Social Movements
Social Movements:
Contemporary Perspectives

Edited by

Dianne Dentice
James L. Williams

Cambridge Scholars Publishing
To Hunter and Keller for all the sacrifices they have made throughout the years having me as their mother

To Robert, brother and friend
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface ............................................................................................................................... ix

Chapter One ....................................................................................................................... 1
Introduction
Dianne Dentice

Chapter Two ...................................................................................................................... 6
Communal Success and the Oneida Movement: The Role of First
and Second Order Taken-for-Grantedness
Burke Thomason and Jerry Williams

Chapter Three ................................................................................................................. 19
Peoples Temple: From Social Movement to Destructive Group
Phyllis Abel Gardner, James L. Williams, and Mahmoud Sadri

Chapter Four .................................................................................................................... 28
A Discussion of Conversion Processes: From Cults to Communalism
Jade Aguilar

Chapter Five ....................................................................................................................... 39
Herbal Medicine in the United States:
A Revitalization Movement
Karol Chandler-Ezell

Chapter Six ......................................................................................................................... 51
A Purpose-driven World: From Church-growth Movement to Global
P.E.A.C.E. Plan
Walter H. Scalen, Jr. and J. B. Watson, Jr.

Chapter Seven ................................................................................................................... 62
The Immigrant Rights Movement: A Struggle for Equality
Maria Cristina Morales
Table of Contents

Chapter Eight............................................................................................. 73
The Twenty-first Century Ku Klux Klan: Social Movement or Reactive Subsystem?
Dianne Dentice and James L. Williams

Chapter Nine.............................................................................................. 86
The Continuing Evolution of the White Supremacist Movement:
A New Social Movement Analysis
Stanislav Vysotsky and Dianne Dentice

Chapter Ten ............................................................................................... 98
Hate Groups in the Network Society: A Transnational Social Movement
David Bugg and James L. Williams

Epilogue................................................................................................... 110
Dianne Dentice

Contributors............................................................................................. 113

Index........................................................................................................ 115
This reader on social movements is an attempt to provide students and select lay readers with fresh contributions to a field that is obsessed with progressive social movements. The volume is introductory. It is not intended to tell the entire history of social movement development in the United States. Instead, it is aimed at providing general readers and college students with an overview of specific movements that are part of the broad social landscape that has helped shape twenty-first century America, sometimes for the better; sometimes for the worse.

The purpose of this volume is to present readings that focus on both classical and contemporary social movements. Some movements, such as the immigrant workers’ movement are mobilizing now while others such as the Oneida utopian movement faded away many years ago. The book has three primary objectives: 1) to investigate the mobilization efforts of various collectives that became or are in the process of becoming bona fide social movements; 2) to expand social movement literature to include under-researched movements such as the church-growth movement, and 3) to provide a new supplement to existing social movement texts.

Social Movements: Contemporary Perspectives draws on the expertise of thirteen specialists to highlight this saga. One value of this work is that it presents original and fresh research on a variety of social movements, some of which have been under-represented in scholarly work in social movement literature. We acknowledge that the field of social movement scholarship is expanding and new ways of interpreting collective action occur in the literature regularly. These contributions have been chronicled in other volumes. Important writers and contributors to the literature are included in the bibliography.

We would like to express gratitude to each of the contributors to this text for sharing their expertise. Special thanks are also extended to Dr. Andy Nercessian and the staff of Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their interest in and support of this project.

D. D. and J. L. W.
Nacogdoches, Texas
January 2008
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

DIANNE DENTICE

One of the most common early explanations of the rise of social movements concerned deprivation or disadvantages by a group or groups.\(^1\) Prior to McCarthy and Zald’s development of resource mobilization theory (1977), sociological analysis of social movement phenomena dealt primarily with problem situations, discontent, strain, frustration, anomie, isolation, hopelessness, and status reassertion. As years passed and one theory replaced another, the study of social movements within the discipline of sociology became a cottage industry. Different theoretical camps emerged that included collective behavior, resource mobilization, political process, and more recently a new social movement theoretical approach developed by Alberto Melucci (1980).

