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The Influence of Organizational Structure, Membership Composition and Resources on the Survival of Poor People's Social Movement Organizations

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Abstract

Membership-based organizations of the poor, to be effective, must survive. Although numerous analyses have considered the organizational factors that shape a social movement group's risk of mortality, no existing analyses have systematically considered this process with respect to poor people's social movement organizations (SMOs). Using a unique data source based on the successful grant application files of such groups to a major United States funding agency, we assess the likelihood of a movement organization's mortality over a period of approximately 12 years. We take into consideration factors such as an organization's membership composition, organizational age and size, diversity of previous funding sources, organizational structure, non-profit incorporation, and position within larger regional and national networks of poor people's SMOs. We find that although membership structure is related to survival, its effects work primarily by way of affiliation with organizing networks and a group's ability to garner substantial and diverse resources. We then discuss how these findings shape our understanding of the factors involved in developing an autonomous voice for the poor in political discourse.

Introduction

The Citizens' Action Program (CAP), an organization founded with the intention of building cross-cutting alliances between various community and interest groups across Chicago, was the last organizing project started by Saul Alinsky before his death in 1972. The CAP, like many groups formed on the original model of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), built alliances through thick organizing networks used to develop consensus on broad-based issues which would unite diverse constituencies. Originally formed as the Campaign Against Pollution, the group fought and won in its early struggles for better air quality and better regulation. Becoming a city-wide organization with a focus on local community interests, the group restructured into the Citizens' Action Program, with the intention of mitigating the relative powerlessness of small, local organizations based primarily on face-to-face ties; such an organization would hold the promise of thick community networks tied to others and congealed into a larger organization more likely to offer substantial influence in city politics. However, the metropolitan structure of CAP was as much a liability as an asset, as it struggled not only to maintain the commitment of member groups, but also to retain individual members. And, due to their multi-issue focus, member groups each focused on a single instrumental goal such as service provision or defeating a specific policy and often lost interest when CAP sought redress on larger issues such as structural inequality. The organization became increasingly detached from its constituents, a problem further exacerbated by its tendency to adopt forms of fundraising which would not mobilize its membership through involvement in grassroots revenue-generating activities. CAP also faced another series of problems: several at the bottom and others at the top. First, potential member organizations often refused to join CAP out of fear that their group would be faced with pressures to give up autonomy, especially given the fact that some of the white working-class member organizations distrusted the often largely black and Hispanic members who made up other CAP organizations. At the top of the organization, problems stemmed from CAP's relationship to the IAF. Although the IAF helped the organization to form, it did not entirely honor the autonomy of CAP, nor was it perceived to recognize the sorts of local issues CAP faced; this inspired resentment among the locally-developed leadership of CAP toward the IAF's professional staff. By 1975, the organization was in disarray. It disbanded shortly after (Reitzes and Reitzes, 1987: 83-89).

The case of the late Citizens' Action Program represents only one of many instances where poor people's social movement organizations (SMOs) have collapsed under the weight of the multiple pressures they face: membership retention, leadership struggles, and contention over strategies, tactics, and focal issues. Small SMOs attempting to represent the unrepresented in general are more vulnerable to mortality than larger ones (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004), and

this should be especially true in the case of poor people's social movements. In the present analysis, we hope to illuminate the internal and external conditions that shape the likelihood of survival of such organizations in the long term.

Factors such as the organizational structure, the racial and ethnic composition, and the proportion indigenous members in a poor people's social movement organization should all, in theory, have some effect on an organization's ability to sustain itself over time. Existing analyses of social movement groups have shown that some of the best predictors of organizational mortality are having a small membership base, being an organizational "adolescent" (rather than very "young" or "old"), legitimacy of the organization in the community, and having a more informal structure, among others (see, for example, Edwards and Marullo, 1995; Edwards and McCarthy, 2004). Specifically, it has been demonstrated that start-up grants from foundations and other sources tend to support organizational survival (Walker, 1991), as do continued access to financial benefactors (Gamson, 1990). However, no existing analyses examine the factors that differentially affect the mortality of poor people's SMOs in particular; this is, in part, related to the relative scarcity of research on small advocacy organizations (but see Alter, 1998; Cress and Snow, 1996; Edwards and Marullo, 1995; Kempton et al., 2001; Lofland, 1993; Martin, 1990; McCarthy and Wolfson, 1996). Our research addresses this problem by developing a systematic analysis of the factors that help poor people's SMOs to not only continue to exist, but to grow and flourish, empowering ever larger numbers of poor individuals through creating organizations which are an autonomous and collective voice of their own rather than a voice offered *for them* by parties, interest groups, and NGOs.

