FIGHTING A COMMON FOE: ENMITY, IDENTITY AND COLLECTIVE STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we explore the conditions under which organizations that compete in both market and non-market domains might engage in collective strategy. We study low-power FM radio activists in the U.S., who employed a collective strategy both within and across geographic communities to gain the right to broadcast in low-power broadcast spectra. By comparing and contrasting two stages of the micro-radio movement, we argue that, under certain conditions, for collective strategy to be viable, organizations competing on the dimensions of both ideology and resources must recognize themselves as members of an identity group, based on their common struggle against a stronger, more salient enemy. We highlight the role of collective strategies in the processes of organizational ecology, and discuss the generalizability of our argument.

INTRODUCTION

A productive area of interchange between the ecology and strategy literatures is in the domain of interorganizational cooperation. For the most part,

strategy scholars have focused attention on cooperation through dyadic and multilateral arrangements in the market domain, whereas organization ecologists have documented mutualism between populations. Neither group of scholars, however, has devoted sufficient attention to collective strategies in non-market domains. Although scholars on both sides highlight the role of resource competition as a trigger of cooperation, for the most part, they have glossed over the role of identity as a mobilizer of cooperation at the collective level.

Collective strategy has been defined as "the joint formulation of policy and implementation of action by the members of interorganizational collectivities" (Astley, 1984, p. 526). Although this definition suggests that collaborators must identify with other organizations in the collective to participate in a joint strategy, the question of identity has not been fully explored by researchers of interorganizational coordination, which focuses primarily on linkages among interdependent organizations and the environment in which they operate. This literature pays particular attention to organizational struggles to control environmental uncertainty and to secure stocks of scarce resources, but does not explore the link between identity and resource competition.

In this essay, we propose that group identification – self-cognizance as an organizational community – within organizational communities that compete with salient rivals on the dimensions of both resources and ideology fosters collective strategies of cooperation, particularly in non-market domains. Our analysis focuses on a specific type of market structure: one in which production resources are homogeneous and sharply constrained, although consumption resources are heterogeneous, and where there are economies of scale for generalists, who dominate the center of the resource space. In such environments, according to resource partitioning theory (Carroll & Hannan, 2000), specialist organizations are likely to appear to serve peripheral resource spaces not served by generalists. Although collective strategy – explicit coordination of interorganizational action, or direct interaction among organizational collectives (Astley & Fombrun, 1983; Oliver, 1988) – is likely to promote the legitimacy and survival of emerging specialists, such cooperation is difficult to enact; this is particularly true of organizational communities marked by commensalism, or competition, on both ideological and resource dimensions, as well as the struggle for legitimacy of the specialist organizational form. If, however, the nascent specialist community recognizes that its most salient foes in terms of identity, resources, and legitimacy are not other specialists, but rather generalist producers, it will develop an identity in opposition to the larger enemy. This

group identification will, in turn, facilitate the mobilization of collective action, and consequently organizational legitimacy, which should, in turn, increase organizational founding and survival rates.

To illustrate our argument, we present the case of low-power FM (LPFM) radio activists (also called micro-radio) in the United States, who successfully deployed a collective strategy to gain the right to broadcast on the commercial radio spectrum. The two distinct phases in the history of the micro-radio movement illustrate the factors critical to the success of cooperative strategy. After an initially rocky effort, in which federal regulators were targeted as the enemy of low-power radio, disparate groups of micro-radio activists, who proposed competing ideologies and who competed with each other indirectly for resource space on the broadcast spectrum, joined together. Once these erstwhile foes developed a collective identity, by framing commercial radio broadcasters as their common enemy, against which all competed both ideologically and for space on the broadcast spectrum, they were able to set aside their differences and work together. That is, when they recognized that they were all more distant from commercial broadcasters in terms of ideology and resource competition than from each other, the common fight became their most salient mission, resulting in a strong group identity. This identity, in turn, mobilized a collective strategy that enabled micro-radio activists to hasten the process of resource partitioning in the radio broadcast industry. Moreover, the development of a strong group identity enabled micro-radio activists to deploy a cooperative ideology that was palatable to complementary organizations, collaboration with which was crucial to legitimating the new organizational form. Thus, it was the struggle over ideology and resource control against a salient rival that facilitated the development of a strong group identification, which in turn created an opportunity structure wherein successful strategic cooperation was possible. This can be contrasted with the model presented in this volume by Shipilov, Rowley, and Aharonson (2006), which also deals with the choice of partner for cooperation, although in the context of formal, cooperative ties among potential competitors, and among organizations not specifically engaged in the fight for legitimacy.

We argue that, when organizations recognize themselves as members of a group, their attention is directed away from within-group and toward between-group competition; this, in turn, facilitates within-group cooperation. Thus, we propose, when spurred by the threat of competition for critical resources from a rival, group identification can facilitate successful collective strategy. We draw on a case study to produce basic propositions regarding the emergence and efficacy of collective strategies, highlighting their role in the fundamental processes of organizational ecology. Finally, we discuss the
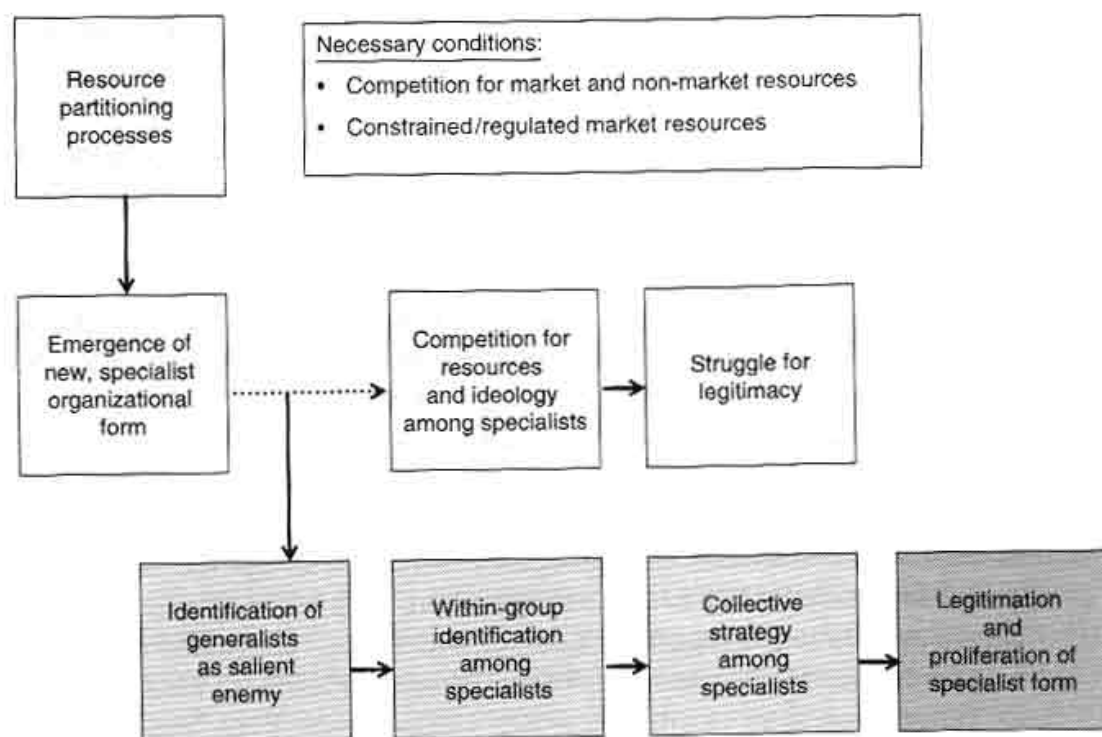
Fig. 1. Proposed Model of Enmity, Identity and Collective Strategy.

