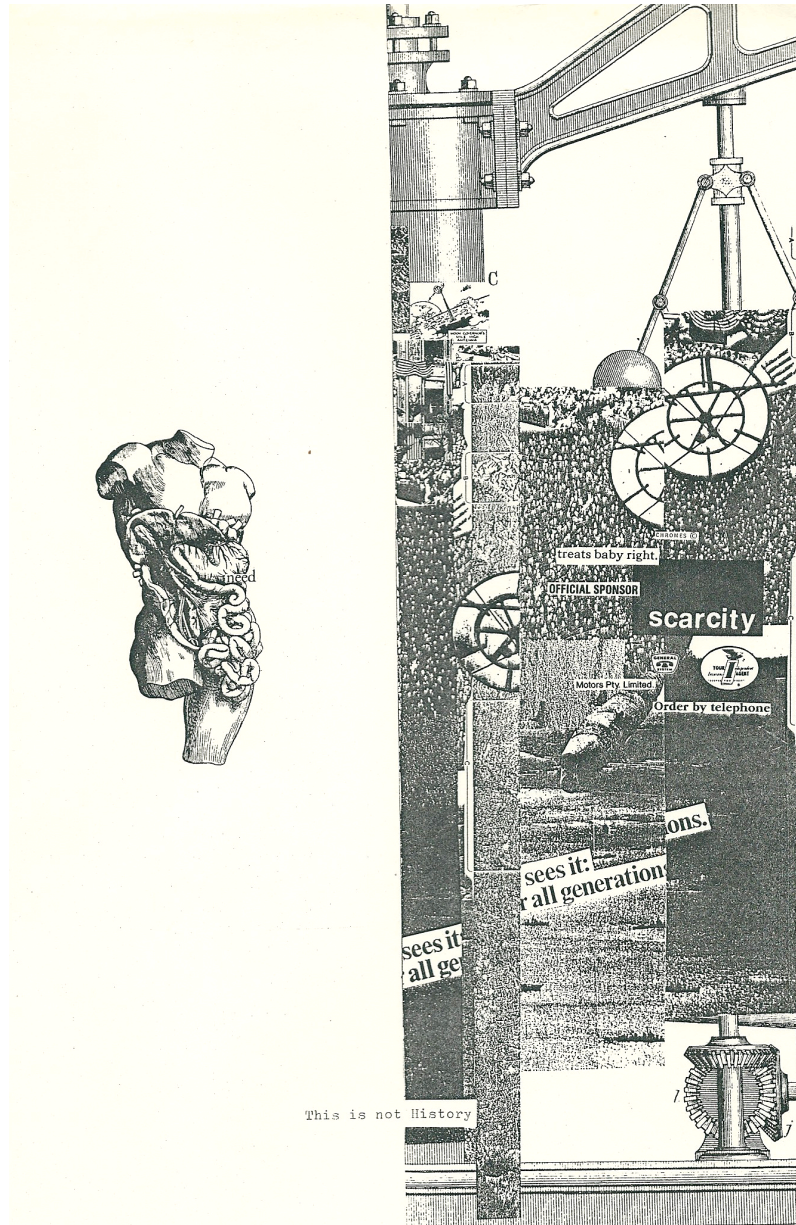


# Theorising Empowerment Practice from the Pacific and Indigenous Australia

Richard Barcham

October 2012

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of  
The Australian National University.



## Chapter 7

### Civil Action

“Dream, improvise, weave, stumble, curse, above all, hope.”

Charles Tilly, *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1991:600)

#### 7.1 The “s” and the “z”

Continuing the progression from universal need to organised groups, the present chapter now considers the third requirement: empowering organisations as instruments of social change. In the previous chapter, empowering groups were defined in terms of the control orientation of the group and whether this was primarily oriented to self-healing, formation of collective identity, or social change. These types of empowering groups imply a particular form of social action, being dramaturgical, normative and teleological. It was said that these action orientations represented limit cases of forms of communicative action, and that all types of empowering groups rely on restoration of communicative action for their effectiveness. In so doing, all groups share some of the characteristics of the limit cases. The self-help group evolved as a structural innovation to break down the disparity of power inherent in the mental health professional/patient relationship. Similarly, the case studies show that the social change group relies on an accumulation of trust and establishment of practices to build the relationships necessary for the risks involved in undertaking social action campaigns. In the present chapter, the focus is on groups acting as agencies of change in society. The final requirement of empowerment is to act to change structures that maintain a damaging disparity of power.

This chapter gives attention to the social movement literature from the United States, known as the Northern Tradition. This is so for three reasons. First, the comment was made in the previous chapter that study of social change organisations is sparse, with work in the field weighted towards study of bureaucracy, corporations and institutional forms of politics. The Northern Tradition is the exception to this. Secondly, two Americans, John Roughan and Barry Lalley, have been influential in three of the four case-study organisations that have been presented here. The case-study organisations have characteristics that reflect their cultural background, and it is consequently necessary to give

attention to literature from that tradition for the purpose of this research. Thirdly, in the course of interaction with academics for the present study, it was the author's experience that few Australian scholars in relevant fields are familiar with this Northern Tradition of social movement activism and the accompanying literature. Alinsky, for example, is not well known in Australia in the author's experience<sup>89</sup>. In the political context of the Westminster system, and in Australia with its compulsory voting, much political debate focuses on policy as it relates to the quality of government service delivery. From this perspective, it is difficult to grasp the power of concentrated wealth that can support Republicans to, for example, reject universal health care. In the context of Australian Westminster, where it is more often the politics of taxpayers than of citizens that matters, it is hard to imagine how such a proposal would ever appear on the electoral radar. From an Australian reading of the Northern literature, it appears that this Northern conservatism and its necessity of organized citizen action to achieve basic conditions and services governs much about the way organisations representing marginal interests operate in the United States, as recorded in this Northern literature (Alinsky 1971; Zald & McCarthy 1975; Piven & Cloward 1977; Tilly 1991; Stoeker 2008; Wallerstein & Duran 2008; Opp 2009). This cultural difference is highlighted by ambiguity in the use of "s" or "z" in organisation and organizing, a matter alluded to in Chapter 3. There, it was proposed that organisation refer to a structure of doing, and organization to the task at hand, and as far as possible, this usage is continued to highlight the difference. Organizing is intentionally engaged with social change, has ramifications for organisations, and must engage with the question of power as it exists outside the collectivity.

An introduction to this literature from the United States is therefore useful for the Australian audience for whom the present study is intended, and is also necessary for the complete interpretation of the case studies. Furthermore, at the final "level" of empowerment, this literature provides the entry point for the present study's interpretation of empowerment as social action and its interaction with organisational structures.

---

<sup>89</sup> In respect of this, Dr. Janet Hunt, a panellist for this thesis, comments that this work was better known in Australia in the 1970s than it is today.

## *7.2 The Northern Tradition*

In the 1980s, neo-liberalism swept the globe with a new religion of the virtues of free trade, flexible labour and active individualism, providing the template for competitive globalisation. With the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in 1981, neo-liberalism was installed as the ideal for the state apparatus, becoming the “dominant ideological rationalization for globalization and contemporary state reform” (Peck & Tickell 2002:381). In the course of the present study it has been noticeable that, with the exception of the fields of health and psychology and to a lesser extent management and education, talk of empowerment and the construction of alternative futures was greatly attenuated at this time. It is for this reason that much of the literature that provides the base for this study is from the 1970s, with a gap to more recent work in fewer fields. This is so much so that it has become one purpose of this study to revive a little of the work that was done at that time, such as that in the area of basic human need. This is in light of the fact that the bravado of neo-liberalism is on the wane in the face of decades of evidence showing global transformation that is both uncontrolled and anthropogenic, with consequences that are not predictable on current knowledge. As the new millennium is yet young, it is time to consider again how to embrace the future with alternatives to the free market and the minimalist state.

In the 1960s, civil rights activism in the United States inspired a new vein of academic literature that showed a deep interest in the participation of ordinary people in the process of making knowledge through the popular rise of oral history, collective biography and participatory action research (Tilly 1991). As alluded to earlier in this study, this interest was present across the globe as new constructions of the process of international development were promoted in the global South, and also in Asia and the Pacific (Freire 1970; Streeten 1981; Howlett 1985; Roughan 1986; Fals-Borda 1987; Uphoff 1988; Rahman 1993). By the 1970s, authors such as Johann Galtung, Erich Fromm, E.F. Schumacher, Bertrand Russell, Paul Erlich, and Ivan Illich were putting the people of the North on notice about the limited nature of a modern future. The language of grassroots development, bottom-up process and empowerment reached its height. Today, it can best be said of this intellectual effort that it now has “its ranks thinned and

sometimes limping” (Tilly 1991:593). Much credit is due to those in the fields of health and psychology for keeping the spirit alive in professional practice (Minkler & Wallerstein 2008).

The highly developed literature of organisation and organizing in the Northern Tradition provides a basis from which to explore social change in the present study. In the Northern Tradition, these groups have been broadly characterised as “social movement organizations” (Zald & Ash 1966).

