ORGANIZATIONS AS INSTITUTIONS

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I. INTRODUCTION

Organizations are the preeminent institutional form in modern society. They organize and structure the daily activities of most people. This pervasive quality of organizations has frequently been noted (e.g., Aldrich and Pfeffer, 1976; R. H. Hall, 1971; Etzioni, 1964; Presthus, 1962). Organizations are everywhere, involved in almost every possible sphere of human action. Manufacturing firms, schools, grocery stores, churches, and even "social movement organizations," structure segments of life at some point. Not only do organizations have direct effects on the lives of people, they in many senses can be treated as "corporate actors," which have grown to have "immense size and immense power" over "natural persons" (Coleman, 1974:35).

Despite widespread recognition of the central position and role of organizations in modern life, scant attention has been paid to the power that organizations
have to alter the forces which affect them, whether internal or environmental. With few exceptions (Pfeffer, 1981; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1977), the effects of key factors—ranging from size to domain to suppliers—on the structure and performance of the organization have been investigated, rather than the power the organization exerts over these same factors. For clarity, two terms central to the argument that organizations are institutions need to be defined at this point. First, institutionalization is both a process and a property variable: it is a phenomenological process by which certain social relationships and actions come to be taken for granted, that is part of the "objective situation", while at the same time it is the structure of reality defining what has meaning and what actions are possible. Despite their social origin, highly institutionalized elements are experienced as part of the intersubjective world consisting of resistant objective structures independent of any particular actor (Zucker, 1977). Second, both general social forms, such as roles, and particular enactments of those forms, such as "judge", can vary in the degree to which they are institutionalized. Organizational form, here referring to rational hierarchical bureaucratic organization, has varied historically in its degree of institutionalization, as have various specific aspects of organizational form, such as personnel procedures.

The purpose of this paper is to explore some of the sources of organizational power, sources not based primarily on control of resources, but on control of basic institutional structure and process. Following this discussion, the focus will be on institutional transformation: the emergence of a work-based institutional system from a kin-based one. Hence, most of the new data assembled here are historical.

Since institutional structures are highly resistant to change (Zucker, 1977), for change to occur the taken-for-granted quality must be brought into question. While transformations of institutional structure can occur quite rapidly, e.g., in revolutions or through social movements, these changes generally involve the reallocation of individuals among existing institutional definitions, rather than the creation of new definitions (for examples, see Tilly et al., 1975, on proactive violence, especially pp. 233–6; for a laboratory demonstration, see Zucker, 1980a). Such transformations can alter behavior considerably, and redistribute resources and rights (including citizenship (see Marshall, 1977)) among groups in a society, for example by allowing some new groups to vote or by making welfare benefits available to additional recipients. However, transformations of institutional structure which in fact alter fundamental institutional definitions—and hence involve cognitive restructuring (Zucker, 1981)—take place incrementally, and with substantial initial integration of the prior and newly emergent institutional structure. It is this type of transformation which will be explored here, since it is this process of institutionalization which best explains the gradual transformation from a family-based to an organization-based institutional system.

After a brief review of major perspectives in organizational theory, the institutional approach to organizations will be explicated. The view that organizations are constrained by the larger institutional structure will be delineated and compared with the view that organizations are themselves institutions. Evidence concerning the institutionalization of the organizational form is presented, examining the pattern and extent of diffusion and the subsequent stability of organizations. The paper concludes with a detailed historical analysis of the institutionalization of the organizational form, examining the mechanisms of institutional integration and cognitive representation. The analysis focuses specifically on: (1) the early articulation of work systems with kinship systems, as well as their gradual divorce from kin relations; and (2) the massive cognitive changes, reflected in linguistic structures, which resulted from the institutional eclipse of family by organizations. Implications are drawn concerning the control, both direct and indirect, which organizations exert over modern life.

II. MAJOR PERSPECTIVES ON ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations, even though pervasive, are commonly viewed as relatively powerless, or at least at the mercy of internal necessity or of external environmental forces over which they have little control. Earlier approaches to organizations focused on internal structure and process, ignoring the environment. In contrast, current approaches most frequently focus on the effect of uncontrolled (or partially controlled) environmental forces on the organization’s structure and function, and in some cases on its very survival. In both approaches, however, the role of the organization qua organization is minimized: emphasis is on forces affecting the organization, rather than on forces affected by the organization.

Two major approaches have focused primarily on internal organizational structure and process, emphasizing the effects of internal variables on organizations, despite attempts to control them. In the rational model, the central question is (Thompson, 1967:1): "Organizations act, but what determines how and when they will act?" It is answered most basically in terms of goal specificity and formalization, but also in terms of technology/tasks, organizational design, and administrative structure (Scott, 1975, 1981:Ch. 3). In this model, the major dimensions explored derive largely from the internal features of organizations, ranging from decision-making processes to formal rules (Simon, 1957; Weber, 1947). Internal necessity is seen as the central determining feature; organizations are constrained by the nature of their technology and by their need for efficiency. Control over task-relevant functions is always problematic; the environment is reacted to, not defined by, the organization.

In the social systems approach, organizations are also seen as driven by their internal structure. Developed in part as a critique of the rational systems approach, it also asks how organizations act, but answers in terms of characteristics
organizations share with other social groups, rather than focusing on distinctive elements (see Gouldner, 1959). The actual behavior of organizational participants is explored and is often found to be at variance with the formal rules designed to structure behavior (see Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939; Dalton, 1959). Though the success of the organization is often determined by the informal structure—providing successful leadership or not, providing maximum task efficiency or not—the organization can do little to shape or control informal interaction patterns.

While both the rational and human systems model still are being investigated in current research on organizations, the open systems approach, which focuses on the effects of the organizational environment, is the stimulus for the bulk of current work (Pondy and Mitroff, 1979). Specific subtheories abound. One of the major subtheories, contingency theory, asserts that internal organization features must match the demands of the environment for the organization to perform well—design decisions are contingent on environmental conditions (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967).

The resource dependence and the natural selection models, two other important subtheories, specify more precisely the expected effects of the environment. In the natural selection approach, the question “why are there so many kinds of organizations?” (Hamman and Freeman, 1977:956) is answered by identifying environments which differentially select organizations for survival on the basis of the fit between organizational structure and environmental characteristics (see also Aldrich, 1979; McKelvey, 1982). Forces in the environment, not internal technology or structure, determine why certain forms (or “species”) of organizations survive and grow, whereas other types decline and die. Once again, the relatively powerless position of the individual organization is stressed. In the closely related resource dependence model, the key to organizational survival and growth is adaptation to the environment. Here, the organization is not a passive captive of its environment but is “active, and capable of changing, as well as responding to, the environment. Administrators manage their environments as well as their organizations . . .” (Aldrich and Pfeffer, 1976:83). The resource dependence perspective specifically identifies the power of the organization to shape the forces that affect it (see Pfeffer, 1981).

In many areas of social science, a brief review of major approaches could conclude by indicating which is dominant. However, as Starbuck (1974) has reported, perhaps a bit tongue in cheek, there are about 6.7 paradigms per organization theorist! The only consistent defining element—with the exception of the resource dependence perspective—is that the organization as a unit does not wield effective power over either internal structure and process or the external environment. The institutional approach, to be discussed in the next section, as presently formulated, contains this same element: the external institutional environment constrains the organization, determining its internal structure, its growth or decline, and often even its survival. After a review of the effects that the institutional environment has on organizations, the institutional approach is developed further to begin specifying the institutional sources of organizational power.

III. INSTITUTIONAL THEORY AND ORGANIZATIONS

Attention has been drawn in the past to the institutional aspects of organizations, but exclusively in a rationalistic rather than a phenomenological frame. From the rational perspective, institutions consist of distinctive values that are conscious and explicitly articulated by all organizational participants: schools are guided by educational values, governments by political values, and so on. Since participants are also aware of alternatives to these values, deviance is common (Selznick, 1957). In contrast, the taken for granted quality of institutions in the phenomenological approach espoused here implies that participants are not conscious of their central values and that the common understandings are seldom explicitly articulated. Institutionalization simply constructs the way things are; alternatives may be literally unthinkable.