conditions that are necessary and sufficient to generate this mechanism, and discuss the generalizability of this argument to industries marked by the emergence of a new organizational form, where the new form competes for both market and non-market resources, where market resources are constrained or regulated, and where a salient enemy can be identified. A graphic representation of this model is presented in Fig. 1.

We begin our discussion with a history of the micro-radio movement in the United States, focusing on the forces that promoted the development of collective identity, then collective strategy, and its consequences for ecological processes. Drawing on data collected by Greve, Pozner, and Rao (2006), we contrast the two distinct phases in the history of the micro-radio movement.

COLLECTIVE STRATEGY AMONG MICRO-RADIO ACTIVISTS

Early History

The struggle for control over the radio airwaves dates back almost to Marconi's first trans-Atlantic broadcast in 1901. The sinking of the Titanic in

1912 spurred the United States government to regulate its airwaves by raising concerns that airwave congestion might block critical transmissions in times of crisis. Consequently, the Radio Act of 1912 required broadcasters to register with the U.S. Department of Commerce, which assigned licenses based on the worthiness of applications. This and subsequent regulations did not prevent unlicensed amateur radio enthusiasts from continuing to broadcast (Anderson, 2004b). Because early thinking surrounding radio was more closely related to a metaphor of public transportation, for which tolls could be collected for discrete use, than to that of a transferable, private good, it was in the 1920s, when radio producers began to broadcast regularly in an effort to boost radio receiver sales, that broadcasters became concerned with the activities of amateurs (Leblebici, Salancik, Copay, & King, 1991). Beginning in the early 1920s, the Department of Commerce attempted to remove amateurs from the airwaves, thus professionalizing radio broadcasting while leaving educational institutions – primarily colleges and universities – as the only legitimate, non-commercial broadcasters (Streeter, 1996).

The idea of the radio spectrum as a scarce resource also emerged in the 1920s. Then Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover froze license applications in 1922 in response to complaints about interference from competing stations. Through the freeze, Hoover developed the doctrine of spectrum scarcity, which holds that access to the airwaves is limited by the carrying capacity of the band allocated to commercial broadcasting (Anderson, 2004b). The scarcity created by this doctrine made licenses more valuable, and led to their trade on the open market, setting the stage for competition for bandwidth as the focus of both domain defense and subsequent strategic cooperation. Changes in broadcasting technology and economics changed the radio landscape in the 1940s and 1950s, whereafter radio became a much more local, specialized medium (Leblebici et al., 1991; Sterling & Kittross, 1978). The move toward localism reinforced the trend begun by the Communications Act of 1934, which limited ownership to two stations per market, with a cap of 20 stations nationwide.

In 1948, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) created Class D radio stations, a low-power radio service that enabled educational institutions to train students in broadcasting on a dedicated band of the FM dial; this service further contributed to public participation in licensed radio and sanctioned local radio broadcasting (Anderson, 2004a). Nearly two decades later, in 1967, the Public Broadcasting Act established a national public radio service and created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private, non-profit corporation, to ensure universal access to high-quality,

non-commercial programming (CPB Board of Directors, 1999). The CPB redefined the mission of public and educational radio from that of training broadcasters to that of educating listeners, and beginning in 1972, lobbied the FCC to eliminate Class D stations and to standardize educational radio along the model of National Public Radio (NPR); NPR, not coincidentally, was directly funded by the CPB until 1987 (Dvorkin, 2000). The CPB argued that the relatively low quality and irregular schedules of Class D stations was an inefficient use of radio spectrum space (Anderson, 2004a). Choosing to serve a wider audience rather than to promote diverse voices, the FCC eliminated Class D licenses in 1978, and required educational institutions either to upgrade or to move to the commercial band of the FM spectrum (Ruggiero v. FCC, 2002). The educational band was then given to so-called translator or booster stations, which are dedicated to relaying the signal – and thus extending the broadcast radius – of their commercial parents (Federal Communications Commission: Experimental Radio, Auxiliary, Special Broadcast and Other Program Distributional Services, 2002).

Pirates on the Airwaves: 1979–1995

Unlicensed broadcasters began invading the FM dial following the elimination of the Class D radio service in 1978. Pirate radio – unlicensed, illegitimate broadcasts, often run by individuals using mobile transmitters – was the only niche left in which enthusiasts could exercise self-expression. Like earlier hobbyists, who felt that because they did not cause interference with licensed broadcasters, they were not the intended targets of federal regulation, pirates ranging from the teenagers playing music in their bedrooms to civil rights groups broadcasting radical political messages in the 1960s and 1970s flaunted federal licensing rules (Anderson, 2004b). Because radio piracy emerged as a means of illegitimate, often individual, self-expression, it was unlikely to encourage the strong group identification capable of sustaining coordinated strategic action.