How exactly does one define a social movement? Melucci started a whole new dialogue about social movements when he dissected earlier theories and suggested that, in effect, a social movement is a system of social relationships and all future analysis should be carried out with this fact in mind. Diani (1992, 2003) and Diani and Bison (2004) found that social movements are social processes that consist of specific mechanisms through which actors engage in collective action. According to American sociologists, Eitzen and Stewart, the formal definition of a social movement is the collective attempt to promote, resist, or reverse change (2007: 3). They support the idea that social movements arise when people are discontented and angry enough with the status quo to mobilize.\(^2\)

No society can function equally well for all citizens all of the time. Social systems succumb to pressure and strain brought on by the inevitability of change especially in complex, post-industrial societies such as the United States. The authors featured in this book explore various types of social movement actors and collectives from different historical periods. Not all of the movements in this text are structurally alike. Progressive movements such as the American civil rights movement, the

\(^1\) Roberts and Kloss 1974, 11.
\(^2\) Ibid., 3.
environmental movement, and the women’s movement are democratic in their appeal. They are popular among social movement theorists because they challenge power and effect positive social change. Dissent can also be anti-democratic and anti-humanitarian. The essays in this text are thought provoking because of the diversity of ideas about social change which they represent.

Not all goals of the social actors represented here benefit the common good and not all outcomes have been or will be positive. This volume is not an academic primer restating theoretical approaches to social movement analysis. Nor is it an attempt to provide solutions to social problems such as racism, immigrant workers’ rights, or the tragic events of Peoples Temple. Instead it is a collection of essays written by people who bring unique insights to collective phenomena such as the church-growth movement and the contemporary migrant workers’ movement. Each chapter consists of original research that is written with students and select lay readers in mind. The movements span hundreds of years. We begin with the Oneida utopian community and end with a transnational network society connected by the Internet.

The Oneida utopian communal movement was an attempt by John Humphrey Noyes to combine the holiness movement with Adventism. Holiness proponents strived to become perfect believers. Adventists longed for a perfect world. Noyes developed his doctrine of perfectionism and presented it in a series of journal articles which attracted a core group of followers. The group then formed a commune that dissolved in 1879. Thomason and Williams examine the success of the Oneida community which lasted three decades. Weathering storms of controversy and criticism from outsiders, the powerful personality and leadership style of Noyes created a second order-taken-for-grantedness that formed a buffer against the outside world. The higher calling of human perfectionism and heaven on earth sustained members and enabled the community to grow and achieve stability until Noyes himself questioned the order his group successfully established.

What happens when a social movement self-destructs? Gardner, Williams, and Sadri argue that Peoples Temple was a social movement even though it is often referred to as a cult. The movement emerged during the 1960s under the charismatic leadership of Jim Jones. Fueled by a sense of social justice and political activism, a group formed and eventually grew to more than 1000 followers. As Jones’ mind and body deteriorated so did the movement which, according to the authors, institutionalized into a destructive group in its final stages of existence. Following years of training to build group solidarity, Jones and his inner circle perpetrated the

Applying a model developed by Lofland and Stark (1965) to explain why people join religious movements, Aguilar explores the contemporary communal movement in the United States. As the two previous chapters illustrate, members of the Oneida utopian movement and Peoples Temple were seeking alternatives to mainstream life. Bolstered by the energy of charismatic leaders, both Oneida and Jonestown exemplify two very different communal environments. For many egalitarian intentional communities an umbrella organization, not an individual leader, oversees operations. A series of interviews with members of four intentional communities along with participant observation reveals reasons why some people collectively seek living arrangements offering options outside mainstream society.

People searching for alternative ways to live and worship are key themes in the preceding chapters. The desire to create a better health system through herbal medicine has resulted in a revitalization movement according to Chandler-Ezell. She argues that people who turn to herbal medicine as an alternative health option are reacting to a perceived failure of mainstream allopathic medical practice. By tracing the roots of western medicine, a series of revitalization phases emerge which helps explain competition between domestic and professional medicine. Alternative models of health care compete for dollars in a market that is rapidly changing and garnering support from consumers along with some progressive traditional medical providers.

For the past twenty years, the United States has witnessed a revitalization religious movement also known as the church-growth movement. Part of the revitalization occurs when churches restructure according to a corporate business model. Motivated by a desire to grow membership and become more fiscally solvent, proponents of the movement argue that standardization of religious institutions results in organizational excellence and guarantees better management of church resources. Opponents of the movement charge that church leaders have lost their sense of moral purpose by replacing fundamental evangelical doctrines with a mass consumer religious orientation. Watson and Scalise explore the global scope of the movement under the charismatic leadership of Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Community Church in California.

The migrant workers’ movement combines race and class politics with migrant labor militancy. Demanding legalization of all migrant workers, the movement is poised to politicize and mobilize Latinos throughout the United States. Morales gathered ethnographic data on immigrant
mobilization efforts in Las Vegas, Nevada. Her investigation revealed how varying conceptualizations of citizenship shape mobilization strategies within the movement. She discusses how globalization blurs political and social boundaries for activists in the movement.