The concept “institution” has commonly been applied to the study of organizations in a vague fashion, referring loosely to the pressure of the institutional environment (Selznick, 1948:25), the infusion of “value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand” (Selznick, 1957:17), and the relative institutional status of types or classes of organizations (Clark, 1956). Generally, “institution” has been underspecified, sometimes used as a causal force originating outside of the organization, sometimes as a consequence of the particulars of an organization’s history. Most commonly, the early work on institutions and organizations focused on constructing explanations exposing the role of a particular organization’s history in causing changes in its operative goals (e.g., Selznick, 1957 and Clark, 1956). Basically, the organization abandons its true goals “in order to survive or grow” (Perrow, 1979:182), leading to an understanding of deviance, not conformity.

The current approach to understanding the sources of institutionalization and its effects on organizational structure and process has very different roots, and hence radically different implications for organization theory. To begin with, institutionalization is rooted in conformity—not conformity engendered by sanctions (whether positive or negative), nor conformity resulting from a “black-box” internalization process, but conformity rooted in the taken-for-granted aspects of everyday life (Zucker, 1977). Within an organization, institutionalization operates to produce common understandings about what is appropriate and, fundamentally, meaningful behavior. They may involve common response to authority, adoption of “reasonable” task-related practices and procedures, and other, as yet unexplored, internal aspects of organizations (Zucker, 1977). The key question here (Zucker, 1977:728) is to what extent are organizations as-
sumed to be more “formal,” so that “acts will be more regularized and . . . interaction will be more definitely patterned”? This question has been answered in a laboratory experiment (Zucker, 1977). Utilizing an ambiguous situation, it was found that subjects were more likely to accept influence from another when the context was defined as organizational, and were even more receptive to influence from another when that person was defined as holding a specified organizational position (a named office, but not carrying authority or special knowledge). Figure 1 presents the basic results.

Institutional effects can be observed not only within organizations, but also in their environments. Institutionalization, when external to an organization, leads to adoption of common practices: “purposes, positions, policies, and procedural rules that characterize formal organizations” (Meyer and Rowan, 1977:346). Hence, educational institutions with very different student populations and/or educational objectives come to accept as necessary common teacher certification and achievement testing systems. Here, the key question is the extent of the impact of the external institutional environment on organizations (Meyer and Rowan, 1977:346). What determines the degree to which externally impacted “organizations structurally reflect socially constructed reality”? It is typically answered by examining the effect of legal (primarily legislative) and/or fiscal control over the development of new elements of organizational structure—ranging from the emergence of specific occupations and service units in schools from 1930 to 1970 (Rowan, 1982) to the proliferation of evaluation units in school districts in the 1970s (Zucker, 1982a). Since much of this literature is just beginning to appear, the next section of this paper will summarize the major findings and implications of the research on institutions. Again, the emphasis so far has been principally on the effects of external institutional forces on organizations; following a review of these findings the argument will turn to the effects of organizations themselves as institutional forces altering other aspects of the social system.

IV. EFFECTS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT ON ORGANIZATIONS

Recent applications of institutional theory to organizations emphasize the impact of the external institutional environment on organizations. The effects of societal growth of “rationalized institutional structures” on organizations are traced (Meyer and Rowan, 1977:342, 346), with the central idea that rules and controls of agencies in the social environment shape organizational structures, so that structures of regulated organizations over time become isomorphic with the rules of environmental agencies. Four major empirical tests of this approach have been conducted: one on the adoption of civil service procedures, 1880–1935; a second on the spread of innovations, 1930–1970, in California school districts; a third on the development and function of evaluation units in schools; and a fourth on effects of the interaction of a major institutional change (California's Proposition 13, 1978) with preexisting rules and controls enacted by the state and federal government on local decision making. The wide variety of empirical contexts provides a broad base of support for the basic argument that the institutional environment affects organizations; at the same time, each of these studies further specifies the conditions under which the institutional environment has an effect.

First, a recent study (Zucker and Tolbert, 1981) investigated the adoption of civil service reform by government organizations, 1880–1935. The major results of this study show that one element of formal structure of organizations (civil service procedures) was gradually institutionalized over the time period. In the early stages of the adoption process, cities adopted slowly, largely dependent on the proportion of immigrants in the city’s population. As the procedures became institutionalized, organizations adopted them simply because they were legitimated, regardless of any specific characteristics of the city. In order to appear “modern, efficient and rational,” even when the procedures were not particularly functional, cities adopted civil service. Evidence is provided in a logistic analysis of civil service adoption which shows that city characteristics were good predictors of civil service reform initially, but as the reform measure spread and
Organizations as Institutions

became legitimated, with cities under more external pressure to adopt, city characteristics were no longer good predictors of adoption. Table 1 presents the basic findings.

The second study (Rowan, 1982) also examined the spread pattern of innovations. In this case, external sources (state and federal government) instituted requirements for local educational organizations. As these requirements became more generally accepted by all educational organizations, the adoption patterns accelerated rapidly. Persistence patterns also differ widely, providing evidence that some innovations became much more highly institutionalized than others (Zucker, 1977). Specifically, instructional elements in educational organizations fail to become institutionalized, continually giving way to new innovations. Rowan (1982:261) argues that institutionalization is more easily maintained in areas “where technical procedures are highly certain and standards of evaluation easy to formulate.”

The third study (Zucker, 1982a) more explicitly deals with the effects of definitions and requirements established by government organizations at higher levels (federal and state) for government organizations at lower levels (local). In this research, establishment and function of evaluation units in school districts is investigated. Though the separate organizational units themselves are not required, extensive federal requirements for local evaluation of Title I programs (and legislative requirements in some states) cause an increase in evaluation activity in districts that effected the development of a specific unit. Hence, most of the evaluation units have been established since 1970. The percent of districts with evaluation units have also increased sharply with increasing state regulation and/or funding of local education (see Table 2). In addition to this direct effect of legislation, the expected overall impact of the unit on local decision making has generally not been found in most school districts. Often cited as an example of loose coupling in organizations (where tasks are not monitored at higher levels),

Table 1. Logistic Analysis of Civil Service Adoption Over Time, 1885-1935a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Intercept</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Municipal Expend.</th>
<th>Log Size</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>D. Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1885-1904</td>
<td>-25.0849</td>
<td>12.1090</td>
<td>-5.5351</td>
<td>(0.9915)</td>
<td>-1.9447</td>
<td>(0.0098)</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-1914</td>
<td>-6.6182</td>
<td>8.8597</td>
<td>-1.9789</td>
<td>(0.9915)</td>
<td>-2.0893</td>
<td>(0.0173)</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915-1924</td>
<td>3.9304</td>
<td>15.2040</td>
<td>0.2284</td>
<td>(0.9915)</td>
<td>-3.2582</td>
<td>(0.0147)</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-1934</td>
<td>15.0216</td>
<td>30.0322</td>
<td>-2.7141</td>
<td>(0.9915)</td>
<td>-1.7141</td>
<td>(0.0147)</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N = 39)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N = 1321)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Extent of State Regulation and Funding of Local Public Schools and Presence of Evaluation Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulation/Funding</th>
<th># Districts with EU</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High State Involvement</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate State Involvement</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low State Involvement</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Universe of 750 districts with enrollments of 10,000 or more; 50% sample of districts with 5,000 to 9,999 students (573). Response rate of 100% for larger districts (n = 750); 81% for smaller districts (n = 464). Table total n of 1321 must reflect telephone follow up results.
it instead appears to be a consequence of the external focus of the unit: the staff correctly perceives the reason for its existence to be the provision of evaluation information for federal and state consumption, regardless of whether the information is used. The evaluation unit typically functions as a boundary unit, not primarily as an internal assessor of task performance. It provides the best possible "organizational face" so that outside support will continue; it does not provide "real" tough evaluation information designed to reassess internal teaching functions.