In this analysis, organizational structure is the central criteria by which we differentiate types of SMOs from one another. In earlier research (McCarthy and Walker, 2004), we found

that the organizational structure of poor people's SMOs tends to have significant consequences for an organization's membership size, capacity for the development of leaders, and willingness to take on more radical efforts for social change. We contrast the following three organizational structures: *individual-membership organizations*, *coalitions of religious groups* (congregation-based organizations), and *coalitions of mostly secular organizations and individual members*. Based on past research (McCarthy and Walker, 2004; McCarthy and Wolfson, 1996), we expect that an organization's structure will have an impact on the ability of that organization to sustain itself. In part, this results from the fact that an organization's structure has consequences for its membership size, its issue focus, its repertoire of tactical methods, and its overall ability to obtain financial and other types of resources.

In order to examine which factors have the greatest effect on organizational mortality, we use a unique data source based on the successful grant applications of 315 organizations that applied to a major U.S. funding agency in the years 1990, 1991, and 1992. We attempted to track down each of these organizations in late 2004, employing a diverse set of sources in order to assess mortality. These sources included organizational websites, email and phone contacts, and interviews with key informants knowledgeable about general trends in the non-profit and voluntary sector. This research design allows us to test several theoretical expectations about the consequences of organizational structure, funding sources and amounts, racial/ethnic composition, and various other factors in determining the survival of poor people's social movement organizations. Emphasis will be placed on developing findings relevant to a comparative perspective on the role SMOs such as these may play in the empowerment of poor people in civil society as well as in larger structures of political and cultural representation.

Assessing the Survival of Social Movement Organizations

The question of organizing the poor has long been a relatively contentious one among both analysts of and activists in poor people's social movements. Perhaps the foundational work in the U.S. debate is Piven and Cloward's *Poor People's Movements* (1977), in which they take the somewhat heterodox position that creating and maintaining organizations is a far less effective political strategy for the poor than focusing on more disruptive, spontaneous forms of contentious claims-making. They argue that the question of organization implicates elites through two related processes: in that (1) elites will prefer to help poor people build organizations in lieu of carrying out disruptive actions, and, it follows that (2) elites will be more likely to respond to the threat of insurgency than the emergence of a formal organization. Largely endorsing the conclusions of Michels (1962 [1915], see Clemens and Minkoff, 2004), Piven and Cloward argue that organizing carries with it the opportunity cost of placing primary emphasis upon organizational maintenance and the search for resources rather than the manifest purpose for taking action, which is insurgency. The very existence of organizations over the long term requires poor communities to jettison, in large part, truly oppositional politics.

Contrarily, some analysts have noted that the very survival of poor people's movements may require formal organizations (Gamson and Schmeidler, 1984; Hobsbawm, 1979), in that more professionalized forms of organization often help to sustain movements through periods of decline and abeyance (Taylor, 1989). However, conclusions regarding the extent to which resource dependence promotes organizational conservatism remain equivocal (Cress and Snow, 1996; Jenkins and Eckert, 1986; Cress, 1997), although it is typically an asset for an organization to rely on resources drawn from a greater diversity of sources (Alexander, 1998; Powell, 1998). Regardless, the survival of social movement *organizations* is likely to help sustain the larger

movement by providing networks for the diffusion of information (Soule, 2004), organizing structures and weak ties on which diverse constituencies can build (Meyer and Whittier, 1994; Oberschall, 1973), and templates for unmobilized constituencies seeking to promote participation (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). Movement survival, then, depends rather directly on organizational survival; it is therefore vital to investigate which factors are most influential in promoting the long-term survival of social movement organizations.

The literature on the survival of small social movement organizations has found mixed results about which factors are most influential. In their study of the viability of homeless social movement organizations, Cress and Snow (1996) found, using a detailed typology of potential resources for each organization, that a key factor in sustaining an organization was the presence of a relationship with a single benefactor that supplied financial and other resources (such as assistance in leadership training, office space, and forms of moral support). Indeed, as Aldrich (1999) notes, the very existence of a patron often has more influence on an organization's survival than does the amount of that patron's contribution. Since the homeless organizations examined by Cress and Snow required, as do most protest organizations, sustained collective effort in order to keep their constituents mobilized, the presence of a benefactor was found to allow disruptive activity *alongside* organizational maintenance (1996: 1103), rather than being an exclusive alternative to it. Although this finding undermines Piven and Cloward's argument that organizational maintenance tends to draw participants away from collective action, it must be tempered by the common finding that patronage, nevertheless, tends to "channel" organizational activity toward more professionalized forms of political engagement (Cress, 1997; Jenkins and Eckert, 1986; for a contrasting opinion, see Chaves, Stephens, and Galaskiewicz, 2004).

