McCarthy Chapter

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2 Pro-Life and Pro-Choice Mobilization: Infrastructure Deficits and New Technologies

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Washington, D.C., January 23, 1982
On the ninth anniversary of the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion, demonstrators marched here today to support a legislative campaign to reverse that ruling. Antiabortion leaders met with President Reagan, who reiterated his longstanding personal opposition to abortion. But they said that the President had not promised to give the abortion issue a high priority or to use his political muscle to push an antiabortion bill through Congress.

For all its problems, the antiabortion movement seems stronger today than at any time since the Supreme Court handed down its landmark ruling in the case of *Roe* vs. *Wade* in 1973. This strength was demonstrated by the long line of marchers, estimated by the local police at 25,000, who paraded past the White House waving antiabortion banners and chanting slogans such as "Life, life, life!"

Last month, a Senate subcommittee approved a constitutional amendment [the "Hatch" amendment] that would validate the 1973 decision and the full Judiciary committee will probably send it to the Senate floor sometime this spring.

Those who favor abortion rights consider the Hatch amendment "a very real threat," in the words of Marguerite Beck-Rex, spokesman [sic] for the National Abortion Rights Action League. Accordingly, the league announced today a $500,000 advertising campaign aimed at generating public opposition to the Hatch bill and public support for candidates they support in next fall's election.

"It's really important for us to sound the alarm, to call our supporters to arms," said Miss Beck-Rex. "We know there's a pro-choice majority out there, but we have to get them involved."

Since the Supreme Court decision, she added, opponents of abortion have "felt more intensely" about the issue than many voters who favor legal abortion, and as a result opponents have had a stronger impact on the political

process. The aim of the new advertising campaign is to convince lawmakers that they will pay a political price if they support restrictions on abortions. (Roberts, 1982, pp. 1,10)

The above account following the 1982 annual "March for Life" provides a snapshot of some of the contrasting forms of contention of the pro-life and pro-choice movements—marches versus advertising campaigns. The two movements have occupied my attention for several years, and I want to briefly summarize what are, in my view, several important differences between them. My purpose however, is not to thoroughly analyze these movements, but to use what I know of them as grist for a more general consideration of the role of social infrastructures in social movement mobilization. Most analysts now agree that social infrastructures facilitate the effective mobilization of public opinion preferences for change. Those public opinion preference structures that are organized neatly along preexisting infrastructural dimensions can, under certain circumstances, lead to social movements of the traditional grass-roots form. Such has been the case with the pro-life movement. But many public opinion preference clusters do not so neatly articulate with infrastructural dimensions. Such is the case with the pro-choice movement. Its relative lack of usable social infrastructures compared with the pro-life movement leads it to depend far more heavily upon modern mobilization technologies in order to aggregate people and resources. This is my central argument. What follows is the development of its details and implications.

Abortion Attitudes and Movement Structure

Let me begin by briefly describing in broad outline the size and make-up of the adherent pools from which these two movements may draw constituents and the structure of the two social movement industries that have been developed out of the pools in the recent period. The routinization of modern survey research and the subsequent regular national surveys of opinion on social issues allow us to chart with some confidence the national preference structure on the question of abortion. Indeed, the literature on abortion attitudes has become quite large. We can draw several generalizations from this wealth of information (Granberg and Granberg, 1980; Jaffe et al., 1981; McIntosh et al., 1979; Singh and Leahy, 1978; Tatalovich and Daynes, 1981; Tedrow and Mahoney, 1979), that would appear to hold for the most recent period (1975-82).[1]

First, with some rather minor exceptions, the size and make-up of the pro-life and pro-choice adherent pools have remained relatively stable during the recent period. Second, it is clear that a large proportion of the

population in recent years (40 percent) approves of the relatively unrestricted availability of abortion and that the vast majority of the population approves of its availability if the life of the woman is seriously threatened (90 percent). Third, "the abortion issue is an intense political issue for only a small minority of people—and they are about evenly split between opponents and proponents" (Jaffe et al., 1981, p. 100). This is reflected in small proportions of self-proclaimed single-issue voters[2] and in the fact that when asked to rank a series of policy issues, respondents rarely rank the abortion issue as very high in importance. Fourth, an analysis of a national survey that asked respondents whether they would describe themselves as "pro-choice" or "right-to-life" find 41 percent choosing the former and 43 percent the latter self-identification (Mitchell, 1981). Fifth, religious preference is not a good predictor of abortion attitude, but religious attendance is one of the best predictors among almost all religious groups. The more one attends religious services, the more restrictive one's abortion attitudes. Political party preference and liberal-conservative self-description are not good predictors of abortion attitudes, but level of formal education is one of the best predictors—as one might expect, the more education, the less restrictive one's attitudes, with the most highly educated the least restrictive by large margins.[3]

This evidence portrays more than large enough pools of potential activists available to contending movements around the issue of abortion, and gives us a bit of a feel for where the two pools are located socially. The two movements bicker incessantly about such poll results, each focusing upon question wordings that tip the numbers of supporters in their own favor, but my reading of the evidence convinces me that neither movement commands more than a minimal majority of potential support, nor have they during the recent period. Remember that we come to this conclusion with extensive public-opinion survey evidence.