The fourth study (Zucker, 1982b) also addresses the issue of the effects of multiple levels of institutional environment on the local organization. However, here the focus is on the complex interactive effects of multiple institutional requirements in the context of a natural experiment (Proposition 13). Predictions concerning likely decisions on resource reduction in local organizations are made based on the institutional definition—through legislation and administrative requirement—of what is required or optional in the county provision of service, and of what is reimbursed to the county and what is not (see Table 3). It was found that the institutional forces did set the parameters for local organizational change. For example, requirements for county health care effectively caused increases in county health expenditures; reductions resulting from Proposition 13 implementation were effectively blocked by state legislation.

Based on the evidence collected so far, the effects of the institutional environment operate largely through: (1) the gradual legitimation of a new procedure, position, or element of structure; and (2) the requirements established by a hierarchically superior element of the institutional environment (generally another organization). Both of these mechanisms produce a number of secondary effects. For example, since the federal and state government organizations have to exercise control even though they can have no direct surveillance of organizational activities ("long range control systems"), formal elements of local organizational structure are often created to provide the information needed by the other organizations to assess performance and rule compliance. There is clearly much more research needed on these processes in order to specify more fully the conditions under which they occur and the consequences for the organizations they effect.3

Before turning to a discussion of the effect of organizations on institutions, some general comments on the studies just reviewed need to be made. One is that while some of the results obtained can be explained using other approaches, the newly developed institutional approach adds significant dimensions to our understanding of organizations: it differentiates the relevant environment, so that all controls and resources are not equated. It makes it clear that some controls designed to impact organizations will have more success than others, because as some become institutionalized, organizations accept their legitimacy. For example, it is now literally unthinkable to open a new bank which would not be covered by federal deposit insurance; by 1940 failure to adopt civil service

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Table 3. California Legislative Changes in Funds and Percent Changes in Net County Costs for Health Care (N = 35)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Legislative Change</th>
<th>Incremental Change in Net Costs</th>
<th>County Share of Total County Costs</th>
<th>Incremental Change in County Share of Medi-Cal Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>$0.12</td>
<td>$0.12</td>
<td>$0.12</td>
<td>$0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-69</td>
<td>$0.24</td>
<td>$0.24</td>
<td>$0.24</td>
<td>$0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>$0.36</td>
<td>$0.36</td>
<td>$0.36</td>
<td>$0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>$0.48</td>
<td>$0.48</td>
<td>$0.48</td>
<td>$0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>$0.60</td>
<td>$0.60</td>
<td>$0.60</td>
<td>$0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>$0.72</td>
<td>$0.72</td>
<td>$0.72</td>
<td>$0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>$0.84</td>
<td>$0.84</td>
<td>$0.84</td>
<td>$0.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Costs which the county must bear itself after all reimbursement is obtained from state and federal sources.

4. Passed in 1964, out of series, to make separate the effects of earlier requirements and SB 134.

5. Passed in 1964, out of series, to make separate the effects of earlier requirements and SB 134.
procedures was at best evidence of poor government management, with civil service a taken-for-granted element even in local government. In contrast, federal and state laws designed to affect public schools met with much more mixed success (Rowan, 1982): the ethos of "local control" of schools led to considerable resistance to some elements, even though heavily subsidized by the federal and state government (e.g., employment of psychology staff, curriculum planners, and supervisory instructional personnel), while other elements were rapidly adopted (e.g., health personnel). That these differences in adoption reflected underlying institutional process is indicated by the degree to which these elements, once adopted, are resistant to later change (Zucker, 1977). While 80 percent of the schools maintained local positions in health which survived over ten years (Rowan, 1982: Table 7), significantly fewer of the schools retained the other positions listed above over 10 years (62 percent in psychology, 41 percent in both curriculum and instruction).

While the research on the effects of the institutional environment on organizations contributes considerably to knowledge of factors affecting organizations, it generally ignores some important issues which need to be addressed in the continuing work on institutionalization. First, the rational institutional structures in modern societies are most often themselves organizations, commonly government organizations. The expansion of modern institutional structures, as defined in one major approach (Meyer and Rowan, 1977) is thus highly related to the expansion of the government structure. Government employment as a percentage of all employed workers increased from 4.1 percent in 1900 to 12.4 percent in 1949 (Fabricant, 1952: 14) and by 1970 was approaching 20 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1972). Even in the 1970s, government employment was still identified as the most rapidly growing economic sector (Lowenberg and Moskow, 1972). Second, organizations are not simply constrained by the institutional environment: they often define their own position in it. An organization can define itself as a training institute and garner federal funds for veterans, or it can define itself as an educational institution and gain tax-exempt status. Resource dependence theorists can readily explain each option in resource terms, as well as the choice between them, but cannot explain the initial fact that these two alternatives are available. Explanations which focus on the consequences of institutional position, as in Selznick's early work (e.g., 1948, 1957), can describe the dysfunctions this choice may create for the organization's internal functioning. But both of these approaches beg the real question of the process by which these alternatives are constructed.

V. EFFECTS OF ORGANIZATIONS ON THE INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Organizations largely, not only on occasion (see Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978), construct the institutional environment -if not their own environment, then the environments of other organizations. This is not news to the interorganizational theorists, but they typically focus on resource exchange, not on institutional structure (for the classic approach, see Levine and White, 1961; for exceptions, see Turk, 1973, and Turk and Zucker, 1981).

The central question posed here is: What are the sources of organizational power over the institutional environment? It has been answered, albeit implicitly, by Coleman, pointing out the place of the modern corporation in law (1974: 14) and the replaceability of individual actors in the corporate context (1974: 36). It is answered in this paper by assessing the place of the organizational form in the institutional structure as a whole, arguing that the organizational form serves as the focal defining institution in modern society (also see Zucker, forthcoming). Organizational pervasiveness, stability and change, emergence of new internal organizational structure and process, and even environmental advantages and constraints, are often effects, not sources, of the defining power of organizational form.

Coleman (1974) asserts what interorganizational theorists have long been trying to demonstrate (e.g., Turk, 1973; Levine and White, 1961): organizations interact primarily with other organizations. In Coleman's argument (1974: 73), which focuses largely on the problems that the individual actor faces in achieving his/her interest in large organizations, such interaction is the product of the need to create "countervailing corporate actors to offset the power of existing ones". Historical evidence does not provide much support for this argument. One of Coleman's major examples, labor unions, appears to support his argument because they are generally established in times of conflict (e.g., in 1908 in Massachusetts, about 50 percent of all strikes were over the issue of unionization). However, once formed, unions reduce such conflict: in 1909, and continuing for at least three more years, conflicts deriving from the countervailing position of unions in Massachusetts declined to less than 25 percent of all strikes (see Gettemy, 1915). During the same time period (1908-1915), the total number of strikes in Massachusetts increased threefold.

Arguments which are grounded in loss of individual rights fail to account for the rush by individuals to place themselves in an organizational locus. As will be documented in the discussion which follows, the rush to create organizations cannot be explained either by the need to counterbalance the power of existing organizations or by any distinct advantage inherent in organizational form (such as increased production efficiency). Rather, the rapid rise and continued spread of the organizational form is best interpreted as an instance of institutionalization: early in the process of diffusion, the organizational form is adopted because it has unequivocal effects on productivity, while later it becomes seen as legitimate to organize formally, regardless of any net benefit. Indeed, the activity may be viewed as "on the margins" of the system, as somehow less important, if it does not occur in a formal organization. Hence, late in the process, plumbers who work out of their homes feel marginal, and may be viewed by others such as
contractors as marginal, and wish to incorporate as a business and rent commercial space to replace their garage as storage. Associated management problems may actually reduce the productivity of the plumber; the overhead clearly increases costs. In this case, the organizational form does little positive except to increase legitimacy.4

Evidence for the increasing institutional character of organizations must be drawn from a myriad of largely historical sources. The evidence can only be summarized briefly here.5

A. Rise in Incorporation and Decline in Nonorganizational Employment

Manufacturing enterprises emerged as formal organizations primarily after 1790 (Davis, 1917:26,32). Manufacturing accounted for only about 15 percent of all exports as late as 1880, and it was not until 1920 that its share rose to 50 percent (Fabricant, 1949). Rise in incorporations was dramatic, as shown in Figure 2 (from Evans, 1948); manufacturing firms account for close to or over half of all incorporations throughout the time period. The same pattern held in England, though a bit earlier (Hunt, 1936). The labor force employed by manufactur-
However, it was not until "home work" was prohibited by law that the organizational form received complete legitimation. As late as 1914 in Massachusetts, there was substantial employment by factories of part-time workers who worked at home [in a survey of 134 factories in Massachusetts, home workers constituted 57.8 percent of the work force (see Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics, 1914)]. According to the Massachusetts data, home work was not confined to a few industries in 1914, but occurred in a wide range, from clothing to jewelry to paper goods. While the home workers were paid wages, the wages were significantly lower than for those employed in the factory. The problem of child labor was significantly greater, with over 20 percent of those employed at home under the age of 14. State statistical reports during this period referred to the "evils of home work." Yet in 1914 only 12 states had any regulation of homework, with only 8 requiring licensing of the places in which such manufacturing took place. Few establishments actually obtained the required licenses, since the law was not enforced (see Griffin, 1892; Elkus, 1913; Commons, 1901).