### 7.2.1 Zald and Ash – A Starting Point

The year after Mancur Olson wrote *The Logic of Collective Action* discussed in Chapter 6, Mayer Zald and Roberta Ash contributed their investigation of social movement organisations with a critique of the “Weber-Michels model” of “goal transformation, a shift to organizational maintenance and oligarchization” (Zald & Ash 1966:327). Zald and Ash drew on Selznick, who was interested in organisation as a consensual “cooperative system” (Selznick 1948:28). Selznick viewed formal organisation as “the structural expression of rational action”. This expression is “an *economy*; at the same time it is an *adaptive social structure*” that has both “rational” and “non-rational” dimensions (Selznick 1948:25, italics in original). For Zald and Ash, social movement organisations are defined by:

- goals to change society;
- purposive incentives predominate, solidary incentives are secondary;
- membership recruitment that can be:
  - inclusive (low participation threshold, “a pledge”) or
  - exclusive (high participation and commitment, “subject to organizational discipline and orders”) (Zald & Ash 1966:331).

The environment of the organisation is made up of its members and backers, including financial supporters, other organisations in the field and “the larger society” which “may contain the target structures or norms which the movement organization wishes to change” (Zald & Ash 1966:330). This is consistent with the view of the modern community developed in the previous chapter.

Zald and Ash’s definition was important because it was broad enough to include “proselytizing and usually messianic religious groups, meliorative political groups and conspiratorial parties” (Zald & Ash 1966:329), placing the view of

organisation and its purpose in a field other than business, management or bureaucracy.

### 7.2.2 *McCarthy and Zald – Resource Mobilisation*

Later, McCarthy and Zald (McCarthy & Zald 1977) introduced their influential “resource mobilization” approach to organizing. This approach places greater emphasis on organisation per se because it makes a closer examination of the structures in organisations that give expression to grievances, rather than the gripe itself. This is because they found “little or no support for expected relationships between objective or subjective deprivation and the outbreak of movement phenomena and willingness to participate in collective action” (McCarthy & Zald 1977:1214).

Finding a weak correlation between the existence of grievance and social movements, McCarthy and Zald assume “the ubiquity and constancy of mobilizing grievances” (quoted in Snow et.al. 1986:465). Having an assumption that discontent has causes that are structurally part of society, the task of organization is to give expression to this discontent. Described as dissent in the present study, it is a phenomenon that flows “directly out of a population’s central political processes” (McCarthy & Zald 1977:1215). Having the vehicle for the independent expression of dissent is essential to mobilisation.<sup>90</sup>

For McCarthy and Zald, organisation is necessary to aggregate resources. This requires:

- a minimal form of organisation;
- involvement on the part of individuals and organisations from outside the collectivity:
  - “crude” supply and demand model is sometimes applied to the flow of resources toward and away from specific social movements;
- sensitivity to the importance of costs and rewards in explaining individual and organizational involvement (McCarthy & Zald 1977:1216).<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> The author notes from experience, supported by the Family WellBeing case study, that the lack of independent Indigenous organizational vehicles in Australia is a substantial barrier to promoting empowering practice. The ubiquitous presence of government in the lives of Aboriginal people continues to be as debilitating as the original acts of colonisation.

<sup>91</sup> This recalls Rappaport and narrative in empowerment as a resource, to be discussed further below.

This work is in the Left tradition of the United States, concerned with “organization”, “tactics”, “mobilization” and “targets” (McCarthy & Zald 1977:1217). This brings attention to “processes by which persons and institutions from outside of the collectivity under consideration become involved” (McCarthy & Zald 1977:1215). This recalls the boundary established by Lash between the players and supporters in a field, and the contribution of each to the way a public good is received in society. That is, through the specialist rules of the players (Selznick’s economy), and as the supporters in the stands who convey how the event is received in society (the adaptive social structure). The question of production of public good also recalls Olson from the previous chapter, who is cited by McCarthy and Zald. They propose resource mobilisation as an alternative to the “challenge” of the “traditional” view of Olson (Olson 1965), with its reliance on incentives, cost reduction and other benefits to explain collective behaviour. Olson’s logic predicts that each individual with a grievance will wait for someone else to take the risks and pay the price of generating the public good of opposition, and thus highlights the obstacles to conflict group formation. The resource mobilisation approach of McCarthy and Zald builds on the work of Oberschall, who viewed mobilisation of collective action as “concerned with how people with little individual power collectively resist or challenge established and organized groups that have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo” (Oberschall 1973:102). Oberschall drew attention to the role of organisations in mobilising grievance – through being a source of “outside help, both in the form of leadership and material resources” (Oberschall 1973:115) – as the means to explain how mass opposition in the form of a social movement comes about. From this perspective, Oberschall extends Olson’s emphasis on incentives by proposing that within the organised collective, “individual goods and selective incentives [...] account for the emergence of leaders and activists in high risk situations” (Oberschall 1973:116).

Incentives continue to play an important part in the argument of McCarthy and Zald, and, in spite of their efforts to the contrary, they open the door for Michel’s oligarchy to become evident. Professional cadre, professional staff, workers and transitory teams are classifications they develop based on individual access to decision-making and commitment of time. They use these classifications to define the necessary incentives applicable to each class, from selective material

incentives (for those essential to organisational maintenance and therefore continuity of resources) to solidary incentives (“selective benefits of a non-material sort” for those with more limited participation). This view has been supported empirically for the United States by Bailis (1974) and Gamson (1975), as cited by McCarthy and Zald.

From the point of view of the present study, Olson was employed in making a taxonomy of groups, and his classifications have been applied with some efficacy at that level in the previous chapter. The challenge presented by Olson bears on the truth that “many, if not most, sets of people who share a grievance or interest fail to act on it” (McAdam et.al. 2001:15). As discussed in relation to incentives in the previous chapter, it is the view of this study that the social model adopted by Olson, placing as it does so much emphasis on incentives of myriad kinds, is not perfectly useful in understanding the modern social movement. While paying employees and contractors to perform the tasks of the organisation is part of the operations of the case-study organisations, this is not primarily offered as incentive but rather as recompense for time forgone from other economic activity. The use of the term “stipend” to describe the payment received by the Solomon Island Development Trust paraprofessionals emphasises this. The Lak experience clearly demonstrated that “incentives” can mean very different things to different people, and that their effectiveness is subject to competition. As discussed in the previous chapters, in the circumstances of a group that requires power to meet its social needs, motivation is a necessary condition for successfully empowering beneficiaries, the push factor rather than the pull. This is why this thesis has begun from an image of the person, for motivation must be accounted for in individual psychology.

However, the resource mobilisation approach also has some benefits for the interpretation of the case studies. The emphasis on aggregation of resources brings the matter of fundraising and donors to the fore, in terms of both quantum and the quality of the relationship. Involvement with those outside the collectivity includes a relationship of donors and supporters as constituents, called “conscience adherents”.<sup>92</sup> McCarthy and Zald define a social movement organisation as “a complex, or formal, organization [sic], which identifies its goals

---

<sup>92</sup> If Aboriginal Australians are to be players on the field of white Australian politics, then the votes of conscience adherents are essential to their cause, as they lack electoral power as a group.

with the preferences of a social movement” (McCarthy & Zald 1977:1218). This appears to be some distance from the “minimal form” required for aggregation of resources, but it is the emphasis on goals that is being noted. At first appearance, the emphasis on organization having “*target goals*” (McCarthy & Zald 1977:1220, italics in original) and achieving them is not strongly evident in the documentation of the case-study organisations. The case studies suggest that in the circumstances of a disparity of power, organization necessarily comes first from the structural innovation of participants in a group. This innovation is cognitive, linguistic and enlightening. While the proposal that discontent is always present and only requires a vehicle for its expression appears sound, from the point of view of motivation, it must also be true that mobilisation of a client or “beneficiary” base through an exchange of power requires relinquishing some kinds of organisational goals. As has been shown by the case studies, at the social level the empowering organisation must convey to beneficiaries evidence of the organisation’s structural innovation that can give the beneficiary power in decision-making about organisational goals specific to his or her constituency. The case studies show that it is a purpose of the empowering organisational vehicle to provide means and access to resources, but not to set specific goals on behalf of constituents.

To clarify the meaning of target goals in the Northern Tradition, it is necessary to move from organisational goals (in the sense of objectives) to tasks. These tasks are oriented to organisational maintenance through the ability to attract “conscience adherents”, including “mobilizing supporters, neutralizing and/or transforming mass and elite publics into sympathizers, achieving change in targets” (McCarthy & Zald 1977:1217)<sup>93</sup>. It can be seen that specific target goals should always be able to shift and change in the successful campaign organisation. For the case study organisations, the goal referred to is not a target but is instead the organisational identification with those having a grievance. This is the use of an organisation’s collective power to speak with the voice of those who are marginalised. It is this organisational goal of advocacy that stands out as having a bearing on the case studies. In the empowering organisation, the task is that of assembling a narrative to give voice to those who are silenced by feeling

---

<sup>93</sup> McCarthy and Zald quite rightly point out that this level of organisation requires a substantial amount of money and a massive collective effort.

powerless. In the case-study organisations, promulgating this narrative through tools built the base that gave a mandate for advocacy. It was an important characteristic to seek out for recruitment those who were motivated to want change – whom McCarthy and Zald refer to as “adherents”, those who then make up an “exclusive” group. The importance of the paraprofessional as a role model, the organizer, is underlined in McCarthy and Zald as the means by which the organisation identifies with an existing grievance, providing the basis for creation of a social movement.

