Revolutions and revolutionary social movements generally start as a way of addressing a perceived social wrong. Some of these movements have strong and charismatic leaders who step to the front, attract group members, mold the image of the group, and impart the group message. Others come into being without an individual leader to articulate the vision of the group members. Some movements succeed in making permanent social changes, others succeed only for a short time, and others fail. This chapter focuses on leadership in social movements and its role in the success or failure of movements in which there is no focal individual who plays the leadership role. The analysis focuses on how leadership functions are carried out in such groups, the success of which, or lack thereof, plays a critical role in the group’s ability to effect social change.

The Occupy movement provides a good example of how leadership functions in a social movement may be carried out in a diffuse manner, without any particular individual having the role of leader. The Occupy movement has voluntary participation, resulting from individuals who come together based on one predominating ideological concern about the dominance of the few over the majority of people in today’s society. Leadership theories can provide an overview of what is required for such a social movement to succeed. More specifically, an examination of this movement provides an opportunity to analyze how the ideology and the context of a revolutionary social movement may provide substitutes for leadership, obviating the need for a particular individual to take on the leadership role in many cases. Further, it offers an opportunity to see how the context of such a social movement may
go beyond substitution to provide enhancement for various leadership functions that are carried out in a diffuse manner rather than being vested in a single individual.

HOW MOVEMENTS EVOLVE

It is not unusual for a social movement to attempt to fight everything about the “system” it sees as the root of the problem it is fighting (often the government or the status quo), including its structure of hierarchy, which is construed as the hallmark of ineffectiveness. Social movement members claim that leaders and others who say they represent the group’s beliefs and who promise they will “get things done” continually disappoint. Given this perspective, the idea of starting a movement to fight the status quo by refusing to adopt the same type of structure is inherently appealing. For example, when the women’s liberation movement began in 1968, its operating model was intended to be a true democracy in which everyone participated in decision making. More recently, the Occupy movement, which started on Wall Street and quickly spread around the world, has wanted to fight against income inequality by overthrowing the current system of government. The protesters, who claimed to represent the “99 percent,” wanted a true democracy that would work for the needs of the many. One of the ways they have refused to work within the status quo is by refusing to pick a leader to represent them in liaising with government officials and media. To make this point, for example, when the local government in Denver, Colorado, refused to meet with members of the Occupy movement until they picked a representative, the protesters chose a dog (“Occupy Denver Protesters” 2011).

Although protesters typically articulate a refusal to adopt elements of the “system,” some such characteristics have been identified as essential to the birth of a social movement (Jackson et al. 1960). First, there is often some precipitating event that causes individuals to pay attention to a particular social issue and to be discontented with the state of affairs related to that issue. This individual discontent turns to social unrest as information is shared, often with the media playing an important role in disseminating the information to a large audience. As the social unrest spreads, a specific object or cause becomes a focal point for members of the movement, and individuals join the group to protest. Rallies, meetings, and spontaneous citizen committees form in an attempt to produce change.

Grassroots movements by definition start out in a decentralized manner, with a number of people coming together for a common cause, usually a local issue. These meetings are generally structureless, as the first and most pressing issue the group will address is “consciousness raising” (Freeman 1970) rather than focusing on creating a structure or formal movement. During this first stage, movement participants usually share stories about their experiences or the experiences of people they know. In recent years these meetings and sharing of experiences have also become virtual, as the consciousness-raising process has been aided by the Internet and social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

This strategy of using social networking and electronic media to raise consciousness of a social issue was widely used during the “Arab Spring” uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. It has also been used quite heavily by Occupy protesters, especially at the beginning, when they shared with the rest of the world stories of poor treatment by police, heart-wrenching stories of foreclosures, and other personal experiences that incited outrage. This is a highly effective strategy for the early stages of a movement, because it creates collective identity. Members can relate to one another as they share stories, then create shared feelings of injustice and unfairness.

These experiences result in people becoming emotionally involved, enough to want to share their stories and perspectives with the public at large, and frequently to become active in the cause. At this point, a collective group of individuals with similar interests reaches a stage at which it can be called a “movement.” For a fledging movement to effectively move forward, it is also at this stage that some division of labor typically must take place for a course of action to be developed and implemented.

