

University of Delaware
Disaster Research Center

PRELIMINARY PAPER
#3

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE WITHIN A COMMUNITY
CONFLICT ENVIRONMENT

Gary Kreps and Dennis Wenger

1970

The sociological relevance of conflict and change is unquestioned though the analytical emphasis given these phenomena has varied considerably.¹ Each of these factors has been treated conceptually.² The interrelationships between them, however, have seldom been systematically explicated.³ This paper represents an attempt to specify relevant interrelationships between conflict and change and in doing so, hopefully, to provide a perspective for future research.

This problem may be attacked from a number of levels. The polar extremes would be an analysis of conflict and change on the societal level as opposed to one on an interpersonal level. For our purposes we will be viewing the relationship of conflict and change at the community level, including its major sub-units, i.e. community organizations. It is felt that in this "middle range" gains can be maximized within a manageable framework. Specifically we will be concerned with the effect a community in conflict has upon the potential for change in the internal conditions and/or external environmental relationships of an organization existent within that context.

Concepts

The four major elements in our conceptualization are community, organization, conflict, and change. These structural units and social processes will be definitionally linked. This linkage is necessitated by the fact that we are utilizing a systemic framework in which one concept (organization) is a sub-unit of another concept (community). Furthermore, we will be analyzing the processes of conflict and change within the context of these structural units. Finally, these concepts will be sufficiently broad to allow for generalization.

I. Community

For our purposes we will borrow from the theoretical framework of Roland Warren and consider the community as THAT COMBINATION OF SOCIAL UNITS AND SYSTEMS WHICH PERFORM THE MAJOR SOCIAL FUNCTIONS HAVING LOCALITY RELEVANCE.⁴

In effect we are saying that by "community" we mean the division of labor and organization of social activities that enable the community to solve the basic problems of social living. Warren suggested five locality relevant functions whose performance fulfills these needs: (1) production-distribution-consumption, (2) socialization, (3) social control, (4) social participation, and (5) mutual support.

While these functions have locality relevance, they are not the exclusive responsibility of the community or under its complete control. The organization of society to perform these functions at the community level often involves a strong tie between locally based units and systems extending far beyond the confines of the community. These functions may also be performed by other types of social systems, such as informal groups, associations, and whole societies. The community, however, is specifically characterized by the organization of these functions on a locality basis.⁵

The function of production-distribution-consumption involves participation in the process of producing, distributing, and consuming those goods and services which are a part of daily living and access to which is considered desirable in the

community. While business and economic organizations are deeply involved in this function, it should be noted that many other organizations (i.e. educational, religious, professional, etc.) also fulfill this function. Socialization is the process of transmitting knowledge, values, and norms for behavior to individual community members. This function is the concern of the family, the formal educational system, and to a lesser extent, the mass media. The function of social control involves the process whereby community members are influenced toward conformity to local norms. While formal government is considered particularly pertinent, since by definition government has ultimate coercive power over the individual through the enforcement of laws, almost every group performs this function. The process of social participation affords opportunity for social interaction on a local basis. Religious and voluntary organizations are important here, but all formal and informal contracts provide avenues for participation. Mutual support is the process by which needs arising from individual and family crises are met. Local primary groups based on family, friendship, or religion provide many of these services. In many communities, however, formal social welfare organizations meet these needs.

At this point we should note that our definition is only one of a number of possible definitions of community. Many definitions are either structural-functional or ecological in nature. Since Warren's conception incorporates both of these perspectives and is based on the notion of organization, it is considered to be a more useful conceptual device.

II. Organization

We will define a community organization as A PURPOSIVE UNIT OF PATTERNED INTERACTION WITH DISCERNIBLE ANALYTICAL BOUNDARIES THAT HAS HORIZONTAL LINKAGES WITH OTHER COMMUNITY UNITS AND MAY BE VERTICALLY RELATED TO NON-LOCAL UNITS, WHOSE PERFORMANCE AIDS IN FULFILLING THE BASIC COMMUNITY FUNCTIONS.⁶ It is apparent that we have definitionally linked the two concepts of "community" and "organization" on the basis of function. For example, the school, as an organization, aids in the fulfillment of the community function of socialization. Voluntary associations aid in fulfilling the function of social participation. However, it must be noted that a specific organization's performance may fulfill more than a single function. The local church may aid in the fulfilling of the social participation, mutual support, social control, and socialization functions. Examples could be delineated to link virtually every group or organization to the community social system of which it is a unit, therefore the list of functions is considered to be exhaustive.

Regarding our definition of organization, there are three salient considerations. First, in defining an organization as a purposive unit of patterned interaction, we are incorporating not only a systemic framework, but are also stating that organizational behavior is "goal-directed" and hence rational. Second, analytically, this "goal-directed" behavior functionally relates the organization to the community social system of which it is a part. Third, by indicating both horizontal and vertical linkages, we point to the fact that an organization is interrelated to both the local community environment and non-local units and networks, hence an organization is an "open system". This definition is specifically influenced by Parsons, Blau and Scott, Thompson, and most of all, Bakke.⁷

The major components of an organization are (1) the organizational charter, (2) resources and technology, (3) activities, (4) normative structure, (5) authority structure, (6) power structure, (7) status structure, and (8) environmental relationships.⁸ The organizational charter is defined as the image of the organization maintained by both organizational actors as well as those individuals, groups, and organizations who come into contact with it. Charter essentially distinguishes the organization as a unique element in the social environment.