Other analyses have found differential influences of patronage and resources on survival. In their recent analysis of the short-term survival of local Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) chapters, Edwards and McCarthy (2004; see also McCarthy and Wolfson, 1996) found that two factors were central to organizational survival: a wide-ranging set of weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) in the community as well financial patronage at the time of a group's founding. The finding about weak ties suggests that organizations with a larger 'stock' of social capital are more likely to survive. But they qualify their conclusion by noting that the SMOs in their sample that emerged out of pre-existing groups as well as those with leaders previously tied through civic engagement were *less* likely to survive in cases where the group expended more effort in providing services to victims of drunk driving. The value of social capital is therefore "contingent," in that the groups that are most likely to survive are those that carefully utilize their available stock of "strong" and "weak" ties (see also Ganz, 2000).

Edwards and Marullo (1995) find that a more diverse group of factors assist in the survival of the U.S. peace movement organizations they examined. Contrary to the expectations of analysts working in a population ecology framework (see e.g. Minkoff, 1997), they found that organizational "adolescence" was more of a liability to survival than being an "old" organization. Their primary findings showed that smallness, lack of wider organizational legitimacy, having a semi-formal structure, and having a narrow issue focus all strongly predicted mortality.

Based on the research and debate we have reviewed, we expect to find several distinct patterns in the present analysis. First, we expect that groups having a religious coalition organizational structure (see below for further explanation on this type) will be more likely to survive than those having one based either on an individual membership or secular coalition structure. Although the causal relationship between organizational structure and cultural factors

such as organizing philosophy is debatable (McCarthy and Walker, 2004), for present purposes we conceptualize the process as cyclical: the choice of an organizational structure is shaped by the context and specific needs of the local community (Alinsky, 1971; Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven, 1990), but once chosen, is tremendously influential in determining an organization's future strategy and opportunities (McCarthy and Walker, 2004; Bower, 1970) as well as its innovativeness (Ganz, 2000; Damanpour, 1991). For our present purposes, we compare the longevity of the three organizational types, each of which derives from a specific organizing philosophy: religious coalitions, individual membership organizations, and largely secular coalitions. We suspect that as a result of the consistent employment of both "strong" and "weak" ties as well as the broad-based focus of the religious coalitions represented in our sample, we will find that they are more likely to survive than the other two organizational forms. Groups with institutional linkages, it should also be noted, have been found to have dramatic advantages in rates of survival (Baum and Oliver, 1991).

In addition, as we noted in previous work (McCarthy and Walker, 2004; see also Warren, 2001a), religious coalitions utilize thick community networks in order to develop consensus on issues that find widespread community support. These networks, developing through the active dependence on already-existing community ties, are, we suspect, more likely to survive. Individual-membership organizations tend to take on the more contentious issues that are potentially divisive among community members, rather than ones characterized by a lowest common denominator of consensus. Secular coalitions, by their very nature, are often temporary and created for strategic short-term purposes, and are therefore expected to be the most likely to disband during the period under observation.

Second, we hypothesize that organizations having a more diverse set of funding sources will be more likely to survive than those relying on one or only a few benefactors. Groups having a more diverse set of funding sources are more likely to survive because they tend to be less reliant on any given funding source and therefore can be more autonomous, since, as we have noted, patronage is likely to “channel” an SMO’s activities (Jenkins and Eckert, 1986). A more diverse set of resource providers allows a group to be not only more autonomous but also more open to the use of new strategies (Alexander, 1988; Ganz, 2000: 1017), which should make it more adaptable to the challenges and therefore more likely to survive.