BEYOND CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING: DEVELOPING MOVEMENT STRUCTURE

Jo Freeman (1970) provided an excellent example of this pivotal point in a developing social movement in her discussion of the problem of structurelessness in the women’s liberation movement. This movement rejected hierarchical structure because it was part of the male dominant status quo. However, this brought up several issues, most important of which were having appropriate spokespeople for the group and the development of an informal structure (or cliques). Trying to disseminate the message to people at large is a natural progression of the consciousness-raising stage of the movement. Individual members of a social movement communicate to others in their local area what the movement is about. If enough interest is shown and more people engage in the movement, the media will take notice and get involved. Once this happens, protesters face the choice of either picking spokespeople to talk to the media or opening the door for the media to talk to anyone. “Leaderless” and “structureless” movements tend to choose the latter, at least in part to avoid having spokespeople being seen as the leaders of the group. This was true for the women’s liberation movement, and it has also appeared to be the case with the Occupy movement at large and on the local level.
Our research team interviewed six local Occupy protesters in December of 2011. This chapter consisted of a small group (approximately 20 regular protesters, less than half of whom lived in the camp) of students, professors, homeless individuals, and other community members. When the protesters were asked if they had key people to speak to the media on behalf of the group, they emphasized that any member of the movement is able to speak to the media if he or she wishes. The group did, however, host “teach-ins” on how to effectively communicate with the media to educate members who were interested. However, in movements such as this, naturally not everyone is equally at ease in the spotlight. As a result, some labor differentiation occurs as certain people volunteer to be spokespersons or as journalists select spokespeople. Volunteers often become unofficial spokespeople because of their willingness to serve in that capacity as well as their overall media savvy and innate ability to deal with journalists. As one Occupy protester who was interviewed by our research team put it:

A lot of people aren’t comfortable with talking to the media and they don’t wanna be like “Oh, what if I say the wrong thing…” So there’s spokespersons, yes, but that’s just because they were the ones who stepped up to be more comfortable with the media. But then we have people who’ve done a couple of media interviews and they are not really comfortable with the media but because they are [at the camp] all the time, it just happens to be them.

When no spokesperson is designated, journalists often pick “interesting” people to interview. However, these are often people who are not necessarily representative of the movement and skew the perception of the protesters as a whole as well as their cause. An Occupy protester alluded to an incident in which someone who was in the camp during the day was being interviewed by the local TV news station. This de facto spokesperson was, in fact, one of the homeless people who joined the camp and stayed there full time. The story’s heavy focus on the homeless man with an alcohol dependency had a negative impact on the image of the Occupy camp, suggesting that it consisted of mostly homeless people and loiterers instead of serious activists pursuing political change. In fact, the person interviewed was not representative of the members of the group, as the majority of protesters were only there at night after classes or work, yet he was selected by the media as a spokesperson because of his availability and willingness to talk. Because of this experience and its outcome, many protesters became leery of the media, with the result that the communication function was carried out by even fewer volunteers. As another protester put it: “There is a core group, that’s the interesting part, there is a core group of people who continuously as far as I know communicate with the media. Even though we say we don’t have official spokespeople we do have them, they just are unofficial ones.”

In addition to negative fallout as the result of the communication function of leadership being left to happenstance, Freeman also highlights a number of other potential pitfalls of informal leadership. The biggest issue, she suggests, is that informal leaders are chosen not based on skill or ability but on popularity, or the “elite,” as she refers to them. Although those chosen for particular leadership functions may have the best intentions for the movement, often they don’t consider themselves responsible for what the movement as a whole does or does not accomplish, because they were never officially chosen as leaders. This lack of personal responsibility tends to result in leadership functions being overlooked or not carried out, effectively limiting the efficacy of the group as a whole. It is important to note that Freeman does not suggest that the only viable alternative is to have a hierarchy with a leadership figure, but she does strongly encourage movements to discuss structure and experiment with different types of structures, as opposed to just claiming to be leaderless or structureless. To better understand how this might work, it is important to understand what leadership is and what it entails in such movements.