But assume that we have not seen the survey evidence. If we observe the social movement activity around the abortion issue, how will we read the shape of the preference structures? First, it is clear, as I will attempt to show, that there are far more people involved and they are more deeply involved on the pro-life side than on the pro-choice side. This has not always been the case, but has been so since at least 1975. Let me focus upon the structure of the two social movement industries since 1975—the shape of the modern social movement industries postdates the 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe* vs. *Wade*, which reversed a long period of tight restrictions upon the legal availability of abortion.

Kathy Pearce, who has generated an impressively detailed description of the organizational structures of the two movements, says: "Pro-life has a wider array of organizations with different kinds of organizational struc-

ture, and has more single issue organizations" (1982a). There is a dense and extensive local organizational structure that is embodied in "Right-to-Life" committees. "These committees are organized throughout the country at the national, state and local levels. They claim a membership of around 11 million divided into some 1,500 chapters, with an operating budget of $1.3 million" (Tatalovich and Daynes, 1981, pp. 159-60).

> The National Right to Life Committee (NRTLC) is an umbrella organization for numerous local groups that are in turn linked into state organizations. . . . March for Life, Inc. has a Washington, D.C. office and draws on other pro-life groups once a year . . . Americans United for Life (AUL) is a non-membership group of legal experts; the ad hoc Committee in Defense of Life is a newsletter producing organization that solicits annual dues and additional contributions through mass mailings; the American Life Lobby (ALL) is a group based in Washington, D.C. that has many small pro-life groups and church congregations as members; the Life Amendment Political Action Committee (LAPAC) is a direct mail, political action committee; and the Catholic Church and its network of dioceses, of state conferences, parochial schools, and lay organizations, and the central bureaucracy in Washington, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) and the United States Catholic Conference (USCC), are involved in many ways; and the fundamentalist television broadcasters and their viewer-contributors, particularly Jerry Fallwell's Moral Majority are active, as is the Mormon Church. (Pearce, 1982a, p. II,3)

On the other hand, Pearce says,

> There are fewer pro-choice organizations, and membership growth [in the movement] has been within the established organizations. The most active and largest of these organizations have a similar structure: a national office, and affiliated groups throughout the states, and also a large proportion of isolated members who pay dues and receive newsletters, but who are, beyond that not actively involved. One of these organizations, the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) is a single issue organization, while other active organizations, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Planned Parenthood (PP) and the National Organization of Women (NOW) make abortion rights one among their range of issues. (Pearce, 1982a, p. II, 2)

While those groups on the pro-life side that are multi-issue are primarily organized religious groups, the multi-issue pro-choice groups link the abortion issue to the population/fertility control social movement; to the feminist social movement industry; to the professional associations of doctors and nurses and others in the health field, and through the National Abortion Federation (NAF) which is the abortion providers association.

This sketch should not be taken to imply that there is no grass-roots activity on the part of pro-choice advocates. There is such activity. Nor is it

intended to deny the extensive proclaimed support for pro-choice among liberal Protestant denominations and many health and professional associations. The sketch is designed to point up the contrast between the two social movement industries, the collection of organized groups which focus primarily upon the abortion issue. It can be safely said that pro-life is more dense in numbers, more grass-roots in nature, more variegated in organizational form, and more widely populated with single-issue groups than is pro-choice (see Johnston and Gray, 1983, for a similar sketch).

Now contrast what we know about the attitude structures consistent with the two movements and self-identification with them through survey evidence with the evidence drawn from the above observations of actual social movement behavior. The two relatively stable and equivalently sized preference structures seem to be transformed into direct movement activity at quite different rates. Why? The spokesperson for the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), Ms. Beck-Rex cited above, suggested that pro-life supporters are more intense in their feelings. I do not believe this explanation to be consistent with the preference structure evidence, though the forms of activity that are typical on the two sides suggests greater intensity and wider use of unorthodox tactics on the part of the pro-life movement.[4] The answer lies primarily, I think, in the contrasting infrastructural patterns of mobilization from the two pools of potential supporters. In the case of pro-life, traditional infrastructural patterns of mobilization are central, while in pro-choice, modern technologies of mobilization are more prominent. Let me expand a bit upon this claim before I seek to spell out its general implications.

