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THE COMPARATIVE ***10563** SOCIOLOGY OF ORGANIZATIONS

Cornelis J. Lammers

Institute for Sociology, University of Leyden, Leyden, Netherlands

INTRODUCTION

Although organizations have been the object of sociological inquiry since the days of Marx, Tönnies, Weber, and Durkheim, the sociology of organizations as a distinct speciality—with textbooks on that subject, with its own sessions at professional meetings, with chairs and courses at institutions of higher learning, etc—did not exist until the 1960s. Frequently, in their efforts to institutionalize the new subdiscipline, the founding fathers of the sociology of organizations used the adjective "comparative" to qualify their approach.

Comparison as a scholarly pursuit can mean in a very broad sense: a study in which diverse units of analysis are juxtaposed in order to detect similarities and differences between them. In the social sciences and humanities, however, "comparative method" or "comparative analysis" also carries a more specific meaning, i.e. a type of study, in which social units or social processes in diverse social settings are juxtaposed. Social settings vary not only in space, but also in time, so that comparative studies of this sort can be either diachronic or synchronic. Therefore, in such fields of study as comparative law, comparative education, and comparative government, one finds both cross-national (cross-cultural or cross-societal) and historical investigations.

In anthropology, political science, and sociology, such "comparative" cross-national or historical research usually juxtaposes social units or social processes in various social settings in order to explain or understand the units or processes in question—or the relationships between units or processes—by reference to features of this wider social setting. In other words, the term "comparative" in this sense stands for a "multilevel strategy" (Przeworski & Teune 1970:36; 50–51) to explain or understand in terms of macrovariables, phenomena at a micro- or mesolevel.

However, when several sociologists around 1960 started to advocate and to practice what they called the comparative study of organizations, they did not recommend or apply such a multilevel macroperspective. They attached other meanings to the term comparative. Therefore the first section of this paper describes what was meant by "comparative" in the sociology of organizations in the 1960s.

Next, a survey is presented of the main trends in the 1960s in this branch of sociology. Finally, an effort is made to assess how the comparative sociological study of organizations is faring in the 1970s and what directions in the opinion of this author are desirable for the future.

The Comparative Angle in Organizational Sociology

Many sociologists interested in the study of organizations rallied to the banner of the comparative approach in the 1960s, particularly in the United States, although the "movement" gradually progressed in western Europe and, later, in other parts of the world. It is fair to say that Blau and Etzioni were two of the most prominent leaders of this movement; they not only voiced and codified, but also generated, a number of ideas that were or came to be shared by many sociologists then working in this field.

By comparative studies, both of these authors meant large-scale studies analyzing fairly large numbers of organizations with the same methods and within the same theoretical perspective. In addition, Etzioni (1961:XII) argued that various analytical types of organizations should be distinguished. As is generally known, he chose as point of departure the compliance structure of organizations, and recognized coercive, utilitarian, and normative organizations as the three main types. Etzioni took issue on this point not only with the common sense, layman's way of classifying organizations (according to their institutional contexts, as factories, trade unions, hospitals, prisons, schools, armed forces, etc) but also with the vast majority of sociologists: Until then the study of organizations was fragmented among a variety of institution-bound sociologies of industry, of medicine, of education, etc. In other words, Etzioni (1958, 1961:XI-XVII) used the term both to indicate his wish to engage in the large-scale study of organizations and to highlight his objective: to construct a cross-institutional typology as a starting point for the identification of fundamental dissimilarities between organizations.

Blau (1965) supplied the word comparative with another connotation, when he focused on features of the organization as a whole. He expressed his conviction that it was the special "calling" of sociologists to make the organization as such the unit of systematic analysis. Therefore, he recommended the study of large numbers of organizations in order to determine how organizations differ and what covariations occur under what conditions between various aspects of organizational structure. Blau proceeded on the assumption that formal organizations can and should be regarded as a class of generic phenomena, apart from their institutional environments. His examples drawn from government, industry, the army, etc, are consistent with his stance that the study of organizations should be cross-institutional. One can say that Blau stressed the search for law-like generalizations concerning the interrelations between organizational characteristics, whereas Etzioni sought to identify fundamentally different types of organizations.

Thus, the term comparative acquired three connotations:

- (a) the investigation of a considerable number of organizations,
- (b) investigation to detect genotypically different varieties of organization across institutional areas, or
- (c) investigation to detect general tendencies in relationships between various characteristics of organizations across institutional areas.

Although at least one authority in the field (Burns 1967:113) maintains that even case studies rest on comparison, and in spite of the fact that at least one other authority (Udy 1965:679) defines comparative studies as studies of more than one organization, it has become customary in organizational sociology to reserve the term comparative for studies of a substantial number of organizations. Even so, comparative in the sense of (a) above is a rather shallow use of the term. Therefore, we assume that comparative means at least (a), and limit our further discussion to (b) and (c), which denote different, although by no means mutually exclusive, analytical objectives.

Comparative analysis of the (b) variety relies on so-called type-concepts, which enable one to grasp intellectually some of the complexities and the Gestalt of the object studied, but—at least in the social sciences—often in a rather global, imprecise way. Comparative analysis in the (c) style rests upon the application of variable-concepts serving for the acquisition of rather precise information about the objects studied. Type-concepts serve for classification; variable-concepts help to measure phenomena.¹

'On this and comparable distinctions see Stinchcombe (1968:28–30, 43–47) and Hage (1972:Ch. 1). Although global typologies can be used to generate variables and a type can be seen as the profile of a phenomenon in terms of values on certain variables, these two kinds of concept represent rather distinct styles of scientific inquiry. As Elias (1974:26) has pointed out, in both natural and social science one finds in addition to the search for law-like regularities, the analysis of configurations, "the exploration of composite units whose properties depend—more or less—on the configuration of the component parts." I suspect that Udy (1965:680) makes a similar distinction when discussing the "interest in variables" vs the "interest in constants."