**TYPES OF LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES**

Although groups by definition are constructed of a number of individuals, a group can develop its own identity and therefore have its own goals subordinate to individual goals. As such, there must be a way in which the group can be sustained over time to achieve the objectives for which the group has been formed. Most frequently, this is accomplished through leadership functions, suggesting that these functions are vital to successfully maintain a movement (Snow, Soule, and Kriesi 2004). Leadership functions may be internal, as an integral part of a group’s ability to remain cohesive and focused on its goals, or they may be external, spanning the boundaries of the group and the environment in which it exists, providing communication to those external to the group and bringing pertinent information into the group. These functions may be formalized, with one or more individuals having designated responsibility for performing the various leadership functions in the group, or as in the case of “leaderless” organizations, may be informal and diffuse.

Of the many models and theories of leadership that have been developed, it may be most useful to examine leadership in social movements in terms of two paradigms: vertical leadership and horizontal leadership (Sveiby 2009). The vertical paradigm of leadership is arguably the one that has received the most attention in organizations and movements, as it is based on the nature
of power and the impact of the leader within the group. One model of vertical leadership is that of the autocratic leader, in which power is centralized in the leader himself or herself, and decisions are made by that individual, with or without input from the group members. Once the decision is made, the group members are then expected to carry out appropriate actions to support the decision made by the leader. Historically, this sort of leadership has often been associated with social movements such as those spearheaded by figures such as Mao Zedong in China, Vladimir Lenin in Russia, and Fidel Castro in Cuba. At the other end of the spectrum of vertical leadership is the democratic model. This model is the one associated with social movements such as the American Revolution in the United States and People Power in the Philippines. This model also places power in the hands of a single leader, but the authority vested in that leader is contingent on the will of the leader’s followers, and the decisions that are made by the leader are expected to take into account subordinate requirements, wishes, and needs. In the vertical paradigm, leaders are invested in power for as long as they hold the formal leadership role in the group, organization, or social movement.

The horizontal paradigm of leadership, on the other hand, is one in which aspects of power are not centralized in a single individual, but rather are distributed among different individuals within the group. The leadership role, either as a whole or in part, is taken on by various individuals as the situation demands and as there are individuals capable of carrying out the needed functions. The horizontal leadership paradigm has been described by many terms, such as shared leadership, distributed leadership, peer leadership, and dispersed leadership. A key assumption of this approach is that there is mutual respect among all members in the group and that the group members will support whichever is currently acting in a leadership capacity.

There is some debate over which approach, vertical or horizontal, is more functional in social movements. Until fairly recently scholars argued that individual leadership emergence in a social or political movement was inevitable to effect large-scale change (Snow et al. 2004). Theorists such as Michels (1961, as cited in Snow et al. 2004), however, have argued that the masses hand over the power to their more skilled leaders to speak on their behalf due to apathy and lack of competence. These leaders in turn become preoccupied with running the organization and maintaining their own status. Other theorists who endorse the horizontal leadership paradigm dispute this point of view, suggesting that not enough research has been done on other leadership models (Snow et al. 2004), and have gone so far as to question whether leadership functions can or even should be vested in a single individual. Nielsen (2004), for example, claims that leadership is not required for a group to be cohesive and to achieve its ends, and that vertical leadership may be especially unproductive. Nielsen promotes a peer model in which all members of the group are involved together where there is no particular leader. It is this model that “leaderless” social movements endorse.

Some researchers have focused on the specific tasks that leaders perform to see whether various members of the group rather than an individual can sufficiently perform them. For example, Earl (2007) looked at leadership tasks in strategic voting. He found that key organizers identified and took on critical tasks to enable the large group to coordinate, but did not identify themselves as “leaders,” nor did others identify them as such. Earl also provided a table of categories of leadership tasks that group organizers have to take over to ensure group success. These include articulating vision and ideology, engaging the political environment, framing the movement and its issues, managing relations with nonmovement actors, strategic and tactical decision making, organizing action, managing internal life of the movement, innovation, and social capital. Studies like this suggest that role differentiation may be more critical to a group’s success than a leadership hierarchy. Earl’s study highlights the fact that different leadership tasks are more salient at different times, especially in large social movements, and that a horizontal group dynamic could in theory be more flexible and responsive to the needs of a growing and changing group and also to situations as they arise.