The final three chapters deal with groups that operate outside the polity and comprise the white supremacist movement in the United States. The Ku Klux Klan continues to be a fixture in American society even into the twenty-first century. It has been labeled a nativist movement, a reactionary movement, and a countermovement. Fragmented in recent years by internecine struggles between Klan groups and infiltration by law enforcement, the Klan persists. Using Young’s (1970) hypothesis, Dentice and Williams argue that the contemporary Ku Klux Klan, when analyzed apart from the broader white supremacist movement, has devolved into a reactive subsystem.

Vysotsky and Dentice investigate the contemporary white supremacist movement utilizing a new social movement theoretical perspective. Although the movement still has reactionary elements, it is also expressive and actors have a strong sense of identity that is defined by cultural aspects of the movement. By expanding Melucci’s (1980, 1984, 1994) three dimensional model, the white supremacist movement is analyzed within the framework of culture, identity, and direct responses by actors to post-materialist social conditions.

Grounding their argument in Castells’ (1997) research, Bugg and Williams suggest that contemporary hate groups are part of a transnational social movement that is fueled by global informational capitalism. A key aspect of the white supremacist movement is the backlash among marginalized white workers who feel the capitalist system has failed them while favoring minorities. Instead of directing frustrations at the source, ethnic out-groups become the collective target of blame. Integrating the work of Blazak (2001) on the role of strain and recruitment to extremist groups, the authors suggest that racist ideology is spread through technology across borders making the movement itself increasingly global.

In what follows, we have tried to balance different viewpoints and ideas about a range of collective phenomena. Given the variety and conflict within the field of social movement analysis, emphasis is placed on under-researched movements and others that could be considered to be modern revitalization movements. We present a broad selection of studies by researchers at different stages in their careers. We hope to provide our readers with an informed and critical introduction to the study of social movements. We also hope to stimulate interest in the field which is wide
open to new ideas and different interpretations of the human factor in collective behavior and social movement mobilization.

Works Cited


CHAPTER TWO

COMMUNAL SUCCESS AND THE ONEIDA MOVEMENT: THE ROLE OF FIRST AND SECOND ORDER TAKEN-FOR-GRA NTEDNESS

BURKE THOMASON AND JERRY WILLIAMS

“The central and most cunning feature of the taken for granted everyday world is that it is taken for granted.”

The Oneida utopian movement began with John Humphrey Noyes, a preacher whose style was reminiscent of religious revivals associated with the Great Awakening. In 1848 he became the leader of a small group of Christian Perfectionists who settled near Oneida Creek in central New York. They later became known as the Oneida Perfectionists who practiced common ownership of property, complex marriage (all men married to all women, all women married to all men), and stirpiculture or selective breeding (Richards 2004). With a commitment to spiritual conversion for individual members, Noyes was a proponent of the utopian beliefs of his day. An idealist who believed in heaven on earth, Noyes planned his small reform society on a working communist model. The Oneida community ranged in size from 87 followers in 1848 to around 300 followers in 1877, the year John Humphrey Noyes officially stepped down as its leader. Oneidans also engaged in several manufacturing endeavors, the most successful of which was the production of silverware. When the community dissolved in 1880 it was reformed into a commercial venture, Oneida Ltd.

1 Natanson 1962, xxvi
2 The company now imports silverware rather than manufacturing it.
Utopian social movements in nineteenth century America were attempting to recapture something lost due to rapid social change associated with the early days of modernity. Leaders such as Noyes wanted to create new social institutions to transform social relationships. The principle suggestion of this chapter is that Oneida's ability to resolve conflict and to survive as a viable social movement for three decades was due to the taken-for-grantedness of its everyday reality. Two different types of taken-for-grantedness characterized Oneidan life. First order taken-for-grantedness is achieved whenever some specific content of social reality is unquestioned. An example is the Oneida community’s commitment to perfect communism. Second order taken-for-grantedness is achieved when what is unquestioned, John Humphrey Noyes’ grasp of higher truth for example, is regarded as a concrete, material thing by his followers. The key to second order taken-for-grantedness lay in the faith that Oneidans had in their leader. This is a clear and central indicator of the charismatic authority of John Humphrey Noyes. While second order taken-for-grantedness helped enable the success of Oneida, it was also a contributing factor to its eventual decline and collapse.