Although at that time they did not view their efforts as comparative organizational sociology, several British investigators had nevertheless already done such studies before Etzioni and Blau wrote about it. First Woodward (1958, 1965) and later Burns & Stalker (1961) conducted large-scale studies of industrial organizations in which they focused on characteristics of the organization as a whole. In both cases, therefore, the studies were confined to one institutional area and in this respect were different from the kind of study Blau and Etzioni had in mind. Furthermore, the British studies were designed to explore relationships between organizational characteristics, i.e. (c).

In Great Britain too, Pugh, Hickson, Hinings, and others—later known as the Aston group, because their research was done while they were connected with the University of Aston—were involved in a large-scale study of organizations. Their work (see Pugh & Hickson 1976) is comparative both in the (b) and in the (c) sense. They gathered data on organizations in different institutional settings (industry and government) for the systematic measurement of many characteristics of organizational structure. In due course they identified the interrelationships between these characteristics (Pugh et al 1968, 1969a), but also used their findings to create a taxonomy of organizations (Pugh et al 1969b). The research discussed thus far took place within the context of one society.

The first sociological study in which organizations in divergent societal settings were systematically compared was the analysis carried out in the late 1950s by Udy (1959a,b, 1962) on the basis of anthropological data concerning a wide range of organized groups, some engaged in hunting and fishing, others in tillage, collection or animal husbandry, and still others in manufacturing or construction. On the whole, Udy's research aimed at establishing interrelations between organizational characteristics and was therefore comparative in the (c) sense. However, Udy regularly focused his analysis not only on interrelations at the organizational level, but in several studies also on the interplay between features of the wider social setting and organizational variables. In other words, his work exemplifies a comparative approach in the sense of the multilevel macroperspective outlined at the beginning of this article.²

²To be sure, in many studies of the second or third trend, discussed later in this article, multilevel analysis occurs in that the connections between contextual and organizational variables are explored. However, some or most of these so-called contextual variables, as Evan (1976:260) rightly remarks, "could just as well be conceptualized as *structural* rather than *contextual* in nature." Furthermore, in so far as these variables do refer to the environment, they seldom or never represent distinct properties of the institutional or societal setting in question, so that multilevel analysis in such cases does not imply a macroperspective. Crozier also contributed much to the establishment of comparative organizational sociology. In his now classic study of the bureaucratic phenomenon, Crozier (1963) compared a clerical agency in Paris with some plants of the French tobacco monopoly; he concluded that both cases provided evidence of a "vicious circle of bureaucracy" and then he related the features of this bureaucratic system to the wider context of French institutions and society. He supports his analysis of the macrosocial determination of French bureaucracy by comparing his findings in a rather general way with evidence from the literature on the Soviet and the American systems (Crozier 1963:Ch. VIII).

Crozier intended to detect particular syndromes of bureaucratic features and to uncover salient processes (i.e. power strategies by various interest groups in organizations) in organizations in varying institutional settings. Consequently, his style of comparative inquiry was more the (b) than the (c) variety. Most importantly, however, his analysis also represents an attempt to trace the origins of certain organization-level phenomena back to the institutional and social setting. Therefore, Crozier's work, like Udy's, can be labeled comparative also in the sense of a multilevel macroperspective.

MAJOR TRENDS IN THE 1960s

This article does not describe all of the pioneer efforts in the late 1950s and early 1960s that paved the way for the comparative sociology of organizations. We may mention in passing, however, that sociologists in other countries likewise launched the sociological study of organizations as a cross-institutional enterprise in the same period, e.g. van Doorn (1956) in The Netherlands and Mayntz (1963) in Germany.

In general, as we have seen, all of the studies that formed the main body of knowledge of comparative organizational sociology in the 1960s were large-scale empirical investigations of a considerable number of organizations in diverse institutional areas, or were based on the literature covering a wide variety of organizations. Over and above that, five somewhat different, although not mutually exclusive, trends can be recognized.

The Search for Types

The first of these five trends is the search for types as advocated by Etzioni. The most prominent efforts of this trend were and are of a theoretical nature. Various authors (Litwak 1961; Blau & Scott 1962:42–57; Touraine 1965:Ch. IV; Katz & Kahn 1966:Ch. 5; Stinchcombe 1967:169–72; Perrow 1970:Ch. 3), in addition to Etzioni himself (1961), tried to classify organizations on the basis of a general theoretical perspective.

Some efforts were also made in an inductive fashion. The authors in question usually prefer to call the classification aimed at, a taxonomy rather than a typology. As already mentioned, the Aston group ventured in this direction (Pugh et al 1969b), as did Haas, Hall & Johnson (1966). Both these variants of the search for genotypically different varieties of organization, i.e. the typological and the taxonomic, were cross-institutional.

What was or is the significance of these typologies and taxonomies? Originally, some of their makers or admirers expected to arrive at a generally acceptable, universally applicable, multipurpose classification of organizations, which would enable us to know all that is worth knowing about any particular organization on the basis of its determination as belonging to this or that class or type. However, no one typology or taxonomy constructed in the 1960s by sociologists, equaled the high explanatory potential of some biological classifications (i.e. of plants, animals). Research (Hall, Haas & Johnson 1967a) showed that the typologies of Blau & Scott and Etzioni differentiate among organizations in terms of important characteristics, but certainly offer no basis for predicting most or all of the variance in the characteristics in question. Moreover, the data do not indicate that one type exceeds the other one in this respect.

Likewise, inductive taxonomic efforts did not deliver theoretically meaningful classifications easily replicated by other investigators. One American critic (McKelvey 1975) claims that this failure is due to technical and methodological deficiencies. It seems much more plausible to presume that organizations as well as other human products, exhibit so much more variation and variability than plants or animals do, that one simply cannot expect any one classification to have more than limited predictive value for more than a limited set of variables (see Durkheim 1950:86–88 for still quite topical observations on this issue).