Third, consistent with the findings of a large literature on organizations of all kinds, we expect an effect of organizational age on survival. Researchers of organizations similar to that on SMOs have found mixed results with respect to the relationship between organizational age and the likelihood of mortality. Scholars working within an organizational ecology framework (e.g. Hannan and Freeman, 1989; Minkoff, 1997) often find that older organizations tend toward inertia and are less able to adapt to their changing environment, thereby facing an increased likelihood of mortality, or a “liability of senescence” (Aldrich and Auster, 1986; Ganz, 2000). However, what is perhaps an even more common finding is that younger organizations face the “liability of newness” (Stinchcombe, 1965; Carroll, 1983), because even though groups tend to experience heightened levels of energy and enthusiasm at their founding which helps them to overcome stresses associated with heavy workloads (Wicker, 1979), channels for resource acquisition and membership retention are less likely to have adequately developed (Aldrich, 1999). Still others find that organizational adolescents are at highest risk of mortality, finding that it is during this point that initial enthusiasm wanes while the more banal aspects of organizational maintenance become central (Edward and Marullo, 1995). We expect that the

second of these explanations is correct: that younger organizations will be the least likely to survive. Our expectation is based on the specific features of the present case, in that poor people's SMOs do not face a dramatically changing environment which would force them to adapt frequently, as there is not much competition between organizations seeking to organize the poor. Younger groups are also more likely, we suspect, to take on narrow issues that, once resolved, may cause an organization to rapidly disband.

Fourth, groups being composed of greater proportions of indigenous members will be more likely to survive than those with a lower proportion. Being membership-based organizations of the poor, such groups must promote an authentic, autonomous voice for their members and not simply operate as a professional group of advocates. We believe that the comparison between "membership-based" and "professionalized advocacy" organizations should be thought of as a continuum rather than a dichotomy, and that the best indicator of it is the proportion of the group's membership base that is poor; this may also be taken as a proxy for the organization's *claim to* legitimacy. We hypothesize that groups that have a higher proportion of poor members will be taken as more legitimate and therefore will be more likely to survive than those with a lower proportion of poor members.

Finally, we expect, *ceteris paribus*, the smaller organizations in our sample to be at a higher risk of mortality than those with a larger membership base. Larger groups are typically found to have much higher rates of survival (Minkoff, 1993), and membership size may be one of its best overall indicators (Edwards and Marullo, 1995).

A Note on Membership Structure

Most analyses of advocacy groups tend to underestimate the variety of organizational forms in use, and often implicitly assume that individual membership structures are the near-universal form (see Lofland, 1996). However, among the more than 6,000 community organizations estimated to be working toward empowering poor communities in the United States (Delgado, 1994), there exists quite a diversity of organizational repertoires (Clemens, 1993) for meeting these ends. Since the individual membership form of organization is common in nations around the world we will not elaborate its features further here (for additional discussion, see McCarthy and Walker, 2004). Here, however, a note on the religious coalition, a form idiosyncratic to the United States, is necessary.

Although we use the generic term religious coalitions here, we must make clear that we refer to a culturally and historically particular form of religious coalition, the *congregation-based* coalition. This particular organizational form was pioneered by the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) after its re-alignment following the death of Saul Alinsky, and has been replicated by several other groups in the U.S. in recent decades (See McCarthy and Walker, 2004; Rooney, 1995; Shirley, 1997). Some of the most successful of these groups are the affiliates of the IAF network in Texas, including Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS), Allied Communities of Tarrant (ACT), and the El Paso Inter-religious Sponsoring Committee (EPISO), all of which were described in detail by Mark Warren (2001a) and are represented in the present sample of organizations.

The congregation-based form tends to bring with it an ideology of broad-based organizing (Rogers, 1990; Rooney, 1995), which stresses the bridging of differences in the religious background of constituent groups, although at the same time being careful not to let

organizing activities get in the way of each congregation's manifest purposes (Wood, 2002). COPS, for example, includes members from San Antonio's large Catholic Hispanic population, but African-American Protestants, White Protestants, and Jewish congregations are also well represented (Warren, 2001b). These groups are membership-based and heavily focused on indigenous leadership development, a far cry from the "organizations without members" described by Theda Skocpol and colleagues (see Skocpol, 1999, 2003; Skocpol, Ganz, and Munson, 2000). Religious traditions are melded with an Alinskyian ideology of organizing for power (Alinsky, 1971; Hart, 2001) in order to accomplish community goals. We should, however, note that these organizations nearly always *originate* as top-down projects of organizers from nationally federated networks such as the IAF (Warren, 2001a), the Pacific Institute for Community Organizing (PICO, see Wood, 2002), or the Gamaliel Foundation. There also exists the concern that building groups on a congregational base merely reinforces the traditional hierarchical structures of religious organizations (Robinson & Hanna, 1994) and does not empower the poorest of the poor (Delgado, 1994), who tend not to be members of religious congregations. Further, the present-day push to fund "faith based initiatives" by the Bush Administration may promote service provision among religious coalitions while suppressing autonomous organization-building or advocacy efforts.¹