Lastly, McCarthy and Zald propose that a social movement consists of groups that can be identified as “mass or elite and conscience or beneficiary bystander publics, adherents, constituents, and opponents” (McCarthy & Zald 1977:1223). They take the economic path and view social movement organisations as parts of an industry and like an economic sector, their “crude supply and demand model” applied to “issue entrepreneurs and organizations” (McCarthy & Zald 1977:1215). Looking at this from a European perspective, it begins to look like Bourdieu’s “field” as cited by Lash.

### *7.2.3 Snow, Rochford, Worden, Benford – Frame Alignment*

The psychological aspect of support for and participation in social movement organisations is pursued by Snow and others in a further influential move forward in the social movement field (Snow et.al. 1986). Snow et al. draw attention to the fact that the resource mobilisation approach avoids the analysis of discontent by assuming grievance as a given. Not that they believe the proposition is false. Instead, quoting a conference paper presented by Doug McAdam in 1982, as with the psychological aspect of incentives and their interpretation, Snow et al. propose that the assumption ignores “the enormous variability in the subjective meanings people attach to their objective situations” (Snow et.al. 1986:466). This is a view supported by the present study.

Snow and others assert that McCarthy and Zald’s proposal that “a social movement is 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 & Zald 1977:1217) is not adequate. The process of identifying preference is an interpretive task in which individuals and groups “frame the world in which they are acting”. This process affects the organisation’s choice of strategic action, resource acquisition and temporal

viability (Snow et.al. 1986:466). Building on Goffman (Goffman 1974), they propose four types of “frame alignment”, being frame bridging, frame amplification (which involves both values and beliefs), frame extension and frame transformation (which engenders a shift from “fatalism or self-blaming to structure-blaming, from victim-blaming to system blaming”) (Snow et.al. 1986:474). In one variety or another, a frame alignment between an organisation and “a particular domain of life” of its proposed beneficiaries is necessary for movement participation. Frame alignment processes give “consideration of both social psychological and structural/organizational factors” (Snow et.al. 1986:464).<sup>94</sup> Again building on previous influential work, they cite Piven and Cloward, who emphasise that

for a protest movement to arise out of the traumas of everyday life, people have to perceive the deprivation and disorganization they experience as both wrong and subject to redress. The social arrangements that are ordinarily perceived as just and immutable must come to seem both unjust and mutable (Piven & Cloward 1977:12).

This “interpretive task” appears remarkably similar to what the Southern tradition would call “conscientization”. As has been shown, conscientization is linked to understanding power relationships and individual empowerment, introducing empowerment as crucial to group organisation aimed at social change. “Framing” is another word for Freire’s literacy. In the present study, it is regarded as the outcome of communicative action that provides for the validated mutual understanding necessary for people to act and participate.

#### *7.2.4 McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly – Contention*

Finally, the work of these previous authors in the Northern Tradition is given general application through the Northern study of social movements not only in the United States, but also those past movements occurring on a national scale in Europe, the former Soviet Union, Africa, the Subcontinent and South and Central

---

<sup>94</sup> Snow here provides an example of the use of “organization” as a potential source of confusion for those outside of the Northern Tradition. Snow refers to “structural/organizational factors”. It does not appear he is talking about organisations in the sense used in the present study. In the studies of cults and the peace movement by Snow and others, it is the phenomenon of effective movement mobilisation – organizing – that is of central interest. For those of us outside the Northern Tradition, it is important to always bear in mind the Northern culture of civil action when reading the language of the North.

America (Tarrow 1998; McAdam et.al. 2001). Sidney Tarrow draws attention to “collective challenge” or “contention” as central to defining social change organization. In the present study, this has been defined as dissent. He identifies contention as possibly “the only resource movements control” (Tarrow 1998:5). Recalling Chester Barnard’s common purpose, willingness and communication, to define the social movement, Tarrow nominates “common purpose” – meaning “common or overlapping interests and values”, “solidarity and collective identity”, the “deep-rooted feelings” that are tapped into by movement leaders, and “sustained contentious politics” – as his essential components. He proposes that the outcome of cycles of contention generated by the interaction of insurgents and elites is dependent not on the justice or persuasive power of a movement, but on its breadth and on the reaction of elites and other groups (Tarrow 1998:7). With respect to Snow et al.’s concept of framing, Tarrow identifies the organisational work of framing, which is cognitive and evaluative, in addition to framing fulfilling the need for “emotional energy” in social change. As was shown in the case studies, no significant transformation of talk into action can occur without emotional energy. Quoting Verta Taylor (Taylor 1995), he writes, “emotions are the site for articulating the links between cultural ideas, structural inequality, and individual action” (Tarrow 1998:111). Once again, this emotional charge highlights the importance of having that “image of being human” in a construction of social change organisations to forge the links between individual psychology, motivation and concerted collective action. Lastly, Tarrow contributes the idea that societies have “repertoires of contention” that are “culturally inscribed and socially communicated” (Tarrow 1998:20). Workers strike, Parisians build barricades, peasants break machines or seize property. These are cultural resources that are available to movements; mobilisation through repertoires of contention is deeply linked to social identity.

Thus, this “classical” social movement agenda in the Northern Tradition shows a progressive move towards inclusion of psychosocial factors in mobilising constituencies through organisations and organizing. It considers the following factors:

- social change processes;
- political opportunities and constraints;
- forms of organisation;
- framing;
- repertoires of contention (McAdam et.al. 2001:41).

McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly took these factors to the next stage by employing their “touchstone” episodes of contention: the American Civil Rights movement, the French revolution, and the French and Italian student movements, along with twelve other outbreaks of social change across time and from around the globe. Regarded as “arguably the most important book on social movements written in the past two decades” (Tindall 2003:481), their work *Dynamics of Contention* brings organization firmly into the realms of sociology and political science. In moving towards a dynamic model of mobilisation, they seek to identify “the dynamic mechanisms that bring [the above list of] variables into relation with one another and with other significant actors” (McAdam et.al. 2001:43). Furthermore, they do so from a relational perspective – that is, “interpersonal networks, interpersonal communication and [...] the negotiation of identities” figure centrally in their focus “not on the boxes, but on the arrows that join them”. In common with this study, they view “social interaction, social ties, communication and conversation not merely as expressions of structure, rationality, consciousness or culture, but as active sites of creation and change” (McAdam et.al. 2001:22). Like many before them, they take this approach as a means to overcome the micro-macro divide in understanding actors, identity and action. They solve the problem with an object-object type approach. In their view, actors are seen as “networks” of shared “histories, cultures and collective connections with other actors” (McAdam et.al. 2001:132).

The work establishes a large and evaluatively useful vocabulary of contention, including attribution of threats and opportunities, social appropriation, identity shift, category formation, radicalisation, repression, convergence, infringement of elite interests, opportunity/threat spirals, co-optation, network dissolution, diffusion, emulation, brokerage, attribution of similarity, and more. The work has been criticised for not adequately showing how this panoply of mechanisms is connected (Tindall 2003). Without entering into that debate, the present study sees this work as useful because it draws “rough parallels between contentious

politics and conversation” (McAdam et.al. 2001:142). This brings attention to what is linguistically conative in building contention, making a parallel with the discussion of Habermas in the previous chapters. They provide good evidence of the significance of “newly-identified political actors” who “employ innovative collective action” in social change. This is closely allied to the discussion of structural innovation that arose from the case studies. These collective actors define the difference between institutionalised contention and that which is “transgressive” (McAdam et.al. 2001:8). McAdam et al. place innovation in relation to repertoires of contention, drawing attention to contention as social “performances – as scripted interactions in the improvisatory manner of jazz or street theatre” (McAdam et.al. 2001:49) that provide the opportunity for appropriation and creation of symbolic meanings. Expressing this in the terms employed in the previous chapter, the public good of structural innovation produced by the group leads through teleological action to performance. Socially, this performance in turn leads to further mobilization – provided the organisation exists to sustain contention.

McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly’s relational approach as sociologists places strong emphasis on the interpretive efforts of groups of actors. Thus they move from the structural and strategic language of political opportunity, forms, frames and repertoires to a view of mobilisation that, “like all social life”, is “suffused throughout with collective efforts and interpretation and social construction” (McAdam et.al. 2001:48).

So, the path to arrive at this dynamic and relational view of organisation and social movements from the earlier emphasis on goals and incentives is clear. What is also clear is that this evidence-based trend invites further sociological approaches to understanding organisation and its function in social change. What has emerged from the Northern Tradition is both a set of mechanisms, the “boxes”, and dynamic processes, the “arrows that connect them”. One does not replace the other but sets the known mechanisms in motion. That is, there is a logic of organization, Selznick’s “economy”, and there is a set of interpretive dynamics that are communicative, the “adaptive social structure”. As already indicated, this route leads back to Jurgen Habermas.