The basic resources and technology of the organization include the actual or potential human, material, capital, ideational, and natural resources and techniques employed by the organization in its activities. These resources and techniques have implications for organizational structure, because they specify relevant activities for their enactment, continuance, and alteration.⁹

The activities of an organization represent an articulation of its organizational charter. They represent the processes by which resources are utilized for the achievement of organizational objectives, and the preservation of the organization as a unique entity. All organizational behavior is included under this dimension. In effect, activities represent the output of the organization.¹⁰

Fourth, an organization includes a normative structure. This structure is composed of norms, prescribed and proscribed rules for behavior, which indicate required and permissible interaction between positions, roles, or individuals. These norms are both official and unofficial in nature. The official normative structure refers to those patterns of norms related to specific positions within the organization. The unofficial norms refer both to the positions and to the individuals who occupy them. Imbedded in this unofficial, or informal, normative structure, is an interpersonal structure. This element refers to the pattern of sets of person-to-person orientations that develop among organizational members. These orientations evolve as persons respond to each other as unique human beings, i.e. these are unofficial normative relations that exist between particular members, and are independent of the positions they hold. All organizational activities are embedded in this normative structure.

The authority structure is the pattern of authority relations within the organization. Authority is formalized and institutionalized power. Its basis is the office or position. Like Weber, we will view authority as residing in the office, not in the individual. The right to exercise power in an authoritative relationship is determined by members of the organization. It is normatively based and therefore legitimate. Authority is non-transferable from individual to individual.

The power structure is the pattern of power relations within an organization. Power is the ability of an organizational unit to actualize its interests, whether consciously or unconsciously, within the context of asymmetrical relationships and thereby effect the activities in the organization. We are saying that power takes place in interaction between organizational components. For example, actor 'A' may attempt to effect the behavior of actor 'B'. Due to any one of a number of bases of power, 'A' has more power than 'B'. The relationship could be viewed as 'A' effecting 'B', or $A \rightarrow B$. This is a traditional description of a basic superordinate-subordinate one-way relationship. What we mean by "asymmetrical relationships," however, is that 'B' also effects, or influences, 'A' -- but not in as great an amount or to as great an extent as 'A's effect on 'B'; $A \not\rightarrow B$. If two actors were equal in power, than we would have a "symmetrical relationship," or $A \leftrightarrow B$.

This concept is in line with the theoretical definitions of Clark, Dahl, and French.¹¹ Furthermore, Weber's statement that power is the probability that an actor can carry out his own will despite resistance can be subsumed under this concept. Power may have numerous bases, including prestige, coercion, threat of force, control of resources and finances, deference, etc. We view power as a general concept that includes authority. The authority structure, in effect, is the network of power relationships that are based on the office and the formal normative structure. The power structure, on the other hand, is based on all other power resources, except the office, and resides in the individual. It is, of course, possible for both structures to overlap with respect to officeholders in the organization.

The status structure includes the patterns of differential status in the organization. Status is the differential assignment of members of an organization on scales pertaining to such factors as prestige, expertise, competence, power, authority, respect, popularity, etc. Status may be ascribed to the office, for instance the president of the company, or to individuals by birth, i.e., the president's son. Status, however, is more often achieved in the form of advancement, promotion, reward, etc. The status structure is obviously related to the authority structure, normative structure, power structure, etc. In fact, often the status, power, and authority structures may be viewed as elements of the general system of stratification within the organization. For example, where there is high authority ascribed to a position, the positionholder is more likely to achieve concomitant status. These structures, however, do not necessarily have to overlap. For example, power based on coercion or physical threat precludes any relevance attached to status.

Lastly an organization involves environmental relations. We conceive of an organization as an "open system." The organization exchanges products, services, information, resources, etc. with other organizations and social units in its environment. These relationships with the environment are internally channeled through positions commonly referred to as "boundary roles."¹² In being "atune" through these relationships to its environment, the organization is therefore able to both adapt to and effect that environment. Since the environment is dynamic rather than static, the organization must internally adjust to changing conditions. Furthermore, since the organization is an integral part of the environment, changes in the environment may also be brought forth through organizational activities.

We now have one-half of the picture. We have defined the community and its major subunits, i.e. organizations whose performance aids in fulfilling the five community functions. In both of these social units, however, the processes of social conflict and social change occur. Let us turn next to the concept of social conflict.