The density and extensiveness of the pro-life mobilization is importantly the result of the leadership by the hierarchy of the American Catholic Church and the consequent widespread availability to activists of the structures of the church and its community organizations. This is the conclusion of a number of observers of the recent pro-life movement (Tatalovich and Daynes, 1981; Jaffe et al., 1981), and is consistent with two forms of evidence. First, one could cite various forms of involvement by the church itself. These include the direct involvement of Bishops, the support by national committees of the church, the use of communication channels of the church, the direct involvement of local groups such as the Knights of Columbus, and the use of Catholic schools for indoctrination and mobilization for pro-life. Second, evidence based upon survey of pro-life activists supports the conclusion indirectly. Though Protestant church attenders are almost as pro-life in sentiment as Catholic attenders, the vast majority of pro-life activists seem to be Catholic. While approximately 25 percent of the American population is Catholic, one national survey of National Right to Life Committees (Granberg and Denny, 1982; Granberg,

1981) showed 70 percent of the membership to be Catholic, while a survey of the South Dakota Right-to-Life Committee showed 85 percent of its membership to be Catholic (Pearce, 1982b). This evidence supports the more recent findings of social movement researchers that structural location is a more important determinant of mobilization than is sentiment or ideology (Snow et al., 1980). The implication of this understanding will be explored further below.

On the other side, the largest and most influential single-issue membership group in the "pro-choice" movement is the National Abortion Rights Action League, which was organized in 1969. It was originally called the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws in New York by its organizers, including, importantly, philanthropist Stewart Mott (Lader, 1973). Though not initially a professional social movement organization (SMO) (McCarthy and Zald, 1973), it can now be characterized as one since it depends primarily upon a large membership that relates to the organization primarily through the mail. Its membership grew from approximately 100,000 in 1980 to 175,000 in August, 1982 (Peterson, 1982b). It employs a national office staff and uses volunteers in its Washington office. It has organized forty state affiliates and has attempted to generate greater grass-roots action along with its primary tactics of lobbying at the federal level and advertising. There are some quite active local affiliates, though this is not the rule. The organization continually solicits new members through large mailings. The organization also purchases newspaper advertisements and radio spots to both alert supporters and to canvas potential new members. The only other national single-issue, pro-choice organizations of any strength are the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (RCAR), which is not a membership organization, and the National Abortion Federation (NAF), which has abortion providers as primary members.

My sketch, then, has these two movements with about equal-sized potential pools of activists, but very different rates and types of mobilization. Pro-life mobilization is heavily dependent upon the infrastructure of the Catholic church and, increasingly, Protestant denominations, while pro-choice mobilization depends importantly on the newer advertising and mass-mail technologies. The pattern is not restricted to these contending movements, either. It seems to characterize well the movements around the gun-control issue with gun clubs, manufacturers, and sales outlets serving traditional infrastructural purposes for the pro-gun movement and professional social movement organizations representing the pro-gun-control sentiment. The pro-gun mobilization depends upon social infrastructures and is importantly facilitated by the heavy use of modern technology by the National Rifle Association (Kohn, 1981). The pro-gun-control movement, however, consists almost exclusively of professional SMOs, most notably Handgun Control, Inc., a direct-mail organization. Yet the dispassionate reviews of the survey evidence on the gun-control issue shows large pools of supporters on both sides of it (Wright et al., 1983; Wright, 1981; Schuman and Presser, 1981). This has led many analysts (i.e., Wright, 1981) to puzzle over the lack of mobilization around gun-control sentiment not unlike that presented here on the pro-choice movement. I raise this case primarily to put the pro-choice movement into perspective. Pro-gun-control is an almost pure case of a sentiment pool mobilized exclusively through professional SMOs. While dependent on this technology, the pro-choice movement represents a mixed case.

While some analysts perceive a close relationship between public opinion preferences and social policy outcomes partly mediated through normal political processes and sometimes as the result of social movement activity (see Burstein, 1981), the sketch I have offered here poses the following question: What are the conditions under which the existence of a large sentiment pool cannot be easily translated into normal political activity or grass-roots social movement activity?[5] Since social infrastructures have been seen as so important for the emergence of such social movement activity, my search for constraining conditions naturally leads me to their lack—what I will call infrastructural deficits. Of course, I recognize the crucial importance of other facilitating conditions of successful mobilization such as effective ideological packages, political opportunity, and, of course, resources, but I will ignore these factors here. Let me briefly review the common understanding of the importance of social infrastructures for social movement emergence prior to exploring an infrastructural deficit account of nonmobilization.