### 7.3 *New Social Movements*

When looking across the fields that seek to engage with social change in the Northern Tradition – from community psychology and community health to social movement studies – Jurgen Habermas makes a surprisingly limited appearance. As referred to in the introduction to this thesis, and in what seems to be an isolated instance, Habermas appears in community-based participatory research, in the field of community health (Minkler & Wallerstein 2008). Here, the concepts of system and lifeworld are used to caution researchers about their relationship with communities, as researchers “often reinforce community member roles as clients and consumers”, these being derived from system aspects of the relationship (Wallerstein & Duran 2008:30). Habermas is employed conclusively to justify statements such as, for example, that dialogue “begins to shape a new social reality” (Springett & Wallerstein 2008:204) or that emancipatory process emerges from people “speaking, reasoning, and coordinating action together, unconstrained and uncoerced” (Bradbury & Reason 2008:229). Given that the *Theory of Communicative Action* claims to provide a general social theory that has been shown to be applicable to empowerment, it seems appropriate to attempt to progress a more comprehensive application of this work to the conceptual understanding of social change.

In his essay *New Social Movements*, Habermas uses a snapshot of an “objectified, descriptive nature” to show “various trends in the Federal Republic of Germany” to which he applies some of the concepts he would later elucidate in the *Theory of Communicative Action*. He begins with an approach to the “new social movement” that mirrors the concerns raised by McCarthy and Zald (Habermas 1981). In seeking to understand social movements, McCarthy and Zald turned away from a view that emphasises deprivation and grievance to one that emphasises resources for mobilisation. It is Habermas’s view that this change in theoretical orientation was present in a social change that had already occurred, and that “new conflicts are not sparked by *problems of distribution*, but concern *the grammar of forms of life*” (Habermas 1981:33, italics in original). Unlike previous social change movements that were “offensive” in character – such as the American civil rights movement, “long since concluded in the particularistic self-affirmation of black sub-cultures”, and feminism, “deeply rooted in the acknowledged universalist foundations of morality and legality” – the new

movements are ones of “resistance and retreat”.<sup>95</sup> These movements “seek to stem or block the formal, organised spheres of action in favour of communicative structures” (Habermas 1981:34). These resistance movements are either conservative and preoccupied with the defence of “traditional and social property”, or of a distinctive kind that is “a defensive which already operates on the basis of a rationalized life-world and tries out new forms of cooperation and community”. However, both are concerned with the novel problem of the critique of growth, which has been brought about by global risks that “explode the dimensions of the lifeworld”. Habermas suggests that previous movements have not provided a repertoire for this type of protest. Instead, it must consist of, in the language of McAdam et al., “innovative collective action”. It is precisely “the roles of the employed and the consumer, the client and the citizen” that are the target of protest (Habermas 1981:35). These phenomena, says Habermas, “correspond to the hypothesis of internal colonization”, which arises at “the seam between system and lifeworld” (Habermas 1981:36). In the *Theory of Communicative Action*, this is developed into “colonization of the lifeworld”.

### 7.3.1 Colonisation of the Lifeworld

In his exposition of the process of social evolution, Habermas refers to the means by which system and lifeworld become differentiated “in the sense that the complexity of the one and the rationality of the other grow”, each becoming differentiated from the other at the same time (Habermas 1987:153). The place of communicative action in social evolution is that it serves the transmission and renewal of cultural knowledge, the continuation of stable institutions and the socialisation of accountable persons through the reproduction of the symbolic structures of the lifeworld.

He identifies that new social structures take shape at “higher levels of integration” – that is, in the circumstances where the lifeworld is increasingly rationalised into “formally organised action systems” (Habermas 1987:154). These systems are ultimately institutionalised as “media-steered subsystems” that take on the aspect of a “natural symbol” (Douglas 1970), such that members behave towards them as if they possessed a natural reality. Money and power, in particular judicial process, are Habermas’s cases in point. As complexity

---

<sup>95</sup> “Retreat” in the sense of withdrawal.

increases, everyday language “gets overloaded in the end and replaced by delinguistified media” (Habermas 1987:155) in order to relieve communicative action of the burden of continually establishing mutual understanding. In this process, communicative action – that is, action oriented to mutual understanding – gains increasing independence from normative contexts. Recalling Michels’s “iron law of oligarchy” (Michels 1962), for Habermas

[t]he irresistible irony of the world-historical process of enlightenment becomes evident: the rationalisation of the lifeworld makes possible a heightening of systemic complexity, which becomes so hypertrophied that it unleashes system imperatives that burst the capacity of the lifeworld they instrumentalise (Habermas 1987:155).

However, unlike Michels, for Habermas this is no iron law. To the extent that normative validity claims are institutionalised, they are also objectified, and so made subject to the application of the critical potential of speech. Media-steered subsystems are “no longer legitimated per se through religious and metaphysical worldviews”. Habermas allows action aimed at empowerment to be freed from normative restrictions to “the extent that it becomes linked to flows of information from the scientific system” (Habermas 1987:196). That is, to the extent that the group narrative is evidence-based. The exemplar that emerged from the case studies was the use of a timeline. This is the foundation of the effectiveness of existential consciousness. Every utterance that emerges from habit rather than the evidence of the moment must be subject to the test of reality.

Thus it can be seen that as communicative action is progressively relieved by systematic organisation, a growing complexity arises from the increasing rationalisation of the lifeworld. Relating this framework to organisation based on the forms of social action described above, as different structures of the lifeworld (person, society and culture) are made thematic, the forms of action (dramaturgical, normative, teleological) demand increasingly complex use of steering media, in particular relationships of power to facilitate decision-making, money to sustain operations, and rules of governance to relieve linguistically developed mutual agreement. Habermas “call[s] ‘formally organized’ all social relations located in media-steered subsystems so far as these relations are *first generated by positive law*” (Habermas 1987:309, italics in original). This view

identifies organisation as an entity with rules and procedures in which the groups have codified some of their practices. However, what is also evident is that if the structural complexity of these media-steered subsystems is to maintain its anchors in the lifeworld, their apparent normative quality must be subject to discourse. This is the cycle of action and reflection so often linked to empowerment. It is essential because it subverts the institutionalisation of normative validity claims based on the structural quality of steering media.<sup>96</sup>

For all empowering groups, the restoration of communicative action – that is, the achievement of shared understanding based on tripartite validity claims anchored in the lifeworld – is *the* outcome. Put another way, one common purpose is to achieve a narrative anchored in experience. This narrative makes transparent that the structural force of system imperatives is based on the apparent normative validity<sup>97</sup> of subsystems, such as money, power or ideology. This purpose is a necessary condition of the empowering group seeking to achieve social change. The specific actions and/or results that follow from this are second-order aims. Also, in practice, the case studies show the force of the potential influence of sources of funds and the accompanying power relations in shaping the organisations themselves. Under these circumstances, it is the common values of donors and recipients that are emphasised. However, when these take the form of formal organisation, they have the characteristics of media-steered subsystems. That steering media in general do not present an “iron law” is shown in the case studies by the rules and codes of behaviour of those organisations, which are anchored in the lifeworld of members as personally held values. This is seen in the essential characteristic of the paraprofessionals as role models. The tripartite claim to validity must include subjective sincerity, and thus the essential public goods of trust and risk. In the procedures of teleological action, codes of behaviour are given priority over guiding statements and goal orientations for the organisation; it is the question of who is “on the bus” as opposed to where is the bus going. Only by emphasising values as the basis for action is the potential created for structural innovation, a public good that is a requirement for the exercise of social empowerment.

---

<sup>96</sup> The tension resulting from this was evident in the Bismarck Ramu Group. Less established members identified the core group as management, “boss”. Time and again, this mindset produced struggle with management.

<sup>97</sup> Freire’s placement of “false consciousness”.

#### 7.4 Power and Empowerment

However, while Habermas is well-regarded for his views on procedures, it is in relation to his account of power that he has been criticised (Flyvbjerg 1998). While the importance of shared values has been emphasised up to here, it cannot be denied that the encounter of the collective with others outside is an encounter that is centrally about power. Thus far, the present study has placed power in the context of understanding motivated participation, called control. In terms of control, this power is realised in communicative action as consensus. The social encounter, however, requires an expansion of the “scope of the concept of power” (Lukes 2005:72).

This discussion of power returns first to the work of the Northern Tradition. For the collective acting for social change, the Northern Tradition contributes an idea about *injustice*. Groups “frame the world in which they are acting” as unjust through an interpretive task in which what is accepted is instead seen as wrong, mutable and capable of correction by agency outside of the collective. Stephen Lukes also finds this view definitive. “If we think of powerlessness as an injustice,” he says, we do so because “we believe there are those in a position to relieve or remedy it” (Lukes 2005:68). It is these agents the collective seeks to influence, bringing those inside and outside the collective into a power relation. Lukes specifies that this involves:

- assessments of the extent of the agents’ power overall;
- comparisons of its varying extent over time (increase/decline);
- comparisons of the overall power of different agents (Lukes 2005:72).

Making such assessments requires understanding what is meant by power in empowerment not only in terms of control, but also in terms of disparity. As Lukes points out, power is “one of those concepts that is ineradicably value laden” (Lukes 2005:30). Grasping contending meanings of power is not helped by the way in which the single word “power” is, in English, commonly used in such a variety of ways and contexts: the power of the body to heal itself; the power of the ascetic to resist pain or privation; the power of resources of wealth or military might; the visible power of making decisions; the invisible power of social structures and power as conflict or struggle ... one word for a great many meanings.