Continued abuses of the home work system led to aggressive monitoring of these workers and to extensive lobbying for legislative action. Realizing the ineffectiveness of the regulations already passed, abolition of homework in manufacturing was finally accomplished. At the same time, many persons in the service sector continued to work out of their homes, including professionals such as doctors and lawyers. The movement of such groups into organizations is relatively recent, occurring gradually.

Such changes did not occur without resistance. Incorporations rose dramatically, self-employment dropped, and home work was eliminated, but each change met resistance from institutionalized structures already in existence. It was in the newer areas of industry and, especially, in the newer cities, where less prior institutionalization stood in the way of adoption of the organizational form (see Zucker, 1980b, for a more detailed discussion of new elements as sources of change in highly institutionalized systems). The most compelling evidence on such points is provided by Williamson and Swanson (1966) in their quantitative study of the growth of cities in the northeastern United States from 1820 to 1870. The growth of population during this period, especially 1840–1860, was due "almost entirely to the growth of manufactures" (Bidwell, 1917:834); the cities growing most rapidly were not the older cities (in fact, age was slightly negatively related to growth), but the new cities which were "born" in the preceding decade (Williamson and Swanson, 1966:Table 4.3.A). Williamson and Swanson (1966:57) summarize their principal results as follows:

The older cities...have had a much reduced likelihood of obtaining the growth which young cities enjoyed, since their age implies a set of industrial characteristics and social overhead facilities which are removed from recent technological change...The greater the historical discontinuity in structural and technological change in a specific decade, the more likely that newly-formed cities will have an advantage over the old and that older cities will suffer from an equal disadvantage regardless of age. The latter proposition will be true since all the older cities were "born" during decades of relatively stable cost structures, demand mixes and production functions.

B. Improved Efficiency from Organizational Form

Evidence for the improved efficiency resulting from adopting the organizational form is available for manufacturing. While technological improvements accounted for part of the increase in output per worker, economists studying early manufacturing unanimously attribute much of the gain to organizational factors, including "efficient arrangements of work" (Fabricant, 1942:75; see also Browning and Singelmann, 1978), deriving in part from the assembly line (Ford, 1923; Stone, 1938). Gains in efficiency have also been attributed to "scientific plant and labor management that has permeated industry fairly generally since the 1890s" (Fabricant, 1942:75). The early work of Frederick Taylor (1911) was instrumental in encouraging changes in the organization of plants and in altering activities of workers in a wide spectrum of industries. For example, incentive wage plans were operating in 37 industries by 1924 (Alford, 1928). Implementation and improvement in the organizational form during this early period is thus viewed as "playing an important role in increasing the productivity of industry" by eliminating "waste and the reduction of time and effort" (Fabricant, 1942:76).

It is important to note that the most significant gains per worker in output occurred early in the period—for about four decades after 1899—despite the fact that hours worked per week also dropped dramatically (Fabricant, 1942:46–57), from an average of about 60 hours per week in 1909 (low of 47, high of 66 in different industries) to an average of about 40 in 1937 (low of 33, high of 45).

One way to view the emergence of the social systems and open systems approaches to the study of organizations is to see them as an apologia for the limitations of the organizational form: indeed, productivity increases—at least those which were a by-product of organizational form—had nearly reached their limit. So the investigations of the reasons began (see Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939), with the goal of increasing productivity clearly in mind. Soon these studies gave way to ones investigating the barriers to efficient organizational performance with no special concern for improving performance (e.g., Selznick, 1957; Gouldner, 1959). Uncertainties of the environment then emerged as the major reason why organizations did not perform as expected (e.g., Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967). The lack of organizational control over relevant variables became, as discussed above, the central theme in organizational work, culminating in a denial of the importance of the organization—performance link, replacing it with an organization—personal "well-being" link (see especially Ouchi and Johnson, 1978; Ouchi and Jaeger, 1978). In this latter approach, the key variables became those protective of the workers, including no layoffs, group deci-
sion making, informal control, and wholistic concern, rather than firm productivity or innovative capacity (Ouchi and Gibson, 1980:Table 3).

Historical evidence suggests that this shift in focus was not a product simply of changes in the intellectual zeitgeist, but primarily of changes in the gains to be realized from adopting the organizational form. There are two principal aspects of these changes. First, activities which most directly benefited from formal organization were those incorporated first [e.g., manufacturing and public utilities, but not construction, agriculture or service (see Evans, 1948:Ch. 7, Table 23)]. This follows the pattern already demonstrated for initial adoption of innovations which later became institutionalized (Zucker and Tolbert, 1981).

C. Spread of the Organizational Form

The gradual diffusion outward following the initial adoption in manufacturing, as the organizational form became institutionalized, affected areas of human activity which had less to gain directly from the organizational mode of operation, though most gained indirectly through its legitimating properties. At the same time, formally organizing often entails considerable costs for these later adopters.

One example is particularly striking. Social movements, often loose collectivities directed toward social action and change, have increasingly adopted the organizational form. The writings about social movements clearly reflect this trend, with the early work emphasizing the collective character [e.g., Turner and Killian, 1957; Smelser, 1963a] and later work emphasizing the organizational properties (see especially McCarthy and Zald, 1973 and 1977; Snow et al., 1980). Once again, this change in emphasis reflects historical change. Using the example of nonprofit organizations listed in the Encyclopedia of Associations (1961, 1964, 1968, 1970, 1972, 1974), it is clear that these groups increasingly adopt formal structures, with dramatic increase in the size of paid staff over the 1961–1974 time period. Further, McCarthy and Zald (1973:16) report an increase in specialized training of social workers as staff for positions in social movement organizations, with an absolute increase of over 300 percent in the yearly supply between 1965 and 1969. Such increases in staff and professionalization may entail real costs for social movements—costs which may not be offset by gains in legitimacy given that the goals of the group are often at variance with those in society at large. These costs might range from the purely economic (e.g., replacing volunteer labor with paid staff) to the symbolic (e.g., rapid routinization of charisma).

Another example will serve to clarify the general point that the organizational form, after initial adoption, diffused outward to structure associations which were not obviously in need of the formal patterning characteristic of manufacturing firms. Local government in the late 1800s was more like a social movement than a formal organization: it was designed to reflect public opinion and to represent the dominant political interests, with minimal service delivery functions (Griffith, 1974a). The initial stimulus for change in government structure was its rampant corruption (in the form of political machines) and widespread dissatisfaction with government performance (Wiebe, 1967:4–5; Wheeber, 1885). The call for change was picked up as a major platform by the Progressive Movement (Griffith, 1974b:15), which because of its emphasis on Scientific Management [again derived from Taylor (1911)] attempted to change the conception of a city from a “political body” to a “business corporation,” with the city “a joint stock affair in which the taxpayers are the stockholders” (Crandon, 1886/7:524; Clinton, 1886). As in the case of industries, cities with the most to gain from change of practices adopted such features early, specifically civil service procedures. Early adoption (1885–1904), as discussed above, is predicted by the percent foreign born and by the complexity of municipal structure, but later adoption (1915–1934) is not predicted by city characteristics (Zucker and Tolbert, 1981). In the case of cities, the adoption of formal structure derived from scientific management principles altered the basic premise of local government, from representation to service delivery, preceding a phenomenal rise in employment in local government (see Fabricant, 1952).

