendency to go dormant. The trend not to expand tasks and goals may be due to the fact that the exogonous coalitions are also involved in issues that other neighborhood groups are involved, hence there is no need for the ECG's in disaster to puruse these other issues. In addition, ECG member may belong to other groups that deal with other specific issues. ECG's also need to be careful in such situations not to encroach on other neighborhood groups' political or issue "turf." ECG's in disaster that belong to an exogonous coalition, however, do generally give their support to the other neighborhood groups, usually through the coalition, on other issues.

In this study, we find that ECG's under the control of exogenous coalitions do not receive grant money of any type (see Figure II). Generally, they receive from the coalition advice, pamphlets (and other information), contacts (for networking), and a degree of legitimacy. In one case an exogenous coalition aided ECG's (along with the Civil Defense) in receiving a material resource worth any degree of monetary value (this being a plectron unit--a flood warning device--for three neighborhood ECG's). As we can observe from comparing Figures I and II, a difference in structure and resource distribution exists between indiginous and exogenous coalitions.

The exogenous coalition acts as a focal point for all types of resources. These coalitions, however, need money for staffing, offices, and related materials and activities. Hence, non-monetary resources are the only resources available to distribute to the ECG's by the coalition, and at times these resources only "trickle down." Although these types of coalitions are concerned with the issues at hand, quite often much of their energies and efforts are spent in terms of obtaining money from various sources to keep the organization running, instead of working on issues that the various neighborhood groups have defined as important.

In comparing exogenous coalitions to indiginous coalitions, it is evident why ECG's within the indiginous coalitions receive money. The ECG's themselves are the coalition, hence they are more concerned with the initial issue at hand and aiding the ECG's rather than organizational maintenance of the coalition. The main function of the indiginous coalitions serves as a boundary contact and a source of legitimizing the ECG's needs. We have found that most institutions are more inclined to give money to the community and regional SMO's (such as the exogenous and indiginous coalitions) rather than neighborhood groups (such as ECG's). If ECG's do receive money, it is accomplished only through the aid of the indiginous coalition.

The ECG's in exogenous coalitions, however, are only part of the total SMO, and deal with only one of many issues. The leaders of these SMO's concern is directed toward the SMO's own existence along with dealing with the many issues at hand. Although indiginous coalitions are concerned with fund raising, their activity is more issue-oriented than the exogenous coalitions.

Discussion and Conclusion

Generally, we can conclude the SMO's need each other to exist. In this study, we found that ECG's need contact with other ECG's and community/regional SMO's, and that community/regional SMO's need contact with other community/regional SMO's and ECG's to obtain or distribute resources and maintain the organization's own existence. If the varying types of SMO's exist within an "organizational set" the acquiring and distribution of resources, especially monetary resources, is enhanced.

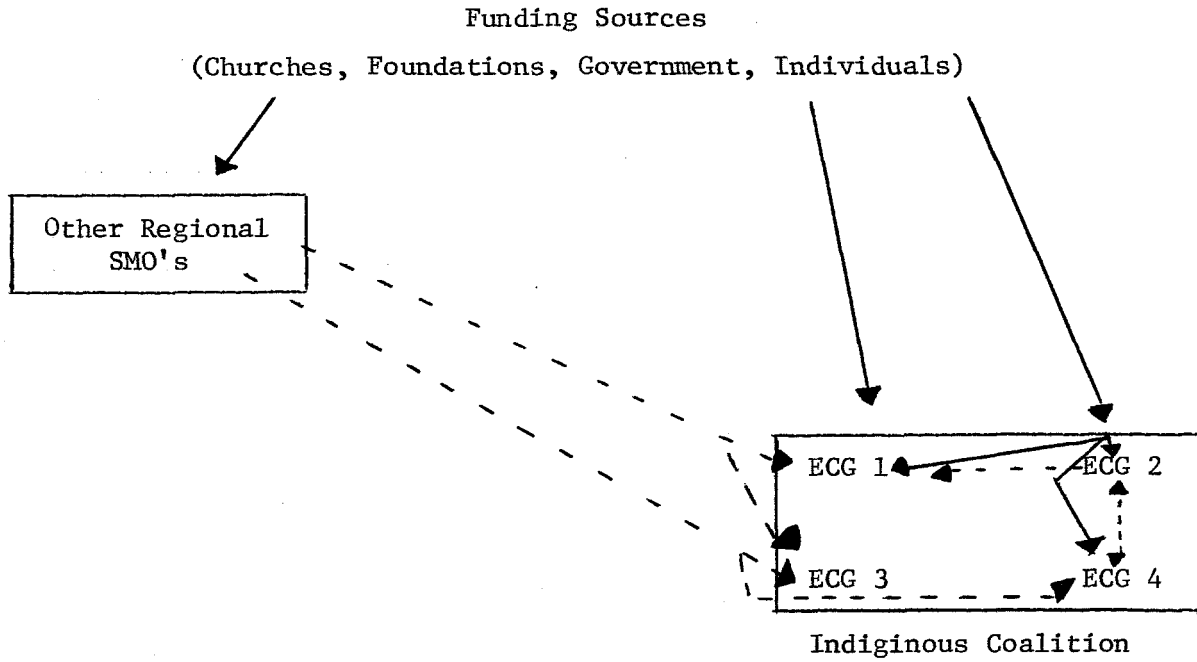
We find that monetary resources are generally directed toward the community/regional SMO's, regardless if it is an indiginous or exogonous coalition. Only ECG's belonging to indiginous coalitions obtain monetary resources. We suggest at least two conditions are responsible for this phenomena: 1) indiginous coalitions are initially one issue organizations, hence all the resources will be directed toward the issue at hand, and 2) ECG's are initially more concerned with the needs of its own members rather than the total maintenance of the indiginous coalition. We should note, however, that after a year's time and some organizational success, indiginous coalitions have a tendency to become more involved in its own maintenance and become involved in a broader scope of issues.