Not only were pirates' individual identities incompatible with cooperative strategy, so were their ideologies. The pirates who became active after 1978 lamented the lack of local responsiveness and diversity of voice, ownership and employment in radio broadcasting, emphasizing the need for diversity and non-conformity. Pioneering micro-radio broadcasters such as Walter Dunn in Fresno, California, and Mbanna Kantako in Springfield, Illinois, broadcast their own music, publicity for African–American businesses, and "militant talk" (Sakolsky, 1992), such as raising awareness about police

brutality in minority communities (Anderson, 2004a). Organizations such as Americans for Radio Diversity (ARD) and Radio Mutiny aimed at promoting more interesting and local programming choices. These organizations lamented that "[m]ainstream media offers no place for independent thought or dissenting opinions. The cultural life of our society is becoming terrifyingly blurred with our commercial life" (Radio Mutiny, 2004). Radio Mutiny, in particular, objected to the trend among NPR and other legitimate radio outlets to shy away from dissenting opinions and controversial points of view; responsibility for this conservative turn was ascribed to the U.S. Congress, a significant financial supporter of public radio, and the FCC (Rosenblum, 1997). Thus there was no unifying, strong identity among radio pirates, each of which advocated and represented its own idiosyncratic identity and ideology. More specifically, not only was there no collective identity, but there was no motivation to cooperate based on ideology.

The ideology of the micro-radio movement in its pirate era was exemplified by Stephen Dunifer, founder of the pirate station Free Radio Berkeley, a 50-watt station that broadcast round the clock, originally from Dunifer's own apartment. Dunifer's piracy was motivated not only by his perception of bias in commercial media, but also by sympathy with other unlicensed broadcasters who had been shut down by the FCC, which he believed to be illegitimate. Dunifer argued, instead, that radio was a medium of free speech and a forum for diverse voices (Dunifer, 2004). Through Free Radio Berkeley, Dunifer hoped to get the public involved in piracy, creating an "ungovernable situation" for the FCC and forcing it to legalize low-power, non-commercial broadcasting (Dunifer, 2004). The key to this strategy was open civil disobedience aimed at drawing the FCC into a public justification of its licensing policies (Coopman, 1997a).

Although public disobedience on a grand scale failed to materialize, Dunifer was able to draw attention to the pirate radio movement through a highly publicized court case. After the FCC attempted to close Free Radio Berkeley months after its founding, a pro-micro-radio legal team helped Dunifer argue that FCC licensing policy and the ban on low-power radio both violated the First Amendment, and discriminated against 95% of the U.S. population, as the more powerful the station, the more expensive it is to operate (Coopman, 1997a). Critical to this argument was the fact that, although stand-alone stations under 100 watts were illegal, the FCC allowed low-power transmitters to rebroadcast the signals of their parent stations, though forbidden from broadcasting local programming (Federal Communications Commission: Experimental Radio, Auxiliary, Special Broadcast and Other Program Distributional Services, 2002). Despite a decision in

favor of the FCC in 1998, the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), the industry lobbying group, felt sufficiently threatened that it filed a comment justifying the elimination of Class D licenses through spectrum efficiency (Edmonson, 2000).

News of the Dunifer case was disseminated on the internet, helping to mobilize a wave of pirate activity already underway in the late 1990s (Anderson, 2004a, 2004b). Advances in technology and communications media also encouraged the development of a micro-radio movement by improving the quality and reducing the price of radio transmitters, making pirate broadcasting relatively easy and inexpensive. The internet also enabled a degree of coordination among pirates, who shared information about FCC enforcement and replaced each others' equipment when confiscated in FCC raids (Coopman, 1997b). This diverse, loosely organized community of pirates also began to coordinate action, albeit loosely, by launching demonstrations with hand-carried radio transmitters in front the headquarters of both the FCC and the NAB in Washington, DC, in October 1998 (Flugennock, 1998). Those involved describe this phase of the movement as extremely informal, without a unifying identity save that of individuals "breaking the same law" (triDish, 2005). Thus the primary focus of the pirates' action was still individual in nature, rather than collective, although the roots of coordinated action can be traced to this time period.

Broadly speaking, the pirates' ideology focused on the elimination of Class D service, and FCC licensing policy more generally, which limited freedom of speech while privileging certain groups over others. This loose movement, therefore, entailed an identity as critique strategy (Bernstein, 1997), whereby the pirates strove to distance themselves from mainstream society, creating an identity in contrast to the elitism and discrimination they perceived within commercial broadcasting. It did not, however, produce a positive identity, partially due to the strong ideological divides among pirates, some of whom favored the creation of a commercial low-power service, a non-commercial service, or a completely local, grass-roots service, while still others were completely absorbed with their individual ideologies and uninterested in media reform (Schellhardt, 2005; triDish, 2005). What common rhetoric there was among pirates centered mainly on contrasting their own liberal views with those heard on the radio, while also framing the FCC as the conservative force responsible for the lack of liberal representation. The FCC thus became the primary focus of the pirates enmity and their goal: to subvert the FCC's legitimacy and authority by claiming voice through anarchy and civil disobedience. Thus not only did the pirates embody diverse identities, they also failed to find common

ground in their struggle for resources, or bandwidth. By framing the U.S. government as the enemy against which to act, the pirates framed their contest not as competition for resources or even for legitimacy of a new organizational form, but rather as a debate over the legitimacy of regulatory authority, a very different dispute. These failures account, in part, for the failure of the pirate movement to gain momentum and achieve its goals.

The biggest success in the pirates' unorganized campaign to create chaos on the airwaves, which consisted primarily of individual action, was the development of a countermovement. The FCC increased its enforcement efforts against unlicensed broadcasters in response to increased piracy, and the NAB mobilized an effort to suppress the movement. Although initially sporadic, enforcement activity rose as the NAB increased pressure on the FCC to shut down pirate operations as they proliferated (Spangler, 1997). At the same time, the NAB, CPB, and NPR – all of which had strong ties to the FCC – mobilized in opposition to the pirates. As incumbent broadcasters have done since the 1920s, they invoked resource-based arguments against low-power broadcasting, positing the radio spectrum as a scarce resource to which not all comers may have access; adding voices to the airwaves would crowd the radio dial, cause interference to existing signals and harm existing stations' financial well-being (Tymon, 1998).

Fundamentally, the piracy phase of the micro-radio movement failed because its ideology was inconsistent with collective strategy. Pirate broadcasters saw themselves as different, as crusaders, and as exceptionally local activists – that is, activists for their own individual causes alone. Their identity was not one of a strategic group or an organizational community, but rather of outlaws working independently, often with sharply different and competing ideologies. Moreover, the enemy against which they directed their activity was, essentially, the FCC, a bureaucratic organization that presented only an enemy, not a true competitor for resources. Thus, the pirates never coalesced with a strategic group identity. Moreover, they were unable to generate an ideology towards which other constituencies, those with the resources to promote their goals, could sympathize. The pirates' master strategy – civil disobedience and resistance – did not resonate with the general public, nor did the extremely liberal and often radical viewpoints voiced by most pirates. Pirates' self-definition in sharp contrast to dominant popular culture alienated and excluded many potential supporters, and precluded the development of a community identity capable of mobilizing cooperative action. Therefore, despite the consistency of its message and the dedication of its members, the pirate movement was ultimately unsuccessful in achieving its goal of legalizing low-power radio.

