INSIDE ORGANIC SOLIDARITY*

WHITNEY POPE
Indiana University

BARCLAY D. JOHNSON
Carleton University

Durkheim's analysis of organic solidarity in The Division of Labor *contains ambiguities and contradictions. These difficulties can be resolved by abandoning the concept of organic solidarity, as Durkheim himself did in his later work. But if* Division *is unsuccessful in attaining its explanatory goals, it remains important as Durkheim's first comprehensive analysis of mechanical solidarity.*

The Division of Labor in Society (Durkheim, [1893] 1960; hereafter referred to as *Division*) remains an important influence on social research and theorizing. Sociologists who wish to use an existing theory generally summarize it briefly and then turn to empirical tests of it; but when, as in the case of *Division*, there is considerable confusion about the theory, an "internal" (Ross, 1978:4) approach focusing on the theory itself is particularly appropriate: What are its central concepts? What are their mutual relations? How are they embodied in propositions? Are these propositions mutually consistent or contradictory?

WHY DURKHEIM CANNOT PROVE HIS THESIS

What makes the individual solidary with the group? Durkheim suggests that the bond of solidarity has changed during the course of social evolution, and he seeks to identify the causes and consequences of this change. He (1960:37–38; succeeding references to this work cite page numbers only) poses his problem as the resolution of a paradox: Any increase in individuality would seem to entail a decline in solidarity. But over the course of social evolution individuality and solidarity have simultaneously grown stronger.

Durkheim postulates a complex set of relations between the individual and society. The two are mutually dependent and reinforce each other. Without the cooperation and participation of individuals society languishes and dies; society revitalizes individuals and gives them the strength to persevere in the face of the vicissitudes of everyday life.

The conscience (consciousness) of the individual is dual in nature. One element of it "represents that in us which is personal and distinct" (129–30; see also 105); whereas the other element, the collective (common) conscience, "is common to our group in its entirety" and is "society living and acting within us" (129; see also 105, 129–31, 198, 403). Society and the unique elements in the individual conscience are opposed forces. The unsocialized and unsocializable part of the individual conscience is a force which serves the individual's selfish needs. A moral rule or a common belief is a force which serves the interests of society. The concrete individual is a battleground between the two forces at war within it (130, 92, 100, 152, 227). This "constitutional duality of human nature" and "perpetual division against ourselves" produce "both our grandeur and our misery" (Durkheim, [1914] 1973:150, 154).

The theory of mechanical solidarity directly incorporates Durkheim's basic theoretical perspectives. An emergent phenomenon, the social factor consists of commonalities, similitudes, and likenesses. It is what individuals share, what they have in common. Mechanical solidarity derives from and is proportional to the strength of the collective conscience. Composed of "the totality of social similitudes" (80) or "social likenesses" (80–81n), the collective conscience "is the psychical type of society" (80). Durkheim (79) defines it as "the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society." The theory of mechanical solidarity asserts the inverse relationship between solidarity and individuality.

The perspectives which place this inverse relationship between individuality and solidarity at the core of Durkheim's theory produce intractable theoretical difficulties when Durkheim argues that organic solidarity and individuality are proportionately related. Solidarity is a social factor; individuality, referring specifically to what *distinguishes* individuals fron one another (129–31), is an individual factor. Hence, Durkheim's argument that individuality and solidarity grow proportionately directly contradicts his basic premise that the individual and social factors vary inversely.

* Direct all correspondence to: Whitney Pope, Department of Sociology, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405.

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This tension between his explicit argument and his underlying premise permeates *Division*. Durkheim's attempts to resolve it lead him into ambiguities, inconsistencies, and other theoretical difficulties. It accounts for his inability to demonstrate that individuality and solidarity "develop in parallel fashion" during the course of social evolution. He concedes that the proportional relation between solidarity and individuality is an "apparent antinomy" (37). We will argue that the antinomy is real.

MECHANICAL SOLIDARITY

Mechanical solidarity prevails in primitive society, where likenesses are extensive and the collective conscience is powerful. Many have criticized Durkheim's (70–110) description of primitive society as stereotyped and empirically mistaken. It is doubtful that there has ever been a society so simple that it lacks sex roles and the family, and in which religion is the only identifiable institution, but Durkheim's occasional exaggerations need not trouble us once we recognize that he sometimes reifies what he (129) concedes to be ideal types. His model of mechanical solidarity is both internally consistent and consistent with his underlying theoretical premises.

ORGANIC SOLIDARITY

Units of Analysis

An initial ambiguity. Solidarity presumably refers to the mutual coordination of units and their integration into some larger whole. But what are the units and what is the whole? Usually Durkheim applies his model of organic solidarity in one of two ways. Sometimes he applies it to society and its parts, identified as organs, groups, or functions. For example, he (131) describes organic solidarity as something which

> resembles that which we observe among the higher animals. Each organ . . . has its special physiognomy, its autonomy. And, moreover, the unity of the organism is as great as the individuation of the parts is more marked. Because of this analogy, we propose to call the solidarity which is due to the division of labor, organic.

Division (129) refers to the organic aspect of society as "a system of different, special functions which definite relations unite" and (181) to a complex society as "a system of different organs each of which has a special role, and which are themselves formed of differentiated parts." Not only are its major parts organically integrated into society, but each part exhibits organic integration within itself. The division of labor is the basis of solidarity in society conceived, in contemporary terms, as a structural-functional system of specialized parts, each of which exchanges with the other parts and each of which makes a distinctive contribution to the persistence or evolution of the whole.