Generally, we concur with some of the basic tenets of the resource mobilization approach. A major criticism of which we agree, however, is that the resource mobilization approach facilitates the analysis of regional and national SMO's, but does not facilitate the analysis of local or grass-roots movements (see Gambrell, 1980; Luebke, 1981; and Walsh, 1981). Some further clarifications are needed to enhance the analytic ability of this perspective. Researchers need to consider the "level" of the SMO. In addition, if the SMO is on the community/regional, it is necessary to determine if the SMO is an indiginous or exogonous coalition. From this type of schema, a better understanding or resource acquisition, distribution, and use can be ascertained in terms of the SMO's emergence, maintenance, and success.

We should emphasize that many of the grassroots movements that emerge do survive, and they have success without money or very little money. This finding runs contrary to a basic assumption of the resource mobilization perspective. If the grassroots movement is analyzed in terms of the monetary resource of its broader based SMO, and considered in light of whether the grassroots movement belongs to an indiginous or exogonous coalition, perhaps part of this contradiction can be resolved.

Figure I

Indiginous Coalition SMO

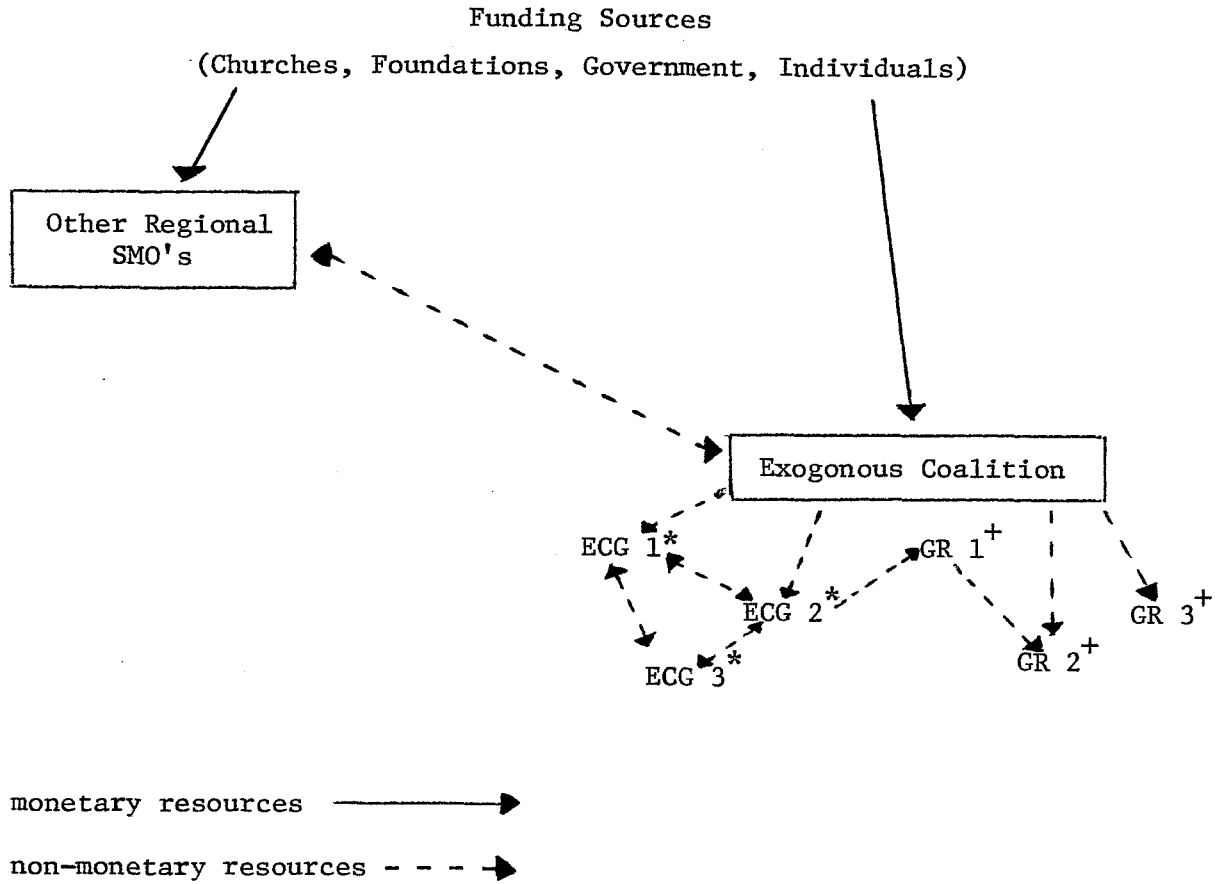


monetary resources —————>

non-monetary resources - - - - ->

Figure II

Exogonous Coalition SMO



*represents emergent citizen groups in disaster
+represents other grassroots movements

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