Micro-Radio and Cooperative Strategy: 1996–2004

Ironically, it was the countermovement spurred by the pirate movement that helped micro-radio activists to develop the strong group identity necessary for successful cooperative strategy. Unswayed by pirates' attempts to force reform, and under heavy lobbying by the NAB and others, the FCC and Congress encouraged consolidation and commercialization of radio ownership through the mid-1990s. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 facilitated consolidation by increasing the single-market ownership cap from two to eight stations and eliminating the national ownership cap. Subsequent to this change, the first wholesale telecommunications regulation overhaul since 1934, came a wave of consolidation within all broadcast media. Between 1996 and 1998, approximately 50% of U.S. radio stations changed hands, with the most significant losses coming from independent stations (Smith & Rosenfeld, 1999) and minority ownership of radio stations dropped 9% within two years of deregulation (DeBarros, 1998). By the end of 2003, Clear Channel Communications owned more than 1,225 stations in 230 U.S. cities, or 11% of all stations, putting it into the homes of 70% of the population (Sharlet, 2003). This reform allowed national station owners to reduce costs by consolidating advertising sales replicating set formats nationwide, replacing local personalities with syndicated and computer-automated programming, and eliminating local news departments (Fisher, 1998). By the late 1990s, one could listen to the same broadcast on a Clear Channel station in virtually any market in the U.S., but could hardly find any truly local programming. Thus although the number of stations did not decline, the number of listening options was limited through consolidation, fueling more activity by radio reform activists.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 was a turning point in the micro-radio movement. As the spate of media mergers and acquisitions led to increasingly centralized ownership, radio listeners and FCC regulators lamented the homogenization of programming, lack of diversity, and vanishing local coverage on the FM airwaves. As the media giants became ever larger, and as they lobbied against micro-radio ever harder, they presented a salient, inimical out-group competing for a critical resource – bandwidth – with the micro-radio community. Bandwidth was a resource that engendered competition among micro-radio activists, particularly those operating in the same communities, as was later demonstrated by the number of mutually exclusive, competing applications for available bandwidth by LPFM applicants. Nevertheless, this competition was less critical than that against incumbents already in possession of bandwidth. In fact, the incumbents

themselves may have made resource competition even more salient by emphasizing the need to preserve signal integrity by keeping others' off of the airwaves and insisting on prosecution of pirates. As incumbents' lobbying efforts became more vocal, making the competition for resources more intense, the ideologies of what had been a fragmented group of activists and organizations converged towards fighting this strong, unified enemy. It was against this backdrop that a new group identity, and ultimately a more successful micro-radio movement, emerged.

The formation of a group identity was facilitated by the professionalization of pirate radio that began in the early 1990s, due primarily to the incorporation of new interest groups into the micro-radio movement. An important component of this change was the participation of radio programmers and engineers who had been fired from corporate radio due to consolidation. These displaced radio professionals, having experienced the effects of homogenization of commercial radio directly, became focused on serving the interests of local communities through broadcasting, rather than advocating specific and idiosyncratic ideologies (Hall, 2005). The involvement of radio professionals also attracted the participation of local opinion leaders in communities across the country, who were less interested in media reform than they were in community-level issues, with a strong anti-commercial philosophy (triDish, 2005). At the same time, media reform groups such as the Amherst Alliance began to take up the cause of low-power radio, with the goal of bringing new voices, although not exclusively local voices, to the airwaves. The media reform activists advocated for change from within the establishment, and had less of an ideological stance than other micro-radio activists, though they were for the most part in favor of a commercial low-power radio service (Schellhardt, 2005). Eventually, two more groups joined forces with the micro-radio movement: Evangelical Christian groups, such as the Christian Community Broadcasters, who sought legitimate outlets for their ideological messages; and pro-commercial low-power radio activists, who are interested in more professional broadcasting, but at a lower cost of entry onto the airwaves (Schellhardt, 2005).

It is clear that these broad categories of micro-radio activists represented highly divergent viewpoints, some of which are directly in competition with one another. One activist describes the differences among the various constituencies as strong barriers to collective action, with greater we-feeling within each group (Schellhardt, 2005). Yet, the same activist praises these groups for their ability to put aside their differences and work together on the fundamental issue of establishing a low-power radio service. Part of the credit for establishing a super-ordinate identity as micro-radio activists among these

diverse groups must go to information technology, through which collective action is more easily coordinated. Perhaps more important to creating a strong group identity, however, are the protests and conferences organized by influential groups such as the Prometheus Project and the Amherst Alliance, which gave participants a feeling of commitment to a radio-reform movement (Hall, 2005; Reese, 2005; Schellhardt, 2005; triDish, 2005). In contrast to the pirates, who operated outside the law, the new activists identified themselves as a community, or strategic group, by forming public action groups and exploiting existing channels of protest (Reece, 1998), and by consciously overcoming ideological differences to engage in collective action.

Critical to the development of this strong community identity and a collective strategy was the recognition of the depth of the ideological schism between commercial broadcasters and the various micro-radio groups relative to that among the micro-radio activists. After all, the NAB was actively engaged in efforts to delegitimate micro-radio, whereas the various groups primarily squabbled over the details of the implementation of a low-power service. Most importantly, perhaps, the geographical dispersion of micro-radio activists meant that they were infrequently in direct competition with one another for bandwidth, whereas all were constantly engaged in direct competition for spectrum space with commercial radio stations at the local level. As one advocate argued: "The fact that the NAB and its members prevent non-commercial spaces from existing means that the airwaves are preserved for those whose sole motive is money" (Clarke, 2004). By focusing on the commonality of the struggle against commercial radio, rather than the relatively minor differences of opinion and indirect resource competition among reformist groups, micro-radio activists found the will to consciously develop and deploy a collective strategy.