Durkheim's second way of using his model is quite different. Even though he says that "the division of labor *does not present individuals to one another*, but social functions" (407; emphasis added), he identifies complementary differences and the division of labor *between individuals* as a source of organic solidarity. Complementary differences are a basis of mutual attraction and friendship (54–56). "The sexual division of labor" between men and women "is the source of conjugal solidarity" (56). Complementary interests are the basis of contractual solidarity (200–219).

These relations between individuals vary from the fleeting relations of exchange on the market, to enduring contractual relations, to lifelong social and political relations. The relations may be between two individuals or between the individual and a collectivity. These collectivities may be as small as a married couple or as large as the modern nation-state.

Division shifts back and forth between applying the model of organic solidarity to the relations between a part and society, between individuals, and between the individual and the group or society. These shifting applications often leave unclear the focus, boundaries, and particulars of the model's application. Surely there are differences in the nature of the solidarity between the economy and the state, market exchanges, husband and wife, and the individual and society. Durkheim, however, often fails to acknowledge, much less specify, these differences. Indeed, rather than doing so he supports his model by citing the range of relations to which it applies, each of which is taken as another important source of organic solidarity in modern society.

The common conscience and groups in modern society. Primitive society is a homogenous mass in which the common conscience, the source of solidarity, consists of beliefs and sentiments shared by all. Though Durkheim stresses differentiation in modern society, his analysis of the common conscience often fails to take this differentiation into account. First, what is the common conscience in modern society? Sometimes *Division* (129–30, 172–73, 407) suggests that the common conscience consists of beliefs and sentiments shared *throughout the society*. Elsewhere (105n, 364) the unit of analysis becomes the group, and the common conscience turns out to be those beliefs and sentiments common to a particular

group. Second, what is the effect on a whole society of the collective consciences of its component groups? *Division* states two answers to this question. One answer says that the common conscience is powerful insofar as it is shared and integrates only the group which shares it. Since the collective conscience of a single group is not shared by society as a whole, it cannot integrate the society. A second answer treats the level of integration in society as a function, not only of the integration of that society as a whole, but also of that prevailing in its various groups or parts. The conscience of a single group, then, contributes to the integration of the society as a whole.

Durkheim's formulation is unsatisfactory on empirical grounds. The beliefs which define and integrate a given group may bring it into conflict with other groups and alienate it from society as a whole. Analogous considerations apply in measuring the degree to which a given individual is integrated into society. "We take part in several groups and there are in us several collective consciences" (105n). Durkheim's implied assumption is that one may measure the degree to which individuals are integrated into society by summing the strength of the collective consciences within them. Clearly, however, their level of integration is a function, not only of the strength and number of these elements in them, but also of the relations among the specific contents of these collective consciences. The consciences of the groups to which a person belongs may well conflict and reciprocally enfeeble one another (99, 102), and when they do so the result may be anomie.

Bases of Solidarity in Modern Society

Solidarity based on individual self-interest. Durkheim's main interest is solidarity in modern society; in fact, the first edition of *Division* carries the subtitle, *A Study of the Organization of Advanced Societies*. "In the industrial societies that Spencer speaks of, just as in organized societies, social harmony comes essentially from the division of labor. It is characterized by a *co-operation which is automatically produced through the pursuit by each individual of his own interests*" (200; emphasis added). Thus does Durkheim affirm that organic solidarity is something very much like Herbert Spencer's contractual solidarity. Durkheim is most explicit about this solidarity of interests when he tries to show that complex societies are more tightly knit than are primitive ones. In a primitive society, since consciences are identical, each person has the mental equipment necessary to live successfully in isolation from others. If so inclined, he can freely quit society and go wherever he pleases (148–49).

> It is quite otherwise as labor becomes divided. The different parts of the aggregate, because they fill different functions, cannot easily be separated. In the words of Spencer, if we separated from Middlesex its surrounding district, all operations would cease in a few days, due to shortage of materials. Separate the district where cotton is manufactured from Liverpool and other centres, and industry ceases, since the populations will perish. Separate the mining populations from the neighboring populations which found metal or make clothing by machinery, and they would die socially, since they would die individually. (149–50)

This kind of tight interdependence is not limited to the economic world. It characterizes all spheres of life in an advanced society; Durkheim (40, 56–61, 270) mentions especially the family, government and courts, science, and the arts.

Division (200–26) also contains a polemic against Spencer's notion of contractual solidarity. Such solidarity is inherently unstable since it is founded on self-interested relations of exchange rather than the morality which alone can produce enduring solidarity. Why, then, would Durkheim want to affirm Spencer's view? We cannot be sure, but two reasons suggest themselves. First, the view is derived from Durkheim's procedure of defining organic solidarity as the opposite, in each of its properties, of mechanical solidarity. Second, the concept of contractual solidarity does have an enormous appeal in the context of Durkheim's argument, for if solidarity in complex societies has its basis in self-interest rather then morality, then Durkheim can argue that solidarity and individuality grow together.

Four elements of moral solidarity. Of course, utilitarianism is not the dominant element in Durkheim's thinking. He (203–204) argues that self-interested interaction fosters solidarity only insofar as that interaction produces the moral rules which both regulate it and are themselves the basis of solidarity in advanced society. But what kinds of common ideas are they, and whom do they unite? To this question Durkheim offers four answers. The moral ideas which unite complex societies are the cult of the dignity of the individual, the belief that it is one's duty to specialize, the ideal of justice, and the morality of specialized occupational groups.