Data and Methods

Our analysis is based on a sample of poor-people's SMOs which was collected by John D. McCarthy and Jim Castelli (see McCarthy and Castelli, 1994 for more detailed information), drawn from the grant applications of poor people's organizations to the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). CCHD was formed in the late 1960s by the U.S. Catholic

¹ This possibility is suggested by Chaves, Stephens, and Galaskiewicz (2004).

Bishops to serve as a mechanism for attacking the structural sources of poverty. But rather than supporting services to the poor (which was the traditional role of U.S. Catholic Social Services), CCHD was conceived as an agency that would instead provide support for groups that seek to empower the poor through community organizing. For more than 30 years CCHD has made annual grants to a diverse set of local community organizing projects, including individual membership groups, and religious and secular coalitions.

Our first wave of data is based upon the groups that were granted support by CCHD in the years 1991, 1992, and 1993. During those years more than 600 groups applied for funds annually, and in each annual funding cycle approximately 200 groups received grants that ranged between \$35,000 and \$50,000. Many of the groups that received support from CCHD did so for several consecutive years. All groups funded in 1991 were included in the sample, and each group that was newly funded in either 1992 or 1993 was added to the sample. This procedure yielded a total of 315 groups that were funded in at least one of the study years, although we do not consider 41 of them for the purposes of the present analysis because we wish here to contrast the organizational coalition forms with the individual membership form.² Of the included 274 groups, 80 groups were congregation-based coalitions, 118 were composed of individual members, and 76 were largely secular coalitions.

In a second wave of data collection in late 2004 we attempted to establish which of these groups survived over the intervening period of more than a decade. In order to ascertain survival, we used a triangulated method to make contact with each group in the original study. Based upon past research on similar groups, we anticipated a mortality rate of between 25% and

² These 41 cases consisted of 11 groups that were excluded because they were duplicate cases of the same organization applying to CCHD in separate years (the information from the older application was dropped, the newer kept), 28 cases excluded because they were not membership-based organizations of the poor (e.g. corporations, school boards, Native American tribes, and churches), and 2 cases excluded because information about their membership structure was missing.

50% (Edwards and Marullo, 1995; Edwards and McCarthy, 2004). Our analysis of the mortality of these organizations followed a five step approach. (1) Along with two research assistants, we first sought information through internet searches for the websites of existing organizations. If an official website was found, we collected the following information for each group: their contact information, any evidence of organizational activity in the past two years (e.g. documentation of events and meetings, press releases, links to news articles, lobbying activity), as well as evidence of future meetings and events planned. If we were unable to locate an organization's official website, we searched the web for reliable alternative sources of contact information. (2) Then, for groups that did not demonstrate recent activity on their website, we attempted, using the contact information we found online, to contact the group by way of email and/or telephone. (3) Those groups that either did not respond to emails or were unable to be contacted by telephone were then searched in the national telephone listings (www.yellowpages.com). If there was a telephone number found in this database for the organization different than ones already attempted, we attempted to contact the group at this new number. (4) If the previous steps failed, we searched the groups again through online search engines, seeking alternative sources of organizational activity. If we found a news article or other web-based source reporting the activity of the group since the beginning of 2003, we took this as a case of survival. (5) Our final step was to attempt to contact the organization using the telephone number collected in wave one. *All groups that remained after we exhausted all five steps were considered effectively 'dead' for the purposes of analysis, as well as those groups who reported mortality in telephone or email exchanges, or through other web-based sources indicating mortality.* In addition, groups that reported a name change or merger with another organization were considered effectively 'dead' as well, following the standard convention in

organizational research; however, these indicators of mortality may be interpreted as much as indicators of success as they are of failure (Carroll and Delacroix, 1982).

Measures and Descriptive Statistics

Organizational Survival. Our examination of the survival of membership-based organizations of the poor yielded a number of possibilities concerning the present-day state of these groups. These were: mortality, survival, merger, organizational name change, and unable to be contacted. For purposes of the present, preliminary, analyses, any organization that changed its name, merged with another, or was unable to be contacted was grouped with 'dead' organizations. This variable is coded such that 1 = survival and 0 = mortality. We found that overall, 62% of organizations survived (see Table 1).