The Fundamental Need for Social Order

The success of the Oneida movement requires explanation. Few would argue as to the need for order in human life. Some degree of regularity, predictability, and at least partial consensus seems indispensable to both collective and individual survival and sanity. The disagreement arises over questions of which order is best, how that order is to be determined, and what degrees of flexibility and autonomy are to be allowed or encouraged. Daily life in the Oneida community lacked traditional or routine regularity. Noyes urged his followers not to let their activities become mere habits. His philosophy dictated that both good and bad habits should be avoided. More generally, Oneidan daily life exhibited a vibrant unpredictability typical of orders when leaders are most effectively and fully maintaining their charismatic leadership.

The most fundamental basis of the need for order in human life, according to one important school of thought, is biological.3 The organism confronts its environment in a way that allows survival and ultimately reproduction. Many organisms act in ordered ways because of genetically provided patterns or instincts with which they are endowed.

---

3 For a central presentation of this point of view see the work of Peter Berger (1963, 87).
Humans stand out in this respect because they are relatively ill equipped genetically with such ordering patterns. Humans have few and flexible instincts when compared with other animals. Human order is a constructed social order rather than an imposed genetic order.

What is particularly interesting is that human order has its own virtually imposed character. One of the most famous sociological discussions of this point surrounds the classical notion of anomie as originally developed by Emile Durkheim ([1897] 1951). The Greek word nomos is equivalent to the English word law so that anomic conditions are, by definition, lawless or “normless” conditions. A society characterized by anomie is one that leaves its members undirected and disoriented.

Total anomie and imposed human order are hypothetical endpoints on a continuum describing the most basic dimension of human life. All societies and communities have varying degrees of social order which fall somewhere near the center of the hypothetical anomie-order continuum. Important to Durkheim’s analysis of social order is that order obtains not as a natural consequence of innate human orderliness, but as a social fact; an outcome of a complex social process. A society’s institutions are patterned solutions to the problem of social order. Alfred Schutz (1964) suggests that culture provides a pattern for group life. Not only do people shape social institutions, social institutions also shape people. Let us examine how social institutions serve this purpose.

Extending the work of Arnold Gehlen (1940), Berger (1963) and Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that humans exist in a state of world-openness. Born with little natural instinct, humans are confronted by a world that is not predetermined. Lower animals live in a world without choices; they do what they do because they follow a genetic pattern. The human world is one of possibility. World-openness exposes humans to anomie on a grand scale or a world of potential chaos. Life would not be possible without some way to limit or restrict world-openness. Berger and Luckmann (1966) suggest that humans construct social institutions in three stages: 1) habit; 2) mutual typification; and 3) institutionalization.

Confronted with a bewildering number of choices, humans form habits that allow them to take an unthinking approach to daily life. Habit is repetition that allows us to do what we have always done. Human habits

4 If one insists on using the term “instinct” at all, one must admit that human instincts do exist. Their immense variability across cultures makes it very clear that “instincts” relating to sexuality are very flexible. That flexibility is in large measure biological and related to the reliance among human primates on large brains and on language and culture which are made possible by an advanced nervous system.
are mutually reinforcing. Mutual typification occurs when habits are pursued in the presence of others who are actively pursuing their own habits. Mutual typification provides a durable sense of taken-for-grantedness. Alone I can change my habits. In the presence of others it becomes more difficult to do so because we do what others expect us to do. However, mutual typification is not a perfect solution for world-openness. While performing our mutually typified habits, we recall that our habits were once choices that were also possibilities. It is not until the next step of the process, institutionalization, that world-openness finds an effective remedy.

Institutionalization provides a sense of taken-for-grantedness; the most effective antidote to the precarious position of world-openness. Following habit and mutual typification, institutionalization occurs when people are born into an existing social situation. Subsequent generations are socialized into a mutually typified behavior. Because children know no other reality, the present state of affairs becomes taken-for-granted. It is important to point out that the last step is more able to limit world-openness than the first two because subsequent generations do not have direct knowledge that the existing social order was constructed by those who came before. At some point, social institutions become the instruments of social order. For social order to be obtained, the social habits of others must be transferred to those who follow without the knowledge that these habits were social constructions. True social institutions always transcend their constructedness. They take on a degree of fixedness or objectivity which is crucial to their capacity to control human life. The social world takes on a kind of reality which is opaque with respect to its constructedness.