Durkheim (167, 170–74, 283, 361, 364) argues that, although as social evolution proceeds, the common conscience as a whole becomes "feebler and vaguer" (171), one part of

it, the belief in the dignity of the individual, actually becomes stronger (172, 167). Since it consists of shared beliefs and sentiments, one might interpret this belief as a basis of a solidarity of moral ideas. On the other hand, since it encourages the development of individuality and the pursuit of individual interests, one might see it as a basis of a Spencerian solidarity of interests.

Another element in the conscience of a complex society is the belief that it is one's duty to specialize. As labor becomes increasingly divided, "the categorical imperative of the moral conscience is assuming the following form: *Make yourself usefully fulfill a determinate function*" (43, 407). This maxim becomes a more and more prevalent moral injunction, and thus an increasingly prominent part of the common conscience. Surely we can only interpret it as a basis of moral solidarity in advanced societies. At the same time, in enjoining individuals to specialize, it fosters the mutually complementary differences presupposed by a solidarity of interests.

"The need for justice," Durkheim's third element, "has grown more ardent in our hearts" (409), and "the task of the most advanced societies is . . . a work of justice" (387). Durkheim's chapter (374–88) on the forced division of labor states that modern morality increasingly insists on equality of opportunity. A person's position in society and ultimately his/her social rewards, will depend, not on circumstances of birth and inheritance, but rather on ability and performance. Durkheim's brief discussion of this moral element occurs late in *Division*, long after his model of organic solidarity has received its longest and most systematic exposition. As in the case of the duty to specialize, he does not make clear how it can be that, while this belief is ever more prominent, the collective conscience, aside from its growing respect for the individual, grows ever weaker. The demand for justice appears to have been an afterthought.

Whereas each of the three elements just discussed is a feature of the conscience of a whole society, a final element is not. As social evolution proceeds and the conscience of society as a whole fades, the division of labor gives birth to new groups, each with its distinctive moral ideas. We may suppose that collective consciences (105n) would be found in religious groups, political parties, and neighborhoods, but Durkheim gives most of his attention to occupational groups.

The morality of such groups has two sources. In a normal advanced society people choose their vocations partly on the basis of their individual abilities and inclinations (229). This suggests that the members of a particular occupation are initially similar because of what today would be called selective recruitment. Once such a group is formed interaction among its members increases their similarities still more—a process of mutual socialization (228–29, 361).

The notion that occupational morals are a basis of organic solidarity is more prominent in Durkheim's later work, including his famous Preface to the second edition of *Division* ([1902] 1–31). Here we limit ourselves to the discussion in *Division* itself. Durkheim is unsure whether occupational morals are strong or weak. On the one hand, "professional obligations . . . are . . . very strict" (215) and "the rules of occupational morality . . . are as imperative as" the morality of primitive societies (227). On the other hand, occupational morality does "not correspond to very active sentiments" (127), and its "yoke . . . is much less heavy" than that of mechanical solidarity, partly because one's work encompasses only part of one's life (131, 302–303). For this reason, its "rules . . . cannot have the superior force, the transcendent authority" of the conscience of a primitive society (127).

What makes Durkheim unsure? Insofar as occupational morality is both strong and organic, it constitutes an additional basis for asserting the strength of organic solidarity in advanced society. Yet insofar as occupational morality is based on common morals and the collective consciences of the groups they integrate, appeal to occupational morality undermines the clarity of the mechanical solidarity–organic solidarity distinction. In short, Durkheim's uncertainty about the strength of occupational morals reflects one of the theoretical tensions which permeates *Division*.

It would seem that the solidarity of occupational groups is based entirely on morality and not at all on interests, and, indeed, insofar as such a group is made up of persons in a given trade or profession, its members are solidary because of their similarities. However, there is also a second, more inclusive kind of occupational group, each consisting of a given group of workers *and their employers*. The solidarity of groups of this second kind is based in part on complementary interests and is expressed in contracts (212–13). This is, of course, precisely the situation in which Durkheim's polemic against Spencer applies: solidarity based on contract alone is a fleeting thing (203–204, 213, 365), and only Durkheim's famous noncontractual elements in contract—shared moral ideas—sustain enduring cohesion among the contracting parties (56–62, 227–28; Parsons, [1937] 1949:311–14).

A conscience of this kind has a somewhat

different source than does the conscience of a group made up only of workers. Somehow restitutive laws and associated customs prevail in an advanced society without being part of its common conscience (112–13, 115). When a contractual relationship is entered into, however, these laws and customs of the larger society become moral principles for the contracting parties, that is, they only become emotionally charged moral imperatives when an occupational group within the larger society adopts them as its own (211–12, 214–15, 226–28, 365–67). We may conclude that the solidarity of occupational groups is based primarily on morals and only secondarily on interests.

What, then, *is* the basis of organic solidarity? Durkheim both affirms and denies that it is a solidarity of interests. His denial affirms that it is based on morals, but are these the morals of the society or of specific groups within society? Durkheim affirms that the consciences of both society and of the groups within it are strong and weak. Insofar as organic solidarity is based on the common moral ideas and sentiments of groups and most particularly of society itself, isn't mechanical solidarity by definition the source of organic solidarity?

THE THEORIES OF MECHANICAL AND ORGANIC SOLIDARITY

Mechanical and Organic Solidarity: Two Distinctions

Durkheim makes two distinctions between mechanical and organic solidarity. The first of these is tied to contrasting images of society (129–31). In mechanical solidarity, society is a force opposed to the individual, while in organic solidarity, society is a structural-functional system. As ideal types the two are polar opposites: one is small, technologically backward, structurally homogeneous, and without individuality; the other is large, technologically advanced, structurally differentiated, and with great individuality.