The framing of the micro-radio movement's identity as anti-commercial radio, with its monopolistic grip on the airwaves, rather than as an expression of multiple identities and agendas, mobilized activists to cooperate both within their own groups and with like-minded communities. Activists carefully painted the increasingly homogenized and centralized commercial radio industry as the enemy, creating a salient out-group against which many different identity groups could mobilize, while coalescing as a unified strategic group with a strong identity. The movement then easily resonated with a nationwide movement celebrating authenticity, diversity, and community, giving it access to the resources of grass-roots organizations engaged in similar activity, ranging from "the Green Party, the United States Catholic Conference, the Library Association of America, the ACLU, the Council of Calvin Christian Reformed Church, Native American tribes and the United Church

of Christ; celebrities like the Indigo Girls, Bonnie Raitt, and Kurt Vonnegut; and the cities of Detroit, Seattle, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Santa Monica, Berkeley and Richmond, California, among others" (Boehlert, 2003). Thus, whereas the pirates' ideology and anti-regulatory stance had alienated community groups, in targeting commercial radio, the moderate frame induced by the later micro-radio activists was sufficient to attract the participation of groups that might have previously been considered ideological rivals.

In addition, by painting the radio chains as the enemy, the micro-radio movement was able to attract powerful allies and take advantage of a growing political opportunity structure. First, by framing the commercial radio interests as their enemy, the community micro-radio activists were able to work legitimately with the FCC to overcome the problems caused by consolidation. The movement also resonated with William Kennard, who became FCC Chairman in 1997. Concerned with increasing media consolidation on following the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which he claimed was changing the radio industry "from one of independently owned operators to something akin to a chain store" (DeBarros, 1998), Kennard viewed micro-radio as a legitimate balance to the corporate presence on and homogenization of the airwaves (Boehlert, 2003). It has also been suggested that Kennard, the FCC's first African-American chairman, as well as a democrat working with a republican-dominated Congress, both valued diversity for its own sake and saw LPFM as a means to give minorities and underserved constituencies access to broadcasting (Mayer, 1998). Thus changes in leadership and philosophy within the regulatory agency itself created a political opportunity structure, and simultaneously increased the salience of commercial radio interests as an enemy, contributing to the success of the micro-radio movement on two levels.

The mature micro-radio movement clearly differed from pirate radio in several respects. Pirate radio espoused a radical, individualistic ideology that inhibited the formation of a strong identity – it celebrated its differences with the FCC – its proclaimed enemy, from which it stole bandwidth like the Robin Hood of the airwaves – and posed pirate radio as a radical alternative to commercial radio dominated by a few corporations. By contrast, later micro-radio activists presented a moderate political ideology, which facilitated the formation of a strong identity. Viewing the FCC as an ally, in contrast, allowed micro-radio activists to use existing channels of political protest. Focusing on commercial radio – a salient out-group with which to engage in legitimate ideological and resource competition – enabled the micro-radio activists to create a strong strategic group identity that both unified them and drew in other, supporting groups. Unlike the pirates,

whose radical agenda created a narrow identity that excluded many poten-
tial supporters to secure a political outcome, this community's identity
was based on non-controversial, inclusive themes such as using radio to
promote community development and identification, local dialogue, educa-
tion, experimentation and diversity, and a new class of radio entrepreneurs.
Moreover, whereas the pirates had no central organization through which to
operate in the political realm, and in fact preferred a decentralized move-
ment in the political and market realms, the later micro-radio activists'
unifying identity enabled them to deploy a collective strategy both by
building organizations for the purpose of coordinating action in the political
ream, and by teaming with grass-roots entrepreneurial efforts in local com-
munities in the market realm.

Just as radical flank effects arguments would predict (Haines, 1997), the
activities of the pirates actually enhanced the success of community radio.
First, although Dunifer's campaign to create chaos on the airwaves failed
to produce numbers sufficient to force the FCC's hand, the cost of
FCC enforcement activity, and growing pro-diversity sentiment within and
outside the agency made it more amenable to moderate rhetoric in radio
licensing reform, opening the opportunity structure for the later-stage ac-
tivists. Similarly, the vigilance with which the NAB, CPB, and NPR fought
against micro-radio, and their lobbying of the ever less-receptive FCC, cre-
ated a counter-movement that threatened the micro-radio movement to
the point that a strong group identity emerged. Moreover, in arguing his
case against the FCC, Dunifer developed compelling legal arguments in
defense of micro-radio, which were appropriated by the later micro-radio
activists to develop legitimate and compelling proposals for regulatory re-
form (Opel, 2004). Finally, the later-stage activists gained exposure and
resonance through FCC enforcement efforts against pirates; external iden-
tification of micro-radio as a movement enacting a concerted, collective
strategy, through academia and local print media, solidified the movement's
identity and facilitated cooperation.

The Rebirth of Micro-Radio

Through a collective strategy, micro-radio activists achieved their goals of
regulatory change and the establishment of a new, low-power radio service.
In July 1997, micro-radio activists filed a petition with the FCC proposing
that the FCC dedicate one channel on both the AM and FM bands na-
tionwide for local micro-stations, with the goal of fostering community

development and identification, developing local dialogue, and providing an outlet for experimentation and diversity, particularly in areas underserved by commercial, high-powered media (Leggett, Leggett, & Schellhardt, 1997). Several months later, an experienced broadcast engineer who had unsuccessfully applied several times for a full-power broadcast license, filed a similar petition encouraging the licensing of low-power stations to create a new class of radio entrepreneurs, to minimize the problem of unlicensed radio broadcasting without causing harm to licensed stations, and to provide more diverse and locally responsive programming (Skinner, 1998). The latter proposal also opened the resource space by demonstrating the feasibility of allowing more low-power broadcasters on the air without causing interference to existing stations. The FCC made both proposals available for public comment in 1998, drawing record numbers of comments both in favor of and in opposition to micro-radio. Despite pressure from the NAB, the FCC issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the Creation of a Low Power Radio Service on January 28, 1999. This document, and the report and order issued in January 2000, adopted elements of both petitions while making concessions to the opponents of LPFM (Federal Communications Commission, 2000, 1999).

The FCC authorized a LPFM radio service in January 2000. LPFM stations are authorized for non-commercial, educational, and community-based broadcasting only. Their operations are limited to an effective radiated power (ERP) of 100 W (0.1 kW) or less and maximum facilities of 100 W ERP at 30 m (100 feet) antenna height above average terrain (HAAT), giving them a broadcast radius of approximately 3.5 m (Federal Communications Commission, 2000). The FCC decision induced the NAB and NPR to lobby Congress, which passed the Radio Broadcasting Preservation Act (RBPA) in December 2000 as a rider on a spending bill – the first time Congress had ever become involved with engineering standards (Prometheus Project, 2000). As we have argued, the NAB and NPR's efforts to derail LPFM actually strengthened the resolve of FCC chief Kennard to support micro-radio (Kennard, 2000a, 2000b).