Social Infrastructure

There has emerged a "post–mass society theory" consensus around the importance of preexisting social infrastructures for the mobilization of social movements. Close observation of the civil rights movement (Von Eschen, Kirk, and Pinard, 1971; McAdam, 1982; Morris, 1984), the feminist movement (Freeman, 1975), the Farmer's Alliance (Schwartz, 1976), a third party (Pinard, 1971), neighborhood organizing (Boyte, 1980), as well as more general treatments of social movements (Oberschall, 1973; Turner and Killian, 1972; Jenkins, 1979; Snow et al., 1980; Fireman and Gamson, 1981) agree that preexisting relations among social movement supporters make social movement mobilization far more likely and less costly in human effort and material resources. These networks of interrelationships must, of course, be usable, or, as some say, cooptable. This means, as the

latter term implies, that they can be put to purposes other than those for which they were originally intended. Such networks of relations should also be more than casual—the more solidary the relations, generally, the more useful. There are a wide variety of terms used to capture the dimensions of social structure upon which social movement organizations and social movement activity can build (catness and netness, preexisting ties, communication networks, secondary relations, indigenous organizational strength), which I have called social infrastructures. The diversity of descriptive terminology reflects, to some extent, the wide variety of social structural linkages that have been used for social movement mobilization and, to some extent, the wide variety of social structure linkages that can be emphasized in attempting to characterize societies.

The social infrastructures of religious groups have been, and remain, in the United States, fertile territory for social movement mobilization. So, too, have relations generated at the workplace and through work, and, lately, at the welfare place (Piven and Cloward, 1977; Bailis, 1974; West, 1981). Also, lately, colleges and universities and the many networks of relations developed there have served as bases for mobilization. Voluntary associations of many kinds, too, have served social movement mobilization functions as the earlier pluralist theorists observed that they did.

Attempting to imagine the usable infrastructural map of a society leads also to thinking about its changing nature. We know, for instance, that church membership has been in rather consistent decline lately among the liberal Protestant denominations (Hoge and Roozen, 1979). It might be suggested that the internal problems created by membership decline for these religious bodies has been partially responsible for their recent pulling back from the facilitation of social movement activity, but the case of the Catholic Church belies such a straightforward explanation. It, too, has experienced membership declines in the recent period, one which also has witnessed extensive facilitation of social movement activity on the abortion and the peace issues. The structure of the Catholic Church, of course, makes many of its clergy less directly dependent upon membership trends. Those Protestant Church bodies that have experienced growth, the fundamentalists groups, have, on the other hand, been fertile ground for a number of recent social movements.

The traditional role of local political party structures in incorporating and mobilizing emergent sentiment pools in the United States appears to have atrophied. Polsby (1983) blames party reforms for this, and says:

> Party is increasingly a label for masses of individual voters who pick among various candidates in primary elections as they would among alternatives marketed by the mass media. Achieving financial support through mass mailings and through the public purse has displaced in importance the mobilizing of well-heeled backers and the seeking of alliances with territorially identifiable interest groups and state party organizations. (pp. 132-33)

So, apparently, the lack of incentives in these new arrangements mean that party structures are less usable infrastructures for the mobilization of sentiment than they had been historically.

The occupational structure has changed rather dramatically over the last several decades, and this, too, can be expected to have implications for the shape, extent, and location of social movement mobilization. Labor unions have experienced membership declines and professional employment has increased with concomitant increases in professional associational membership. The structures of relationships that these two forms of occupational association produce can be expected to be quite different in their mobilization dynamics. Many labor unions have consistently engaged in the direct support of social movement activity as well as having provided usable infrastructures for SMO mobilization. Professional associations, on the other hand, appear more reticent to get involved in social issues that range very far afield of their "claimed expertise," though they are certainly active in their own direct self-interest. Though symbolic support for social movement activities is not uncommon, making directly available the resources and infrastructural networks to SMOs, which has been typical of labor unions and church bodies, seems rare among professional associations. It seems reasonable to conclude that this reticence is the result of the need to protect the legitimacy that such associations gain by successfully making claims to narrow technical expertise. This is not unlike the structure of motives that led many craft unions generally to avoid involvement in broader social issues. Whether new employment structures (large hospitals, government agencies, etc.) will lead to the undermining of typical craft professionalism and the emergence of a potentially more aggressive industrial type of professionalism remains to be seen. Those who posit the rise of a "new class" (see Bruce-Briggs, 1979) see the growth of newer professions as fueling social movement activity, as have some of the resource mobilization analysts (McCarthy and Zald, 1973). The new class theorists, for the most part, however, argue from preference structures to outcomes ignoring social movement mechanisms such as infrastructures. The argument made here suggests that "professionalism" may inhibit the use of some of the potentially most fruitful infrastructures of the attitudinally activist new class.

The growth in size and complexity of large employing bureaucracies can be expected to produce social infrastructures that can serve social movement mobilization functions within them (Zald and Berger, 1978; Wein-

stein, 1979), if not without. That social movement–like activities are rife within such organizational settings is responsible, in part, for the plausibility of political bargaining models of their functioning (cf. Pfeffer, 1978). Involvement in social movement activities within these organizations, however, is likely to reduce the amount of activity without, other things being equal. The success or failure of such activity within organizations may indirectly affect the outside world, but such activity can be expected to have few such consequences normally.