A sense of orderliness and taken-for-grantedness in a social setting does not equate to or depend upon a shared social stock of knowledge that is consistent or even logical. It is quite possible for groups and the individuals who compose them to take-for-granted contradictory perspectives. Alfred Schutz (1964) provides a useful way to understand how socially shared knowledge can provide order and also contain incompatible elements. Instead of an accumulation of homogenously consistent ideas, he suggests that what we know is often contradictory and highly stratified. We may acquire our ideas in tangible and specific circumstances or in specific horizons of reality. The present contains only those aspects of reality necessary for meeting our specific and immediate

---

5 This is a key reason that the whole stages account of institutionalization is so important.
needs. Potentially contradictory elements are invisible and do not exist in the unfolding moment of the present. Similarly, when we draw upon our stock of knowledge it is in real circumstances with certain practical requirements. Inconsistencies in our stock of knowledge are rarely apparent and do not interfere with the taken-for-granted perception of social order. The ability to take-for-granted contradictory notions was an important feature of life at Oneida.

**Taken-For-Grantedness as a Quality of Life at Oneida**

As a first illustration of matters taken-for-granted within the world view of the Oneidan community, let us consider the question of human competitiveness as a quality which might be innate in human beings. Oneida is famous for the thoroughness and depth of its commitment to perfect communism. Not only were all material goods communal but all personal relationships were carefully nurtured in directions that would avoid temptations of exclusivity. Pierrepont Noyes (1937, 127) notes there was no effort to “…take measures against the competitive spirit.” The elders of the Oneida Children’s House never “frowned on competitive games…ball games, foot races….all kinds of athletic contests were encouraged, not to mention spelling bees, cards and dominoes.”

What is interesting is Pierrepont Noyes’ explanation as to why the Oneidans might have been permissive with respect to competition.

We are all born with competitive instincts. I remember a story my aunt Cornelia was fond of telling, of how, when I was a very small boy, she interfered in a quarrel between Dick and me. She insists that I burst out crying and wailed passionately, “I want to be headest!” It seems to me probable that the craving to be “heades t” in some department of activity will be the last passion suppressed; perhaps never profitably suppressed.

He reveals his acceptance of the larger culture’s views about the naturalness of competition. By comparing Oneida communism to Russian communism in 1930 the question of competition arises quite explicitly and consciously. It seems odd to claim that the alleged natural competitiveness of human beings is something that was simply taken-for-granted. This is a general problem when documenting taken-for-grantedness. The things people take-for-granted are precisely the things they do not notice explicitly, comment upon or defend. It is clear that the

---

7 Ibid., 127.
8 Noyes, *My Father’s House, an Oneida Boyhood*, 129
younger Noyes is suggesting that competitiveness was taken-for-granted by his father and other Oneidans. We would only add that this taken-for-grantedness would give extra stability to the social reality of life in Oneida. Matters that go unquestioned and unchallenged are clearly not going to be matters that become contentious or divisive.

The quality of taken-for-grantedness under discussion is revealed more typically by indirectness. The following example regarding the role of women shows another way in which Oneida borrowed an attitude and a piece of social knowledge which was taken-for-granted at the time. The Oneida community was famous for what Noyes called complex marriage where no exclusive sexual and marital relations were allowed. Oneida is also known for having granted women more freedoms and responsibilities compared to their counterparts in the outside world. Examples range from unorthodox female dress to the fact that women were allowed to take on leadership roles within the Oneida community.

What is not so well known is the ways in which Oneida women were regarded in much the same way as women in general. They were taken-for-granted to have subordinate status to men. The following section of Pierrepont Noyes’ reminiscences might be considered in this light to illustrate the point. He is not actually discussing the role of women but rather the topic of selfishness and competition. Noyes recalls the children’s meetings that took place every evening at five o’clock. He remembers that adults occasionally attended the meetings to say a few words. Mr. Hamilton gave a talk on unselfishness which ended with the following story:

A certain man determined that no one should share any of his belongings. He kept his wife in his pocket. She, being like-minded, kept her children in her pockets; the children kept their playthings in their pockets so that no other children might touch them.\(^9\)

The moral of this story concerned the futility of selfishness. Underneath is the complete taken-for-grantedness of the status of women and of children and their playthings which the story implicitly suggests. All of which are, in effect, property. A man’s selfishness regarding his wife, even as that selfishness is being criticized, is regarded as identical to the selfishness of women with respect to their children and of children with respect to their playthings.

It is easier to notice such things now since our present culture attempts not to take-for-granted the status of women. The intent here is not

\(^9\) Ibid., 105.
political. We are not criticizing Oneida for going along with the prevailing cultural conception of women.\footnote{There were explicit rejections of the idea of treating women or any other persons as property in the Oneida community.} Nor are we praising Oneida on this basis. We are suggesting that many things were left unquestioned within the Oneidan world view. We would add that such taken-for-grantedness allowed for added stability and security within Oneida. This was not because of what they took for granted or did not take-for-granted but because there were elements of Oneidan social realities that were taken-for-granted.