Although the fight over the LPFM service continued through 2005, opinion regarding media consolidation within Congress has latterly shifted toward the micro-radio activists (Mediageek, 2004), and the service has been adopted and expanded. Figs. 1 and 2 illustrate the degree to which the LPFM service has expanded since its inception, particularly as the growth in the number of full-power commercial stations has slowed (Greve et al., 2005). Greve et al. (2006) have shown that the rise of LPFM stations has even contributed to the loss of market share of incumbent, commercial radio
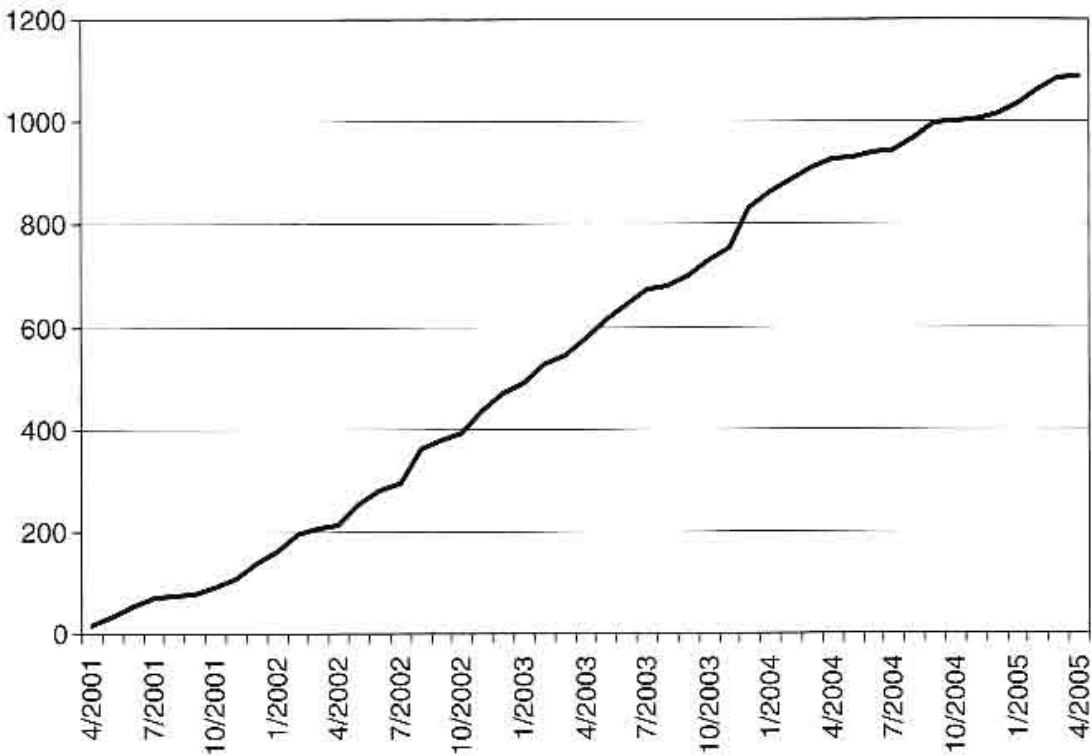
Fig. 2.   Number of Licensed LPFM Stations, April 2001–April 2005.

stations (see Figs. 3 and 4) (Greve et al., 2006). Thus, it is clear that the collective action undertaken by micro-radio activists achieved its aims both in establishing legitimacy for the new organizational form and in carving out resources to the extent of eroding the generalists' resource base.

COLLECTIVE STRATEGY

Development of Collective Strategy

The example of U.S. micro-radio activists demonstrates our proposed model of enmity, identity, and collective strategy, as well as the role of collective strategy in the processes of legitimation and resource partitioning. When emerging specialist organizations with competing ideologies seek legitimacy and access to scarce production resources, collective identity will emerge through the recognition of the commonality of specialists' enmity with generalists. This identification in opposition to generalists will help mobilize collective strategy, thus spurring the legitimation and proliferation of
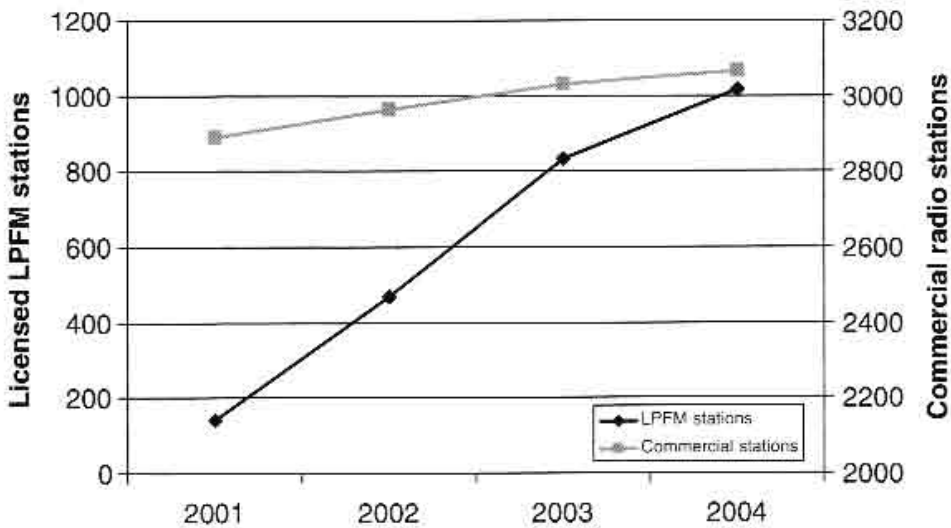
Fig. 3. Number of Licensed LPFM Stations and Commercial Radio Stations, 2001–2005.
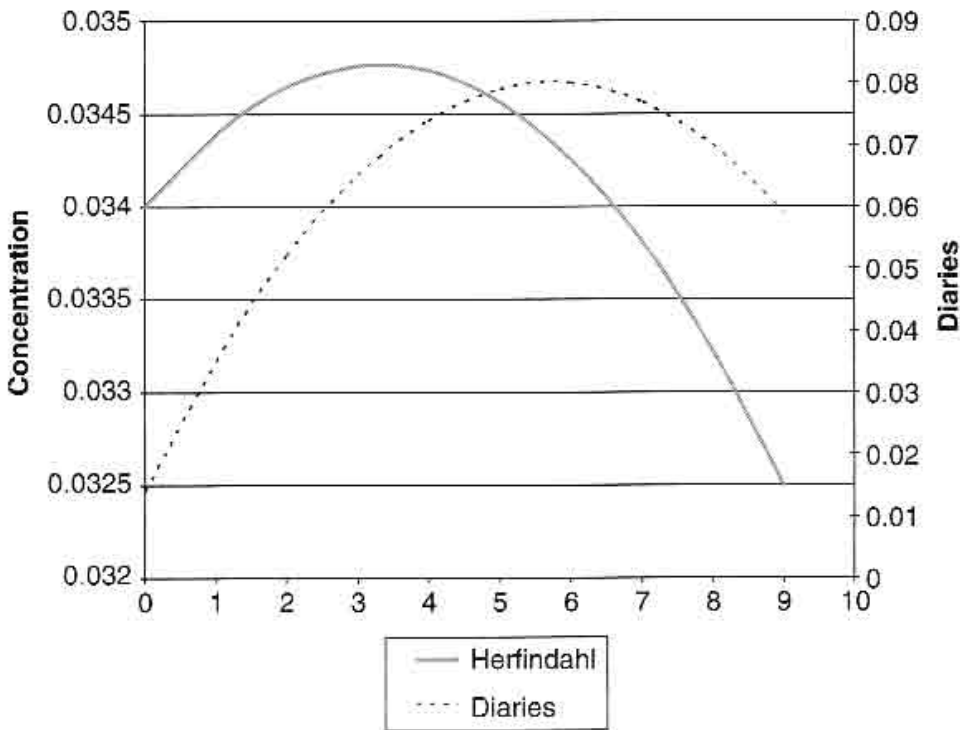