III. Social Conflict

As with many sociological concepts, conflict is often used as both a descriptive and analytical tool but seldom defined succinctly. For example both Simmel and later Coser discuss the functions and dysfunctions of conflict.¹³ Conflict is seen as an essential element of ingroup solidarity. Conflict functions to increase interaction between previously isolated groups. Conflict is admitted to cause or modify interest groups, unifications, and organizations. Thus conflict is intimately linked with social change. Conflict is viewed as having dynamic tendencies in social settings. Conflict involves a struggle for power. These

statements are but a few of a plethora of propositions or proposition-like pronouncements about conflict. However, these statements only tell us what conflict does or with what it is associated. We are unfortunately left to infer, in most cases, the meaning of the term we are considering. With the assumption that a relatively clear definition of the concept can be of value to investigators, we will present a general definition of conflict and then apply it to the problem of this paper.

At the very least, conflict is interactional. Therefore, the potential for conflict encompasses all social encounters. For our purposes, conflict is defined in the broadest sense as a social process in which opposition occurs between two or more interacting units of social organization over an event (specific incident or occurrence) related to the vested interest of those social units. Thus the event is reacted to differentially on the basis of differential interests. Conflict is therefore, the conceptual antithesis of consensus or agreement. Implicit in the definition is the notion that conflict varies in intensity, i.e. from disagreement to open antagonism to manifest violence.¹⁴ The term interest denotes a vested goal on the part of each social unit to which the event has relevance. Also, conflict quite logically involves attempts to obtain or exert social power. Where power is equilibrated, there is little likelihood of one unit imposing its wishes on another. Finally, conflict is conceptually distinguished from tension or strain. Though tensions may exist, they need not be overt, nor involve interaction, nor necessarily revolve around a specific event. However, conflict, by definition, is overt, interactional, and generated by a specific event.

In our systemic analysis, at any level of generality, conflict is either inter-systemic or intra-systemic, i.e. interorganizational or intraorganizational. The discussion thus far has emphasized conflict between social units. We feel, however, that our definition has relevance in both instances. We assumed earlier that the potential for conflict is inherent in all social systems. A discussion of internal tension and strain within social systems is particularly appropriate in this regard. Sjoberg's discussion of these "built-in antagonisms" among system parts will be useful.

Sjoberg feels that all systems are plagued at one time or another by contradictory functional requirements and that these are associated with mutually antagonistic structural arrangements that function to meet these requirements.¹⁵ Some of these antagonistic arrangements may be essential to the operation of the system. (This is conceptually similar to Parsons discussion of system strains as a force for change.)¹⁶ Without going into the empirical problems of location, these internal contradictions induce tensions and can result in outright conflict. We would add that for conflict to follow, a specific intervening event or series of events having relevance to these contradictory functional and structural arrangements occurs to result in an acute and overt alignment of them over that event. We would further argue that whether the event is internal or external to the system in its origin is not crucial at this point of our discussion. But the point that it is intervening is crucial. Whether the conflict results in temporary or long term disruption, or whether the conflict results in system breakdown is dependent upon the intensity of the conflict as well as the ability of the system to cope with it.¹⁷ In intra-system conflict, functional and structural contradictions are analytically similar to "vested interests" in our general definition of conflict. Gouldner's explication of autonomous system parts is relevant to our perspective here.¹⁸

We have finally to make the concept applicable to the problem at hand, i.e. conflict in a community context and its implications for organizational change. In this case the community is the systemic level of generality. We have defined the community a la Warren as that combination of social units and systems performing the five major social functions having locality relevance. Since the community is our reference point, intra-system conflict will be under consideration. It follows logically from our discussion that in a community conflict, an event occurs which is related to the community functions. (It will be important in this regard to consider the contradictions in the activities related to these functions in a particular community setting.) Thus, for our purposes, community conflict is defined as a PROCESS IN WHICH THERE IS OPPOSITION OVER AN EVENT RELATED TO THE FIVE BASIC COMMUNITY FUNCTIONS.

In concluding this section the reader will note the intimate relationship between conflict and change and vice-versa. This relationship results in a great deal of conceptual difficulty and a most acute problem in the specification of dependent and independent variables. We will discuss these problems and offer possible solutions to these dilemmas in later sections of the paper.

IV. Social Change

As a general social process, we will define social change as a RELATIVELY PERMANENT ALTERATION IN THE INTERNAL CONDITIONS AND/OR EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS OF A SOCIAL UNIT RESULTING FROM THE EFFECT OF A CHANGE AGENT WITHIN A SPECIFIC SPACE-TIME CONTEXT. In regard to this definition, the attempt has been to define social change in a general manner. This conception of social change can be applied to social units of varying degrees of complexity, from the family, through the organization and community, to the nation-state. In this paper, however, we will be principally concerned with change within organizations.

A few comments may be in order concerning this definition.¹⁹ In addition to its general nature, we state that social change is an alteration in the internal conditions and/or external environmental relationships of a social unit. In effect, we are stating that alterations can occur within a social unit that may or may not be concomitant with alterations in that unit's relationships with other social units in its environment, and vice versa. An organization may change the time of its "morning coffee break" from 9:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. It is doubtful if this change in its normative structure will have much effect upon its relations with other groups and organizations. While the example is rather sublime, it does illustrate the principle that alterations in the internal and external conditions of an organization are not necessarily interrelated.