If large portions of the social world were not taken-for-granted the world’s inhabitants would have little stability and there would be a constant state of collective and individual confusion and exhaustion. The intrinsic world-openness of human beings must be relatively closed by the social institutions that organize human life. Stable social institutions can provide a base of operations for various experiments and temporary instabilities. Institutions provide the collective equivalent of what habits provide for individuals. The innovations of Oneida are the famous foreground that is opened up by the less recognized background of taken-for-granted values, attitudes, and ways of life. So far we have looked at this in terms of values Oneida borrowed from the surrounding culture. We will turn now to a consideration of elements specific to Oneida which were taken-for-granted within the community.

**Internal Taken-for-Grantedness**

The previous section dealt with elements of the Oneida way of life which were drawn from the larger culture’s world view and then taken-for-granted within Oneida. We mentioned assumptions about the natural competitive instincts of humans and then discussed the prevailing conception of women as property. Many other elements of the Oneidan’s social reality could have been discussed in this connection from mundane presumptions about the role of childhood play to the community’s endorsement of the larger society’s praise for hard work and diligence. One of the most central of all elements of Oneidan social reality, Christianity, was something they had in common with the majority of outsiders in their day. This is true despite the special and controversial details of Noyes’ perfectionist doctrine. The revolutionary beliefs of the Oneidans made up only a small portion of their outlook. Most of their views were basic and fundamental tenets of standard Christianity.
Religion provides a firm grounding of taken-for-granted social belief and was pivotal for the Oneida community. It also provides both individual and collective security and constitutes what Berger (1967) referred to as a “sacred canopy” of legitimizations for the various details of social life.

There is a very nice passage in Pierrepont Noyes’ musings which illustrates this point effectively while once again showing how a firm foundation of taken-for-granted beliefs can enable and render meaningful whatever is innovative, challenging and even rebellious. Noyes recalls a time when he was outside early in the morning and the sunrise stretched across the sky. An elder of the group gestured toward the sunrise and called out: “Lucifer, Son of the Morning!” This exclamation made a great impression on the young boy.

Always God had been in the sky, but it was an everyday blue sky, without form or romance. God was everywhere…He could not seem magnificent; only an undo-withoutable element in our daily lives (emphasis added). But now there was a striking new power, “…a charioteer, a gorgeous, reckless, irresistible driver of cloud horses…..” Given the solid background of God’s all pervasive presence, this new force in the universe could be at least contemplated without any ultimately disruptive influence.11

Pierrepont Noyes learned that Lucifer was “not a good god.” Without abandoning the firm foundations of his faith he had a vehicle for imagining some alternative, new world.

I longed to ride in the chariot with Lucifer and I suspected that in the great outside, now immensely greater than I had ever dreamed, there were realms of grandeur and opportunities for adventure quite beyond experience in the Children’s House and perhaps beyond the knowledge of our grown folks.12

Ironically, even the meaningfulness of rebellion depends upon the firmness of those taken-for-granted realities which it challenges. This is true for people of every age even though it is especially evident in children. Parents have to be the clear representatives of an adult reality

---

11 Ibid., 86-87.
12 The word adventure is aptly chosen in this passage. Adventure is exciting but manageable; an excursion into new territory but not without knowledge of where one came from and how to get back. Adventure is not a matter of anomic terror. The difference lies in the secure groundedness of reality that is provided by the solid structure of its most deeply taken-for-granted elements.
within which children can find comfort even as they find adventure and test themselves through disobedience and rebellion. Parents who lack any deep grounding in the reality they represent are ill equipped to pass that reality on to their children. Oneida had very little difficulty in this respect partly because of its communal system of child care. We suggest that it might also be due to the fact that Oneida values were so deeply and firmly taken-for-granted.

An example of the way that background remained unquestioned is provided by Pierrepont Noyes’ discussion of the absence of monogamous marriage within Oneida. Everyone, even the children were aware of Oneida’s system of complex marriage. “There was never any concealment from us of the universality of marriage outside the Community…nor do I remember any attempt to explain or defend our social variant.” The stability of the Oneida marriage arrangement like so many of the other very unusual features of Oneida’s way of life, rested on its being unquestionably a given and therefore clearly not in any need of being explained or defended.