Durkheim's second distinction portrays the two types of solidarity as polar opposites along a series of five dimensions: (1) In mechanical solidarity people like each other because they are *similar* (54, 105). In organic solidarity people like one another because they are *different*, provided their differences are complementary (55–56). (2) In mechanical solidarity there is only *one* common conscience (129–31). In organic solidarity there are *many* common consciences, one for each group in a complex society (105n), and that common to the entire society. (3) In mechanical solidarity the common conscience is *powerful;* violations of its rules elicit intensely negative emotional reactions. In organic solidarity the common conscience of the whole society is *weak;* violations of its rules elicit little emotion (127, 167, 171–72, 146, 289). (4) In mechanical solidarity the content of the common conscience is devotion to *society* as a whole (129–30). In organic solidarity the common conscience of society as a whole contains sentiments of devotion to the *individual* (167, 172, 405). (5) In mechanical solidarity the concrete individual conscience consists wholly of ideas and feelings which the individual *shares* with others (129–30). In organic solidarity the concrete individual conscience consists largely of sentiments *unique* to him (167, 172). This second distinction evokes an image of the conscience of a member of a simple society as a circle without subdivisions and of the conscience of a member of complex society as a circular chart with segments which correspond to ideas and emotions shared with everyone else, those shared with fellow members of the various groups of which the person is a member, and those unique to the individual.

Durkheim is unclear as to whether mechanical and organic solidarity are inversely related, so that an increase in one necessarily means a decrease in the other. The first distinction carries no such implication. In a society in which both types of solidarity are to be found there is no reason why an increase in the force of society relative to the individual would make the specialized parts of society any less functionally interdependent or why increased differentiation and functional interdependence would decrease the force of society relative to the individual. The first distinction, then, allows for the possibility that there can be an increase in organic solidarity with no corresponding decrease in mechanical; but the second distinction necessarily implies that the two forms of solidarity are inversely related, since the only way a society can move along the five dimensions toward either type of solidarity is for it to move the same distance away from the other. This ambiguity permits Durkheim to claim either that the two types are inversely related or that they are not, as suits his argument.

Differences in Primitive Society Likenesses in Modern Society

Durkheim typically treats the amount of solidarity in a society as the sum of all the different analytic instances of it. He does not consider how one type of solidarity and the conditions giving rise to it might undermine, conflict with, or otherwise negate the other type and the conditions causing it. For instance, how does the development of dif-

ferences affect solidarity based on likenesses? Durkheim does not say. Of course, with the development of differences solidarity changes from mechanical to organic; but this tells us nothing about changes in the *sum* of mechanical and organic solidarity as social evolution proceeds. To address this question we must be able to determine the effect of the introduction of some specified amount of social differentiation on the overall level of solidarity of a society which is primarily mechanical. We know that differences reduce levels of mechanical solidarity, but we do not know by how much. Let us assume that such differences develop under the pressure of the struggle for existence and thus are complementary. As such they provide the basis for the mutual attraction which underlies organic solidarity. To determine a given change in the total sum of solidarity we must have some objective basis for comparing a specified *decrease* in mechanical solidarity with a corresponding *increase* in organic solidarity. Durkheim (63–69, 109–10, 131–32, 147–48, 204–205) uses the relative preponderance of repressive and restitutive law to measure both the relative proportion of the two types of solidarity in various societies and the total amount of solidarity present, but a number of commentators (Faris, 1934; Schwartz and Miller, 1964; Merton, [1934] 1965; Barnes, 1966:168–69; Lukes, 1972:159–60; Sheleff, 1975; for a different view see Cotterrell, 1977; see also Spitzer, 1975) have raised serious questions about the adequacy of this indicator. It is regrettable that it bears such a heavy burden and that *Division* does not provide more satisfactory alternatives.

Which Form of Solidarity is Stronger?

Durkheim's remarks about the duty to specialize, the growing demand for justice, and (at least in his later works) the cult of man make it clear that moral solidarity makes an essential contribution to the proper functioning of *any* normal society, even a modern one. Empirical assessment of the level of solidarity in modern society, including the search for indicators, is complicated by an inconsistency: although Durkheim asserts that modern society is more solidary than primitive society, *Division* makes a strong case to the contrary.

Durkheim initially asserts that organic solidarity is stronger than mechanical. It follows that solidarity increases as the division of labor advances and that solidarity is greater in normal modern societies than in primitive ones (37–38, 152, 173). However, this assertion is contradicted by much of his subsequent analysis.

Mechanical solidarity has a primacy of two kinds: it was present in the earliest human societies (166), and it is a prerequisite to organic solidarity (275–77, 186). While Durkheim sometimes indicates that an increase in moral solidarity would heighten the overall level of solidarity in an advanced society, he never says that an increased division of labor in a primitive society would heighten its solidarity. He (277) rejects the contention that the division of labor is "the fundamental fact of all social life" and claims that it is "a derived and secondary phenomenon . . . [which] passes on the surface of social life" (282n). Moral bonds between men and cohesion "due to a community of beliefs and sentiments" (277) are the fundamental or at least more fundamental fact of all social life (277–82).