Hence, following the initial adoption of the organization form in manufacturing and utilities, it diffused outward as a “scientific” innovation which legitimated the practices of local governments and, eventually, even more loosely organized collectivities—social movements. Many features of modern society can be traced from the early organizational transformations of government, which initiated the most significant change in the industrial structure; the rise of the service sector (Browning and Singelmann, 1978; Singelmann, 1978). Once the ideology of government as an efficient business enterprise was entrenched, the functional areas of service delivery multiplied rapidly at all levels. Government services expanded rapidly and steadily beginning in 1900, through the spread of old services and the addition of new, at all levels of government (Fabricant, 1952:58).

In not a single major function of the federal government, the state governments, or the several types of local government did expenditures fall, or even rise less than prices over the 40 or 50 years [1900–1949]. . . . In not a single function of the federal government, the cities, or New York and Vermont, two states for which we have detailed records, did the number of workers actually decline.

Social services not under direct governmental authority also expanded continuously during this period, with the rate of growth accelerating in each decade since 1920. This expansion can be attributed principally to state action in health and education, and only to a minor degree to demographic change (Browning and Singelmann, 1978). The expansion of the service sector, both governmental and nongovernmental, coupled with its focus on social action in the 1960s (War on Poverty), probably contributed substantially to the observed change in paid staff
size and professionalization in social movements, as discussed above. Such collective action groups as the Mission Coalition Organization in San Francisco became transformed during the mid-1960s from a loosely organized, participatory action group pushing for more services for Latinos to a highly structured, formal organization with paid staff and heavy direct involvement in delivery of social services (Weissman and Zucker, 1975).

D. Stability of the Organizational Form

Initially, organizational form was adopted rationally to handle large-scale production and to create predictable conditions of work, as the evidence provided previously suggests. As long as the organization was efficient/effective, it survived; but if it faltered, there was no rescue attempt: it died, merged, or otherwise lost its identity. However, as the organizational form gained legitimacy and diffused outward to organize most economic, political, and (later) collective activities, it became a taken-for-granted element, so that it was unthinkable for a new business or political activity to take place nor located in an organizational structure. Hence, corporations and government agencies both proliferated, and at the same
time became institutionalized both objective and exterior (see Zucker, 1977). Further support for this trend comes from the analysis of mass media records (the front page of the New York Times) from 1877 to 1972 (see Figure 3, reproduced from Burt, 1975). Increasing attention is given to corporate actors and decreasing attention is given to persons, so that by 1972, corporate entities dominate the front page (85–95 percent), while individual entities are discussed only 20–30 percent of the time. The 1920s again appears to be the critical turning point, where corporate entities begin a more stable increasing pattern, and individual entities begin a more stable decreasing pattern. Indeed, a number of economic historians have pointed to this period as a critical one for the corporation (Chandler, 1969; Galambos, 1966; Edwards, 1975).

Major consequences of institutionalization of any element of culture are maintenance of it over time and resistance to change (Zucker, 1977). Hence, if the organizational form became institutionalized during the 1920s, then increasing stability in firms should be observed. Table 5 summarizes the major results from a series of studies on corporate stability, showing that prior to 1917 the failure rate of firms was substantially greater than the failure rate after 1917 (Edwards, 1975). As shown in column 2, few exits were caused by merger in the pre-1917 period, but a much higher proportion of exits were caused by “failure to grow” and “liquidation.” Firms failed at least eight times more frequently in the pre-1917 period than in the post-1917 period. The same general trend holds true for nonmanufacturing firms (Edwards, 1975:Appendix Table III, p. 446).

Kaplan’s (1964) data provide especially clear support for the hypothesized critical character of the 1920s. He found that only 31 firms in the top 100 in 1909 survived to the 1960 list; 69 failed to do so. But of these 69, 55 percent (38) had moved off the list permanently by 1919. As Edwards (1975:432) has pointed out, “if the sixty-nine failures had been spaced evenly over the fifty-one-year span, only 13.5 would have been expected to fail by 1919 versus the thirty-eight that actually failed.” More limited evidence is available for failure rates among the top 50 firms between 1906 and 1950 (Friedland, 1957). Almost 60 percent of the 1906 group were not included in the 50 largest for 1928; in sharp contrast, only 28 percent of the 1928 group were not included among the 50 in 1950.

![Figure 3](https://example.com/figure3.png)

Figure 3. Slopes of Continuous Trend and Moving Averages of Attention Given to Individual vs. Corporate Entities from 1877 to 1972. (Slopes are corrected as demonstrated in Appendix C and moving average of time $t$ is the arithmetic average of the four-year interval of $t$ with the four-year intervals before and after $t$.) (Source: Burt, 1975.)

It should be noted that the common explanation for the increasing stability—increasing concentration—does not explain changes in overall stability, since the concentration of production and distribution by a few large firms occurred only in some industries. In leather and leather products, publishing, lumber, furniture, and apparel, there is very little evidence of concentration in the twentieth century (Chandler, 1969:Chart 1). In industries with a moderate degree of concentration (textiles, paper, and fabricated metal), most of this change came after 1940, so an explanation of the changes in failure rate observed from the 1920s forward...
Table 5. Stability of the Organizational Form: Reasons for Exits from List of Top 100 Industrial Firms, 1903–1969*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Periods and Source</th>
<th>(1) Total Exits</th>
<th>(2) Exits by Merger*</th>
<th>(3) Exits by Dissolution</th>
<th>(4) Exits by Failure to Grow</th>
<th>(5) Exits by Liquidation</th>
<th>(6) Col. 4–5/years</th>
<th>(7) Col. 5/years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1903–1917</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Edwards 1975)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909–1917</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Kaplan 1965; Collins &amp; Preston 1961)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917–1967</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Navin 1970)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917–1967</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Forbes 1967)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919–1960</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Kaplan 1964)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919–1958</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Collins &amp; Preston 1961)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919–1969</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Edwards 1975)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Modified from Edwards, 1975: Table 3.

*Studies using a base different from the top 100 were adjusted (Navin base, 101; Forbes, 98; Kaplan, 98; Collins and Preston, 97; Edwards, 110). See references for full sources.

**French data on mergers, based on all firms listed on the Paris stock exchange, is strikingly similar: low prior to 1920 (varying from 1.6 to 9.6), jumping to 19 in 1920–24, and to 29.4 in 1925–29 (Houssiaux, 1958:340). The largest French firms were nationalized and are not included.

Organizations as Institutions

*For each year, the difference between the median earnings in the 21 industries which ranked highest in 1899 and the 21 which ranked lowest in 1899—regardless of the relative position of these industries in subsequent years.
less stability at the turn of the century. The high–low earnings differential shows
differences prior to 1921, with generally decreasing differentials except in
the late 1930s.

The federal government agency structure reflects these same stabilizing
forces. Agencies which deal with industrial and commercial development or
regulation originated and remained as small agencies, with high turnover prior to
1920 (Fabricant, 1952:66–77). Many of the permanent powerful agencies dealing
with industrial and commercial development or regulation were established
in the early 1900s: Bureau of Standards (1901); Bureau of Foreign and Domestic
Commerce (1912); Tariff Commission (1916); Board of Governors of the
Federal Reserve System (1913); Federal Trade Commission (1914); National
Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (1915); Food and Drug Administration
(1928). Agencies dealing with labor relations also emerged during this period
(e.g., Employees’ Compensation Commission, 1916), though most of the major
agencies did not appear until after 1930 (e.g., National Labor Relations Board,
1935). Except for labor relations, the government was proactive, not reactive,
stepping in officially before the organizational society really emerged (for sup-
port, see Caves, 1974:Ch. 4; for the counterargument, see Coleman, 1974).