All this however, by no means implies that the typological efforts of the 1960s in organizational sociology were fruitless. It may well be that "the history of sociology, from Montesquieu through Spencer, Marx and up to Weber himself, is littered with the debris of ruined typologies" (Burns 1967:119), but that does not imply (as Burns suggests) that such typologies do not serve a purpose.

First, most typologies contain explicitly or implicitly a substantial number of testable hypotheses concerning interrelations between variables. Therefore, however unsuccessful a typology may be at establishing an all encompassing classification, as a theory it may turn out to be quite a rich source for further research. This indeed is the case rather often. If one looks, for example, at the summaries Etzioni provides in a revised edition of his 1961 work in which he launched his typology, two facts stand out:

- 1. No attempts were made to validate his compliance typology as such, by taking a cross-institutional sample of organizations, dividing that into subsamples according to the main criteria (types of power and kinds of involvement), and then proceeding to investigate the correlates designated by Etzioni and their interrelations.
- 2. But an impressive array of studies was undertaken usually within the limited range of one "pure" or "dual" type of organizations to explore the value of specific propositions of Etzioni's compliance theory.

On the whole the results are rather encouraging and lead to the confirmation, further specification, or interpretation of many propositions concerned.

This may be true for other typologies as well: they serve(d) primarily as theoretical starting points for a search for regularities, which, as discussed below, was also a trend contributing to the comparative sociology of organizations.

Finally, I draw attention to another, seldom recognized, but highly significant impact of the typological endeavours of the 1960s. In my own experience—and, I am convinced, in that of many others as well!—in teaching sociology of organization to students and to professional practitioners such as junior executives, organizational consultants, personnel officers, the presentation of a typology proves to be quite an effective teaching device. It helps people to acquire a sociological perspective on organizational phenomena, for it is easy for the novitiate in the field to try, in a "mental experiment," to classify the organization(s) he knows in terms of various typologies. Of course, he then finds out rather quickly that no concrete organization exactly fits any typology, but precisely that discovery of the one-sidedness of such typological theories is an important stimulus to systematic thinking (that is in terms of explicit criteria and concrete indicators) about organizational reality from a sociological point of view.

One could say, therefore, that typologies as heuristic devices not only constitute a source of hypotheses for further research, but also provide us with a tool for "professional socialization" of those who are going to utilize the sociological approach to organizational phenomena either for scholarly pursuits or for administrative or policy purposes.

The Search for Law-Like Generalizations

Investigations to detect general tendencies in relationships between various characteristics of organizations across institutional areas, as sponsored by Blau in the US and by the Aston group in the UK, made considerable

progress. Blau himself and his students studied public personnel agencies (Blau, Heydebrand & Stauffer 1966), government finance departments (Blau 1968; Meyer 1972), employment security agencies (Blau & Schoenherr 1971), hospitals (Heydebrand 1973a), and universities (Blau 1973).

As Hinings (1978) points out, Blau and his school used a set of different but homogeneous samples of organizations and applied approximately the same concepts and techniques for each sample, in order to cover a wide variety of organizations. One could call this the step-by-step procedure. Another strategy is to select one large but heterogeneous sample of organizations from a diversity of institutional settings, the one-stroke procedure. Examples of the one-stroke method other than the original Aston study (see Pugh et al 1963, 1968, 1969a) are the investigations done by Hall, Haas & Johnson (1967b), Hall (1963, 1967, 1968), Hall & Tittle (1966), and Child (1972b).

Have these attempts to discern empirical generalizations, valid for a variety of institutional areas, succeeded? The question can be answered in the affirmative. Of course, the experts are fond of quarreling with one another about the degree to which and the grounds on which one can designate a series of findings concerning the interrelation between variables as a "true" generalization. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that regularities have been encountered often enough and in sufficiently diverse institutional settings to justify the conclusion that there are general tendencies at covariation between certain characteristics of organizations. The term general tendencies obviously implies that the relationships in question may vary in strength, even in direction, under the impact of moderator variables, so that one can never expect to find always—and certainly not always identical —correlations between the variables in question.

Others have inventoried the outcome of the search for generalizations by means of comparative studies: Hall (1972:Pt. II) summarized many research findings concerning the impacts of the size of an organization, the nature and implications of complexity and of formalization as key characteristics of organizational structure. Blau himself undertook an ambitious effort to design a middle-range theory about the relations between size, complexity, and the administrative component (Blau 1970; Blau & Schoenherr 1971:Ch. 11; Blau 1972). Finally, Scott (1975) presented a survey of findings on the interrelations between technological, structural, and size variables.

Such a supply of law-like generalizations constitutes a "thing of beauty" to some, a *horreur* to other social scientists, depending on their ideals with respect to the end product of scientific efforts. I do not discuss the relative merits of such highly abstract generalizations at this point. Instead I submit that the theoretical and social questions raised by this line of comparative

organizational research may be as fertile as the generalizations it has provided.

There are quite a few salient themes that have become foci for scholarly debates, for reanalysis of old materials, and for new research as an upshot of the research advocated by Blau and the Aston group. These themes are usually not only of theoretical and methodological interest, but are also significant with respect to a number of practical issues and social problems.

A first regularly recurring theme is how far is bureaucracy a unitary concept and can one conceive of bureaucratization as a unidimensional process (Pugh et al 1963, 1968, 1969b; Hinings et al 1967; Benguigui 1970; Child 1972b; Mansfield 1973; Hall 1963; Hall & Tittle 1966; Blau, Heydebrand & Stauffer 1966).