#### *7.4.1 The Scope of the Concept of Power*

Power being such a contested concept in Western cosmology begs the question whether anything can usefully be said about the nature of power relations that is universal. As a universalist approach has been the basis of this thesis so far, this is a matter of importance. In looking at the cultural contexts of the case-study organisations, great differences emerge. As would be expected, these differences bear particularly on the relations between the organisational community and those outside of it. Because these centrally involve relationships of power, a way must be found to specify these relations.

In their examination of power relations, Freire, Foucault, Bourdieu and Lukes all interrogate the matter of cognitive and moral relativism, a matter that emerges in the consideration of interests as a dimension of power (Freire 1970; Lukes 1974; Habermas 1984; Lash 1994; Flyvbjerg 1998; Lukes 2005). It is an issue that divides them. In considering social empowerment in a cross-cultural setting, this is an essential issue to study in greater depth. To examine this problem, it is useful to first recall the case studies and their analysis to date.

The question that is the primary concern of these authors is stated thus: “how do the powerful secure the compliance of those they dominate?” (Lukes 2005:110). This approach draws attention to the invasion not only of physical but also ideational space. The two Melanesian examples show solid evidence of this. This invasion has its most vivid manifestation in the cargo cult. Both of the Melanesian-based organisations place strong emphasis on “changing cargo thinking” as essential to restoring self-reliance. But Fiji and Australia demonstrate something quite different. In Fiji there is good evidence that missionaries actively promoted a false view of Indigenous history, one that took hold in the collective conscious. This was an active use of their control of education and the public media. There were also things in Fijian culture (as it was at the time of the arrival of the missions), such as a caste system, that continue to produce an internal domination of subjects by chiefs; then there is the influence of the churches. This complexity of power relations, and the multiple sources for legitimation of authority, were discussed in Chapter 3. This appears far more complex than the compliant/dominant or oppressor/oppressed view proposed by the authors above. When we look to Australia, the situation is different again. It can be argued that the domination of Aboriginal people was secured first by active physical

force and is now secured by their minority status. Aboriginal Australians have so little numerical power in the polity, they must rely on securing that which can be carried by moral force in the settler population. As a consequence, policy-making deals with the appeasement of settler interests, and well-meaning whitefellas continue to write the rules for "how we should help the Aborigine".

The point to be made here is that the central question of most of these principle authors on power – that of securing compliance – appears difficult to apply to these colonised peoples. Either it appears as not quite the right question because the dichotomy powerful/powerless is an inadequate place to start, or the plurality of possible answers is so large that the question does not serve the interests of understanding beyond emphasising *how* different circumstances can be in different cultures and settings. This suggests that these authors have a view of power that does not lend itself to being universalised and applied to different cultural contexts. As Flyvbjerg notes, however, Habermas claims himself as the exception to this in seeking “a universally constituted philosophy” (Flyvbjerg 1998:212). This is a matter of interest considering that *The Theory of Communicative Action* has thus far stood up well as a sociological model of empowerment.

The engagement between pluralist and universalist approaches was first introduced in Chapter 5. In the face of the diversity of contexts experienced by the case-study organisations, this matter again comes to the fore. In his critique of Habermas, Flyvbjerg makes the common objection to universalism: that it “ought to be subject to empirical verification”. The ideal speech situation is just that: “utopian”, and therefore not subject to objective assessment. With no objective way to separate power and rhetoric from consensus in communication, says Flyvbjerg, “the better argument, and with it communicative rationality, is empirically empty”, and “the matter must be settled by the concrete examination of the case at hand” (Flyvbjerg 1998:216). To the contrary, the present study has above cited Habermas in support of the use of evidence, the test of reality in the tradition of Hegel. Flyvbjerg’s objection parallels the objection to universalist approaches made by Wetherly to Doyal in Gough’s proposal for basic human need: that it lacks specification and is therefore unrealisable. Earlier basic human need authors referred to, such as Streeten, pointed out the problem of specification as leading to the basket of needs becoming impoverished for this

reason. Communicative rationality involves radically taking the stance of the community of hearers and speakers,<sup>98</sup> a phenomenon referred to in this chapter in terms of frame alignment and advocacy. The endless plurality of “the case at hand” leaves no obvious space for moral objection, or understanding the nature of right action. Pluralism necessarily proposes the counterfactual and, along with it, “false” consciousness. Universalism, on the other hand, invites reflexivity. The argument in favour of universalism and the necessity of having an image of being human is dealt with most extensively by Martha Nussbaum, in her reconciliation of basic need to Sen’s capabilities approach. With respect to Habermas and ideal types, let it for now be said that ideals do not appear contrary to empowerment. Nevertheless, it is also clearly necessary that the matter of power relations in empowerment be dealt with. However, Habermas’s other failing, says Flyvbjerg, is that communicative rationality “is rooted in an insufficient concept of power” (Flyvbjerg 1998:215).<sup>99</sup>

Flyvbjerg’s criticism rings true. Habermas’s concentration on consensus risks obscuring conflict and the exercise of power. As Flyvbjerg says, “in power terms, we are speaking of ‘strategic’ versus ‘constitution’ thinking, about struggle versus control, conflict versus consensus” (Flyvbjerg 1990:228). In the present study, to date the emphasis has been on the latter, based on the case studies and the additional empirical support that has been presented. It is the “control factor” that has been primarily identified in relation to empowerment. However, at the point where an organisation seeks to influence social outcomes as a requirement of empowerment, at least at this point dissent inevitably involves conflict. The case studies show that in practice, power as the ability to determine the outcome of conflict needs to be considered. There must be recognition of the risks of placing participants in empowerment into situations that are highly resistant to change. These risks demand a good account of conflict and struggle, those matters

---

<sup>98</sup> In addition to his comments in relation to anthropology in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas makes the following observation in *New Social Movements*: “This chapter addresses the question as to how the issues raised by critical theory in the 1930s can be made relevant again today under different circumstances. This explains the objectified, descriptive nature of my remarks. They are not intended to substitute for a political analysis. Had I wanted to provide the latter, of course, I would have had to write from the vantage point of an active participant” (Habermas 1981:33).

<sup>99</sup> The fact that a discussion of power has been delayed this long is perhaps some evidence of this. Thus far, the definition implicit in the present study has been viewing power in terms of “the control factor”.

of power.

To build this account, and to consider power in the context of communicative rationality, first reconsider the question posed above by these authors on power: “how do the powerful secure the compliance of those they dominate?” Knowing the great diversity of use of the word ‘power’ in the English language, Lukes recommends his readers to first make a judgment about “the scope of the concept of power one is using” as a “lens” to look for power. A judgment must also be made about the “significance of the outcomes agents are capable of bringing about” (Lukes 2005:72). In an account of empowerment, the pressing question in relation to action that requires these judgments is not first in relation to domination, but rather in relation to how people can achieve greater autonomy and control. The question that Lukes suggests, “how can the excluded and marginalized be empowered?”, presents itself as looking at power from the opposite end of the lens from that which is generally used. In his criticism, Flyvbjerg clearly states the perspective:

Habermas’ definitions of discourse ethics and communicative rationality ... ‘establishes a *procedure* based on presuppositions and designed to guarantee the impartiality of the process of judging’ (Habermas 1990:122). Habermas is a universalistic, ‘top-down’ moralist as concerns process [...] Conversely, as regards content, Habermas is a ‘bottom-up’ situationalist: what is right and true in a given communicative process is determined solely by the participants in that process (Flyvbjerg 1998:214, italics in original).

Leaving the former argument and taking instead this latter virtue as the basis for the concept of power in empowerment emphasises subjective experience as the starting point for analysing power. Consistent with the approach taken throughout this study, “bottom-up” is both an absolute theoretical and practical necessity in empowerment. This view first regards the issues over which the dissent group can determine the outcome. As discussed in Chapter 6, these include control over resources from which the group produces public goods. To this can be added, from the Northern Tradition, issue framing, mobilisation and repertoires of contention, called here “performance” (McAdam et.al. 2001:49).

In the view of the present study, the logical scope of power includes social

resources, social action processes and common purpose. These are highlighted in Table 5, which shows the social products of empowering communities. Common purpose has been used throughout the literature as a defining characteristic of organization. Here, the common purpose of the group is used to consider framing and mobilization together, as positive outcomes of work by the community. This common purpose is achieved through social action, using social resources. This table shows the social resources required for the production of public goods to meet need as those identified in Chapter 5 – kinships, social organization and values. It also shows the social expressions of communicative action as the processes that link resources to common purpose.<sup>100</sup> These processes include the creation of narrative and the development of performance.