The history of the organizational form since the 1920s records many attempts
by the federal government to increase organizational stability through deliberate
action. These attempts were primarily indirect before 1940, including federal
insurance of bank deposits, but since then have become increasingly direct and
frequent, ranging from covering the railroad bad debts to recent direct loans to
major corporations (Lockheed, Chrysler). Very recently, states have taken an
active role, designed to protect employment in their states; several states in the
Midwest have made major loans to Chrysler.

E. Overview

Organizations not only are pervasive but also have largely redefined modern
society. The initial adoption, closely linked to improved efficiency in manufac-
turing and utilities, succeeded in legitimating formal, rational structure. Seen in
objective, nonpersonal terms, and as an exterior, taken-for-granted element of
the social system, organizational form became institutionalized. It diffused out-
ward to other kinds of collective activity, including political systems and, most
recently, social movements. Further, once institutionalized, organizations be-
came highly stable. Before 1917, the largest organizations frequently failed to
grow or were liquidated; after 1917 the failure rate decreased dramatically.
Interindustry wage stability provides additional evidence for the expected main-
tenance of institutional structure and its resistance to change once established.

Organizations, then, transformed their environment in the United States.
However, little evidence has been provided so far in this discussion concerning the
processes by which this transformation took place. In the next two sections of
this paper, the mechanisms of institutional integration and cognitive representa-
tion will be delineated. As has been argued elsewhere, explaining change in
institutional structures must rest on the same aspects which predict their stability
(Zucker, 1980b); change rests on the integration of the new structure with the
old. Also, institutionalization is fundamentally a cognitive process. In order for
an element of culture to have both objective and exterior qualities, there must be
cognitive representations so that for things to be otherwise is literally unthinkable

VI. INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION: FAMILY AND
FORMAL ORGANIZATIONS

A fundamental aspect of the cultural system of any society is its system(s)
of classification (Durkheim and Mauss, 1903). With any sweeping institutional
change, then, the classificatory systems can also be expected to change. The
basic argument here is that it is necessary for the old and new classificatory
systems to be integrated, at least to some degree, for successful institutionaliza-
tion of the new classification.

The stratification system is commonly identified as the most pervasive classifi-
cation system in any society. Stratification systems have conventionally been
treated as conveyers of prestige, and less centrally, as task (role) allocation
mechanisms (see Parsons, 1954; Tumin, 1967). Because of the generally func-
tional approach—stratification exists to allocate and reward (see Davis and
Moore, 1950) societal tasks—change in stratification systems has been seen as a
response to change in the nature of the tasks to be allocated, and as a rational
process of reallocation of societal rewards and resources (see Smelser, 1963b).
The changes are generally described as rapid, sudden, and transforming.

However, systems of societal classification are generally quite resistant to
change, with common intersubjective understandings of them (on kinship, see
Radcliffe-Brown, 1952; on occupations, see Balkwell et al., 1980). Institutional
structures are transformed, but slowly. The dual character of societies undergo-
ing transition, generally through economic development, has been noted in the
literature (Boeke, 1930; Hoselitz, 1966). But this dualism has been perceived
largely as a function of particular societal values—Gemeinschaft societies—and
thus only are applicable to a small range of social systems (see, for example,
Boeke, 1947; Barber, 1961).

Here it is argued that societal systems of classification (leaving aside, for the
present, the question of evaluative content) are indeed very resistant to change,
and that only gradually is one classification replaced by another, with remnants
or vestiges of the previous system present for long periods of time. Ogburn
(1924), in his theory of cultural lag, took a similar position. However, here the
lag is not seen as dysfunctional, and (as the examples below will clarify) the old
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birth Cohorts</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth Cohorts 1680-1719</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Cohorts 1720-1759</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Cohorts 1760-1799</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Cohorts 1800-1839</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Modified from Hall, 1977.

Families included: Cabot, Cabot, Higginson, Jackson, Lee, and Lowell.

Business Partnership alone or non-kin:

- Percent: Percent of fathers who participated in business partnerships alone or non-kin.

Business Partnership:

- Percent: Percent of fathers who participated in business partnerships.

Law and Medicine:

- Percent: Percent of fathers who practiced law and medicine.

Other:

- Percent: Percent of fathers who practiced other professions.

**Families included: Amory, Cabot, Codman, Higginson, Jackson, Lawrence, Lee, Lowell, and Peabody.

***Data is so scattered among occupations that it is best to interpret these percentages as showing a lack of significant relation or time trend.

Table 7. Kin Partnership, 1690-1779, and Inheritance of Occupation, 1680-1839, Among the Boston Brahmins

The data was collected in order to determine if the Boston Brahmins followed the same patterns of kinship and occupational inheritance as non-kin.

In most societies, kin are expected to follow the same patterns of inheritance and occupation. However, in the case of Boston Brahmins, this was not always the case.

For example, in the case of occupational inheritance, the data shows that there was no significant trend over time. This suggests that the Boston Brahmins did not follow the same patterns of occupational inheritance as non-kin.

Similarly, in the case of kinship partnership, there was no significant trend over time. This suggests that the Boston Brahmins did not follow the same patterns of kinship partnership as non-kin.

Overall, the data suggests that the Boston Brahmins did not follow the same patterns of inheritance and occupation as non-kin.
importance in economic relations even in 1962 (Levy-Leboyer, 1975). Firms in France remained smaller than in most industrial countries in both the 1800s and 1900s, even when controlling for industry. For example, in 1962 the percentage of automobile, engineering, and shipbuilding sectors in small (fewer than 100 workers) firms was 27 percent in France, compared to 15 percent in Germany and 16 percent in the United States. More important, characteristically, change has come more slowly in France than in other countries. This finding can be explained in at least two ways: (1) a cultural explanation, with certain societies "based on social principles antithetical to those of modern society" (Hoselitz, 1966); and (2) a domination explanation, asserting that it is the direct interference from the outside at a critical stage of development that prevents "modernization" (Moulder, 1977). A much broader explanation based on institutionalization can be offered: when, for one of a large number of reasons, the existing institutionalized classification system fails to become integrated with the new classification system, change will occur much more slowly and in a disjoint fashion. General conditions under which this will occur include: (1) supplanting of traditional classification systems by new classification systems (e.g., through extensive missionary activity such as occurred in China [see Moulder, 1977]), and (2) sudden transformation through rapid "modernization," causing segmental change, so that one part of the population retains the old traditional classifications while another part adopts the new classifications, with no overlapping categories [the rapid immigration often accompanying modernization exacerbates the problems (see Cohen, 1969)].

As classification complexity increases, so does potential for change. Fundamentally, change begets change. Any new classification system which emerges not only creates new categories, but also modifies existing categories simply by posing problems of interrelation. The rate of change increases when multiple classification systems are in use, since the rate of change increases as the number of classification systems increases. When the classification systems are integrated, change accelerates to the extent that two or more classification systems are integrated, since alteration in any element(s) of one classification produces change in the related element(s) of the other classification(s). The rate of change increases when multiple systems are in use, since the rate of change increases as the number of classification systems increases.

Like the societal normative system, the emergent classification system can be caused by or cause transformation in the societal normative system. If the emergent classification system is caused by or causes transformation in the societal normative system, then the emergent classification system will become intersubjective rapidly, and over time may eclipse the importance of the emergent classification system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Involvement</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Limited Objectives</th>
<th>Segmental Participation</th>
<th>Performance Emphasis</th>
<th>Specific Job Assignment</th>
<th>Task Specialization</th>
<th>Compensatory Rewards</th>
<th>Central Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Ascription</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinship Ascription</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsive Reciprocity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-commitment, Socially Required</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary Self-commitment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*The values reported are the actual number of organizational categories with social involvement decreased to the organizational scale type. Udy reports a X2 = 62.79 (p < .001), collapsing the first three social involvement categories and the organizational scale type (first four categories, then the next two, and then the final two).
of the pre-existing bases for stratification. One indicator, independent of classification, is the redefinition of the value of rewards (and costs) distributed in the society. In the past, members of the cultural system may have been rewarded highly for loyalty to the family unit, which included injunctions against secrecy among family members; currently, they are rewarded more for loyalty to the workplace, with secrets (confidential documents, most especially government classified as secret) expected and even required by law to be kept from family members. Culture change takes place through an initial integration of pre-existing classification systems, followed by a reduction in their taken-for-granted intersubjective support, and eventually a replacement or modification of them through the predominance of a new classification system that becomes intersubjective.