A second important issue, connected with the first theme, relates to the finding of Blau & Schoenherr (1971:Ch. 5), Hinings & Lee (1971), and Child (1972b) that there is a moderately negative relationship between centralization and the utilization of formalized procedures and in general of impersonal control mechanisms. The question has been raised (Blau & Schoenherr 1971:353–58; Perrow 1972) whether this means that new forms of insidious control—through rules and routines, through incentive systems and recruitment policies, through delegation and decentralization—have replaced old-fashioned ways of commanding people in organizations.

A third theme concerns the relationship of size with organizational structure. Size has repeatedly been found to be a most powerful predictor of various structural dimensions (for a summary, see Hall 1972:Ch. 4). However, is it reasonable to see size as a determinant of organizational forms, or is it possible and proper to consider size and structure as the result of "strategic choices," made by the "dominant coalition" in an organization? (Hall 1972:119; Child 1972a; Aldrich 1972)

A fourth issue, akin to the third one, centers on the extent to which and the ways in which there is an interplay between technology, environment, and organizational structure. The questions under consideration are: What kind of environment or technology has what kind of impact, if any, on what structural aspects of an organization? Is a certain degree of fit between structure and environment or technology a prerequisite for an effective organization? Of course, these kinds of problems were raised first by Woodward, Burns & Stalker, Lawrence & Lorsch (1967) and are now known as the "contingency-theory controversy." But, several investigators engaged in comparative cross-institutional research have contributed to the debate concerning these questions on the basis of their results (Hickson, Pugh & Pheysey 1969; Child 1972a; Child & Mansfield 1972). These themes are continually debated and stimulate theoretical thinking and further research. Whoever looks for truly definitive settlements of these issues is bound to be disappointed. However, those who share my view that social science (and probably any science) never achieves definitive but only tentative answers will take a more optimistic view. Our insight has undoubtedly increased with respect to certain regularities in the patterns of interrelation between specific forms and processes of organization and the conditions under which these occur. Furthermore, awareness has grown of the intimate relationship between the theoretical models and research methods used, on the one hand, and the kind of answers we tend to get or not to get, on the other. Not only does this imply a heightened degree of scholarly sophistication of organizational sociology, but also a potentially rich source of knowledge for the design of diverse strategies for diagnosis and treatment of the problems posed by organizations for their participants and for society at large.

Sociologists themselves have in general been rather hesitant to spell out these implications,³ and it is too early to determine the extent to which administrative and policy sciences can and do make use of these insights. Nevertheless, findings with respect to the fourth issue about environment, technology, and structure, for example, are obviously quite relevant for organizational design. Likewise, much of what has been discovered about the second and the third themes—"insidious control" and size as a matter of "strategic choice"—is of fundamental significance for the understanding of the risks of large-scale, formal organizations in modern society (risks in terms of concentration of power in the hands of organizational top managers and in terms of life chances for ordinary organizational participants, for organizational clients, and for the public at large). All these insights and notions do not in any simple and direct way lead to policy measures and strategies to contain or reduce the risks mentioned. Nevertheless, assuming that diagnosis must precede therapy, this type of research has contributed not only to the flourishing of the discipline, but also, in principle at least, to the job of coping with a number of pressing, current problems.

The Search for Regularities in One Institutional Area

The research on regularities in one institutional area perhaps should not be mentioned at all in this article. This kind of research frequently was not labeled as organizational sociology by those who carried it out, and, more

³To be sure, several prominent organizational sociologists have occupied themselves with elaborating the practical implications of their theories and research findings. See for example, Lawrence & Lorsch (1969), Clark (1972), Litwak & Meyer (1974), Rothman (1974), and Caplow (1976). On the contributions of organizational sociology, see also Lammers (forthcoming).

importantly, by definition one of the salient features of the comparative approach in the sociological study of organizations in the 1960s, i.e. the attempt to generalize across institutional areas, is lacking.

Nevertheless, with the wisdom of hindsight we can now discern that various studies by different investigators in diverse institutional settings have made rather similar findings. In other words, a series of institutionbound studies of organizations can retrospectively be viewed as a general cross-institutional study of the step-by-step type!

Again, as in the case of the first and the second trend, we meet here the curious fact that a certain type of study has been quite fruitful also on account of its unintended achievements. In the case of the "monoinstitutional" research under discussion, studies like those of Woodward, and Burns & Stalker, and also those done by Street et al (1966), Lawrence & Lorsch (1967), Hage & Aiken (1967, 1969, 1970), and Aiken & Hage (1968, 1971) produced quite a few regularities, which one could codify as empirical generalizations valid across institutional spheres. In addition, however, in each of the studies mentioned the researchers discovered a pair of contrast types rather similar in nature.

All the investigators in question (Woodward, Burns & Stalker, Street et al, Lawrence & Lorsch, Hage, and Aiken) arrived at contrasting types of organizations, two of which resembled what Litwak called in his innovative article of 1961, the bureaucratic and the professional models. In Table 1 a list of variables is presented, based on Aiken & Hage (1971) with minor amendments. This list of characteristics of organizational structure was drafted by the authors to aid comparison of results of their research with those of Burns & Stalker.

If one compares the characteristics found by Street et al (1966) to be typical of the "obedience/conformity oriented" institutions with those

Variable	"Classic" bureaucracy (mechanistic)	Professional bureaucracy (organic)
Degree of complexity	Low	High
Degree of formalization	High	Low
Degree of centralization of decision making	High	Low
Intensity of communication (upward, downward, and lateral)	Low	High
Degree of professionalization (of "line-functionaries") Innovative capacity	Low Low	High High

	Table 1	Contrasting typ	pes of organizati	ion ^a
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^aSource: Aiken & Hage 1971: 64.

found to be typical of the "treatment oriented" institutions, one finds that in all respects listed by Aiken & Hage, the former kind of institution tends towards the "mechanistic," the latter towards the "organic" type. In a similar way, the successful firms in Woodward's sample, which had a large batch or mass production system, resemble the mechanistic variety, while those in the process industry are quite similar to the organic type (as noticed by the author herself at various points; see Woodward 1965:23–25, 28, 33, 64, 71). Lawrence & Lorsch (1967) note contrasts between high-performing firms in the plastics and in the container industry, which in most respects again exhibit the differences between organic and mechanistic systems of management as portrayed in Table 1.