It should also be noted that any alteration results from a change agent. Specifically, a change agent may be any phenomena from a seemingly innocuous pronouncement to a nuclear detonation. All agents, however, can be grouped into one of three classes: an event, a social act, or a social process.²⁰ It will be one of the arguments of this paper that conflict, as a social process, is a change agent.

Related to the requirement of a space-time context, and to our "relatively permanent" qualification, is the fact that whether or not change has occurred is contingent upon the degree of alteration in the internal conditions and external relationships of the unit and the space-time context. Furthermore, the decision as to whether or not change has occurred is the responsibility of the investigator who

must consider the degree of alteration and the space-time context in his decision. An alteration in a social unit that is considered a "change" in one space-time context may only be a "fluctuation," i.e. relatively impermanent alteration, in another. For example, the promotion of a junior-executive to the position of vice-president may be considered as a "change" if one considers the space-time context of a few months of the organization's life. If one considers the entire history of the organization, however, the researcher may decide that this promotion does not constitute change. The decision, however, is with the investigator who has specified (1) a social unit for analysis, (2) a space-time context, and (3) the degree of alteration.

The next question, of course, is "what, specifically, has changed?" The investigator must adequately specify what variables in the social unit may undergo alteration. We consider the variables of any social unit which may undergo alteration to include the following: (1) the social structure, (2) cultural patterns, (3) social processes, (4) resources and technology, and (5) environmental relationships. By social structure we are referring to the patterned distribution of power, status, authority, norms, and interpersonal relations in the social unit. Cultural patterns denote the distribution of values, beliefs, and goals that are a part of the social unit. Social processes refer to the ongoing activities of the social unit. For example, at the community level of analysis, one may conceptually relate all activities in terms of the five basic functions. The activities at the organizational level have already been discussed. By resources and technology we are referring to all forms of resources -- human, material, ideational, capital, etc. Thus the ideas and knowledge inherent in the social unit, the material wealth of the unit, and the physical environment and distribution of subunits in that environment (i.e. ecological aspects) are all included under this variable. The environmental relations of the social unit indicate the social ties that any particular unit has with other units in the environment. For a community one can consider its relations to area, state, national, and international units in any institutional sector -- political, economic, religious, etc. Thus, we may be concerned with the relationships of a small rural community with other towns in its area, its relationship to larger urban centers, and, finally, its ties to state and national agencies and the mass society. With respect to a community organization, one can consider its relationships with other organizations and social units both within and outside the local community.

Since we are attempting to determine what variables of organizations may undergo social change, it should be noted that the previously mentioned variables of the organization all may be subsumed under these more general variables. The normative, power, authority, status, and interpersonal structures are subsumed under the variable of social structure. The organizational charter is fairly analogous to the ideational elements of culture. Activities within the organization are coterminous with social processes at the system level. Finally, the variables of resources and technology and environmental relationships are identical at both levels of generality.

These variables, therefore, answer the question, "What can change?" It is customary to consider these as dependent variables. We choose, however, to consider them only as variables, because they can be both dependent and independent. As will be discussed later in more detail, changes in any of these variables may lead to changes in other variables. Therefore, what is an independent or dependent variable in any instance of social change is purely at the discretion of the investigator who has specified a social unit and a space-time context.

This conception of "independent-dependent" variables will become clearer as we next discuss the relationship of social conflict and social change. We will also specifically consider the organization in a community conflict environment.

The Relationship of Conflict and Change

It is the basic position of this paper that conflict and change are intimately interrelated. The nature of this relationship can be analyzed from four premises. First, any instance of social conflict results from a change or fluctuation in the internal conditions and/or external environmental relationships of a social unit. Second, change may or may not be followed by conflict. Third, all instances of social conflict result in change or fluctuation in the internal conditions and/or external environmental relationships of a social unit. Fourth, change may or may not result from conflict. Since we are specifically interested in this paper in the relationship between conflict and change, and more basically in the relationship of subunits in a conflict environment, we will not consider the fourth premise. It is apparent that change in any of the previously listed variables, i.e. social structure, social processes, cultural patterns, technology and resources, and environmental relationships in a social unit, may accrue from factors or events other than conflict. An immediate example would be any introduction of planned change. We are stating, in effect, that conflict is only one of a number of change agents.

With regard to the first premise, we are basically saying that all conflict results from change. As previously mentioned, the designation of "change" as opposed to "fluctuation" is solely at the discretion of the investigator who bases this decision on a space-time context and the degree of alteration in the variables. The key point, however, is that some alteration in the variables has taken place prior to the onset of conflict. We have also argued that conflict is always preceded by some intervening event. The very existence of this event, i.e. agent, entails an alteration of one or more of the variables of change. Furthermore, conflict ensues when and only when these alterations impinge upon an important aspect of social units existing in this space-time context. This impact is differential to the subunits and is reacted to differentially on the basis of vested interests in these variables. This thesis is based upon certain aspects of Coleman's theory of community conflict.²¹