#### 7.4.2 *The Actor View: Interests as Needs*

The particulars of this inverted “scope” can now be considered in relation to Lukes’s second matter for judgment, that of being able to produce a significant outcome. An outcome is significant when it “effects upon the *interests* of the agents involved”, a concept which “points us towards what is important in people’s lives” (Lukes 2005:80, italics in original). This Sen-like phrase recalls the account of need provided in Chapter 5. Citing Rawls, Dworkin, the “various accounts” of basic needs, Sen and Nussbaum, Lukes agrees that need can be one valid way of interpreting interests, among others. Interestingly, need and power both possess the qualities of passive potential and active exercise. In regards to need, this was expressed in terms of “freedom from” and “freedom to”; as regards power, it can be stated provisionally instead as a matter of “power to” and “power over”. Lukes calls need “welfare interests”, and in favour of a “single, comprehensive [...] concept of power” (Lukes 2005:69) supports the view that welfare interests “are not preference-dependent, and so can be thought of as objective”. Whatever one’s preference, says Lukes, “conditions that damage your health are against your interests” (Lukes 2005:82). As Nussbaum says, it is “whose interests are being served”, not preference, that must be considered, thus necessitating a universal view of what it is to be human as the means of making judgments about interests.

Connolly (Connolly 1974) also considers need in terms of interests. He addresses

---

<sup>100</sup> In the next chapter, these “social expressions of communicative action” are further defined in this social matrix (Table 5) as “agency”.

directly the “tensions and anxieties” experienced by need theorists when considering what might “accompany attainment of the highest postulated states” (Connolly 1974:61). The tension that has again arisen in the present study – between plurality and universalism as exemplified in Chapter 5 by Sen’s capabilities approach versus basic need theorists, and here by Flyvbjerg and Nussbaum – is expressed linguistically by Connolly as a contrast between “need as a noun defined in terms of inclinations” and “needs as a verb construed as those conditions instrumental to the attainment of one’s full development as a person” (Connolly 1974:61). Connolly observes that this conceptual shift emerges as “one advances up the hierarchy of postulated needs”. This is a view the present study rejects. As discussed earlier, human need is seen here as univalent and unlimited, not hierarchical and elitist. In contrast to Connolly, the present study considers that the *transformation* of noun into verb nicely expresses need as potential, as action waiting to happen – what Maslow called “prepotent”. The present study makes no conceptual equivocation about need; at least in relation to conceptualising power from below, it sees no reason to apply Connolly’s limitation of need as interest to only the verb – that is, “person A needs x *in order to* (do, be or become) y”, where y, not x, is “the crucial variable” (Connolly 1974:62). Connolly says defining need as a “felt behavioural tendency runs the risk of celebrating uncritically those inclinations cultivated by dominant socialization processes”, a charge similar to that of Flyvbjerg on the impossibility of identifying rationality as separate from power. However, Connolly does accept a place for need in the sense employed by the present study, in the definition of interests. His caveat is that a definition “*restricted to felt behavioural tendencies*” has application, but is not sufficient to “render intelligible modes of life that are now only dimly glimpsed” (Connolly 1974:62, italics in original). Nevertheless, his final formulation on interests seems not so far from the timbre of the present study: that of the central importance of the image of personhood, because:

a person is pre-eminently a creature who has the capacity or potential to deliberate and to choose reflectively, to remember past experiences and to project future plans, to enter into complex social relationships of mutual recognition and reciprocal responsibility (Connolly 1974:68).

This study has used the concept of universal human need to further specify

Connolly's image. Additional affirmation of this approach in relation to power and interests comes from the field of political science. David West, another author who works with the application of Habermas (West 1990), considers this relation in terms of authenticity. In common with the authors in the psychology literature discussed earlier, West rejects physical needs, "the appeal to nature" (West 1990:40), as a sufficient basis for understanding interests. For West, the "plural objectivity of interests" is explained by understanding that "interests are not simple sites of satisfaction" (West 1990:53). In West's view, "the subjective element of intention or desire is essential" to the formation of interests, which he also sees as "holistic" (West 1990:54). This holism is expressed in adopting "a particular identity", which is "reflected in the ability to undertake deliberately self-transformative action". The judgment of what is being done for "the sake of interests presumed authentic", says West, lies in that fact that it "may require us to change ourselves" (West 1990:56). West's image of a person being aware of the "provisional authenticity of her interests" highlights the fragility of individual authenticity. The necessity of belief suggested by West's specification of identity has been expressed in Chapter 6 in a similar way. In the dissent group, it is only necessary that there be belief in a common purpose. In this study, identity, founded in a group setting employing the language of narrative, is defined as a class of universal human need. The view held is that the framework of universal human need can be sustained as a way to determine interests in the present specification of power from below. In the continuing modern era, says West, "the choice between alternative values and paths [...] involves an effort which is both critical and creative" (West 1990:53). In the present study, this creativity has previously been expressed as narrative and performance that is based on the group's structural innovation, the public good produced by a group employing teleological action for organization.

These disagreements about the core ideas of what constitutes common humanity can, according to Connolly, be "subject to rational adjudication". The present study ultimately is in agreement with Connolly – that it is primarily the image of being human, and the extent to which this image, defined in this instance as "certain beliefs about the way *persons* are to be treated and understood" (Connolly 1974:68) – that is at the core of making judgments about real interests. Furthermore, there is agreement that differences in the interpretation of

personhood vary, dependent upon the extent to which the “assumptions and commitments” understood by terms like “love, trust, resentment and indignation” are based on views about the extent to which these are “programmed into all persons independently of any *specific* social context” (Connolly 1974:68, italics in original).

In sum, for the purpose of the present study, it is reasonable to continue to propose that in the view from below, an “assessment of the extent of an agent’s power overall” can be based on an interpretation of interests defined by need, and that a significant outcome, and therefore also a measure of power for persons of any ilk, is that of getting need met in all these classes of security, identity and autonomy. These classes are shown as significant interests in Table 5. Here, significant interests are shown as related to their necessary resources, actions and common purposes, reflecting the particular interests being met by the different forms of social action.

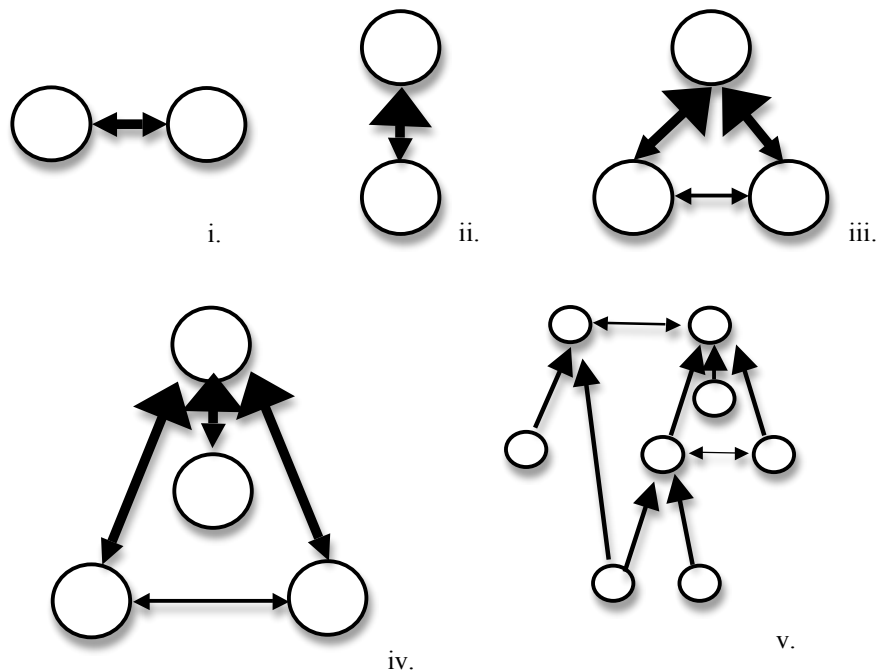
#### *7.4.3 The Structure View: Encapsulation*

So far, the definition of power from below has been examined in terms of interests, which has led again to persons and need. The argument now progresses to the structural assessment that is required for “comparisons of the overall power of different agents”. In the present study to date, the expression “disparity of power” has been used to describe the circumstances under which empowerment is a necessary part of successful intervention. This requires further clarification.

The case study of the Solomon Islands Development Trust introduced Galtung’s analysis of centre-periphery relations as part of defining self-reliance and its relationship to autonomy. In this view, the relation between centre and periphery is a power relation, and so it is to this view that the present chapter now returns. Returning to Figure 3 in Chapter 1, Galtung, ever the mathematician, has derived his classification of structure using a neat approach (Galtung 1980). Having defined two kinds of structural relations, horizontal and vertical, he considers the possible bilateral and multilateral interactions. This is shown here in Figure 10. The horizontal relation (Figure 10:i) represents relative equity, whereby it can be said that “whatever inequality there is in a society shall not come about as a result of the interaction structure itself” (Galtung 1980:57). This equity is accompanied by a relation of autonomy. In terms of need, autonomy has been regarded in the

present study as “power-over-oneself”; however, in terms of social power, one is said to be “autonomous *of*” somebody or something (Galtung 1980:58). Galtung proposes that these types of relations also form patterns. A relation of equity supports a pattern of solidarity, and that of autonomy supports a pattern of participation. On the other hand, the vertical relation (Figure 10:ii) is one of inequality.