Litwak & Meyer (1974:57–84), present a revision of Litwak's original typology in connection with an analysis of the relations between school, family, and community. They do not base this classification of "administrative styles" on a specific piece of research, but indicate that the styles distinguished are inferred from their experience and research with public schools. In several respects their rationalistic style resembles the mechanistic type, while the human relations, the compartmentalized, and the laissez faire styles resemble three variants of the organic type.

In addition, they recognize administrative styles—the autocratic and the paternalistic variety—which they consider to be variants of the rationalistic (mechanistic) style. In both cases formalization (a priori rules) is low. Given also the other characteristics of these autocratically or paternalistically run schools, these regimes are better conceived as subtypes of what is called below a "traditional" type of organization.

Tending in the same direction are the results of studies on systems of management and an organizational control done by Likert (1967) and Tannenbaum (1968). Here again the detected management systems appear to vary between two extreme types—authoritative vs participative—which can be likened to such dichotomies as mechanistic/organic and bureau-cratic/professional.

Finally, it is interesting to note that as early as 1964, Mayntz had already drawn attention to the fact that the differentiation between the classical and professional types of bureaucracy, discovered in industry by Woodward and Burns & Stalker, could also be discerned in nonindustrial organizations (Mayntz 1964:99). She based her conclusion on only two case studies, but history proved her right!

One can go further and also point to a certain convergence in research results on a third type: the traditional organization. What Stinchcombe (1959) calls "craft administration," the form of organization found by Woodward to be typical of unit production, the "sleeper" type of organization discovered by Gater et al (1965), and the "implicitly structured" orga-

nization as distinguished by Pugh et al (1969b),⁴ all resemble this traditional type. Its characteristics are: reliance on custom rather than on formal procedures; centralization of decision making; a simple, rather undifferentiated formal structure; and not much potential for change.

This threefold classification—traditional organization, classical and professional bureaucracy—probably does not have the same applicability in all institutional spheres, and it certainly does not specify the crucial variables or sets of variables that enable one to explain and understand each and every aspect of the structures, development, and functioning of all organizations everywhere. Nevertheless, this typology may be more than a chance convergence.

In a historical analysis of the evolution of blue-collar work at the Renault works in France, Touraine (1955) used technological developments as the prime determinants of changes in the workers' tasks and distinguished three phases: (a) the old industrial system; (b) the era of specialized, high-speed machinery and the assembly line, and (c) the fully automatic production process.

Touraine's main preoccupation was with the degradation of labor that resulted from the technological transition from (a) to (b), but he also presented his observations on organization of work on the shopfloor, on forms of association of workers and their relations with supervisors. On the whole, the three phases Touraine distinguished correspond closely to the main categories of production processes recognized by Woodward. Touraine looks upward and diachronically at the same types of organization viewed downward and synchronically by Woodward.

In a later publication, Touraine (1961) added to his account of the three phases; here he emphasized the coexistence in the modern enterprise of processes of bureaucratization on the one hand, and on the other hand debureaucratization, professionalization of management, and infusion of elements of functional organization into the old line-staff system. The conclusion suggested is that enterprises tend to evolve under certain conditions from classical toward professional bureaucracy.⁵

⁴This type is low on "concentration of authority," a dimension including autonomy (negative) and centralization of decision making (positive). Nevertheless, I suspect that the implicitly structured organization in general is rather high on autonomy and also knows rather centralized decision making. The Aston scale of decision-making centralization has "above chief executive" as its upper end. Therefore, implicitly structured organizations—usually small factories with owning directors—will, on the average, score lower than other organizations on this factor due to the artifact that they have no level above the chief executive.

⁵Touraine himself for good reasons is rather hesistant to call enterprises "bureaucracies." Nevertheless, I conform to the general practice in the field of calling organizations with a bureaucratic apparatus bureaucracies. Touraine's historical analysis and its convergence with Woodward's survey findings lead to the obvious inference that the three main types of organization existing today form the residuum of historical processes. Modernization of industrial organizations was first a process of bureaucratization similar to that noted by Weber as a ubiquitous development.⁶ Much later, in some branches at least, a second wave of modernization took place, a process of internal differentiation, and at the same time of growing reliance on new forms of flexible coordination between the system parts. New, professionally oriented departments with an organic regime are added, while the regime of the old departments sometimes also acquires an organic bent. Consequently, organizations become better equipped to cope with environmental turbulence and can maintain their independence (Kieser & Kubicek 1977:286–306).

Comparable processes in complete or abortive form occur in institutional sectors other than industry, although the initiation and duration of these processes varies among sectors and countries. Of course, newer types of organization emerge not only (perhaps not even primarily!) by refitting old ones, but also by erecting new ones designed according to new insights (Stinchcombe 1965). This then would account for the survival in a new epoch of many an organization still styled preponderantly in the old way, and, moreover, for the presence of a great many mixed types and relatively few pure ones.

This third trend of comparative studies in one institutional area resulted in an unexpected emergence of a cross-institutionally and historically relevant typology. As indicated already, these studies also produced empirical generalizations comparable to those delivered by the Aston group, Blau and his students, etc. Furthermore, as in the case of the second trend, the data produced by the investigators of this third trend relates to the issues of scientific and societal concern briefly mentioned before. However, not all these results could be reviewed, so I highlighted what I considered to be the most interesting outcome.