To "ground" the above discussion we will refer to some of our own empirical work. Presently the authors are undertaking a study of community conflict and change in a small town setting.²² In 1967 an oil strike occurred in a small midwestern community. This event resulted in the direct change of the resources (economic and ecological) of the community and hence had an impact on the lives of the community members. This change elicited differential reaction from individuals, groups, and organizations in the community. The differential responses were based upon the vested interest which these units had in the resources. (Quite simply, due to state drilling regulations, property lot size, and existing capital, only certain individuals or groups were in a position to directly benefit financially from the oil strike.) Furthermore, this change was perceived as leading to alterations in other variables such as the social structure, cultural patterns, social processes, and environmental relationships of the community. As a result of all of these factors, conflict occurred over the changes brought about by this event. Specifically at issue was an injunction imposed by the town council

prohibiting the drilling of wells within the corporation limits. The conflict was extremely bitter and lasted for several months. The community was split into two factions on the basis of support or opposition to the injunction. Also, as will be discussed in more detail later, this conflict affected all of the individuals, groups, and organizations in the community. It is the authors' conclusion that conflict would not have occurred had not these changes occurred from the event.

As was stated in our second premise, however, change or fluctuation need not always result in conflict. From our standpoint the major question is why do some changes result in conflict and others do not? It may be remembered that we posited that conflict follows change or fluctuation in the internal conditions and/or external environmental relations of a social unit when and only when these alterations (1) affect core aspects of the unit, (2) affect the subunits of the system in a variable manner, and (3) elicit a differential response by the subunits based upon vested variables in the variables.²² These are necessary conditions for change to result in conflict. When any of these conditions are not present, conflict will not ensue. For example, in a natural disaster the first two conditions are met, but not the third. The post-impact period of a natural disaster is characterized by consensual bases of response -- not conflict. Changes in the variables resulting from the disaster agent are not responded to in a differential manner by individuals, groups, and organizations in the community on the basis of vested interest, because norms evolve which negatively sanction this type of response. These changes in the normative structure, in the form of the emergence of norms favoring altruistic behavior, expansion of the citizenship role, and the consensual basis of response, create an atmosphere of cooperation rather than conflict. (Of course, some conflict is found in any response to disaster, as difficulties in community coordination and authority illustrate. In general, however, consensus is normatively defined as the correct response.) In other instances, another or all necessary conditions may be absent. Change in the variable may not affect a core aspect of the unit, or affect the subunits in a variable manner. Hence, unless these specified necessary conditions of change are met in toto, conflict will not occur.

Another relationship between conflict and change is that all instances of social conflict result in change or fluctuations in the internal conditions and/or external environmental relationships of a social unit. This thesis is certainly not unique, it is either stated or implied in the works of Simmel, Coser, Coleman, Marx, and others. For example, Marx points out that conflict leads not only to ever-changing relations within the social structure, but the total system undergoes transformation through conflict. Coleman contends that conflict results in new patterns of social relationships (i.e. changes in the interpersonal structure of the social unit) on the basis of differential response to the precipitating event or issue.²⁴ Coser states that conflict prevents the ossification of the social system by exerting pressure for innovation and creativity.²⁵

Basing our thesis on certain of these ideas, we argue that conflict in a social system results in alterations in the relevant variables of that system through either the resolution of the conflict or the process of the conflict itself. Furthermore, variables of subunits within that system will be altered as an adaptive response to the conflict environment through these same two mechanisms. (We will discuss this latter relationship in the next section when considering change in organizations existent in a community conflict environment.)

Social conflict involves the alignment of at least two or more opposing social units. The resolution of conflict is, in effect, the conclusion of a conflicting situation. In other words, after the conflict has been initiated, run its course, and hostilities ceased, we can say that a resolution of conflict has taken place. Since conflict involves the confrontation of opposing social units, the resolution of conflict will either involve the prevailing of one unit over the other or some form of accommodation, compromise, cooptation, or forced-truce. No matter what the nature of this resolution, it will become a change agent for one or more of the variables. For example, it has been noted that conflict involves a struggle for power between confronting social units. The resolution of conflict involves some alteration in the power relations of these social units. If one group prevails over the other, then the balance of power will in all probability be altered. If accommodation, compromise, or a forced-truce ensues, then the patterns of power relations have been altered in that the modes of conduct with reference to each group's relations to the other have a new basis.

This same logic applies to any of the other sub-aspects of the social structural variable, i.e. the status, authority, normative, and interpersonal structures, as well as the other variables. This argument does not imply that conflict will serve as a change agent for all the variables in a conflict situation. The point is that one or more of the variables will undergo alteration, and that this alteration may itself serve as a change agent for other variables. The degree or nature of the alteration is dependent upon such factors as the type of conflict and the nature of the resolution.