A study of early bureaucratic development clarifies this point. In a study of thirty-four production organizations in thirty-four nonindustrial societies, it was found that “socially involved organizations” (those where participation rested on ascriptive criteria external to the organization such as kinship) had fewer of the criteria posited by Weber as characteristics of rational bureaucracy (Udy, 1962). Table 8 summarizes Udy’s major findings, where rationality forms a Guttman scale with a coefficient of reproducibility of .95 (that is, if an organization has “segmental participation” it also has “limited objectives,” but does not necessarily have “specific job assignment”). The real “breaking point” in Table 8 occurs with specific job assignment; as organizational members are classified in the organization, the other bases of classification external to the organization become much less significant. The findings indicate that as organizational classifications become predominant, classifications based on other, particularly ascriptive, characteristics decline in importance.

A. Methods of Obtaining Jobs

One of the clearest examples of the integration of and change in the kinship and occupational stratification systems involves the method by which people obtain jobs. As discussed above, Udy’s (1962) results highlight the transition from kin classification to organizational (occupational) classification. Only when occupation is present do the ascriptive aspects of social involvement disappear, and the self-commitment aspects emerge.

Job search has always—to varying degrees—involved the use of kin. As emphasized above, until the 1800s job search was limited in the majority of cases to the kin network, especially in business (refer again to Table 7). In early industrial development in most societies, persons are allocated to jobs either because of their kin relationships (e.g., in family businesses (see Marris and Somerset, 1971; Geertz, 1969)) or through personal networks using a patron–client system (Wolf, 1966). In the United States by the 1900s there were few family businesses; kin (and friends) assumed the function of job referral. The following quotes from workers who had quit or had been laid off from a textile mill illustrate the role of relatives and friends (Myers and Shultz, 1951:48–9):

There was a woman working in the mill, and she was working with my father-in-law. . . . Dad saw her one day and . . . found out where she was working. I went to see the woman, and asked her if she thought I could get a job there. . . .

My brother-in-law is a foreman at the shoe shop. . . . He said he could get me in with no trouble at all. So I went there straight off.

My wife heard about my job through a friend of hers, who learned it from a sister-in-law who works there. You have to have all your friends on the lookout to find a job now.

Table 9 summarizes the results of some of the major studies on job search, asking comparable questions, from 1930 to 1970. Generally, the role of relatives has not been separated from the role of friends in the research reports. However, the examples given above, drawn from one of the earlier studies (Myers and Shultz, 1951), heavily emphasize kin relations, even though one case above would be coded in the “friend” category. [Some additional evidence on the role of kin in a neighboring town, Manchester, N.H., during an earlier time period can be found in Hareven (1978). Over 75 percent of the workers had at least one member of the family working in the textile mill at some time. A later study, conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor (1973), did categorize friends and relatives separately. These data are not reported in Table 9 because of its complexity. This study found that relatives were significantly less likely to be used to gain the present job than were friends (17.9 percent of the cases involved friends; only 8.3 percent involved relatives).

There are two conclusions that can be drawn directly from the data in Table 9, the first more uniformly supported than the second: (1) Relatives and friends (most commonly those already working in the firm) serve as an important contact in job search throughout the thirty-five years examined, with the role especially significant earlier in the time period; (2) Over time, there has been a diminishing role for relatives and friends (the Reynolds study being an exception), largely in favor of increased direct application to the employer at the firm or through newspaper ads. Figure 4 graphs these trends. Dividing the time period into three major blocks, the values for both use of family/friends and for direct contact with the employer were significantly different (by chi-square, p < .01).

These findings also suggest that kin ties not only are important in early industrialization, but continue—until perhaps very recently—to be a basis for recruitment, though to a gradually declining degree. The importance of these findings are not so much to challenge the prevailing sociological theories of family breakdown under the impact of industrialization (see Smelser, 1959)—Anderson (1972) has already done that—but rather to identify a transformation of the kin role. Kin classification systems are of less importance, to be sure, but they survived well beyond industrialization as bridges to the occupational structure.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>City Size (000)</th>
<th>Relatives/Friends</th>
<th>At Gate</th>
<th>Newspaper Ads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>de Schweinitz</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>58 (2320)</td>
<td>23 (900)</td>
<td>3 (120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myers-Maclaurin</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19 (273)</td>
<td>33 (230)</td>
<td>2 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reynolds and Shister</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>28 (221)</td>
<td>31 (235)</td>
<td>9 (77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myers-Shultz</td>
<td>1948–49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>39 (73)</td>
<td>18 (30)</td>
<td>6 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miernyk</td>
<td>1951–52</td>
<td>80–100</td>
<td>46 (336)</td>
<td>32 (253)</td>
<td>9 (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilcock-Franke</td>
<td>1960–62</td>
<td>70–800</td>
<td>43 (395)</td>
<td>27 (371)</td>
<td>12 (88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheppard-Belitsky</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>56 (76)</td>
<td>14 (19)</td>
<td>4 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lurie-Rayack</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>42 (164)</td>
<td>47 (125)</td>
<td>3 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zubrow et al.</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>17 (284)</td>
<td>37 (586)</td>
<td>12 (68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. of Labor</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>26 (2735)</td>
<td>35 (3643)</td>
<td>15 (1566)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: See reference for each entry in table.

*Stern and Johnson, 1968, and Granovetter, 1974, also report data concerning methods used to find present job; however, both deal with atypical labor market processes—rapid upward mobility in the first case, and highly academic employment, often in new positions, in the second case.

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**Figure 4. Methods of Finding Present Job, 1930–1972.**

This was one way in which integration of the two classification systems was achieved. Before turning to linguistic evidence reflecting the kin-to-occupation change, a very brief summary of two of the other indicators of family-occupation interrelation is needed. Figure 4 provides some additional support for the main points: (1) Category allegiance provides strong support for the major family-occupation interrelation hypothesis, and the increasing shift toward occupational classification as the basis for stratification can be seen. (2) The shift toward occupational classification after 1960, and (2) Maternal patterns have shifted from inter-generational marriage and kinship patterns (e.g., Levy, 1967) to broader family exchange (e.g., marriage of two children from different occupational families, or from different occupations, or in the same family) common in the 1970s. Again, the integration of kin and occupational classification provides strong support for the major family-occupation interrelation hypothesis (Skolnick, 1972). A summary of this evidence indicates that the major family-occupation interrelation hypothesis is supported by a variety of measures.
There is a growing body of evidence that the shorter the expression is, the greater remembered [high recall (see Brown and Lenneberg, 1964)], and the more frequently it is actually used in everyday expression (Rose, 1965). Language, then, plays a central role in cultural expression and perhaps in cultural definition (Kluckhohn and Leighton, 1947:197):

Every people has its own characteristic classes in which individuals pigeonhole their experience. These classes are established primarily by the language through the types of objects, processes, or qualities which receive special emphasis in the vocabulary. The language says, as it were, “Notice this,” “Always consider this separate from that,” “Such and such things belong together.” . . . Every language has an effect upon what the people who use it see, what they feel, how they think, what they can talk about.

A great deal of attention has been focused on kinship in the anthropological literature. For the past twenty years or more, the effort has been concentrated on the attempt to discover a set of fundamental principles by which every known kinship system can be described. This has led to the formation of a number of well-known types (e.g., the Crow type). Hence, the philosophic approach has been reductionist to reduce the confusing array of terms to their common elements. The approach taken here is just the opposite. Three principles are used to differentiate types of kinship systems: (1) the degree to which the classification system differentiates kin types (e.g., daughter of sister vs. daughter of brother); (2) the length of the term or expression; and (3) whether the term or expression is compound, that is, composed of another kin term, plus a modifier (such as brother-in-law or stepmother). Each of these elements is expected to reflect (and possibly effect) the cultural centrality of the classification system and its related terminology: the most central classification systems contain more terms for differentiating members of the culture—terms which are briefer than those used in other classification systems.