Cross-Societal Research

Udy, who inaugurated the trend toward cross-societal research in the 1950s, continued such work in the 1960s, but curiously enough his example was not followed then. True, sociologists of organization took ample notice of his method and findings, but they did not engage in a multilevel analysis to seek macrosocial determinants of organizational processes, nor did they

⁶For a detailed analysis of the internal bureaucratization of industry, see Bendix (1963: Ch. 4).

look for similarities and differences between Udy's organizations in preindustrial societies and comparable organizations in modern Western society. Udy's findings were treated as if he had investigated a series of production organizations in the Midwest or in Yorkshire. In other words, in view of the impact of his work, one could well classify Udy as belonging to the third line of comparative studies!

Also, as in the case of the monoinstitutional studies of the third trend, the author's findings about interrelationships between organizational characteristics led to the "discovery" of types. For example, there appears to be a difference between rational and bureaucratic administration in production organizations in preindustrial societies, which (as pointed out by Blau & Meyer 1971:91–92) resembles Stinchcombe's (1959) dichotomy of craft versus bureaucratic administration, and resembles the distinction made here between traditional organizations and classical bureaucracies. In his later work Udy (1970) utilized his data on the covariations among characteristics of organizations. His classification consists of four main types of organizations: production-determined, socially determined, technologically determined, and pluralistic; and a number of subtypes, which Udy relates to the type of society and to output criteria such as effectiveness, efficiency, and innovative capacity.

This classification, well grounded in empirical data, is notable also because of the historical perspective in which the author places his theory and because of the attempts made to analyze the processes of transition from one (sub)type to another one. This is not discussed extensively here, but Udy's typology and the one inferred in the former section on the basis of a set of monoinstitutional studies do tally in several crucial respects. The traditional type of organization is very much the same as the socially determined type distinguished by Udy, while the two types of bureaucracy both fall in Udy's pluralistic class of organizations.

The Study of Organizations Within their Institutional and Societal Settings

Crozier's analysis of the bureaucratic phenomenon was by no means ignored in the mainstream of the sociology of organizations in the US and the UK. However, as in the case of Udy, the use made of Crozier's work was limited to the adoption of certain concepts and insights. His stress on the impact of the institutional and societal environment did not inspire others to undertake specific intersocietal or interinstitutional comparisons appropriate for multilevel analysis. In France research at the Center of Sociological Studies on Organizations (directed by Crozier) produced a number of excellent analyses of organizations in the public and private sectors of France (Ballé & Peaucelle 1972; Sainsaulieu 1972; Thoenig 1973; Crozier et al 1974; for a general review, see Friedberg 1972; Crozier & Friedberg 1977).

In these studies the authors usually heed the institutional and societal context of the organizations they investigate, but do not systematically compare findings concerning organizations in diverse institutional settings, let alone in diverse societal settings.

Conclusions

The sociology of organizations, which started to gain momentum in the 1960s, first as a recognized current and later as a rather institutionalized subdiscipline of sociology, around 1970 was a viable concern. The mainstream of research consisted of studies that either on purpose or unwittingly contributed to a growing fund of knowledge about relationships between various characteristics of organizations and of their environments, and about the occurrence of different types of organization across diverse institutional areas.

But, in spite of Udy's example and Crozier's onset in this direction, no systematic comparisons of organizations in divergent social settings, either by way of cross-societal studies or by way of historical analyses, were undertaken. Even in the purposeful cross-institutional investigations, the investigators paid little if any attention to the peculiar features of the institutional environments they studied. Therefore, however "comparative" organizational sociology was in the 1960s, comparativism in the sense of a multilevel, macroperspective was not one of its distinguishing features. It is of interest in this connection to note that Landsberger's (1970) book. dedicated to the comparative (i.e. cross-cultural) study of formal organizations, includes only two (of seventeen) contributions (by Udy and Crozier) that are a product of the comparative organizational sociology of the 1960s. Another reader (Heydebrand 1973b) contains an excellent and representative set of reports on comparative organizational research, but has only two (of thirty) studies in which organizations in more than one society are compared (again one of the two is an article by Udy), while in only five cases organizations from more than one institutional sector are compared.

THE STATE OF THE FIELD IN THE 1970s

Obviously, one cannot designate the precise turning point in the development of the sociology of organizations. Nevertheless, in the years around 1970 some marked changes in the direction and mood of the subdiscipline are noticeable.

The Fate of the 1960s' Trends

As to the search for types, efforts to arrive at classifications of organizations deductively on the basis of a priori theorizing, or inductively with the aid of some form of sophisticated data analysis, have faltered somewhat in recent years. It is noticeable that the last two notable typologies (Perrow 1970; Udy 1970) are both based on research results but at the same time are carefully conceived from a theoretical viewpoint. The same holds for the threefold classification presented in this article as a synthesis of the work of many theoretically alert investigators. Therefore, there may still be a future for typological endeavours in the sociology of organizations, provided one steers a middle course between deduction and induction and does not expect more than a classification of limited applicability suitable for some, but not for other, purposes.

The search for law-like generalizations was undoubtedly the main trend of the comparative movement of the 1960s. In practice this trend merged with the search for regularities in one institutional area as well as with Udy's cross-societal research, so that we can speak of a mainstream of research concerning the interrelations of organizational characteristics and relations between organizational and environmental variables. Undoubtedly, this mainstream is still vital in the 1970s, but it has been much criticized (e.g. Brossard & Maurice 1974; Lammers 1974:423–424).