To refer once again to our own work, the resolution of the initial conflict over the oil strike involved the removal of the injunction. This decision served to alter the power structure of the community. The town doctor, who was the leading power figure in the community, was defeated in this issue and as a result his later influence in other town matters was circumvented. Even if the doctor would have been victorious, however, an alteration in the power relations would have occurred due to the altered modes of conduct between the parties in the conflict relationship. The resources in the community were altered in that opportunity for additional community members to derive economic benefit from the oil strike was now enhanced. The interpersonal structure was altered in that new patterns of association and dissociation had emerged from the conflict. The social processes of the community were altered by the ongoing oil activity. The environmental relations of the community were altered by the increased contact with outside oil representatives, brokers, and oil men. The culture of the community was changing in that values held about the community were at issue throughout the conflict and the influx of new people (oil men) had potential impact on the cultural patterns. The authority structure of the community was altered in that several members of the town council resigned as a result of the oil controversy and later the mayor was defeated for re-election. Although the authors' space-time context for each of the variables is not firmly fixed as yet, the potential for alteration in the status and normative structure is likewise quite evident. Hence the resolution of the conflict served as an agent for change in the relevant variables.

The remaining change agent is the process of conflict itself. Here the relationship between conflict and change is equally apparent. In any conflict, values, interests, social and/or organizational relationships become aligned in a specific way to result in a conflict situation. Of course, the type of precipitating event is a cue to the nature of these alignments. A conflict over the books to be used in a school system may have different implications than a

dispute over the flouridation of water. However, the manner in which these alignments develop and the ramifications of them is the essence of the process of conflict. Our review of the literature, as well as our own work, indicates that the process of conflict serves as an agent of change in the relevant variables. To illustrate, conflict entails a polarization of social relations (interpersonal structure). Conflict involves the formation of new associations on the basis of positions in the conflict (interpersonal interaction and environmental relationships). Conflict involves increased interaction and communication between social units (social processes or activities). Conflict promotes in-group solidarity (culture and normative structure). The process of conflict modifies interests and values (culture, normative structure, activities, resources). Conflict involves a struggle for power (power, authority, and status structures, resources). Conflict may alter the boundary relations between groups and organizations (environmental relationships).

The above illustrate only a few of the possible implications of the process of conflict. However, the indication is clear that the variables of change are intimately related to this process. Obviously, the intensity of the conflict affects the degree of alteration in any of the variables. For example, the degree of alteration in the human and material resources of a community undergoing a revolution is substantially different from one having a dispute over the flouridation of water.

The Organization in a Community Conflict Environment

The preceding has attempted to lay the groundwork for the analysis of organizational change within a community conflict environment. We are basing this analysis upon the conceptual groundwork that has preceded it.

With this basic framework, we ask what is the relationship between organizational change and community conflict? As we have shown, any community in conflict will undergo alteration in one or more of the five general community variables due to the resolution and process of the conflict. Furthermore, these "changes" or "fluctuations" may serve as change agents for further alteration in the community variables. To reiterate, we have assumed that social units adjust to changes in their environment and internal conditions. It is necessary that we qualify this assumption in our "organization-community relationship."

The environment of an organization and the nature of its relationship to this environment are defined to a large degree by the organizational charter. In effect, certain dimensions of the environment, i.e. certain specific aspects of the five general variables, are conceived as being relevant to the activities of the organization, while others are not. For example, a local factory may not consider the status structure of the community as being a relevant dimension of the environment for its activities. The material and human resources and consumption patterns, however, may be of prime importance to its activities and thereby considered to be a vital aspect of its environment. A change in the former will be of little consequence to the factory; a change in the latter, however, would more than likely result in some adaptation in the form of an alteration in one or more of the nine major components or variables of the organization. Therefore, any "change" or "fluctuation" in one or more of the major community variables brought about by conflict will necessitate adaptation (alteration in one or more of the organization's components) if they are relevant dimensions of the organization's

environment as defined by the organizational charter. In effect, an organization may not adapt to all or any of the changes in the community variables brought about by conflict. It will, however, adapt to those changes in community variables that constitute important aspects of its environment. A major determinate, therefore, of whether or not an organization undergoes change within a conflict environment is the manner in which the charter specifies the boundary and major elements of the environment.

Of course, an organization that does not undergo alteration within the space-time context established by the investigator may at some later point do so as a result of the inherently dynamic process of change within the community. The initial changes in the community variables serve as change agents for further alterations. This continuous, reactive change process may at some point touch upon an important dimension of the organization's environment. At that point, the organization will undergo change.

Thus far, we have been discussing organizational change as an adaptive response to a changing environment. An organization may also undergo change directly as a result of community conflict. The process and resolution of conflict may directly alter one or more of the nine major variables of an organization. For example, conflict may alter or destroy the resources of an organization, as in the case of looting in a civil disorder. Less overtly, the conflict may result in a splintering of the members of the organization into polar camps and thus alter the interpersonal structure of the organization. Organizations may be forced to take sides in a conflict and thus alter its environmental relations. There is obviously a plethora of possible relationships. The point is that community conflict can result in organizational change not only through adaptation to a changing environment, but also as a direct effect.

One final point should be mentioned in this regard. We have previously stated that any instance of conflict is preceded by alterations in the key variables of a social unit. It follows logically that any organization which has undergone change either directly or adaptively has a greater probability for experiencing internal conflict. Whether or not changes undergone by the organization result in internal conflict is dependent upon the same three factors which determine the emergence of conflict from change in any social unit. These are: (1) change must affect a core aspect of the organization, (2) change must affect the subunits of the organization in a different manner, and (3) change must elicit a differential response by the subunits based upon vested interests in the altered variables. These are necessary conditions; when any of these is absent, conflict will not ensue. (The potential circular relationship between conflict and change is thus evidenced.)