The common conscience is the source of mechanical solidarity; the stronger that conscience, the stronger mechanical solidarity. *Division* (152) identifies three variables that affect the strength of the common conscience: "1. The relation between the volume of the common conscience and that of the individual conscience." The social links that attach the individual to society "are as strong as the first more completely envelops the second." In primitive society the individual conscience is but feebly developed and the ratio of the volume of the collective to the individual conscience is high (129–30, 135, 194, 197–98). "2. The average intensity of the states of the collective conscience . . . [which] has as much power over the individual as it has vitality." Durkheim's (70–110) discussion of penal law, repressive justice, crime and punishment (particularly the "passionate reaction" [85] of primitives to infractions of moral rules), and religion all stress the great power of the common conscience in primitive society. "3. The greater or lesser determination of these" states of the common conscience. In primitive societies these states refer to particular objects of the primitive's experience (287–91). Consideration of each of these factors leads to the same conclusion, that the collective conscience is powerful in primitive societies.

Other aspects of Durkheim's analysis lend strength to this conclusion. One defining attribute of primitive societies is their smallness (257, 287, 300–301), and the smaller a group is, the more tightly it controls its members (297–301). In a large group individuals may hide themselves in the crowd; in small groups each is subject to intense surveillance by others, so social control is stronger (298).

Durkheim (70–110) devotes considerable attention to processes which maintain a strong common conscience and hence high levels of social control in primitive society. Primitives

react strongly and emotionally to crimes (violations of repressive law) and collectively punish criminals. Such collective affirmation of moral rules reinvigorates those rules. In contrast, Durkheim never identifies an analogous process of social control which sustains organic solidarity. His contrast between repressive and restitutive law stresses the intense emotional reactions evoked by violations of the former in contrast to the emotionally neutral reactions to violations of the latter. Mechanical solidarity is again portrayed as stronger than organic.

More generally, *Division* repeatedly asserts that social control is high in primitive societies. "In lower societies, the very external form of conduct is predetermined even to the details. The way in which man must eat, dress in every situation, the gestures he must make, the formulae he must pronounce, are precisely fixed" (289). "The most puerile usages become . . . imperative duties" and "a thousand details of economic life are submitted to very extended regulation" (159). Individuality can only develop to the extent that individuals free themselves from social control, and in primitive society "our personality vanishes" and "our individuality is nil" (130). The intensity of beliefs is proportional to their commonality; in primitive societies beliefs are unanimous, and consensus is total. "Schisms and dissents are unknown; they would not be tolerated" (135). In short, "tradition is all-powerful" (158; see also 138), "collective authority . . . [is] absolute" (195), and "social control . . . rigorous" (300).

The solidarity of modern societies is even weaker than that suggested in Durkheim's depictions of organic solidarity. Durkheim devotes an entire book of *Division* (351–95) to three abnormal forms of the division of labor which pervade modern society and pose a threat to its solidarity. Indeed, *Division* and Durkheim's other books in large measure grew out of his concern with the malaise of modern Europe, the crisis of social integration (408–409). In fact, *Division* fails to cite a single empirical instance of what it claims to be the normal case, a highly integrated modern society.

In short, a contradiction permeates *Division:* while Durkheim asserts that solidarity increases during the course of social evolution and that organic solidarity is stronger than mechanical (173), his analysis sustains the opposite conclusion.

EMPIRICAL APPLICATIONS

Anyone who attempts to apply and test Durkheim's model of organic solidarity empirically will encounter problems. Durkheim identifies mutually complementary differences as the source of organic solidarity, so that the extent of the division of labor can be used as the measure of organic solidarity, but the researcher must have some way of empirically distinguishing those differences which are complementary from those which are not. How this is to be done is not clear.

Let us assume that the researcher chooses to apply the model to the individual and the group or society. Perhaps s/he decides to use individuality as the measure of differences and, albeit arbitrarily, mutually complementary differences. However, in another expression of his thesis that individual and social factors are opposed, Durkheim (203–204) argues that individuality and the expression of self-interest are the antithesis of solidarity: "Where interest is the only ruling force each individual finds himself in a state of war with every other since nothing comes to mollify the egos. . . ." Therefore, the researcher who employs a measure of the individuality–complementary differences–complementary interests configuration is in the strange position of employing as an indicator of solidarity something which Durkheim claims destroys solidarity.

Although to Durkheim the division of labor embodies the complementary differences which lead to organic solidarity, he also sees actual contemporary societies as relatively unintegrated. What, then, is the best guide to the level of integration in modern society—Durkheim's claim that in normal complex societies organic solidarity is strong or his many indications that in existing modern societies organic solidarity is weak?

Regardless of which answer the researcher chooses, presumably s/he should not ignore Durkheim's distinction between the normal and the three abnormal forms of the division of labor (353–95). We discuss two of these forms.

"*Anomy* is impossible wherever solidary organs are sufficiently in contact or sufficiently prolonged" (368). Under these conditions organs are made aware "of the need which they have of one another, and, consequently, they have a lively and continuous sentiment of their mutual dependence." The researcher, then, must determine whether there is sufficient contact between, for instance, producers and consumers, or capitalists and laborers, to give them that sense of mutual dependence which betokens solidarity in complex societies. To the extent that they are not there may be conflict between, for instance, capital and labor (354); and the division of labor may degrade the laborer "by making him a machine" (371).

The second abnormal form, the *forced* division of labor, exists to the extent that coercion rather than an individual's innate ability determines his/her function. "Labor is divided

spontaneously only if society is constituted in such a way that social inequalities exactly express natural inequalities" (377). Under these conditions "the only cause determining the manner in which work is divided" will be the "diversity of capacities," (376) and each person will be rewarded in proportion to his/her contribution. To measure this second abnormal form the researcher must determine the degree to which force or other extraneous factors prevent aptitude and task, and contribution and reward, from corresponding in the way that Durkheim says they normally do.