Charles Tilly (1978) has outlined the dimensions of an analytic census of social infrastructure categories, but there exists no adequate substantive census of them.[6] The results of such a systematic census could be juxtaposed to the sentiment census evidence which is, or could be, produced by opinion polling. Such a matrix would show some sentiments coherently clustered along infrastructural dimensions, some sentiments showing very little clustering along infrastructural lines and many intermediate patterns. We can imagine the first situation where all of those who favor some change are linked to one another through preexisting solidary relations and the second where few who so believe are linked to one another. This second is the condition I call a social infrastructural deficit—widespread sentiment exists favoring or opposing a social change, but the lack of available infrastructures inhibits the mobilization of the sentiment.

If we apply the key elements of this analysis to the pro-choice sentiment on the abortion issue, we can map the sentiments against key infrastructural dimensions. We should, therefore, be able to predict where pro-choice sentiments could potentially become mobilized through preexisting groups, and, conversely, where not. Remember, religious structures are unavailable because religious apathy predicts pro-choice views. As I noted earlier, pro-choice sentiment is concentrated among the highly educated, but this individual characteristic doesn't tell us much about the institutional locations where the highly educated congregate. Interestingly enough, university settings have not served well as pro-choice mobilization sites, though admittedly this period has been one of general quiescence on college and university campuses.

Certain professional occupations are quite solidly pro-choice in sentiment—especially health and human service groups. Indeed, in the earlier period of contention, before the 1973 Supreme Court ruling, professional associations were more prominent, partly because the general level of mobilization was low. Professional associations have all along pretty well restricted their involvement to public support and a bit of technical and legal assistance. This sort of support was quite important to the pro-choice movement when the issue was being pursued in state legislatures with little or no opposition (see Steinhoff and Diamond, 1977). It is of far less note, I think, when a vital and variegated grass-roots opposition is in the field. The full-scale commitment of the organizational structures and resources of supportive professional associations is quite rare in comparison with the level of commitment we find for religious groups in the pro-life movement. I believe that the scale of the commitment of such resources is constrained by the self-interested necessity of professional groups to maintain their uncontested claims of narrow technical legitimacy. Committing resources in contests on issues peripheral to these claims or, in this case, a politically controversial issue, threatens to undermine such claims. Thus, attempts to get more fully involved led by sentimental factions within professional associations are always strongly, and generally successfully, resisted by core professional groups. As a result, then, the infrastructures that appear to hold the most potential for pro-choice mobilization are only weakly available for cooptation. This is my account, then, of the pro-choice infrastructural deficit.[7]

So what is to be done in the face of infrastructural deficits? One strategy is to await a more propitious historical moment (Wilson and Orum, 1974). Another is to begin to build social infrastructures—generating social connections among the like-minded—that can be exploited sometime in the future[8] for social movement activity. A third is to attempt to aggregate the like-minded but unlinked adherents into organizational vehicles explicitly designed for social movement activity (SMOs). It is this third approach that characterizes the new social movement technocrats. Their technologies are well suited to the problems of social infrastructural deficits.

Thin Infrastructures

When an infrastructural deficit exists, now, it can be known. Previously such deficits were only suspected or claimed by social movement leaders. Systematic survey research reveals the existence of unmobilized sentiment pools.[9] Earlier, Blumer (1948) argued against their importance without naming them, suggesting that public opinion only exists in its representations—unless activated it is socially irrelevant. But now such deficits serve as the raw material for social movement entrepreneurs and technological innovators. Rather than traditional forms of social infrastructures, thin infrastructures serve as the basis for the formation of professional social movement organizations. These thin structures consist of lists of names and addresses that have been gathered initially for other purposes. These lists can be characterized as very weak communication networks along which information and resources may pass. The social infrastructures that have drawn the attention of analysts have been based upon face-to-face interaction. These thin infrastructures are not.

The keystone of the new technologies for aggregating the disconnected but likeminded is direct mail. This and derivative technologies depend upon cost-effective communication with sentimental supporters. Preexisting lists with high proportions of supporters are sought. If such lists (or media targets) consist of numerous supporters and these are appealed to in ways that effectively stimulate their sentiments, some proportion of them can be expected to write a check and, thereby, reciprocally activate the thin communication channel. Cost-effectiveness is determined by the rates of response to such appeals, and, hence, partially, the proportion of preexisting supporters on the lists. The quality of these thin infrastructures, then, that is most important is rate of return, not solidarity and cooptability as with traditional infrastructures. Individuals are connected to the soliciting social movement organization, as we shall see below, individually, rather than in preexisting groups. These lists are generated in a wide number of ways—through magazine subscription lists, from other social movement organization membership lists, from political campaign lists, from the files of private mailing firms, and from demographically targeted geographical areas. The process can be described as mining for sentimental homogeneity.