Table 1 about here

Structural Variables. In earlier research, we found that the structure an organization assumes is consequential for its membership size, issue focus, and ability to garner resources. Dummy variables were created for each organizational type under consideration: individual membership, primarily religious coalition, and primarily secular coalition, each coded such that a 1 is assigned if the group is of that type and 0 otherwise. We also include a variable for whether the SMO is part of a national or regional organizing network, such that a 1 is assigned if they are and a 0 if not.

General Organizational Variables. In line with our discussion of the factors expected to influence organizational survival, we developed measures of a number of important factors determined by each group's *grant application in 1990, 1991, or 1992*. These included whether the organization was an officially-recognized United States non-profit organization or had

applied to become one [501(c)3 in the United States tax code], coded 1 if they were and 0 otherwise. Seventy-three percent of groups in the sample reported this status. We also included the proportion of the group's members reported to have been in poverty (with an average of 61%); the membership size of the organization, in thousands of members (with a mean of 10,194 and a median of 1,210 members); the proportion of an organization's membership reported to have been composed of minority members (with an average of 72%); and the organization's age, broken down into three categories: 1-4, 5-9, 10+ years old as shown in Table 1.

Resource Variables. An organization's ability to sustain itself has been found to be strongly shaped by its amount and diversity of resources (e.g. Cress and Snow, 1996). We consider a number of measures of both. As for resource *amounts*, we include measures of the organization's income in 1990,³ in tens of thousands of dollars (with an average of \$155,551 and median of \$11,919); and the amount of grassroots funding raised by the group in the year prior to application, in thousands of dollars (with an average of \$22,963, median of \$8,851). We measured resource *diversity* with the number of types of grassroots fundraising activities reported (e.g. canvassing, direct mail, donations, membership dues), with groups reporting no grant providers or grassroots fundraising coded as 0.

Results

Recall our central interest in the impact of organizational structure upon SMO survival. First, we note that the overall survival rate for all of the groups is greater than 60% over a period of more than a decade, which translates to an estimated 3.2% rate of mortality per year.⁴ This

³ Although the first wave of data includes groups that applied in *either* 1991, 1992, or 1993, we consistently have data on each organization's income for the year 1990, regardless of the year of their grant application.

⁴ Because our data collection includes the years 1991, 1992, and 1993, we estimated mortality based on the central category, 1992, for 62% overall mortality over a twelve year span.

compares very favorably with the annual mortality rates seen among peace movement groups at 8.75% (Edwards and Marullo, 1995) and anti-drunk driving groups 7% (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004). Table 2 shows that, contrary to our

Table 2 about here

expectation, the individual membership groups are more likely to survive than either religious or primarily secular coalitions, although the difference in survival rate is relatively modest one of approximately 10% over each type of organizational coalition.

We present a summary of our complete analysis which includes the organizational structure, general organizational and resource variables in Table 3. The figures included

Table 3 about here

in the table are, in the first column, the zero-order effects of each variable on the likelihood of survival. That is, it presents the effects of each variable on its own, before considering whether its effect is canceled out by some other variable. So, for example, the figure for organizations 1-4 years old tells us that these organizations have odds of survival that are 1.34 times lower than organizations aged 5-9; organizations aged 10+ years old have odds of survival 3.07 times greater than organizations aged 5-9. This is distinct from the right column in that the latter considers the effect of each variable *when all other variables are also included*. In the second column, effects can be interpreted as either the reduction in the likelihood of survival or the enhancement of the chances of survival of each organizational factor measured more than a decade ago and when all of the other factors are also taken into account. (The results from the full analysis are shown in the Appendix.)

When we look only at a group's organizational structure and whether or not it is a member of an organizing network we find that both of these factors have a positive and relatively

strong impact upon a group's chance of survival as expected. Yet, when we take all of the other factors into account, these two factors become statistically insignificant predictors of survival.

The other factors that remain important in accounting for a group's survival are organizational age and two of the resource variables. Both very young (between 1 and 4 years of age) and adolescent (between 5 and 9 years of age) organizations are less likely to survive. These are reasonably strong effects of age, in that once all other factors are taken into account, organizations that were age 10 or older by the first wave of data collection were 2.6 times more likely to survive than younger groups. The greater the 1990 total income of a group was, the more likely it was to survive. For each increment of ten thousand dollars, a group's likelihood of surviving increases by just a little more than 1 (1.03), but this translates into an increased likelihood of survival of 1.34 for every \$100,000 increment in total income (1.03^{10}), a reasonably powerful effect. We also found that the greater the diversity of sources of grass-roots income, the greater the likelihood that a group will survive. Each additional source increases the likelihood of survival by 1.19 times, such that adding four additional sources more than doubles a group's likelihood of survival.