**Figure 10. Galtung’s power relations: equity/solidarity and exploitation/fragmentation (after Galtung 1980:43,61).**



The strong, able to aggregate resources, may dominate more than one among the weak, portrayed as a triangular structure (Figure 10:iii). Adding a third dimension introduces other actors in a pyramidal structure (Figure 10:iv). This structure shows that relations of exploitation also contribute to fragmentation of relations of equity. By contrast, solidarity is the result of many relations of equity. This recalls Habermas’s “solidarity of members” as an indicator of social reproduction processes, which he contrasted with anomie. Finally, many vertical relations can be compounded to produce a structure with the weakest at the bottom and the strongest at the top (Figure 10.v). Relations of exploitation also penetrate through this structure. This has an effect on the whole that reinforces the structure of exploitation through further fragmentation. This also leads to

increasing marginalization, or exclusion.

So, these two power relations of equity and exploitation can be characterized by autonomy, solidarity and participation on the one hand, and penetration, fragmentation and exclusion on the other. Galtung's method allows the use of "disparity of power" to now be more clearly identified with the conditions of fragmentation, penetration and exclusion.

One further item of vocabulary is required to complete this structural view of power. The term "encapsulation" is used in Australian anthropological studies to critique the pluralist "two worlds" view of Indigenous and non-Indigenous, "each world with very different governance styles and each having a deficit view of the other" (Martin 2006; Hunt & Smith 2007). This "two worlds" view "disguises the power imbalance operating in Indigenous communities and organisations, whereby one world (non-Indigenous) encapsulates and penetrates the other (Indigenous)" (Hunt & Smith 2007:26). From the point of view of the case studies, it can be said that the views expressed by the organisations represented here are minority ones in their respective polities, but dissenting Islanders appear to have the advantage of being a minority in a polity that is to a large extent their own. They are at least in a position to mobilise on the basis of communicative equity, whereas the powerlessness of Australian Aborigines in the face of a settler invasion has, to the present time, been nearly absolute.

Yet, at a larger scale, there does also appear to be a parallel between Aboriginal Australia and the Pacific. Martin proposes that this image of "the engagement or articulation between such peoples and the societies which encapsulate them" can be applicable "in the contemporary context of globalization" (Martin 2006:4). The proposal is that the power relations in a colonised country with a majority settler population which "encapsulates" a minority Indigenous population can be applied to the effect on Indigenous societies everywhere of the globalisation of capital. In colonising relations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the centre-periphery model was represented in physical space by the West. While it is still true that Honiara or Suva are physical representations of "centres" on the Western development model, as are New York or Beijing, it is also true that the pressures on small Pacific states to conform with exploitation of their resources now come from a multitude of directions rather than from a single coloniser. For small states, the rise of communications technology and the increasingly rapid

physical reach of exploitative power has led to a loss of sovereignty (Baker 2000).

Microstates are becoming increasingly vulnerable to forces outside their control, resulting in their being manipulated by international big business; being open to transit crime such as flows of illegal flight capital and money laundering; and increasingly out-manoeuvred by larger countries and institutions (Hampton 1999, quoted in Baker 2000:10).

The West may be losing influence to Asia in the Pacific, but exploitation remains the rule and purpose of relations. The globalisation of capital and its ideology of exploitation has transformed the centre-periphery relation to one of encapsulation. The expansion of the physical reach of exploitative power is now such that all earth is subject to the consequences, including the isolated pockets of those who bear no past responsibility for their current plight as survivors of a continuing invasion. The global exploitation redefines the centre-periphery relationship as one of encapsulation, characterised by a loss of sovereignty.

It is this structural relation – that of being surrounded and with a shrinking space for the practice of self-reliance – that is shared by both Aboriginal Australians and Pacific Islanders. The globalisation of exploitative power undermines the pluralist “two worlds” view of Indigenous people. Yet these same people are the only ones who bear the burden of their transformation from being survivors to again asserting power and control in their own right. This process is one of the most challenging aspects of human endeavour.

#### *7.4.4 Two Kinds of Power*

Galtung makes another useful contribution to the structural understanding of power. The differentiation between actors and structures leads him to define three types of power: being power, resource power (both of which are actor-oriented), and position power (which is structure oriented) (Galtung 1980:64). This suggests two forms of social relations that Habermas examines: relations of exchange and of power (Habermas 1987). Habermas proposes that tribal societies based on kinship are made up of similarly structured units. These units become increasingly segmented and differentiated based primarily on coordination of action via exchange. This exchange is governed by systemic mechanisms that remain “tightly intermeshed with mechanisms of social

integration” that attach to “*pregiven* social structures, that is, to the kinship system” (Habermas 1987:165). This can be related to Galtung’s horizontal relation of equity. Power, on the other hand, represents a different level of system differentiation, that which produces stratification. This genuinely *political* power becomes detached from kinship systems when it no longer derives its legitimacy from the prestige of leading descent groups, but from “disposition over judicial means of sanction”, “the crystallizing nucleus of a new institution: the state” (Habermas 1987:165). Habermas proposes that state organisation

is incompatible with the social structures of societies organized along kinship lines; the social structure appropriate to [the nation state] is a general political order, within which social strata are assigned their proper places, and to which they are subordinated (Habermas 1987:165).

Here, Galtung’s “exploitation” is expressed in terms of subordination to system imperatives, whereby relations between social actors are defined by their position in an abstracted system rather than by concrete relations such as kinship and land. In the process of the evolution of the nation state, previous relations of exchange are “downgraded and sublated”, being reformed in “symbolically generalized relations” such as is provided by the medium of money. This phenomenon can be observed in the typical conversation Europeans engage in on meeting, where dramaturgical identities introduce the question, “What do you do?” as the prelude to identifying generalised connections in the social field (such as status and income), in contrast to the typical Solomon Islander who asks, “Where are you going?” as the prelude to identifying relationships of kin and place<sup>101</sup>. That these two types of relation are incompatible and yet interrelated suggests the similar dichotomy between lifeworld and system. Employing the dichotomy of actors and structures, this leads the present study to propose two forms of power: *lifeworld power*, which is governed by exchange rooted in the bonds of kin, bilateral relations, horizontal forms of social organization and fundamental beliefs that support shared values; and *system power*, which, for example, in Australia is governed by the stratified power found in state institutions, generalised media of exchange and the claim to legitimacy of judicial

---

<sup>101</sup> ...or the Indigenous Australian “who’s your family, and where’s your country?” ...Examiner comment.

process. The positive power in empowerment is of the lifeworld kind. The transformative effort in society is driven by redefinition of the relations of system power, which is achieved through the countervailing processes of self-reliance, framing and mobilisation. Thus, in empowerment, the “assessment of the overall power of different agents” is based on a concept of power that is not singular. An approach to transformation that is strengths-based begins from the lifeworld and the power it gives the Indigenous survivor as a countervailing force to colonising system imperatives that define the Indigenous actor as problematic. The use in the present study of “disparity of power” can now be seen to refer to the systemic power of the ongoing process of colonisation, which is not context-specific, in contrast to empowerment being the augmentation of the lifeworld, which is based on subjective experience. This perspective raises a further matter that has now been referred to on several occasions in this study – that of belief.

#### 7.4.5 *Empowerment and Belief*

Above, reference has been made for the requirement to have only belief in the real existence of a common purpose. From West on “authentic interest”, to Tarrow on “overlapping interests and values” and “deep-rooted feelings”, from common purpose as a narrative discussed above, and, through these others of the Northern Tradition, back to Barnard on what “desires” might constitute motives for contributing to an organisation – for all, belief in a common purpose is a distinguishing feature of organisation. What this means in practice is that the common purpose can remain as a tacit appreciation of why the group comes together. It is the *belief* in existence of common purpose, coupled with the communicative practices of the group, that are important. It follows that communication may not be necessarily, or even primarily, for the articulation of purpose. In an example from the case studies, this appeared most clearly as the Bismarck Ramu Group’s statements of “guidelines”, which showed a difficulty in stating the purpose of the organisation. This was relieved by the negative aim that “BRG does not seek to become an institution”.

The case studies demonstrate belief in terms of the essential importance of shared values, through to procedural codes that require commitment,<sup>102</sup> the

---

<sup>102</sup> These are the characteristics that Zald and Ash identify with inclusive and exclusive groups. An example of the latter is the use of “stipends”, or perhaps more significantly the requirement for complete honesty and sobriety.

“way” that sets a group apart. In both content and context, faith and belief play a great role in the case studies. From a reflective stance, if empowerment is seen as founded in lifeworld power expressed in terms like “love, trust, resentment and indignation”, then some better account of the belief that inspires such feelings must be given to complete a picture of power in empowerment. In that regard, the account of need, power and identity brings to mind a song by Jimmy Chi and the Kuckles band, from the musical Chi wrote, *Bran Nue Dae*. Entitled “There is Nothing I Would Rather Be”,<sup>103</sup> with sardonic humour a small part goes:

... nothing gives me greater joy  
than to watch you fill each girl and boy...  
with your ... superficial ... existential ... shit ...” (Chi 1990).

Chi is right is saying that the sense of belief conveyed so far is hollow, and a remedy should be found for this.