LEADERSHIP EMERGENCE AND EFFECTIVENESS

It is clear that regardless of whether a movement wants to have a leadership structure, for it to have any longevity or effectiveness, some role differentiation must occur. Groups that claim to have a looser leadership structure deal with the ever-present tendency of some members to rise into leadership roles, whether formal or informal, whether encompassing many or few specific leadership tasks. Leadership emergence has been defined as the display of leadership characteristics by individuals who do not possess formal authority through the evolution of roles in small groups (Lewis 1972; Slater 1955). This definition ties leadership emergence to the development of roles that, according to Lewis (1972), are essential to the success of a group. Problems related to this role differentiation and development may occur, however, in certain groups. This became apparent in the Occupy movement as members struggled to define roles without the formation of a hierarchy within those roles.

In looking at who is likely to emerge as a leader, the focus of research has shifted over the last fifty years from behaviors to context to personality. Whereas Stogdill (1948) suggested that personality was not a function of leadership emergence, newer research gives a much different picture. In a meta-analysis of research on individual differences and leadership emergence,
Ensari and colleagues (2011) found a number of personality traits that positively related to individuals’ likelihood to emerge as a leader. These traits include extraversion, emotional stability, openness to experience, masculinity, conscientiousness, antagonism, authoritarianism, self-efficacy, intelligence, social skills, emotional intelligence, and creativity.

An individual cannot become a leader, however, unless he or she has people who are willing to follow, and an examination of the interplay between leadership and followership highlights the importance of specific personality traits (Ensari et al. 2011; Hollander 1992). Through the evaluation of leaderless group experiments, Ensari and colleagues (2011) found that the like-mindedness of the group and the leader is a major factor in leadership emergence, as group members share ideas about what a leader should be, then seek out these traits. Traits such as emotional intelligence and social skills are desirable, as they allow potential leaders to relate to the needs and goals of potential followers. Emotional intelligence in particular allows individuals to not only understand their own goals and desires, but also be able to understand how these goals and desires relate to the goals and desires of others. This allows for, and often results in, leaders emerging who have high levels of like-mindedness with the group (Cote et al. 2010). In observing the “leaderless” Occupy movement, there are numerous examples of how such like-mindedness brought forth leader figures for better or for worse. During the general assemblies of one local branch, for example, there were individuals whose creativeness brought forth interesting solutions to problems concerning allocation of resources. However, individuals with traits such as authoritarianism and extraversion frequently dominated conversations in which those who were more conscientious and introverted may have had something to offer. It is quite clear that these traits that correlate with leadership emergence interplay with each other in a very complex way.

Although there is clearly a certain type of person who tends to emerge as a leader in a group, the mechanisms by which a given individual takes on a leadership role can vary greatly. There are a number of perspectives on how a leader comes to the forefront. These generally involve an individual’s competency at group tasks, loyalty to group ideas, participation in group activities, and competition within the group (Hollander 1992; Johnson and Bechler 1998; Mullen 1989). Hollander (1992) discusses the idiosyncrasy credit, which involves individuals gaining credits through actions that followers perceive to show competence and conformity, which suggest loyalty to the group. This was clear in the Occupy movement, where there was a sharp distinction in the group between individuals who slept at the camp and those who would show up only for general assemblies and weekend protests. Sleeping at the camp is an example of an action that followers perceived as participating in the group task of “occupying” as well as showing loyalty to the group. An avenue of leadership emergence that appeared to be a large factor in the Occupy movement, therefore, was the idea that increased participation in group tasks increases salience of a member to other members, thereby increasing chances of leadership emergence (Mullen, Salas, and Driskell 1998).

Another mode of leadership emergence is through the competition with and elimination of potential leaders (Johnson and Bechler, 1998). In this process a number of individuals will make efforts to take control of tasks, with those who do not suit group needs or ideologies being eliminated and those who do being accepted. A process of elimination occurs until one or a few individuals have been identified as leaders (Johnson and Bechler 1998). This avenue of leadership emergence became very apparent in the general assemblies in the Occupy movement. For example, at one local group there was a clear leader running the meetings; however, as other members would voice opinions and thoughts, certain individuals would be received less or more positively, with a core group of individuals gradually taking over the meeting. It seemed clear that individuals who idealized the majority mentality were being accepted, whereas others who were not conforming were being pushed aside.