Fig. 4. Effect of LPFM Stations on LPFM Audience and Chain Concentration (Greve et al., 2006).

specialists proposed by resource partitioning theory (Carroll, 1985; Carroll & Hannan, 2000). This model explains why the pirates, in framing their enemy as the FCC, were unsuccessful in their struggle for legitimacy and resource space; their struggle to delegitimate the FCC, rather than to legitimate their own identity, and their failure to recognize the primacy of their direct struggle for resources with chain-owned commercial radio prevented them from developing a group identity and working in concert, resulting instead in internal competition for ideology and resources (see Fig. 1). Moreover, the pirates' idiosyncratic, anti-establishment identities failed to resonate with outside groups, which might have legitimated them as an organizational form. In stark contrast, the later micro-radio activists' cognizance of their common foe helped forge a super-ordinate identity, which in turn enabled them to overcome intra-group competition over ideology and resources, and work together to win legitimacy and resource space.

The critical interaction of group identification, identity, and resource competition has not been explored in either the organizational strategy or the organizational ecology literatures. The collective strategy literature developed partially in response to population ecologists' focus on the effects of the resource environment on individual organizations. Astley and Fombrun (1983) encouraged ecologists to consider strategic choice at the collective level as a viable means of exerting control over the environment by absorbing variation and uncertainty, making groups of organizations less susceptible to variation and selection pressures than are individual firms. Cooperation among special interest groups is thus a means to construct a negotiated environment (Cyert & March, 1963), whereby collectives of interdependent organizations occupying the same resource space play an agentic role, mobilizing resources and formulating concerted strategic action to take control over their collective fate. The classic explanation for collective action thus centers around resource scarcity: organizations work together to control scarce resources efficiently and economically, to minimize susceptibility to outside forces – such as powerful competitors and exogenous market change – and thus to promote organizational survival (Aldrich, 1979; Astley & Fombrun, 1983; Bresser & Harl, 1986; Oliver, 1990; Pennings, 1981; Pfeffer & Nowak, 1976; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Thompson, 1967; Van de Ven, 1976; Van de Ven & Walker, 1984; Whetten & Leung, 1979). A number of ecological studies have documented mutualism between populations of organizations and have emphasized economic and technological interdependencies (Barnett, 1990; Carroll & Swaminathan, 1992; Hunt & Aldrich, 1998; Shipilov et al., 2006), to the exclusion of political and ideological ones (Carroll, Delacroix, & Goodstein, 1990),

although more recent ecological work does address identity and ideology (Barnett & Woywode, 2004; Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000; Dobrev, 2000, 2001; Minkoff, 2002; Ruef, 2000).

Although many authors suggest that participation in collective strategy creates a sense of solidarity among organizational actors, the question of group identity has not been fully investigated. Rather, it is interdependence based on competition for relatively scarce resources that is assumed to spur organizations to coordinate their actions so as to minimize environmental uncertainty and variation (Aldrich, 1979; Astley & Fombrun, 1983; Bresser & Harl, 1986; Oliver, 1990; Pennings, 1981; Thompson, 1967). Moreover, although several scholars have investigated cooperative strategies in the non-market domain (Galaskiewicz, 1985; Hardy & Phillips, 1998; Oliver, 1990; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2000), the cooperative strategy literature generally privileges the market domain, where organizational survival and resource accumulation – rather than identity, ideology and legitimacy – are the primary measures of success.

Resource Partitioning and Collective Strategy

Collective strategy and organizational ecology largely fail to account for potential coordination under conditions such as those we see in the case of micro-radio activism, and more generally, for organizational environments experiencing resource partitioning. Resource partitioning describes the process through which generalists consolidate and gain market share over time, leaving only peripheral resources underserved; eventually, specialist organizations arise to serve those niche markets, leaving a stratified market in which large generalists and small specialists coexist (Carroll, 1985; Carroll, Dobrev, & Swaminathan, 2002; Carroll & Hannan, 2000). Resource partitioning occurs primarily in industries marked by scale economies, heterogeneous resources, and limits on the range and adaptability of both specialists and generalists. Our case study illustrates the process of resource partitioning in the U.S. radio industry, which began in the 1990s with the consolidation of ownership, facilitated by the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and the consequent emergence of larger, generalist radio station owners. These generalists were able to achieve economies of scale by consolidating advertising sales and by eliminating local radio personalities, broadcasting instead standard programming that could be produced in a central location. Such consolidation and homogenization of radio programming left many listening audiences under-served, as was evidenced by

the emergence of a movement in support of bringing diversity and differences of opinion, as well as local programming, to the airwaves. Clearly, those generalist broadcasters could not serve small constituencies given their business model, nor could micro-radio stations serve the larger, more mainstream audiences, limiting the adaptability of both organizational forms. Finally, it is important to note that, although audience resources are heterogeneous, production resources in the radio industry – most importantly, bandwidth – are both homogeneous and severely constrained, making this somewhat a special case of resource partitioning.