Once an individual has responded, he or she becomes eligible for emergency appeals to stimulated sentiments. A membership survey of NARAL showed that 30 percent of the members gave more than the then standard $15 membership fee (Mitchell, McCarthy, and Pearce, 1979).[10] Some large proportion of the additional giving stemmed from such emergency appeals. The timing of these appeals can be elegantly coordinated with legislative and movement struggles—witness the appeal onslaught that came from the National Organization of Women (NOW) during the final death rattle of the Equal Rights Amendment (Peterson, 1982a).[11] Telephone contacts can, and do, allow even more perfectly timed appeals to those who, based on past experience, are known to be likely to contribute.

The culling [12] of lists of names to produce SMO members, and, then, the most supportive and hence cost-effective members, requires a period of time. The process requires several rounds of mailings and remailings to those who initially respond (Sabato, 1981). The procedures are well suited to issues that find a well-educated and well-heeled sentimental constituency for which little SMO representation exists. Fifty-five percent of the NARAL members, for instance, had at least some graduate training. The technologies can also be used, however, to gather resources from the more traditional thick infrastructures, and are widely used in such cases. The pro-life movement utilizes these technologies quite effectively building upon the thick grass-roots infrastructures that have been formed. Pearce's survey of the South Dakota Right to Life Committee (1982b) shows that 16.2 percent of the members of this grass-roots local group also belong to the National Right to Life Committee, 21.58 percent belong to Life Amendment Political Action Committee, and 8.3 percent belong to the American Life Lobby, all of which are primarily direct-mail SMOs. Here, however, the organizations built by these technologies are part of a variegated movement industry rather, as with pro-choice, the center piece of the industry.

Many of these professional social movement organizations spend reasonably large percentages of their resources upon advertising, including newspaper, radio, and, sometimes, television. Advertising can be seen to function in a number of ways for these organizations. First, it increases name recognition for the organization. Second, it heightens the sense of threat among supporters concerning the success of the opposition. It is almost never the case that such advertising does not dwell on the opposition threats. Third, it creates small numbers of names of persons who have taken it upon themselves to respond for whom barriers to response are greater than usual. The importance of media coverage for the mobilization of resources has been highlighted in the past (McCarthy and Zald, 1973, 1977), but such accounts stressed attempts by social movement leaders to win unpaid coverage. The perils associated with such attempts are illustrated in Gitlin's analysis of Students for a Democratic Society (1979), which shows the relative lack of control by that SMO over relevant media frames. Since these direct-mail organizations buy advertising, they should be less vulnerable to media imposed frames of their positions and activities.

The social history of the use of these interlinked technologies for social movement purposes remains to be written. The use has been evolving for some time and professionalization has begun in earnest with a professional association of practitioners of direct-mail, associated publications, and even an educational foundation to encourage the development of appropriate educational attention to the technologies. Its technological side is advancing rapidly with the integration of computers that can dial culled telephone numbers for solicitors who then read emergency appeal messages off a video screen to the listening sentimental supporters. The appeal is not unlikely to include some reference to yesterday's national news broadcast. The results of this transaction can be entered into the computer and stored for further action. Credit cards are preferred.[13] In these ways SMOs can be created and SMO resources aggregated through thin infrastructures.

Membership and Activity in Direct-Mail Professional SMOs

"Professional social movements" exist in several forms (McCarthy and Zald, 1973). The variety I have been discussing here, the direct-mail profes-

sional SMO, has proved, I think, to be the heartiest of them. This is so, I think, because the form is based upon a highly profitable marketing mechanism. In spite of its widespread application and the number of professional SMOs it has spawned, neither its technologies nor the organizational form have been well examined by social analysts.[14]

The suspicion that member commitment to this organizational form is weak, no matter the sentimental fit, seems confirmed. McFarland (1976) reports a study of Common Cause members which shows that 79 percent of them disagreed that they would like to be more active in the organization if given the opportunity. Remember, being active in such an organization generally means no more than sending a contribution and receiving the newsletter. Our NARAL survey showed that only 13 percent of the members belonged to local affiliates, and 60 percent said they didn't want to join one or didn't know if they were interested in doing so. Forty-eight percent of the NARAL members agreed, also, with the statement, "I don't really think of myself as a member of NARAL, the money I send is just a contribution." Robert Mitchell finds 58 percent of a sample of the membership of the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), an environmental professional SMO agreeing with the same statement. Goodwin and Mitchell (1984) report that attachment to the organization is inversely proportional to the percentage of direct-mail joiners for five environmental organizations. When we asked NARAL members how many of their friends belonged to the organization, 77 percent didn't know—strongly suggesting that they did not talk with their friends about their membership in the organization, and this is consistent with the fact that 67 percent had encouraged no friends to join the organization.

So these organizations are built out of thin infrastructures, and they create weak commitments to themselves in spite of their regular contacts through the mails, and, sometimes, over the telephone with their members. This weak membership form is reflected in rather high rates of turnover of membership in these SMOs. This fact encourages the constant mining for new members through the available thin infrastructures.