The characteristics that play a key role in determining who might emerge as a leader are not necessarily the characteristics that determine the effectiveness of that leader, though. For example, as Cote and colleagues (2010) point out, there is a large difference in effectiveness between informal, emergent leaders and formally appointed leaders. Leadership emergence is a within-group phenomenon in which some individuals exert more influence than others, whereas leadership effectiveness is both a within-group and a between-group phenomenon, in which certain groups are more productive because of better leaders (Cote et al. 2010). It is clear that even though the Occupy movement claimed to be leaderless, leadership roles were defined. Across various Occupy movements, leaders most likely arose through similar avenues and exhibited similar traits, as the groups are similarly structured; however, the success of the different Occupy groups varied considerably. These differences in group effectiveness were surely due to a variety of factors, and leadership effectiveness is most likely one of them. Clearly the many factors that lead to the emergence of a leader do not predict the effectiveness of that leader, yet the success of the group depends greatly on those who take on leadership roles and functions. As one Occupy member stated:

So the whole idea of not having a leader is to stay away in part from that form of organization or structure, a hierarchy, but at the same time we have to come to terms with this hierarchical structure because it has some good and bad sides of it. Take for instance traffic lights; imagine a busy corner
without a light, that would bring chaos, serious chaos, but having lights and then organizing them on minutes, that brings order. So then having a leader brings order to the confusion and then that leader would be in charge of ideas and tasks.

This idea that a totally leaderless group is chaotic may be a stretch, but it does point to the idea that people enjoy order and structure, and from this desire we elevate leaders to maintain focus and order.

**SUBSTITUTES FOR LEADERSHIP**

Although a social movement may not have a single individual or specified team of leaders, the functions that leadership serves remain critical to the success of the movement. If leadership can be broken down into a series of functions, it is arguably possible that some of these functions can be replaced with substitutes that can be performed by the group or built into the context of group functioning.

Leadership behaviors and activities may be generally categorized as task oriented or person oriented. Task-oriented behaviors are those that are geared toward marshalling individual resources to complete the task or objective of the group. Person-oriented behaviors, on the other hand, are supportive of individual group members, ensuring that their needs are met and their individual goals are addressed. Further, these behaviors are geared toward maintaining good relations between the leader and the individual group members as well as among group members themselves. These behaviors are aimed at enhancing cohesion, providing a unified, coordinated, and collective effort toward achieving group objectives.

In their seminal work, Kerr and Jermier (1978) claim that certain subordinate tasks and organizational characteristics have the potential to substitute for many leadership functions and activities that are normally expected from an individual or team of leaders. Specifically, it is suggested that when followers have a professional orientation; abilities, experience, and training; and the knowledge to carry out their roles in the group, task direction is not required from leaders. The characteristics of the group members therefore can function well in place of task-focused leadership behaviors. Similarly, when subordinates have a strong need for independence and/or indifference to any potential rewards from their organization, leadership behaviors related to maintaining harmony and personal support are obviated. Individuals who are independent and indifferent to rewards are unlikely to be moved by person-oriented behaviors on the part of leadership and are motivated by their own needs to work within the confines of the group toward their own ends.

In the Occupy movement, and specifically in the local movements, ability, experience, training, and knowledge vary with the individual participants. They join the social movement to protest because they sympathize with the cause. A big portion of the participants in one local movement in a university town, for example, appeared to be university students. Other professionals were also involved, albeit in smaller numbers, such as professors. There is also a significant portion of participants who were currently unemployed. A variety of skills can be very useful in such a situation; for example, students can provide energy, vitality, group numbers, social media communication, and innovation to the group.

Meanwhile, professors and academics, who have taken a serious interest in this cause (some universities going so far as teaching courses on the topic) can provide the theoretical and practical know-how about a variety of topics. In one local chapter of the movement, there were members who worked in the radio industry, and though they formally became the spokespeople for the local movement, they also made an effort to teach other members how to interact effectively with the media. On the global stage, high-profile members, such as Carne Ross, a former British diplomat, took on tasks that others may not be as qualified to perform, such as working out the details of starting the People Bank. In terms of independence, however, it is likely that there is a variety of members from the entire spectrum, and those who take the initiative are more likely to become organizers of specific tasks.

Certain tasks are conducive to leadership substitutes when they are clearly defined and the task protocols are routine, are methodologically invariant, and have their own feedback loop. In this case, task-oriented leadership behaviors are not required for group members to know what they must do. Person-oriented leadership behaviors are not required when the task a group member is engaged in is intrinsically satisfying to that individual; the intrinsic satisfaction provides its own reward, and interpersonal support from the leader is not required.