This last point is made very effectively in a more general context when Pierrepont Noyes relates the following:

During the winter of 1885 something happened which temporarily jolted me…Mr. Pitt gave a lecture in the Hall on the subject of Christian evidences. Until that moment I had never suspected that doubt existed as to the truth of religion or that the story of Jesus Christ required any bolstering evidence. I was shocked and disconcerted. My mother tried to lessen the effect of Mr. Pitt’s lecture. She said: He likes to parade his learning. You and I know that the Bible is true without any of his miserable evidences. Mr. Pitt did not destroy my belief, but he altered permanently my relation to the heavenly powers. He changed that which had seemed an unquestioned reality into a less stable object of faith.

John Humphrey Noyes passed his leadership on to Theodore Noyes between 1876 and 1877. In the years following, Oneida all but dissolved as a community. The preceding passage reveals that the basic structures of Oneidan life had lost their firm taken-for-grantedness. The younger Noyes was noting, on a personal level, what happened to the community when his father was no longer in charge.

\[13\text{Ibid., 141.}\]
\[14\text{Ibid., 266.}\]
Social Movements: Contemporary Perspectives

Second Order Taken-For-Grantedness

Oneida depended on a pervasive taken-for-grantedness of a great many of its ordinary (yet quite extraordinary) practices and realities. Such a picture might seem to imply rigidity and predictability and strongly ingrained habit. That was not the case.

Noyes constantly exhorted his brethren against the tendency to settle into permanent schedules, for he believed that, should life there become habitual, it would lose its inspiration and become a source of evil...He encouraged his community to entertain all sorts of odd notions and experiments, for any change, he thought, is a source of growth among people who are searching for newness of life.15

This passage does not sound consistent with claims about the central role of taken-for-grantedness as a kind of background or secure foundation out of which Oneida’s more experimental and extraordinary characteristics grew. The explanation may partially lie with the apparent constant change in surface arrangements and routines rather than in the deep, religious underpinnings of Oneidan life. Contradictions in knowledge and practice are quite normal for human experience. Oneidans did not see the disjunction between their rejection of habits and actually having habits because the demands of each unfolding moment required a selective and intentional sampling of what they knew as truth. Selective attention helps to explain why everyday life in general is laden with contradictions. Some level of habit in social life is typically considered by sociologists as necessary for social stability and survival. Noyes; however, was adamant in his condemnation of habit of any kind.

The great mistake...is in distinguishing between different kinds of habits, calling some good and others bad, and considering it a merit to have what are termed good habits; whereas in truth, and in the sight of God, all habits are bad, and in some senses, “good habits” are the worst of all.16

How does one account for the long life and great success of a community in which habit of all kinds was so vigorously condemned? The answer, we contend, lies in another level of taken-for-grantedness which we refer to as second order taken-for-grantedness. This amounts to the kind of unquestionableness which Noyes enjoyed above and beyond any details of his leadership. He was a classic charismatic leader whose ideas

15 Demaria, Communal Love at Oneida, 10.
16 Ibid., 10.
were almost universally unchallenged, unquestioned, and taken-for-granted as truth.

Old members of the Community have said to me that those who got within the effective area of Father Noyes’ personality were reluctant to lose him; that life seemed brighter and more worthwhile when he was about. Another of his long-time associates tried to analyze for me his unquestioned power to attract and hold the loyalty of both men and women. He accounted for it thus: “Most people subconsciously fear life just a little or have become disillusioned by its futility. Mr. Noyes had no doubts regarding life or himself. He plowed through difficulties, disappointments and dangers with an inextinguishable faith in an Edenic world plan and the ultimate triumph of righteousness. He was a source of light and power for all about him.”

It is worth noting that the second order taken-for-grantedness implicit here is based on the leader’s own ability to project his views and personality. What is involved is a reification which might be deemed a prerequisite for long-term communal survival and success. By reification we mean a forgetfulness as to our own agency as constructors of reality (Thomason 1982). When we live in a world of reified truth we grasp its meanings as thing-like givens to which we simply submit. The meanings form an unquestioned foundation and a taken-for-granted basis for security.

**Conclusion**

We suggest that taken-for-grantedness is the key to assuring success of utopian movements. The special case of Oneida was used to illustrate and support this general claim. Oneida was a remarkable experiment in intentional community because it consisted of a great number of highly unconventional beliefs and practices. That these unconventional ways could have persisted so successfully for so long is in our view a solid testament to the ability of Oneida to construct for itself a social order that allowed members, in very fundamental ways, to take their world for granted.