Summary and Discussion

We begin by recalling that, in context, the poor people's organizations we have analyzed here exhibit a very robust rate of survival. That resilience stems, we believe, in large part from the fact that the groups we study were ones that had already succeeded in achieving some minimal level of organizational structure and community legitimacy in order to be judged qualified to receive institutional financial support from CCHD. Having the time, energy, and

information to fill out a grant application tends to filter out organizations with low viability (McCarthy and Walker, 2004).

We began with very strong theoretical claims about the survival advantages of religious (congregation-based) coalitions over individual membership organizations. Yet, our findings suggest that, if there are survival advantages to any organizational form, it inheres rather in the individual membership form. But, when we include other factors believed important to survival in our analyses, we find that the apparent advantages of survival for individual membership organizations in this sample actually result from differences between the two sets of groups in age structure and resources. The religious coalitions in our sample were, on average, younger than the individual membership organizations, and, as we showed, younger organizations were quite a bit less likely to survive. We also found, in separate analyses (available upon request), that belonging to a national individual membership organizing network (e.g. ACORN) greatly increases odds of organizational survival.

As well, the individual membership organizations in our sample, by virtue of their larger total incomes (\$183,000 versus \$110,000 for religious coalitions, and \$161,000 for secular coalitions), have a survival advantage. And, finally, because our individual membership organizations also have an advantage in having developing more diverse sources of grassroots financial support⁵ (2.4 versus 1.54 for religious coalitions and 2.04 for secular coalitions), they gain a survival advantage over groups of each kind of coalition type. Our findings suggest that older groups that have succeeded in generating larger resource bases that are derived from more diverse sources are the groups more likely to survive, and that organizational form (e.g. coalition versus individual membership) does not account for any additional survival advantage in these

⁵ The sources include group activities, membership dues, donations from individuals, donations from organizations, donations from charity campaigns, donations from institutions, direct mail, telemarketing, canvassing, and ad sales.

data. Overall, we found support for two of our hypotheses (that diversity of funding sources increase chances of survival, while being a younger group decreases it), evidence contradictory to one of them (that religious coalitions would be the most likely to survive), and null findings for the other two (that groups with a higher proportion of poverty members would be more likely to survive, as would larger organizations).

Although our core hypothesis on organizational structure was falsified as a direct predictor of survival, we suspect that a process of mediation may be taking place in which organizational structure shapes an organization's ability to acquire resources, which in turn shapes the likelihood of survival. Elsewhere (McCarthy and Walker, 2004) we have argued that the coalition form, especially the congregation based variety, provides poor people's groups the advantage of a more reliable funding base that can, as a result, free those groups to devote more effort toward social change and also release them from some of the pressure to constantly seek financial resources. Our evidence showed some support for that argument. On the other hand, the necessity for individual membership groups to seek more diverse sources of resources appears, when successful, to improve their chances of survival over religious coalitions that do not broaden the range of their fundraising efforts. Regardless of how much of an organization's total effort is devoted to goal accomplishment, organizational survival is necessary in order to mobilize and institutionalize an autonomous voice for the poor in local and national politics. Even if short-term goals of insurgency are accomplished by disruptive activity (Piven and Cloward, 1977), without organization the poor will be taken as a mere temporary threat to be managed rather than a true contender for power.

One final note. The importance of a group's diversity of funding sources to survival provides strong support for the strategy of U.S. institutional funders in general who commonly

encourage groups they support to seek *diverse sources of funding*, and funders of poor people's groups in particular to seek *diverse grassroots sources*. Reliance on any single source for patronage can easily restrict the autonomy of an organization and thereby may generate the liability of a few strong ties. Importantly, the mobilization of membership in grassroots fundraising can make up for the general lack of capital available to poor populations seeking to organize (Reitzes and Reitzes, 1987); in this sense, *resourcefulness* may in fact be much more influential than financial resources (Ganz, 2000).