By Durkheim's (353–95) own account the abnormal forms of the division of labor are widespread in the modern world. They are also so interwoven with the normal form that it is difficult to see how one might empirically separate the abnormal from the normal. Yet anyone who wishes to test Durkheim's model must make the distinction, since the former undermines solidarity, whereas the latter engenders it.

In light of these difficulties the researcher might prefer not to measure differences and interests at all, since their relations to moral rules are at best unclear, and not try to separate the effects of the abnormal from the normal. Instead, s/he might be inclined to measure moral rules directly since they are purportedly the proximate source of organic solidarity. The researcher who does this, however, runs the risk of measuring mechanical solidarity as much as organic, thereby flying in the face of Durkheim's assertion that organic solidarity has largely supplanted mechanical in the modern world.

Most empirical applications of *Division* (e.g., Miley and Micklin, 1972; Webb, 1972; Krohn, 1978) incorporate Durkheim's theory of change and employ such global variables as technological growth, industrialization, and population size, density, and growth. The division of labor is linked directly to solidarity. (Reflecting the widespread uncertainty about the relationship between the division of labor and solidarity, one investigator interprets *Division* as holding that the division of labor causes increased deviance! See Webb, 1972.) Such studies typically do not spell out and measure the processes and variables which Durkheim subsumes under division of labor and which explain its causal linkage to solidarity. Moral rules are often not measured at all. Consequently, whatever the reported correlations between the division of labor and solidarity, there is no way of knowing if this relationship exists for the reasons hypothesized by Durkheim.

If one really did want to test Durkheim's model of organic solidarity, the best way to do so would be to interpret the theory as a description of a hypothetical causal process and then to test successively each of the hypothesized causal relations. Individuality marks the existence of mutually complementary differences. Such differences reflect mutually complementary interests which are the source of the mutual attraction leading to interaction. Interaction, in turn, generates the moral rules which are the proximate source of solidarity and which regulate further interaction based on mutually complementary interests. So far no one has succeeded in confirming these causal relations empirically. Few have even tried to.

WHY DURKHEIM SHOULD HAVE ABANDONED THE MODEL OF ORGANIC SOLIDARITY

We argue that on internal grounds Durkheim should have abandoned his concept of organic solidarity. At its core the theory of mechanical solidarity asserts the inverse relationship between individuality and solidarity, but Durkheim (37–38) also seeks to show that individuality and solidarity grow proportionately during the course of social evolution. If one type of solidarity is to be proportionately and the other inversely related to individuality, these two types must themselves be quite different. Indeed, Durkheim argues that in important ways they are polar opposites; and one of the ways in which they are polar opposites is precisely that one is proportionately and the other inversely related to individuality. The type of solidarity which is proportionately related to individuality increasingly replaces the other type: "It is an historical law that mechanical solidarity which first stands alone, or nearly so, progressively loses ground, and that organic solidarity becomes, little by little, preponderant" (174). This increasingly preponderant type is the stronger of the two (37–38, 173). Durkheim has solved his initial problem if (1) mechanical and organic solidarity are distinct; (2) organic solidarity is the stronger type; and (3) organic solidarity and individuality vary proportionately.

Each type of solidarity is linked to a different image of society and empirically to societies, primitive versus advanced, which are themselves different and even opposites. The differences between mechanical and organic solidarity permit them to be compared on many different dimensions. Finally, there are a number of steps in the causal chain explaining the strength of each type of solidarity. By appealing to different elements in the chain these two types can be made to appear similar (moral rules are the source of solidarity) or different (one is proportional to likenesses, the other to

differences). Taken together all these elements provide sufficient interpretive flexibility to permit Durkheim to succeed on one level even while failing at a deeper level.

The model of organic solidarity seems to solve Durkheim's initial problem. Differences create mutually complementary differences and interests, which in turn lead to interaction. However, if these are the conditions which underlie organic solidarity, they are not the bond of solidarity itself. It is the resulting moral rules which embody the social force and social control creating solidarity. How then is organic solidarity different from mechanical solidarity, where moral rules (the collective conscience) are also the source of solidarity? Why are some moral rules proportionately related to individuality and others inversely related to it? Does not the assertion that solidarity and individuality vary proportionately contradict Durkheim's theoretical premise that the social and individual factors vary inversely?

Durkheim does offer a partial answer to these questions when he speaks of differences in the *content* of moral rules. But surely the distinction between organic and mechanical solidarity is something more than the different content of the moral rules in which each is embodied.