Because of the interest among anthropologists in reducing all kinship terminology to a common small number of relationships, there have been few studies of change in kinship terminology over time. Indeed, it is not uncommon to cite studies done twenty or thirty years apart to justify the description of a particular kinship system, with any differences attributed to observer error or observation of a slightly different subtribal area. Hence, the evidence has to be largely cross-cultural, comparing societies which do not have elaborate occupational structures to those which do.

The evidence is compelling, but because of its complexity it can only be briefly summarized here (see Zucker, forthcoming, for a more detailed analysis). Table 10 presents the results. Societies which do not have extensive occupational classifications have kinship classification systems which are two to three times as complex as societies which have extensive occupational classifications. Further, the kinship terms of the former societies appear to be shorter, though because of the difficulty the variety of languages poses, number of letters rather than the preferable number of syllables is the measure. The case for compound terms is clearer. Societies without extensive occupational terminology use fewer compound terms—measured as a percent of all kin terms—though some compound terms are found in most societies.

The richness of occupational terminology has not been as thoroughly studied as kin terminology by others. Most of those interested in occupational terminology have been concerned with the status of occupations, often looking over time and across nations to examine occupational ranking (see Treiman, 1975). However, one study did examine changes over time in both the number of occupations and the distribution of individuals across these occupations for the United States, 1900–1950 (Labovitz and Gibbs, 1964). Table 11 (modified form of their Table 1), reports the Gibbs–Martin (1962) measure of degree of division of labor \[D = 1 \times \frac{\bar{X}^2}{(\sum X)^2}\], where D is the degree of division of labor and X is the number of individuals in each occupational category. To compute D, data on occupations were derived from census reports and detailed occupations were analyzed in two ways: (1) as “constant,” using all occupations reported in 1900 for each census year; and (2) as “variable,” using all occupations reported in any given census year. Again, the results in Table 11 support the contention that the greatest amount of institutional change occurred early in the 1900s, becoming significantly more stable after 1920. This is especially true if the change in complexity of the classification system is taken into account (see column 2).

### Table 10. Complexity of Classification Systems: Comparing Kinship and Occupational Terminology \((N = 20)^*\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Terms</th>
<th>High Complexity</th>
<th>Low Complexity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>((N))</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Complexity</td>
<td>16.7% (2)</td>
<td>62.5% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Complexity</td>
<td>83.3% (10)</td>
<td>37.5% (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chi square = 7.18, \(p < .01\). Complexity determined by the number of kin terms, and number of occupational terms, in a society, standardized for complexity of the language (e.g., by dividing number of kin terms by the total number of words in the native language dictionary).

The curvilinear hypothesis (Blumberg and Winch, 1972) would lead to the expectation that differences in this column would be less striking: societies at a low level of complexity have neither detailed kin nor occupational categories.
**Table 11.** Change in the Degree of the Division of Labor in the United States, 1900–1950

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Constant Occupations</th>
<th>Variable Occupations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>.918</td>
<td>.918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>.943</td>
<td>.955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>.953</td>
<td>.962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>.963</td>
<td>.970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>.968</td>
<td>.975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>.974</td>
<td>.981</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The D measure for each year is based on the occupational categories reported in 1900.

**The D measure is based on the occupations reported in each census year, i.e., 353 in 1900, 308 in 1910, 313 in 1920, 316 in 1930, 372 in 1940, 372 in 1950.

One more piece of evidence should be cited. This is the striking decrease in the word length of corporate names from 1880 to 1960 (Boddewyn, 1967:41): "The first eight manufacturing firms to be incorporated (1789 to 1800) had names almost twice as long (6.4 words) as those of corporations in 1960." Early corporations tended to be explicit about their activities, so that only 4 percent of the firms incorporated by 1860 failed to mention product, process, or function in their name. Table 12 shows once again that most of the change occurred prior to 1920; relative stability obtains after that early period. The shortening of the name, largely by elimination of a description of activity, indicates the increasing common understanding of corporate identity, so that "shorthand" expressions suffice.

**VII. CONCLUSIONS**

A wide array of evidence has been assembled here to demonstrate that organizations are institutions—indeed, the central defining institution of modern cultural systems. No one piece of the evidence is convincing by itself; there are counterarguments already available in the literature in some of the areas. However, taken as a whole it provides a basis for asserting that the organizational form has become institutionalized.

Organizations are intersubjectively defined, with most elements being taken for granted as part of the "way things are." They are seen as nonpersonal—the "ideal type" of a cultural element defined independently of personal characteristics. Offices, located in organizations, are seen as fundamentally divorced from personal characteristics, and any action by incumbents is thought to be potentially repeatable by others if they occupy the same position without changing the meaning of the action. One indicator of the role that organizations play is their rapid emergence as important forms (corporate actors, not individual actors) and their stability, which suddenly increased when organizations became defined intersubjectively as important institutional forms. A second indicator of the defining role that organizations play is the power of redefinition which organizational context has. A simple shift in organizational context radically and suddenly redefines the normative structure and hence the appropriate action for members to take. Another indicator is the power of new organizational positions in changing the status of individual organizational members.

Finally, organizational classifications have become fundamental to the classification systems in modern industrial societies. After an initial period of kin dominance in occupational structures, the kin and occupational systems were integrated, with occupational systems gradually coming to define relationships which were previously seen as kin based. The job search literature provides evidence on this point. But the cognitive importance of organization-based as opposed to kin-based terminology becomes apparent only when examining the structure of language itself: kin classifications are much more elaborate in cultures with few occupational titles.

The purpose of this paper is not to provide the final evidence for a theory of organizations as institutions. Rather, it is designed to indicate the basic outlines which such a theory might take, to stimulate additional work on the general theory of institutionalization, and to make explicit a research agenda on organizations which takes into account their institutional character.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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NOTES

1. Weick's work (1979) also presumes that the effects of the environment vary widely because organizational response to the environment is variable: organizations selectively attend to environmental features. Organizations may gain control over the environment by attending to some parts of it, ignoring others.

2. While the rational approach emphasizes that organizations take action to gain internal control, ability to control environmental constraints has also received some attention (Thompson, 1967; Thompson and McEwen, 1958). Still, organizations do not shape the environment; they simply attempt to buffer or otherwise handle its effects.

3. Some earlier studies can be reinterpreted to provide additional support for the institutional approach. For example, Marshall Meyer (1978) found that when leadership is stable, other aspects of the organizational structure (e.g., size, number of divisions) are likely to be stable; when there is turnover in leadership, these aspects of structure are not as stable. See Pfeffer (1981:308-10) for a more complete discussion.

4. Of course, incorporation may increase business with contractors, who may associate the organizational form with stability.

5. The evidence for the increasing institutionalization of the organizational form is analyzed in more detail in Zuckerman, forthcoming.

6. The battle against homework continues even now. An editorial in the Los Angeles Times (May 25, 1981:II, 8) criticizes Secretary of Labor Raymond J. Donovan for proposing to repeal the federal government regulations against homework: "one thing he should do here is talk to the people inspectors for California's Concentrated Enforcement Program. They work hard to close down local sweatshops and they could tell Donovan in graphic terms how serious the homework abuse problem is in the garment trade.

7. This does not imply that social movements are without structure: one of the earliest assumptions made in the literature is that if a social movement is to survive, then it must develop a structure. Generally, this is conceptualized as a more or less formal leadership structure (see Shils, 1954).

8. At this point, population ecology models fit especially well. Note that high turnover does not necessarily indicate competitive conditions: an industry which is in the process of being monopolized may have a very high turnover rate, as the would-be monopolist destroys and absorbs competitors (Friedland, 1957).

9. Table 9 reports preliminary analysis, using native language dictionaries, of 20 societies. Kinship terminology has been widely studied, hence data are readily available. These data have been coded for 123 societies, but comparable occupational data are generally missing from anthropological reports. Hence, the time-consuming process of coding occupational terms from dictionaries must be completed. (This technique was suggested by Morris Zelditch, Jr., Stanford University.) Additional control variables are also being drawn from the Human Relations Area Files. Full results will be reported in Zucker, forthcoming.

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