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
<i>Organizational Survival</i>	0.62	0.49	274
<i>Organizational Structure Variables</i>			
Individual Membership Group	0.43	0.50	274
Religious Coalition	0.29	0.46	274
Non-Religious Coalition	0.28	0.45	274
Member of an Organizing Network	0.53	0.50	274
<i>General Organizational Variables</i>			
Non-Profit (501(c)3)	0.73	0.44	274
% Poverty Membership	0.61	0.51	274
% Minority Membership	0.72	0.31	274
Membership Size (in thousands)	10.19	29.82	274
Organization 1-4 Years Old	0.35	0.48	274
Organization 5-9 Years Old	0.33	0.47	274
Organization 10+ Years Old	0.30	0.46	274
<i>Resource Variables</i>			
1990 Total Income (in tens of thousands)	15.55	18.20	274
Grassroots Funds (in thousands)	22.96	44.74	274
Diversity of Grassroots Sources	2.05	1.55	274

Table 2. Survival Rates by Organizational Membership Structure

		Religious Coalition	Non-Religious Coalition	Individual Membership	Overall
Mortality	N	35	30	40	105
	%	43.75%	39.47%	33.90%	38.32%
Survival	N	45	46	78	169
	%	56.25%	60.53%	66.10%	61.68%
Total	N	80	76	118	274
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Chi-Square: 2.017(p=.365).

Table 3. Factors Influencing Chances of Survival¹

	Zero-Order Effect ²	Effect on the Odds of Survival ³
<i>Organizational Structure Variables</i>		
Individual Membership Group	<u>1.52</u>	0.99 (-1.01)
Non-Religious Coalition ⁴	1.19	0.93 (-1.08)
Member of an Organizing Network	1.28	1.45
<i>General Organizational Variables</i>		
Non-Profit (501(c)3)	0.79 (-1.27)	0.81 (-1.23)
% Poverty Membership	1.37	1.16
% Minority Membership	1.41	1.62
Membership Size (in thousands)	1.00	1.00
Organization 1-4 Years Old	0.75 (-1.34)	1.01
Organization 10+ Years Old ⁵	<u>3.07</u>	<u>2.60</u>
<i>Resource Variables</i>		
1990 Total Income (in tens of thousands)	<u>1.04</u>	1.03
Grassroots Funds (in thousands)	<u>1.02</u>	1.01
Diversity of Grassroots Sources	<u>1.25</u>	1.19

Underlined figures indicate statistical significance at the $p < .20$ level.

Bold figures indicate statistical significance at the $p < .10$ level.

Bold and underlined figures indicate statistical significance at the $p < .05$ level.

Each column lists the amount by which the odds of survival are predicted to increase or decrease with a one unit increase in each variable. Figures in parentheses indicate the amount of decrease expected if the effect is less than 1.

Footnotes:

1. See Appendix table for a more detailed statistical analysis.
2. The independent effect of each variable listed on its own.
3. The effect of each variable in light of all other variables.
4. The odds for the membership type variables are compared with religious coalitions.
5. The odds for the age category variables are compared with organizations 5-9 years old.

Appendix. Logistic Regression Analysis of Organizational Survival

	Zero-Order Exp(B)	Model 1 Exp(B)	Model 2 Exp(B)	Model 3 Exp(B)	Model 4 Exp(B)
<i>Organizational Structure Variables</i>					
Individual Membership Group	1.52*	1.99***			0.99
Non-Religious Coalition ¹	1.19	1.49			0.93
Member of an Organizing Network	1.28	1.65*			1.45
<i>General Organizational Variables</i>					
Non-Profit (501(c)3)	0.79		0.78		0.81
% Poverty Membership	1.37		1.11		1.16
% Minority Membership	1.41		1.39		1.62
Membership Size (in thousands)	1.00		1.00		1.00
Organization 1-4 Years Old	0.75		0.77		1.01
Organization 10+ Years Old ²	3.07***		3.04***		2.60***
<i>Resource Variables</i>					
1990 Total Income (in tens of thousands)	1.04***			1.04***	1.03**
Grassroots Funds (in thousands)	1.02***			1.01*	1.01
Diversity of Grassroots Sources	1.25***			1.20***	1.19**
Constant	-----	0.83	1.21	0.57***	0.36
Cox & Snell R-Square	-----	0.019	0.075	0.088	0.129
-2 Log likelihood	-----	359.60	343.45	339.38	327.07
N	-----	274	274	274	274

Significance Levels: * .20, ** .10, *** .05

1. The membership type variables have religious coalitions as their reference category.
2. The age category variables have organizations aged 5-9 years old as their reference category.