Consistent with his occasional emphasis on variation in the content of moral rules, Durkheim (172) at one point asserts that because of their content certain shared moral rules do not constitute a bond of solidarity. Perhaps more than any other, this assertion encapsulates his theoretical difficulty. He is trying to distinguish between mechanical and organic solidarity. He acknowledges "a place where" the common conscience "is strengthened," namely, the cult of personal dignity. To acknowledge, however, that an element of the common conscience is growing stronger and, therefore, increasingly important as a bond of solidarity would undermine his thesis (173–74) that mechanical solidarity and the collective conscience grow ever weaker and are increasingly replaced by a different kind of solidarity. He resolves the dilemma by asserting that, because of its content, the cult of personal dignity "does not constitute a true social link" (172). This denial enables him to argue that even though one of its elements grows stronger, the collective conscience makes an ever-decreasing contribution to the total amount of solidarity. However, the assertion that moral values, collective sentiments, or elements of the collective conscience—in this instance the cult of personal dignity—do "not constitute a true social link" contradicts Durkheim's premises. Indeed, nothing is more basic to Durkheim's theory than the idea that shared sentiments and beliefs are the source of solidarity. When he suggests that certain shared beliefs (the cult of personal dignity) cannot be a bond of solidarity, he shows how far he will go to perpetuate the mechanical-organic distinction. If his point is simply that the main distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity is a change in the content of moral rules, he could say so. And, indeed, given that the cult of personal dignity is strengthened, this assertion would support his argument that organic solidarity is stronger than mechanical. Obviously, Durkheim feels it important to do more than that. His argument is not that the content of the collective conscience changes (although *Division* asserts the importance of such changes), but rather that mechanical solidarity is increasingly supplanted by another kind of solidarity based on something (Durkheim is often vague about just what) other than the collective conscience.

Nor does appeal to change in the content of collective morality provide a fully satisfactory answer to the question of how a social factor, solidarity, can vary proportionately with an individual factor, individuality. In that part of the organic solidarity causal chain explaining the generation of moral rules, they do vary proportionately (individuality → mutually complementary differences → mutually complementary interests in interaction → interaction → moral rules). But what are the effects of these moral rules? Should they not, like all other moral rules, control and regulate the individual, reduce individual differences, and engender commonalities? Is not the inherent conflict between two opposed forces, the individual factor—here individuality and the expression of individual interests—and the social factor present? Do not the social and individual factors, as always, vary inversely? At best we reach a paradoxical result. The greater individuality is, the stronger is solidarity; conversely, the stronger solidarity, the less extensive is individuality.

Durkheim's attempt to distinguish organic from mechanical solidarity intermeshes with major theoretical difficulties. Masking these difficulties and increasing his appearance of success is the complexity and interpretive flexibility of his argument. When Durkheim wants to *distinguish* organic from mechanical solidarity he treats them as polar opposites. For instance, one is based on and proportional to likenesses, whereas the other is based on and proportional to differences. This solution is satisfactory, except that it leaves the source and power of organic solidarity unclear. When Durkheim wants to emphasize the *strength* of organic solidarity, he calls attention not to differences but to moral rules. Since his model of

organic solidarity includes both, he can emphasize either element, depending on whether the immediate task is (1) to identify the difference between mechanical and organic solidarity which explains why the former is inversely and the latter proportionately related to individuality, or (2) to identify the strength of organic solidarity which is explained by moral rules. Never, however, does Durkheim identify a source of organic solidarity which is both different from the source of mechanical solidarity and powerful.

On these grounds we conclude that Durkheim has ample internal reason to drop the concept of organic solidarity. But to abandon organic solidarity is to concede that *Division* has failed to realize any of its five theoretical goals. These goals are to demonstrate that (1) there are two importantly different types of solidarity; (2) one of these types, the organic, is proportionately related to individuality; (3) organic solidarity is the stronger form; (4) modern society is more integrated than primitive; and (5) individuality and solidarity grow concomitantly during the course of social evolution.

DURKHEIM ABANDONS THE CONCEPT OF ORGANIC SOLIDARITY

Nisbet (1966:86, 1974:128) notes that after *Division* Durkheim never again used his mechanical-organic distinction. Parsons (1949:318, 320) observes that "it was in the conception of the *conscience collective* that the germ of most of his later theoretical development lay" and that "gradually the *conscience collective* came more and more to overshadow the conception of organic solidarity." This change in Durkheim's thinking can readily be seen in several of his later works.

Suicide (Durkheim, [1897] 1951) discusses the lack of social integration and regulation in modern society in general, and one unfortunate result, high rates of suicide, in particular; but *Suicide* never describes low levels of integration and regulation as low levels of organic solidarity. Rather, varying suicide rates are attributed to what can only be called (though the term does not appear in *Suicide*) variation in *mechanical* solidarity. For instance, Durkheim ([1897] 1951:152–70) compares Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, not in terms of the relative development of a division of labor within these religious communities, but rather in terms of the strength of common beliefs, sentiments, traditions, and ways of acting. Religious society *"does not unite men by an exchange and reciprocity of services, a temporal bond of union which permits and even presupposes differences."* Rather, "it socializes men only by attaching them completely to an identical body of doctrine and socializes them in proportion as this body of doctrine is extensive and firm" (1951:159; emphasis added).

Even when one might expect Durkheim to find organic solidarity, he does not. For instance, the army is a bureaucracy divided into specialized, interdependent parts, with mutually complementary differences, whose personnel are in regular contact with one another. Durkheim's ([1897] 1951:228–39) explanations, whether of higher military than civilian suicide rates or of varying rates within the military, are not couched in terms of complementary differences and functional interdependence. Instead, he cites varying degrees of "esprit de corps" ([1897] 1951:229), "impersonality" ([1897] 1951:234; see also 238), or, more generally, altruism ([1897] 1951:236–40).

His treatment of the family further illustrates the same change in his thinking. In *Division* (123) he rejects the common belief that family cohesion depends exclusively on "the community of sentiments and beliefs" and suggests that the "division of familial labor . . . dominates the entire development of the family." The contemporary family is united by a "particular solidarity . . . in accordance with the division of domestic labor." In the family as in the larger society, organic solidarity increasingly replaces mechanical. Four years later in *Suicide* ([1897] 1951:201–202) family integration is a function of the strength of its "traditions," "common sentiments," and "collective life," not complementary differences and the division of labor.