Recruiting with these technologies, however, seems to have the effect of producing startling sentimental homogeneity among SMO members compared with traditional, thick, infrastructural SMO formation. Our survey of NARAL members, for instance, showed them to concentrate almost exclusively in the least restrictive response categories (Mitchell, McCarthy, and Pearce, 1979), while surveys of pro-life activists (Granberg, 1981; Granberg and Denny, 1982; Pearce, 1982) show them to be far more heterogeneous in their attitudes toward the conditions for the availability of abortion. Goodwin and Mitchell (1983) report that direct-mail joiners of five environmental groups are substantially more extreme in their view

than social network joiners, consistent with the evidence from the pro-life and pro-choice movements.

One might ask why a direct-mail SMO couldn't link its likeminded members with one another in local areas in order to generate grass-roots organizational strength. It should not be surprising, however, given the weak commitment we observe to these organizations, to find that such efforts have been relatively unsuccessful when tried.[15] NARAL attempted to create such groups earlier without notable success. Increased effort, however, seems to have yielded greater success in the face of vital grass-roots pro-life action. But to dwell upon such failures is to be bound by past understandings and diverts attention from the technologies used by these organizations to activate members and supporters.

These techniques include asking members through direct appeals to take action—usually contacting a legislator, and, also, targeted mixed media appeals (television and radio spots as well as newspaper ads) asking supporters to take action—again, usually in contacting a legislator. Each of these appeals also typically includes solicitation of resources. Of course, members can be expected to be more likely to act when asked than nonmembers and media blitzs, as they are called, can be expected to activate some small proportion of those sentimental supporters who are exposed to the exhortation. In this way, through increasingly thin infrastructural connections, very small segments of large sentiment pools can be fleetingly and individually activated. An example will illustrate this process. On August 17, 1982 the U.S. Senate began consideration of the abortion issue. On the same day, I received in the mail an emergency appeal from NARAL. It asked me for a donation for a media blitz to counteract the forces supporting a Helms Bill and a Hatch Amendment. It also encouraged me to contact the Senate majority and minority leaders and my senators. Planned Parenthood also alerted its 30,000 members. Press reports (Peterson, 1982b) indicate that this encouragement succeeded for the first time in producing a greater volume of pro-choice than pro-life mail to a number of senators. These blips of activity are utilized by professional staff lobbyists in their contention with the opposing movement industry.

Conclusion

I have argued here that known infrastructural deficits allow the application of new technologies. Some observers have concluded that the membership in direct-mail professional SMOs that results is an "ersatz" form of participation that has driven out more meaningful forms—read grass-roots participation (Topulsky, 1974; Sinclair, 1982). This is one among a number of theoretical possibilities, however. These minimal

forms of activism could also replace declines in more traditional forms of participation, could substitute for their lack, or, finally, could supplement these forms. In the case of the pro-life movement, it seems clear that these forms supplement more traditional forms, and if this case is typical probably increase the total volume of participation.

My portrayal of the pro-choice sentiment pool as suffering from an infrastructural deficit favors the view that this new form of participation substitutes for the lack of more traditional forms. When pro-choice was the movement, rather than the countermovement, before the 1973 Supreme Court decision, it was not, with the exception of a few areas (notably New York), a vital grass-roots movement. Its sentiment base has been quite large for as long as we have systematic survey evidence on the issue. Its few victories, however, were won against minimal opposition (Steinhoff and Diamond, 1977). Whether the newer forms drive out or replace more traditional forms depends upon demonstrating their decline and the relative time order of these and the increases in the newer forms in specified sentimental arenas—both very difficult descriptive empirical tasks.

Finally, let me say that the action taken by a NARAL member responding to an emergency appeal is certainly not extra-legal or unorthodox. Indeed, it is only collective in a very restricted sense. As well, the facilitators and perpetrators of these actions can rarely be considered outside of the polity. These are the three criteria most widely used to characterize collective action as social movement action. Rigidly applying them to these activities would exclude the forms from our view as analysts of social movements. To do so, however, would seriously undermine our ability to understand the pro-choice/pro-life battle I have been following. The new technologies have complicated traditional forms of contention.

Notes

I wish to thank Kathy Pearce and Robert Cameron Mitchell for the many hours of fruitful discussion on these topics and the extensive analyses they have both made available to me on these questions. Thanks also to Gene Weinstein and Doug McAdam for helping me sharpen the arguments. Doug McAdam, Clark McPhail, Joane Nagel, and Mayer Zald all made valuable comments on an earlier version of this manuscript, which was presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association in 1982.