The initial task for this movement was to create awareness in the public about growing inequality that protesters witnessed in their own cities and around the world. Though the ultimate cause may be intrinsically motivating, the actual tasks related to the cause are not necessarily so. By the time these local protesters were interviewed, they were extremely fatigued and overwhelmed with the process of running the actual camp, especially in freezing temperatures. This left little energy for tasks to propel the movement forward, such as communicating with and supporting the community. This made the dismantling of the camp inevitable, which was actually a positive turn of affairs for the group, because it allowed more energy and effort to be mobilized toward the cause. However, there was no key figure to effectively communicate and structure this change as a positive event in the
local chapter. Other chapters did ostensibly try to portray this change as a growth for the movement; however, the media had a much louder platform, from which they painted the dismantling of camps as a sign of failure. This took a toll on group morale, causing the movement to lose many members, including many entire chapters. In this case, lack of routinization and an understandable desire for positive feedback from the public played against the Occupy movement’s ability to substitute leadership functions.

Finally, the way a group is organized can allow for leadership substitutes to be effective. A cohesive work group, as well as clear support from others in the organization, substitutes for direct interpersonal leadership behaviors. The organization must have clear goals and a plan of action, be inflexible, have established and very clear role differentiation, and group members who do not need to rely on a leader for incentives. After speaking with members of the local Occupy movement and attending their general assembly, it became clear that the structure of the movement comprised of various committees set up to act on various issues.

This structure bypassed the need for a leader to make decisions and instead employed the horizontal paradigm (Sveiby 2009). The method of running the general assemblies became fairly well standardized across different branches of the movement. General assemblies were scheduled every week, and everyone who wished to attend and/or speak was welcome. Protesters usually set up a rotation system for mediating the assemblies so that it was never in the hands of one individual (this works in theory; however, in practice some members were “better” at mediating an assembly and therefore performed this duty on a regular basis). The mediator kept a list of speakers as well as keeping the assembly moving, allowing participants to talk in turns. If it was a large assembly, protesters would use the “human megaphone.” The speaker would make a point while the crowd passed it on by using repetition that rippled through to the outer edges of the group. Assembly participants used hand signals to communicate their agreement, disagreement, or desire to provide extra information.

Other than the general assembly and general rules such as “no fighting,” there were no clearly defined rules of behavior in the Occupy movement. This applied to work groups, which were not defined despite the fact that various committees were formed. For example, there was a committee that was responsible for communication with other chapters. This committee membership was fluid and did not adhere to Follett’s (1951) notion of “the law of situation,” which states that the person who has the most knowledge and expertise should be appointed leader, regardless of rank or hierarchical position. So it was difficult to discern who they were accountable to and whether any of the tasks they wanted to accomplish were actually getting done.

Overall, research in this area suggests that a group can act successfully as long as it is composed of tight-knit professionals whose role expectations are very clear and incentives and feedback can be obtained from sources other than leadership (Howell et al. 1990; Howell and Dorfman 1986). Leadership researchers often conclude that even though substitutes can explain a lot of subordinate behaviors and can enhance, neutralize, or completely replace some leadership functions, leadership substitutes cannot replace hierarchical leadership altogether (Dionne et al. 2005; Howell 1997). For example, Howell and Dorfman (1986) found that role clarification, which is usually the function of a leader, could not be substituted for either professional or nonprofessional subordinates, whereas numerous other studies have found that various substitutes partially moderate leadership effectiveness, but do not replace it (see Dionne et al. 2005; Muchiri and Coolsey 2011).

The limitation in applying this theory to the context of the Occupy movement is that not only is there very little research on leadership substitutes, but what few studies have been done were conducted within the context of organizations, not social movements, and have substantial limitations even within their narrow scope (for a discussion of this please see Dionne et al. 2005). Pearce and Conger argue that leadership viewed as a process is a more useful perspective and define shared leadership as “a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group organizational goals or both” (2003, 1).

All of the substitutes for leadership discussed so far focus on replacing leadership functions within the group. However, those are not the only functions that leaders perform. They also have a variety of external functions, such as image management, communication to the public as well as other similar groups, a coherent ideology, and a solid plan of action. To date no studies exist on the effectiveness of substitutes on external leadership behaviors such as group representation (image) management, but Howell and Dorfman (1986) suggest that these functions would be more difficult to substitute.