First, it would be hubris to claim to know the beliefs of those who have been raised in another culture. The approach in the present study at this point is to look instead at the effect of relations of power on belief. This is a topic explored by many Aboriginal Australian authors. Kevin Gilbert (Gilbert 1973) states it starkly:

Aborigines have endured a history of land theft, attempted racial extermination, oppression, denial of basic human rights, actual and de facto slavery, ridicule, denigration, inequality and paternalism. Concurrently, we suffered the destruction of our entire way of life – spiritual, emotional, social and economic (Gilbert 1973:2).

In the Family Wellbeing teaching materials, spirituality has been identified by Aboriginal people as a basic human need. Gilbert’s account of the destruction of Aboriginal grammars of life shows why. The power relations of exploitation, fragmentation, penetration and exclusion are all present in Gilbert’s statement. The present study has (admittedly perhaps now rather weakly) placed spirituality in the class of autonomy. That is, spirituality provides symbols upon which to reflect, and this reflection contributes to satisfying autonomous relations. However, it appears that without belief of some kind, the struggle for

---

<sup>103</sup> ...Than to be an Aborigine.

autonomy is going nowhere. Taking a leaf from Galtung's book,<sup>104</sup> as well as seeing what things are not, it is always possible to frame the same idea positively. For many, the contemporary Christian church can be a starting point, in as much as providing a grounding in values and codes to live by. After all, the appropriation of Southern Baptist pulpits by campaigners for civil rights shows the power a church organized on Christian beliefs can generate. Gaining one power spiritually through belief and discipline, as well as losing another power through exploitation, are both possibilities that affect autonomy. Church can be a secure retreat for the powerless.<sup>105</sup> At the same time, the present study believes that no Aboriginal person would deny there is also spirituality embodied in being the land's first people. In this regard, Aileen Moreton-Robinson says Aboriginal ontology and epistemology is

grounded within complex relations derived from the intersubstantiation of ancestral beings, humans and land. In this sense, our sovereignty is carried by the body and differs from Western constructions of sovereignty, which are predicated on the social contract model of a unified supreme authority, territorial integrity and individual rights (Moreton-Robinson 2007:2).

In terms of power, for Moreton-Robinson belief is expressed in the construction of sovereignty, an essential basis in any working polity. Being encapsulated, this construction is engulfed by what Habermas would call a "juridified" conception of sovereignty in the form of the nation state. The subsystem characteristics of judicial power are shown in the way "landowner" or "native title holder" are generalised, system-specified identities that penetrate disputes, increasing fragmentation and excluding the sovereign interests of Aboriginal peoples. These interests include the sustaining beliefs that support links to land, giving system the power to invalidate belief. However, evident too is the countervailing lifeworld force shown in the continual struggle to maintain one's identity and use this to assert a right to freedom. Vicki Grieves says spirituality supports this struggle.

---

<sup>104</sup> ... and BRG's.

<sup>105</sup> This statement begs the question of whether the same interpretation can be applied to modern Islamic martyrs. By contrast, Janet Hunt, as panellist, comments that Timor Leste gives a positive example of the protective umbrella provided by church institutions during the struggle for self-determination.

Aboriginal Spirituality provides a philosophical baseline for Indigenous knowledges development in Australia. It is Aboriginal knowledges that build the capacity to enhance the social and emotional wellbeing for Aboriginal people now living within a colonial regime (Grievés 2009).

What these Aboriginal authors contribute to the present study is showing that if belief is that which is absolutely taken for granted, spirituality asserts belief with a telos; a story, a hope. The expression of this hope contradicts spiritual powerlessness. In asserting this power, based on the work of the Northern Tradition, the community of believers<sup>106</sup> bearing this hope expresses itself in society in the forms of narrative and performance, expressions of communicative action that also support empowerment. Repertoires are present. Unlike evolution or the land itself, power – both lifeworld and system – is, like belief, a normative or socially determined construct and not an objective fact. Being like power, belief is mutable, subject only to its validation by the lifeworld. Belief and its spiritual expression are not “inoculated” against invalidation as is the lifeworld, which is built on the past world of subjective experience, that which is “embodied”. For Aboriginal people in the contemporary oppositional world, the contingency of belief can be a source of hope: the hope that the spirituality shattered by invasion can be reconstituted in the bodies of Aboriginal people coming together to act on shared beliefs. In the view of power from below, as Hannah Arendt says, “power corresponds to the human ability not just to act, but to act in concert”(Arendt 1986:64). In the Christian view, gospel says that “where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst” (Matthew 18:20). Even gospel shows that for organization it is necessary to have belief in common purpose.

To complete this view of power, the present study now returns to the typology of empowering groups identified earlier. Of the manifestations of belief seen here, narrative has previously been associated with normative action and the identity group, and performance with structural innovation and organised action done with intent, or teleological action. Continuing the association with Aboriginal Australia, in the field of Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing there has been

---

<sup>106</sup> “Community” as defined in Chapter 6 related to Bourdieu’s “field”, meaning the group of specialists and their clients.

shown in the case studies the example of men's and women's groups, health workers and others who have employed the Family WellBeing framework as a tool. The work of these groups on healing emphasises the third form of social action observed in empowerment: dramaturgical action. This is also a world of performance, but, Janus-faced, one where "the actor, in presenting a view of himself, has to behave toward his own subjective world" (Habermas 1984:91). The person engaged in dramaturgical action "has desires and feelings in the sense that he can at will express these before a public" in which speakers trust the hearers will truly attribute to them the desires and feelings so expressed, and hearers trust the speakers are sincere. Dramaturgical action is suggested by a romantic couple, or the counsellor/client. In larger groups, too, it is healing and transformative to have one's desires and feelings recognised and validated. As was discussed in Chapter 2, it is in the transformative public good of trust – believing in each other, with its inherent risks – that the bonds are made between personal motivation and collective power. As regards how belief supports a proper stance of the person in relation to power-over-oneself, the present study identifies that empowerment is served by power relations of equity that support solidarity. With evangelical fervour, Freire has insisted that one "must love the people", for what is there without love? The present study draws on the Buddhist tradition to propose that in dramaturgical action – the public revelation of the stance to the self – right action is guided by lovingkindness, shared joy, compassion and equanimity. In this tradition, these expressions of action, of which every person is capable, are intended to counter relations of exploitation and fragmentation. They therefore can take a place in the practice of empowerment.

Based primarily on the Family WellBeing program, in Table 5, these forms of dramaturgical agency are shown in relation to the requirement for structural self-reliance found in the social resources of kinship and bilateral relationships. The circumstances of Aboriginal people referred to by Gilbert show the deepest disparity in power to meet the spectrum of need, placing the practices of the Family WellBeing program in the class of security.

### 7.5 Summary

This chapter has examined organisations as entities producing public goods that deliver a social effect. It began with an outline of the Northern Tradition of sociology as it relates to organizing. This outline led to a view of the group as an entity, the “s” concerned with the structure of doing, and as an agency of change, the “z” concerned with the task at hand. An organisation is an entity with rules for decision-making and financial management that consists of members, backers, conscience adherents and other “players” in the field. This entity is necessary as a vehicle for the expression of dissent, operating as a source of support for its clients.

This support is necessary because there is a disparity of system power between the community of players and clients and members of society at large. The tasks of empowering organization at work in society consist of: advocacy (meaning compassionate identification of and with the grievance of the client), interpretation of subjective experience in an evidence-based narrative (otherwise known as “conscientisation”), and performance (being the actions flowing from the first two). This community has belief in its common purpose. This common purpose may remain tacit.

**Table 5. The social products of empowering communities.**

	<b>Significant interests</b>		
	Security	Identity	Autonomy
<b>Resources for production of public goods</b>	Kin and bilateral relationships	Social organisation	Values
<b>Expression of social action</b>	Lovingkindness	Narrative	Performance
<b>Common purpose</b>	Self-reliance	Framing	Mobilisation

The achievement of shared understanding communicated in tripartite validity claims anchored in the lifeworld is a sufficient outcome in empowerment. Organisation, the entity for the community of specialists and clients, organizes social change through its people by using communicative process to develop critical analysis of existing conditions, formulate strategies to change the situation, and constantly reflect on the process. This community is structurally encapsulated by its own, and by colonising societies. This encounter is permeated and interpenetrated by relations of power. Power as seen through the significant interests of persons is vested in the resources, action and common purpose of the community. This is summarised in Table 5.

In the view from below, power is seen as being of lifeworld and system kinds, which work in countervailing directions. They are connected, one being evolved from the other, and then mutually exclusive, having different rationalities for deriving their continuing legitimacy. For actors, power has been expressed as the ability to meet need, in as far as this can represent significant interests. In Chapter 5, need was defined as having the classes of security, identity and autonomy. In Chapter 6, the dissent group was seen as an entity in which personal motivation, public goods and the form of social action are the minimum resources *personally* within the ambit of the group's control. In this chapter, by extension, a rule-bound community has power structurally *in society* to build members' self-reliance, seek opportunities to frame injustice, and create and maintain a continuous repertoire of mobilising performance.

It has been evident in this chapter that the definitions and arguments introduced and developed earlier in the present study have demonstrated their utility in an analysis of power. In the final chapter, the present study comes full circle, beginning by looking again at Galtung's Goals, Processes and Indicators in Development (GPID) project and the contribution of the present study to advancing knowledge of human development and its place in organisation.