Oneida’s success was a testament to the charismatic leadership of John Humphrey Noyes. Noyes had the special ability to provide his followers with a confidence in the ultimate truth of the Oneida way. His leadership, by extension, gives us new reason to marvel at the power of charismatic authority as a force for the organization of collective life. Most social

\(\text{\textsuperscript{17}}\) Ibid., 127.
orders, since they are not guided by charismatic inspiration, have to rely almost exclusively on what has been referred to in this paper as first order taken-for-grantedness. The special advantage of charismatic leadership is that it enables a potent second order taken-for-grantedness.

The notion of second order taken-for-grantedness offers a better explanation of the precarious position of social movements whose legitimacy depends upon charismatic authority. The potential of second order taken-for-grantedness to provide an antidote for world-openness and anomie is strictly limited to the abilities and life-span of the charismatic leader. As Max Weber pointed out, “the succession of charismatic authority involves a certain institutionalization of that charisma” and by inference from the present analysis a second order taken-for-grantedness.

Institutionalization involves the reification of social relationships making them appear independent of the social processes that created them. People forget that they are the creators of their own social world. It is such forgetfulness that gives institutions their ability to order the inherent disorder of the human world. Second order taken-for-grantedness obtained from charismatic leadership is partly successful because it is not burdened by the strictures of institutionalization. Aware that the world outside was a changing and often hostile place, Oneidans were shielded from anomic terror by their leader’s ability to filter and interpret these changes in ways that led to second order taken-for-grantedness. In the absence of the charismatic leader, institutionalized charisma could not adequately produce the second order taken-for-grantedness that was such a successful element in the Oneida experience.

Works Cited


Peoples Temple will be forever linked to its charismatic and troubled leader, Jim Jones. On November 18, 1978 more than 900 of Jones’ followers died in their jungle compound in Guyana after drinking liquid tainted with poison. The long strange journey of Peoples Temple from social movement to a destructive and deadly group takes many unexpected twists and turns. Considered a cult by some and a religious movement by others, we believe Peoples Temple was initially a utopian social movement that bureaucratized into a total institution and declined as a destructive group in its final stages of existence. In its early days, Peoples Temple was recognized as a Protestant Christian denominational group (Reiterman and Jacobs 1982). Jim Jones, its founder, was ordained a Protestant minister while living in Indiana during the 1960s. He used his influence to gain popular support for his church which he eventually moved to California.

Political and social activism, so typical of new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, was a tactic Jones used effectively to bring people into the movement while in California. Jim Jones used socialist ideas laced with Marxism to gain momentum for the movement in its early stages. He gained consensus among his followers through his interpretation of a world free from capitalist exploitation and racial inequality. In the beginning, at least, Jones attempted to build a collective identity based on shared commitment to a cause that was a product of this particular time in American history. Jones’ early followers believed in joint ownership of property. They pooled their economic resources with the goal of establishing a communal, egalitarian society.

From California to Guyana, a series of unexpected events culminated in the deaths of nearly all Temple members. Conflicting stories about the conditions at Jonestown, goals of the organization, the mental stability of the leaders (most significantly Jim Jones), and outside interference have
fueled nearly thirty years of debate over the actual reasons behind the deaths. What caused the failure of Peoples Temple? What can we learn about the emergence and course of social movements that have destructive outcomes? These are some of the questions that we will attempt to answer. First of all, we will look at two classic definitions of total institutions and destructive groups.

**Total Institutions**

Goffman (1961) made an influential argument for analyzing some settings as total institutions. One of his key findings was that obedience and conformity are often achieved through complex patterns of manipulation by people in authority. According to Goffman:

A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life.¹

A process Goffman refers to as self-mortification occurs when an individual voluntarily enters or is recruited into a total institution. This process is fairly standard and essentially produces radical shifts in a person’s moral career.² As individuals, we are generally defined by a collection of roles we routinely perform. Total institutions relieve individuals from the performance of those routine roles. Within a total institution, admission procedures are instrumental in conversion of individuals to units who follow orders. Goffman characterizes the admission process as leaving off and taking on with a mid-point of physical nakedness. The concept of leaving off refers to dispossession of the individual’s personal property. Individuals are stripped of their “identity kit” which consists of makeup and other toiletry items for females and shaving essentials for males. Loss of identity equipment, according to Goffman, may inhibit a person from presenting her or his usual public image.

The imposition of degrading postures or deference patterns is also a part of the self-mortification process. Previously free individuals are forced to ask permission to do basic things such as taking a bathroom break, smoking, or watching television. In some cases, they are required to

¹ See the Introduction of *Asylums* 1961, xiii
² Ibid., 14 – 28