I do not review here the reasons for disaffection with the reigning paradigm, or the emerging new trends in the 1970s, such as the rise of interorganizational analysis and networks (e.g. see van de Ven et al 1974), the Marxist critique of organizational sociology (Allen 1975; Schumm-Garling 1972), or the growing importance of alternative perspectives such as the action model and the related ethnomethodological approach (Silverman 1970, 1975). Instead, I concentrate on developments in macrooriented, multilevel analysis of organizational phenomena. Mainstream research in the sociology of organizations, heralded as comparative in the 1960s, has become so common that it hardly makes sense to maintain the term comparative, with the connotations attached to it originally by Etzioni and Blau, as an identifying label for studies in the style of the second and third trend. Nevertheless, in the 1970s a new kind of comparativism in the sociology of organizations has appeared. It tends to develop into more systematic efforts at multilevel analyses of organizational phenomena in their macrosocial settings. That is to say, finally cross-societal research and the study of organizations within their institutional and societal setting merge and form a viable trend. This trend is a consequence of the "internationalization" of the mainstream research of the 1960s.

The Cross-National Breakthrough

Several cross-national studies emerged as a more or less natural outgrowth of the development and application of a specific set of measures in one country. The Aston approach was exported by one or more of the Aston group members, who in collaboration with their colleagues abroad, applied their measures in several parts of the world (e.g. Hickson et al 1978; Child & Kieser 1978). Tannenbaum established a team for a five-country study in which the control graph and related indices were used (Tannenbaum et al 1974). Ruedi & Lawrence (1970) conducted an investigation in Germany similar to Lawrence's original study with Lorsch.

In addition, the methods developed by British and American researchers in the 1960s were also adopted, and sometimes adapted, by others for replication in their home countries. Benguigui (1970) executed an Astontype study in France; Samuel & Mannheim (1970), Zwerman (1970), and Blau et al (1976) repeated wholly or partly Woodward's analysis in Israel and in the US, while Tannenbaum's control graph found its way into numerous projects around the globe (for a summary, see Tannenbaum & Cooke 1978).

Curiously enough, examples can also be found of unintended replications, whereby investigators learn after having completed their field work that their indicators resemble rather closely the ones used in another study done abroad either earlier or at the same time. Cases in point are a study by Negandhi (1978) in Latin American and Asiatic countries, which turned out to be quite comparable to one done in Britain (Gater et al 1965). Likewise, an American and a Spanish sociologist made comparable studies of the role commitment of priests in the Catholic churches in Spain and in the US (Schoenherr & Vilarino 1978).

Usually in these cross-national investigations the authors are more interested in similarities than in differences. If differences in the strength or direction of certain intercorrelations between the same organizational variables in different societies are found, they tend to be treated as exceptions. In other words, there is comparatively little interest in multilevel analysis to discover if and why varying societal environments impinge on the structure, functioning, or development of organizations. Of course, to discover whether society makes a difference for organizational phenomena, one must gather data not only about similar organizations in diverse social settings, but also about these settings. One investigation in which this was done is the project carried out by Hofstede on power distance in subsidiaries of the same multinational corporation in 40 countries (Hofstede 1978, forthcoming).

Systematic analysis of interrelations between societal and organizational characteristics in the style of Hofstede can and should enlighten the role of sociostructural and cultural determinants of organizational properties and processes. This strategy can be called nomothetic (literally: law-posing, the search for generalizations). Another possibility in studying organizations as part of society is to apply the idiographic (literally: describing the particular) strategy.⁷

The full-fledged idiographic method of studying one particular organization within its peculiar institutional and societal context to understand its unique or distinct features can for obvious reasons hardly be called comparative. However, as explained elsewhere (Lammers & Hickson 1978:Ch. 1), efforts to determine what is distinct about an organization always imply comparison, if not explicitly, then implicitly.

In some of the acknowledged classics in the field—Abegglen's analysis of the Japanese factory (1958), Berger's study of Egyptian bureaucracy (1957), and the work of Berliner (1957) on the Soviet management and factory system—the authors contrast the patterns of organization they investigated abroad with those at home (in all these cases, the US). We have already noted that Crozier in his work on the bureaucratic phenomenon used the opposite approach: he compared the results of his organizational analysis carried out in his home country with what he knew from the literature concerning similar organizations abroad.

More systematic intersocietal comparisons obviously are based on research undertaken with basically similar methods in two countries. Richardson's (1956) comparison of the organization of British and American merchant ships, and Dore's study (1973) of two British and two Japanese factories fall in this category. Recently, a number of two-setting studies of organizations in different countries were reported (Lammers & Hickson 1978:Chs. 3,12,13,15,18,19), in which multilevel analysis is achieved by presenting the outcome of two parallel studies in diverse settings and inter-

⁷This distinction is related to, but not identical with, the one made earlier (see footnote 1) between the variables approach, which usually implies a search for law-like generalizations, and the configurational approach, which often reduces to a search for types. As pointed out by Smelser (1976:204), in an idiographic analysis one is interested primarily in one (or just a few) case(s), and that frequently implies "attempts to attain an 'understanding' of the pattern of the unit, a grasp of the relations among its constituent parts." In other words, idiographic studies tend to utilize the configurational approach. Nevertheless, not all configurational studies are idiographic! For example, all typological efforts in organizational sociology discussed above, are nomothetic, since these theories are designed to attain general knowledge of configurations of organizational characteristics in all institutional sectors.

preting each set of results in the perspective of some general knowledge of the culture and structure of the society in question. In this kind of research one can rarely prove in any rigorous way that one arrived at the correct conclusions. Such idiographic studies, however, can be considered as indepth studies, of crucial significance to identify basic mechanisms and processes that are operative in the complex of interrelations between organizations and their societal surroundings. In this type of inquiry one can explore new material, furnish original hypotheses, and devise new measures, which can subsequently be tested in nomothetic research.⁸

Apart from their usefulness for the design of nomothetic research, such idiographic comparisons of organizations in different societal contexts, or even multilevel studies of organizations in one society, can contribute to knowledge of a more general nature. A case in point is the secondary analysis undertaken by Lammers & Hickson (1978:Ch. 22) of a number of quantitative and qualitative comparisons. The studies in question were in most cases based on data about organizations in only two social settings. Nevertheless, and in spite of widely different methods of data gathering and index formation, the findings exhibited a conspicuous convergence in the geographical distribution of types of organization.