The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life ([1912] 1965) only briefly analyzes religion in modern society. Durkheim's well-known analysis of the French Revolution ([1912] 1954:244–45, 475–76) suggests that modern society can only become more integrated if there arise common beliefs, sentiments, symbols, and rituals. Once again, he has mechanical and not organic solidarity in mind.

CONCLUSION

The Division of Labor has long occasioned puzzlement and ambivalence among sociologists. It treats common beliefs and sentiments as the basis of social solidarity, a thesis central to the thinking of Talcott Parsons and many of those whom he has influenced. Durkheim's case against Spencer's utilitarianism was long accepted as definitive (Parsons, [1937] 1949: 311ff); a school of neo-utilitarians only came forward to challenge it in the sixties (Blau, 1964; Homans, [1961] 1974). These authors notwithstanding, many sociologists ex-

plain the variable orderliness and integration of society as, in part, a product of the variable pervasiveness and strength of common values, beliefs, and sentiments. Even those who in basic ways depart from Durkheim's perspectives—such as Marx, Weber, and their followers—affirm that common beliefs and sentiments are one basis of social integration.

Durkheim has contributed more to our field than a general perspective. Goffman (1967:5–95; see also Collins, 1981:223–38) adopts a self-consciously Durkheimian perspective in some of his early works. He ignores the internal structure of Durkheim's thought and the problems involved in testing his hypotheses and instead looks for evidence of organic solidarity in social encounters in the modern world.

Durkheim's account of the cult of personality, both in *Division* and in his later work, is almost wholly limited to beliefs. He says little about the rituals which must both express and strengthen the beliefs if his cult is to qualify as a religion as defined in *The Elementary Forms* ([1912] 1965:62). Goffman tries to remedy this omission. The cult of personality in our time, he suggests, maintains the sacredness of the self. It does this, not in scheduled ceremonies with large congregations, but through everyday encounters among as few as two people. He considers ceremonies of deference and demeanor to be modern analogs of some of the kinds of rituals which Durkheim identifies among the Australian natives. A ceremony which confirms the sacredness of the self strengthens solidarity among those who participate in it, and many ceremonies, sustaining many interlocking relationships, maintain organic solidarity in the larger society.

More explicitly than Goffman, Collins (1975:153–55) has incorporated ideas from Durkheim and from Goffman's extensions of Durkheim into his own analysis of ritual solidarity, which is basic to his recent synthesis of conflict sociology.

The defects of Durkheim's book are equally notable. The doubtful empirical status of a number of its propositions has been documented here and elsewhere (for a summary see Lukes, 1972:159–67). If we have made a contribution, it is in showing the fruitfulness of an internal approach to a book like *Division*. Such an approach identifies the difficulties to be overcome before its ideas can be empirically tested. Juxtaposed to Durkheim's theory of mechanical solidarity and analyzed in the context of his general theoretical perspectives, his theory of organic solidarity exhibits a number of difficulties. These defects help account both for Durkheim's subsequent abandonment of the model and for its failure to provide the basis for cumulative theorizing and research.

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THE LIABILITY OF NEWNESS: AGE DEPENDENCE IN ORGANIZATIONAL DEATH RATES*

JOHN FREEMAN GLENN R. CARROLL
University of California, Berkeley
MICHAEL T. HANNAN
Stanford University

Age dependence in organizational death rates is studied using data on three populations of organizations: national labor unions, semiconductor electronics manufacturers, and newspaper publishing companies. There is a liability of newness in each of these populations but it differs depending on whether death occurs through dissolution or by absorption through merger. Liabilities of smallness and bigness are also identified but controlling for them does not eliminate age dependence.

Most research and policy literature on organizational failure assumes that new organizations are more likely to die than old organizations. Stinchcombe (1965) argued that new organizations suffer a *liability of newness*, a greater risk of failure than older organizations, because they depend on the cooperation of strangers, have low levels of legitimacy, and are unable to compete effectively against established organizations. Further, Stinchcombe argued that new organizations of a new form are more likely to fail than new organizations with an established form. As time passes, structures stabilize and ties with environments become durable, causing death rates to fall for organizations with both common and innovative forms.

Stinchcombe's argument has been used frequently but has rarely been studied empirically.[1] The argument apparently makes such good sense that organizational theorists accept it unquestioningly. However, there are plausible alternative explanations of the age dependence in organizational death rates. Apparent age dependence in any death rate can be due solely to heterogeneity in the population; that is, the rate declines with age simply because units with the highest death rates fail early (see, e.g., Vaupel and Yashin, 1982). More specifically, the liability of newness might be a liability of smallness. It may be that the smallest organizations have the highest death rates and that the overall death rate in a cohort declines with age as small organizations are screened from the population. The failure rates in the population would then appear to depend on age even though the rate does not decline with age within any particular size class.

The empirical status of liability-of-newness arguments has broad relevance for current theory and research on organizations. As organizational analysis has broadened to include studies of organizational populations over long periods of time (Hannan and Freeman, 1977; Aldrich, 1979; Brittain and Freeman, 1980; Carroll and Delacroix, 1982; Freeman and Hannan, 1983; Delacroix and Carroll, 1983), it becomes increasingly important to understand the links among three kinds of processes: (1) processes of development or internal transformation; (2) processes of competition and selection in the environment; and (3) in-

* Direct all correspondence to: John Freeman, Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720.

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[1] For exceptions, see Freeman and Hannan (1982) and Carroll and Delacroix (1982).