COMMUNICATION: A LEADERSHIP FUNCTION THAT IS CRITICAL TO MOVEMENT SUCCESS

Along with leadership, ideology, a plan of action, and a viable public image, communication is a key ingredient for a successful movement (Jackson et al. 1960). It is one of the most critical pieces that can make or break a movement and is important on several levels. First, communication is important to create a sense of collective identity between movement participants. This involves both in-person storytelling of experiences, as well as
communication via social media and slogans. According to McGee (1980), ideographs, or slogans, are the most potent way to unite a group of people under the same banner. This is why “we are the 99 percent” has become such a catchy and well-recognized slogan. It does very well at communicating, “We are the common man, we stand for the rights of everyone.” It is highly inclusive and powerful, because it speaks to people’s desire for a sense of community that has been lost.

Communication is also vital between different local branches of the movement. One of the biggest mistakes that local groups can make is not communicating with one another, and it is a very easy mistake to make, in that it takes tremendous effort to keep in constant contact with other groups. The nature of communication makes it unlikely that this is a task that can be rotated among group members, because effective communication often requires a rapport between people that has to develop over time. A movement therefore needs key people who can be responsible for this task. One of the ways that leaders can arise is by performing a task that becomes indispensable to the movement; the group may become resistant to this division of labor to prevent this key individual or group from “taking over.”

It seems that some local branches are better at this than others. For example, when participants from a local chapter were asked about their efforts to keep in touch with other movements, they said that they kept in touch passively through Twitter. This did not seem like an organized effort. They did not have any initiatives to communicate or plan events with movements close by, though three much bigger chapters were active in the vicinity (they, in turn, did not run any coordinated events with one another, either).

However, there is evidence that other cities are better at this. For example, the group in Philadelphia is organizing a national gathering and has a Philadelphia Committee of Correspondence that is dedicated specifically to interbranch communication. In addition, an InterOccupy communication network has been set up to aid communication among protesters around the world (Occupy National Gathering 2012).

Communication with mass media is also critical for the success of a movement, and is another area in which leaderless movements would like to shy away from division of labor. If the movement doesn’t pick its spokespeople, as the Occupiers have chosen not to do, the public will do it for them, sometimes with disastrous results. Mass media will create the public image of the movement with the agenda of creating a story that will sell. Any movement that is serious about attracting a large membership needs to play a part in manipulating its public image. For example, the student unrest in Quebec (with whom Occupy Wall Street expressed solidarity) is a prime example of an image gone awry. The students were portrayed by the media as spoiled and ungrateful; news stories constantly pointed out that students in Quebec have the lowest tuition in the country, so their response to hikes is extremely unreasonable and embarrassing. This has skewed the general perception of the students as ungrateful and disruptive.

As for the Occupy movement, the media have generally pushed stories that divided the protesters from the common people, suggesting that only fringe types (e.g., hippies, lazy people who don’t want to work, etc.) participate in the protest, as opposed to regular people. More recently, the media have been doing something equally as damaging: asserting that the movement has completely fizzled out and no longer has any momentum. Whereas at the beginning of the movement news stories of Occupy across the world were abundant, now even stories about the big movements, such as the one in New York, have almost completely disappeared. When the Occupy movement has been mentioned on mainstream media, the stories tend to be about groups such as the Cleveland Five, self-proclaimed anarchists whose plot to blow up a bridge was foiled by the FBI (or they were entrapped by the FBI, depending on whom you want to believe; “Occupied Movement Being Labeled” 2012). Stories like this can serve the purpose of creating a negative image of “homegrown terrorism” in order to discredit the movement and make it unattractive to people who may originally have sympathized with the cause.

On the flip side, evidence also suggests that police repressed journalists’ ability to cover the story. A report put out by the Global Justice Clinic at New York University stated that journalists who attempted to cover the protests in New York were subjected to “a pattern of harassment, including the use of force, restrictions on access and arrests” (“NYPD Violated Rights” 2012). In light of this, managing communication with the public at large is a difficult task for Occupy that needs to be carefully planned and managed. It is easy to see why the groups have used the social media route instead. Whether it is a sufficient substitute, only time will tell.