1. See Blake (1971) for the earlier period.
2. This pattern does not appear to hold for pro-life and pro-choice activists (Granberg, 1981), but more about this below.
3. This pattern seems to hold also when one compares pro-life and pro-choice activists. The former are substantially more likely to attend religious services and to have less formal education than the latter (cf. Granberg and Denny, 1982; Granberg, 1981; Mitchell, McCarthy, and Pearce, 1979; Pearce, 1982a).

4. But see Blake and Del Pinal (1981) for an attempt to account for the different rates of activism directly with attitudinal differentials between the two pools of adherents. They argue that the pro-choice supporters are less intense in their preferences. It is, nevertheless, the case that most of the intense pro-choice supporters are not mobilized, and, as we shall see below, the mobilized pro-life supporters are more "wobbly" in their views on abortion than are the mobilized pro-choice supporters.
5. Remember that abortion sentiment is not well predicted by political party preference. This fact translates into a lack of clustering of abortion attitudes along political party structures, and has led Speaker of the House Thomas P. O'Neill to call the issue a "plague on the House" (Jaffe, Lindheim, and Lee, 1981, p. 149). As the issue has been adopted by the Reagan administration, however, the correlation between abortion attitude and party preference can be expected to improve.
6. Analysts of social movements have not addressed themselves much lately to the search for *the* key infrastructural dimension along which group conflict can be expected to turn for the new era, but see Tourraine (1981) for an exception.
7. Of course, the lack of grass-roots mobilization on the part of pro-choice supporters could be, and probably is, partially the result of other important factors. These include the lack of political opportunity—the period of the strong pro-life mobilization (1975 to the present) has seen pro-life presidents in office almost entirely. Also, ideology is important—the pro-life forces link their actions to the sanctity of human life, while the pro-choice forces utilize First Amendment and "civil liberties" symbolism, which appears to command far less widespread legitimacy.
8. See McAdam (1982) for an account of the institution building phase that preceded and facilitated the civil rights movement.
9. The sample of sentiments from the potential range for which systematic public opinion polling evidence exists is, in fact, quite narrow. As a result, large sentiment pools may remain unknown, and hence unexploited by the new entrepreneurs. For instance, on the nuclear freeze issue, Matt Reese, a modern political operative, says, "It's a strong issue whose birth was secret. I didn't see it coming" (Clymer, 1982, p. 1). The new technocrats of citizen involvement are unlikely to see grass-roots movements coming, I would surmise.
10. In May 1978 we mailed a survey to 1,000 NARAL members asking a variety of questions about their recruitment, involvement, and attachment to the organization, along with questions about their general political participation. Fifty-nine percent of the questionnaires were returned in completed form. The evidence reported here and below is drawn from the responses to that survey.
11. I have ignored the widespread use of these technologies for raising funds for political action committees (PACs). Each of these direct-mail SMOs can now be expected to operate a PAC arm which raises money to be funneled into the political campaigns of supporters. A full analysis of this class of SMOs would require taking these structures seriously into account.
12. "Culling" is a term which is widely used in the industry. The term carries both the meanings of putting aside the choice and putting aside the inferior. The British colloquial usage is "to dupe or fool."
13. See Hadden and Swann (1981) on the use of these technologies by the Fundamentalist Protestant groups. They seem particularly adept at integrating them with television programming.

14. There are, however, several exceptions, including McFarland (1976, 1984), Troyer, (1980), and Sabato (1981).
15. See McFarland (1976) and Frankel (1979) for reviews of such an attempt by Common Cause and its ironical consequences.

3

Religious Groups as Crucibles of Social Movements

Mayer N. Zald and *John D. McCarthy*

Scan the "religion page" of any metropolitan newspaper in the United States. Alongside reports of ministers arriving and departing, of church-related social events, of special services, and of new buildings dedicated or planned, one cannot fail to notice coverage of the involvement of religious groups in a variety of controversial issues. Recently there have been reports of resolutions by many national religious bodies pertaining to nuclear disarmament. There have been reports of bitter contests among factions of Southern Baptists over the election of a national leader. There have been reports of extensive involvement by many church groups in the affairs of Central American nations. There have been persistent reports of controversy over the appropriateness of female clergy. And much attention has been focused upon the Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on economic issues.

But news reinforcing the centrality of religious groups to broader social and political processes has not been restricted to the "religious pages." An effective religious coalition lobbying against the Reagan administration's attempts to aid the overthrow of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua is front-page news. So, too, is continuing coverage of the role of the Catholic Church as the major institutional base of dissent as well as a moderating force on that dissent in Poland. And a series of events in the Middle East continue to highlight the importance of the Islamic resurgence to political and social currents there. The vigorous involvement of evangelical fundamentalists has been "news" ever since Jimmy Carter was elected president in 1976. Finally, "Liberation Theology" has become the subject of serious debate as it comes under attack from Rome and is seen as an important basis for a wide variety of forms of dissent in Latin America.

Over the last several decades, in the face of this "news," sociology has generally ignored the relevance of religious beliefs and institutions to