All of the aforementioned aspects of the relationship between organizational change and community conflict can be "grounded" by reference to our own empirical work. Referring once again to the small town that experienced bitter conflict over an oil strike, the focal organization of the community, the school system, underwent extensive change in many of its dimensions as a result of the conflict. Prior to the conflict, the school system had one of the lowest tax bases in the state. Although the most impressive edifice in the community, the physical plant was noted for overcrowded conditions and inadequate facilities -- except for athletics and extracurricular activities. The professional administrators of the system had been entrenched in their positions for a combined total of 60 years. The same stable condition was evidenced on the five man school board whose members' tenure of

service averaged 18 years. The incumbents on the school board, particularly the president, the town doctor, and a local businessman were some of the most influential members of the community. The teachers were unorganized and generally lacked power within the system.

Both adaptive and direct changes were wrought in this organization as a result of the conflict. Furthermore, intra-organizational conflict erupted as a result of these changes, which in time led to further changes, and to further conflict, and to further changes

Illustrative of these processes of change and conflict are some of the following. The resolution of the oil conflict had altered the economic resources, power structure, interpersonal structure, social processes, cultural patterns, authority structure, human resources, and the ecological aspects of the community. We have stated that any "change" or "fluctuation" in one or more of the community variables brought about by conflict will necessitate alterations in an organization's components if they are relevant dimensions of the organization's environment as defined by its organizational charter. Since the school was such a focal organization in the community, most of these variables were considered by the organization as being relevant. Particularly illustrative, however, were the alterations in the power structure and economic resource variables. Considering the latter, the defeat of the injunction allowed the drilling of more wells which increased the tax base for the system. (The school system received 70% of all property taxes.) This proved to be a substantial increase in the operating funds of the school. This increased wealth required adaptive responses in many components of the school system which are self-evident. With regard to the power structure, it has been shown in other studies that the school is intimately related to its power environment.²⁶ In fact, in this community the structure of power in the school and the community exhibited great overlap. The town doctor was the most influential member of the school board as well as the community. He became a pivotal figure in the conflict over the injunction and was defeated. This defeat in the community-wide dispute affected his position of power on the school board. As his power became circumvented, the power structure of the school system was altered.

The school also underwent direct change as a result of the process and resolution of the conflict. During the course of the dispute, the possibility of drilling an oil well on school property became a major issue. Because of this issue, the school system itself became embroiled in the conflict. Factions developed within the system and there were pressures, both internally and externally, for the school to "take a side" in the issue. Besides these changes in the interpersonal structure, the values and norms of the organization were altered because the legitimacy of placing a well on school property was at issue.

It has been noted that changes such as these have the potential to induce intraorganization conflict. Conflict did erupt in this case. Changes in the economic resources of the school system, the power structure, and interpersonal structure of the system resulted in a bitter conflict between the teachers and the administration and board (who themselves were internally factionated). The conflict was waged on the basis of the vested interests of these groups. Specifically at issue were salary demands on the part of the teachers as a result of the potential increase in revenue in the system. Furthermore, this internal conflict involved a power struggle between factions which was precipitated by the sudden alteration in a previously stable power structure. The resolution and process of this internal

conflict resulted in such varied alterations in the organization as membership turnover, institution of a new reward system, increased power for the teachers, alterations in the authority and status structure as the teachers' association was legitimized, and some irreparable cleavages in the interpersonal structure.

When the authors last investigated, the intensity wrought by the initial controversy had persisted. Illustrative of the dynamic relationship between change and conflict is the fact that two other major conflicts have occurred within the school system within the past year, and the entire school board and administration has resigned.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to develop a theoretical framework for the investigation and analysis of conflict and change within a community and its organizations. To reiterate, we have first identified the key concepts, (community, organization, conflict, and change) and conceptually linked them. Second, we have delineated the relevant variables of change at both the community and organizational levels. In this regard, we have shown that a prior designation of independent and dependent variables is untenable theoretically. Rather, we have proposed that the specification of independent and dependent variables is contingent upon the space-time context employed by the investigator. Furthermore, the specification of change as opposed to fluctuation is solely at the discretion of the investigator who bases his decision upon the space-time context and the degree of alteration in the relevant variables. Third, we have specified the relationship between conflict and change from four different perspectives and illustrated them for the reader. Fourth, we have conceptually analyzed and illustrated organizational change within a community conflict environment. Finally, we have, as often as possible, "grounded" our discussion in ongoing empirical work.

In conclusion, we feel that our approach will be of benefit not only to the frame of reference in this paper, but also to any sociological concern where conflict and change are at issue. We feel that the perspectives on conflict and change, with respect to a community and its organizations, articulated in terms of specific variables, are hypotheses worthy of further testing and refinement. Finally, we have attempted to impose a degree of closure in order to enhance conceptual clarity, and make our theoretical perspective on the nature and relationship of social conflict and change comprehensible. It is hoped that the intellectual tools presented here will serve the investigator well.