What was called earlier in this article the classic bureaucracy emerged as the dominant organization pattern for Latin Europe, while the professional bureaucracy (called in the Lammers & Hickson summary the flexible bureaucracy) appeared typical of Anglo-Saxon and northwestern European countries. In the Third World (South America and Southeast Asia) the traditional type of organization prevailed. The significance of this finding is not only that a typology—applicable in the US and the UK in various institutional areas—is found to be internationally relevant, but also that one can fruitfully utilize relatively "soft" data from idiographic studies for arriving at nomothetic conclusions.

This inference is confirmed by the interesting fact that the outcome of their summary of the geographical distribution of dominant types of organization proved to tally with results from Hofstede's analysis of power distance and rule orientation in 40 countries (Lammers & Hickson 1978: Ch. 22). All this leads to the supposition that organizational form and regime should not only—perhaps not even primarily—be seen as rational adaptations to technological and economic conditions. The correlations found between culture area and organizational type suggest that organizational structure also reflects to some extent the culture of the dominant elites or classes in a society and therefore, in all likelihood, the vested interests of those elites or classes.

⁸Further reflections on the contributions of idiographic to nomothetic research can be found in Lammers (1976) and Lammers & Hickson (1978:Ch. 1).

In further support of idiographic strategy in comparative organizational research, such studies also have a more practical *raison d'être*. As long as no other, more verified, knowledge is available, the interested practitioner and the general public can profit from the insights yielded by such studies. In most cases, some guidance from competent and imaginative social scientific research concerning the organizational problems at hand is preferable to no guidance.

We can conclude that the 1970s witnessed a breakthrough in the sociological study of organizations in the direction of cross-national research. Nomothetic efforts at multilevel analysis are scarce indeed, but idiographic studies concerning the interplay of organization and society, in which (at least implicitly) organizations in two different social settings are contrasted, occur more frequently. These idiographic studies contribute significantly to advanced nomothetic research and also contribute in their own right. Altogether, one may hope and expect that the 1980s will see a flourishing branch of organizational sociology, truly comparative in the sense of engaging in multilevel analysis to relate organizational forms and processes to macrosocial constellations.

Interinstitutional Comparisons

Comparative organizational sociology can and should thrive not only on cross-societal, but also on cross-institutional research aimed at relating organization level phenomena to features of the institutional setting. But there have been very few comparisons of organizations in diverse institutional areas whereby this kind of multilevel analysis is undertaken. One could posit that numerous studies on organizations executed from the perspective of institution-bound sociological specialties form a potentially rich source for idiographic interinstitutional comparisons. But no one has yet consolidated these data to discover how specific institutional traditions and functions influence organizational life as opposed to general environmental factors and inherent organizational tendencies. Two-settings studies in the 1960s compared organizational processes in one institutional setting with similar processes in another setting (Evan 1962; Grusky 1964; Lammers 1969). Also, the Aston group extended its method to interinstitutional comparisons (Pugh & Hinings 1976). Finally, in a recent collection of contributions to comparative organizational sociology, one finds a few studies of this type (see Lammers & Hickson 1978:Chs. 7-9). More encompassing, systematic investigations following the nomothetic strategy to elucidate the interrelations between organizations and their institutional environments are absent, however. This type of multilevel, cross-institutional research-much more easily done than cross-national research-is and should be a very strategic branch of comparative organizational sociology. After all, the entire sociology of organizations as it arose in the 1960s is based on the assumption that in salient respects organizations in divergent institutional environments have much in common, while within the confines of one institutional area one encounters genotypically different varieties of organization. However, no one has ever tried to assess whether, and with respect to what crucial variables, organizations in one society exhibit more, the same, or less intrainstitutional than interinstitutional variance.

Likewise, no efforts were ever made to offset a cross-institutional typology against a conventional classification of organizations according to institutional setting to determine which one has more predictive power with respect to certain criterion-variables. Such tests in all likelihood would demonstrate large interinstitutional variance in certain variables and an institutional classification quite relevant for the explanation of various aspects of the structure and functioning of organizations. The identification of institution-bound dissimilarities between organizations would be of strategic importance for the further development not only of organizational sociology, but likewise of those special sociologies that have a specific institutional sector as their study object (sociology of industry, religion, education; military sociology; political sociology).

To understand such matters as the relation between technology and organizational structure, the general social impact of organizations etc, one must investigate the relationships in question as they obtain in varying institutional settings. The special institution-bound sociologies would benefit from such a comparative sociology of organizations, since it would show which generalizations delivered by cross-institutional research were moderated by specific institutional variables or syndromes of variables. At the moment there is definitely an underutilization of general knowledge about organizations by researchers in these special sociologies, for they are never sure whether and to what extent certain findings of organizational sociology are relevant for their particular organizations.

Finally, one should realize that from a theoretical point of view there is little difference between intersocietal and interinstitutional comparisons of organizations. Modern, large societies are so differentiated that in several respects institutional areas are subsocieties. Therefore, it could very well be that many relations—uncovered by cross-national research—between organizational phenomena and apparent features of society at large, are in fact relations between organizational phenomena and features of the institutional setting. No doubt, the wider institutional setting cannot be considered apart from the general societal setting. Therefore, systematic investigation of the interplay between organizations and their institutional settings are relevant, not only for the cross-societal study of organizations and for various sociological specialties, but also for general sociology. Together, both types of comparative inquiry, interinstitutional and intersocietal can contribute greatly to macrosociology and the interrelations of institutions and societies.

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