The external leadership function of communication between groups and with the population at large has important ramifications for the group. Both internally as well as externally. Clearly leaving this function to informal leaders or attempting to substitute for this leadership function is a high risk for any social movement. As the movement continues, more formalized communication responsibility becomes increasingly important.

Beyond ideology, a social movement must put forward a program of demands or actions (Jackson et al. 1960). A movement that relies on ideology but has no plan of action fizzes because people see it as unorganized and become dejected at a lack of progress. One major contributor to movement failures is lack of short- and long-term goals. It would seem in the case of the Occupy movement that in the early stages at a local level there was a definite issue with goal setting. When local protesters were asked what their goal as
a group was, no concrete, unified goal emerged. One ideological roadblock to
goal setting was the groups’ refusal to work within the “current system.”
Protesters interpreted this as refusal to engage with politicians to try to
work toward goals; however, they had no clear agenda of how to go about
attaining change without engaging the system. When asked what they would
have to do to start working toward a more equal society, some members sug-
ggested that they first have to overthrow the system. This is not a concrete (or
popular) goal that the movement would be able to communicate to the larger
population. In fact, there are now members of the movement, such as
Carne Ross (2011), who suggest that Occupy should not aim for a revolution,
but rather a soft, gradual change of responsibility shifting to the population
for true democracy. This, of course, is not an indication that Occupy as a
movement does not have goals or a plan of action. Books like Ross’s The Leaderless
Movement suggest that there is more going on behind the scenes, and key
figures are putting out literature that communicates what it: will take for
these changes to happen. This shows a leap in efforts toward communication
and setting concrete goals that is encouraging.

CONCLUSION

There are many stories of local Occupy movements helping their com-
nunities. Some of the more documented ones include protesters in Albany,
New York, convincing the governor to institute a “millionaire tax”; Occupy
Atlanta helping an Iraq war veteran to save his home (camping out in homes
that are facing foreclosure is a pretty widespread tactic all across the United
States, some examples being as recent as May 25, 2012, in Minneapolis and
LA; Saks 2012); and Occupy Providence pushed for and got a day center for
the homeless (Barr 2012). Although not called so by media, the widespread
protests against Vladimir Putin, and what was widely considered a fraudu-
 lent election, are part of the Occupy movement, although they are facing
severe crackdowns. The Alternative Banking Group of Occupy Wall Street
has been working on alternative options for citizens so that they don’t have
to put their money in the bank.

It is also now evident that there is a group that has split off from the
Occupy movement, which calls itself the 99% Declaration. The split seems to be
due to ideological differences in terms of how to run the movement. The 99D
employs representative governance, unlike the Occupy movement; has closed
meetings; does not post public meeting minutes; and has its own events in
the works (and is not endorsed by Occupy; Occupy National Gathering
2012). The leader of the 99D, Michael Pollock, asserts that direct democracy
is ineffective and unfair to those who cannot attend general assembly meet-
ings and suggests that although Occupy can work on a local level, the
general populace should not make federal or foreign policy decisions (Smith
2012). Instead, 99D encourages districts to elect citizen delegates to gather
at a continental congress, at which they will draft a list of grievances to pre-
sent to the current government (Continental Congress 2012). Evidently a
proportion of the protesters do not agree that going leaderless is a viable
alternative.

This analysis of the Occupy movement shows that although a leaderless
structure is not impossible to accomplish, there are several key factors that
the movement needs to address. What little research exists on leadership
substitutes shows that participants must be intrinsically motivated, have
clear goals, and employ those who are highly professional to coordinate
tasks. Group structure, though it does not have to be hierarchical, must
be openly discussed to ensure that formal structure does not take root. It is
natural for leaders to emerge, so open and clear communication among mem-
bers, chapters, and the public at large will play a big role in maintaining the
group dynamics and engaging more members. Role differentiation does not
have to lead to a hierarchical structure and is evidently critical to the group’s
ability to accomplish tasks. Therefore, the movement cannot shy away from
division of labor, though it can still reject hierarchy. Finally, not only does the
movement need to have a concrete plan of action, it must be communicated
effectively to both members and the public. If Occupy can figure out how to
effectively perform these critical leadership functions within a horizontal
structure, it can become a very strong movement as well as the pin-
cle of teamwork.

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