FOOTNOTES

1. The divergent emphasis given system integration by Parsons as opposed to conflict and change by Dahrendorf is an immediate example from the literature.
2. With regard to general treatments of change see, for example, Wilbert E. Moore "A Reconsideration of Theories of Social Change, American Sociological Review 25 (December 1960): 810-818; Wilbert E. Moore, Social Change (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall 1963); Wilbert E. Moore Order and Change: Essays in Comparative Sociology (New York: Wiley, 1967); or Neil J. Smelser, "Process of Social Change" in Neil J. Smelser, ed., Sociology -- An Introduction (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967), pp. 671-729. Examples of conceptual treatments of conflict include James Coleman, Community Conflict, (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957); Lewis Coser, "The Functions of Social Conflict," in Coser and Rosenberg, eds., Sociological Theory (New York: The MacMillan Co. 1964); Lewis Coser, "Social Conflict and the Theory of Social Change," British Journal of Sociology (September 1957): 197-201; Ralf Dahrendorf, "Out of Utopia: Toward a Reorientation of Sociological Analysis," in Coser and Rosenberg, eds., Sociological Theory (New York: The MacMillan Co, 1964); George Simmel, "Conflict as Sociation," in Coser and Rosenberg, eds., Sociological Theory (New York: The MacMillan Co. 1964); and Kenneth E. Boulding, "A Pure Theory of Conflict Applied to Organizations," in Kahn and Boulding, eds., Power and Conflict in Organizations (New York: Basic Books 1964).
3. Exceptions to this are Gouldner, Coser, Dahrendorf, and Marx.
4. Roland L. Warren, The Community in America (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1963), p. 9.
5. Ibid., p. 10.
6. Admittedly, our definition of organization relates most specifically to complex organizations. However we feel that the delineation can be profitably employed with more simplistic forms of organization as well.
7. Wight Bakke, "Concept of the Social Organization," in Mason Harre, ed., Modern Organization Theory (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1959, pp. 19-73; Peter M. Blau and W. Richard Scott, Formal Organizations (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1962); Talcott Parsons, The Social System (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1951); and James D. Thompson, Organizations in Action (New York: McGraw-Hill 1967).
8. The authors are particularly indebted to Bakke, op. cit. Much of our conceptualization is based upon his detailed analysis of organizational features.
9. Bakke, op. cit., p. 42.
10. Ibid., pp. 43-57.
11. Terry Clark, Community Structure and Decision Making: Comparative Analysis (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1968); Robert Dahl, "The Concept of Power," Behavioral Science 2 (1957): 201-215; and J. R. P. French, "A Formal Theory of Social Power," Psychological Review 63 (1956): 181-184.

12. See William Evan, "The Organization Set: Toward a Theory of Interorganizational Relationships," in James Thompson, ed., Approaches to Organizational Design (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1966); Harold Gutzkow, "Relations Among Organizations," in Raymond V. Bowers, ed., Studies on Behavior in Organizations: A Research Symposium (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1966); and James D. Thompson, "Organizations and Output Transactions," American Journal of Sociology 68 (1962).
13. Simmel, op. cit., pp. 199-203; and Coser, op. cit., pp. 205-209.
14. Marvin E. Olsen, The Process of Social Organization (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967), pp. 133-153.
15. Gideon Sjoberg, "Contradictory Functional Requirements and Social Systems," in Demerath and Peterson, eds., System, Change, and Conflict (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1967), pp. 339-347.
16. Talcott Parsons, "A Paradigm for the Analysis of Social Systems and Change," in Demerath and Peterson, eds., System, Change, and Conflict (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1967), pp. 189-213.
17. An example of systemic elasticity is the institutionalization of conflict.
18. Alvin W. Gouldner, "Reciprocity and Autonomy in Functional Theory," in Gross, ed., Symposium on Sociological Theory (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), pp. 241-270.
19. This definition has been influenced by numerous writers, for example Alvin Boskoff, "Social Change: Major Problems in the Emergence of Theoretical and Research Foci," in Becker and Boskoff, eds., Modern Sociological Theory in Continuity and Change (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1957), pp. 260-305; Lowery Nelson, Charles R. Ramsey, and Coolie Verna, "Social Change and the Community," in Warren, ed., Perspectives on the American Community (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co.), 1966, pp. 537-543; Neil J. Smelser, Theories of Social Change and the Analysis of Nuclear Attack (McLean, Virginia: Human Science Research Inc., 1967); and Smelser, op. cit.
20. Smelser, op. cit.
21. Coleman, op. cit., p. 4.
22. Gary A. Kreps, Community Conflict: A Case Study, Master's thesis, (Columbus: The Ohio State University, 1968); and Dennis E. Wenger and Gary A. Kreps, "The School and Its Power Environment," unpublished paper (Columbus: The Ohio State University, 1967).
23. Coleman, op. cit., p. 4.
24. Coleman, op. cit., pp. 11-13.
25. Coser, op. cit. p. 199.
26. Neal Gross, Who Runs Our Schools (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1958).