The proliferation of specialist organizations in the resource partitioning process can only occur if specialists accomplish two goals: achieve legitimacy for the new organizational form, and gain access to critical resources. These conditions imply that specialists must compete with each other, as well as with incumbent generalists, on the dimensions of both ideology and resources. Inasmuch as organizations reduce uncertainty and deal with bounded rationality by dividing their environment into parts, or cognitive groups, thus limiting their attention to smaller "neighborhoods of action" (Levinthal & March, 1993; Peteraf & Shanley, 1997), the focus of this competition is likely to be other specialist organizations, who may be closer on both resource and ideological dimensions to one another than they are to the generalists. Moreover, the need to legitimate the specialist form tends to channel attention toward competing specialist definitions, rather than toward the established incumbent, whose legitimacy is already secure.

This two-dimensional competition necessitated by the struggle for establishing legitimacy among new organizational forms tends to dominate interorganizational relations, particularly among specialists. At the same time, when production resources are both homogeneous and sharply constrained, as is the case for radio bandwidth, coordination among specialists is needed to dislodge established generalists from their privileged position. Both the intensity and the ideological identity dimensions of inter-specialist competition imply that cooperative strategy – the emergent phenomenon that is "the unintended result of aggregated repetitive patterns of pair wise interorganizational activity" (Dollinger, 1990, p. 267) – is highly unlikely to emerge spontaneously. Thus collective strategy, resulting from a more conscious decision to coordinate action, must emerge if specialists are to win both access to critical resources and legitimacy.

Proposition 1. Given scarce and/or regulated production resources, representatives of a new organizational form must engage in collective strategy to gain access to resources and to win legitimacy.

Identity and Collective Strategy

The enacting of collective strategy, however, is challenging under the circumstances described by resource partitioning theory, as illustrated in our case study. In the case of micro-radio, the scarce, critical resource in question – radio bandwidth – is regulated by the state, and the costs associated with licensing a full-power station represent a significant barrier to entry. The structure of the radio industry in the United States thus required concerted lobbying among specialists to succeed (Murray, 1978; Reger, Duhaime, & Stimpert, 1992). Such lobbying was particularly critical to the success of the micro-radio movement, given the aggressive response of incumbent broadcasters, brought about due to the scarcity of bandwidth available to both full-power, commercial, and low-power radio stations. Emerging specialist populations, however, do not generally meet the characteristics of groups that are generally successful in organizing collective efforts in lobbying for regulation (Maijoor & VanWitteloostuijn, 1996). Although specialists are small organizations, which are more likely to lobby than groups of large organizations (Olson, 1965) because of the relative ease of organizing collective action (Lindahl, 1987), they are in direct competition, and therefore less likely to cooperate. The expected benefits to each specialist are high, promoting lobbying (Downs, 1957), yet the potential costs to incumbents are potentially higher, engendering counter-lobbying (as we saw by the NAB, NPR, and other incumbent groups), reducing the incentive for collective strategy. Similarly, the ease of identifying both winners and losers (Maijoor & VanWitteloostuijn, 1996) makes joint lobbying efforts less likely. Finally, without representative organizations capable of restricting benefits of lobbying to those actively involved, organizing collective lobbying for regulation is exceedingly difficult (Maijoor & VanWitteloostuijn, 1996). To achieve collective action and lobbying for regulation, therefore, a force that unifies specialists by overcoming the competitive tendencies among them is essential; we argue that this force is group identification.

Proposition 2. Representatives of a new organizational form will engage in collective strategy only if they identify themselves as members of a common group.

How can a group identity sufficient to encourage collective action among a population of organizations engaged in competition for both resources and ideology? Whereas the processes and consequences of social identification at the individual and group levels are well studied in the social

psychological and organizational behavior literature (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Messick & Mackie, 1989; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), the corresponding cognitive processes at the organizational level are somewhat less understood. There is ample evidence that managers view their industries as composed of groups of organizations (Baum & Lant, 2003; Fombrun, 1986; Fombrun & Zajac, 1987; Gripsrud & Gronhaug, 1985; Porac & Thomas, 1990, 1994; Porac, Thomas, & Badenfuller, 1989; Reger & Huff, 1993), and that organizations share social identities based on salient group characteristics (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Fiol & Huff, 1992), yet little is known about the emergence of such cognitive groupings.

At the individual level, actors choose to associate with organizations with which they identify (Blau, 1994; Douglas, 1986), engendering positive emotion from the moment of accession. Once the relationship is established, it generates a social category, leading to a sense of identification with the group. The sense of identifying with the group leads members to favor each other over non-members, and to feel greater positive emotions towards in-group members than out-group members (Brewer, 1979; Brewer, 1996; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1987). Similarly, social identification at the organizational level requires that actors define themselves with the group and align their values relative to the characteristics and actions of the group, increasing association and alignment, and thus attachment (Peteraf & Shanley, 1997). Thus it is not group membership per se, but rather the alignment of values, commitment to the group, and acceptance of a common code of behavior that accompany group identification that makes certain organizational populations both receptive to the idea of cooperative strategy and capable of executing such collective action, be it intended or emergent. Nevertheless, it is self-cognizance of group membership that allows emergent cooperative strategies to become more deliberate, and therefore more widespread (Dollinger, 1990).

In surveying one's organizational neighborhood, patterns emerge that tend to promote group identification and interorganizational cooperative strategizing. Group identification emerges when organizations recognize that they are interdependent in such a way that markets and competition cannot address (Astley & Fombrun, 1983; Dollinger, 1990; Doz & Baburoglu, 2000; Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2000). Often, this recognition results from ideological affinity or similarity, which is found to promote cooperative behavior, so long as the key resources upon which the organizations in question depend are sufficiently different to avert within-group competition (Ingram & Roberts, 2000; Simons & Ingram, 2004). In fact,

some degree of similarity may be a prerequisite for of cooperative strategy to emerge spontaneously within an organization population. There is evidence from the social movement literature that diversity increases the costs of collective action by inhibiting the formation of coalitions (Ingram & Rao, 2004; Schneiberg & Bartley, 2001), and, by extension, preventing the development of a unifying collective identity.

Moreover, identification and cooperation are facilitated by ideological similarity and resource distinctiveness. Organizational populations with ideological affinity sympathize with one another, and tend to develop mutualistic relationships (Ingram & Simons, 2000). In contrast, Simons and Ingram (2004) find both negative relationships and increased competition among organizational populations with competing ideologies, just as ideologically similar organizations compete when they share resource profiles. Thus strategic group identification may not emerge when organizations are too ideologically distinct, nor when they compete directly for resources; rather, it emerges most easily within populations of ideologically similar but resource-distinct organizations.

If it is true, as we saw in the case of pirate broadcasters, that organizations competing on both ideology and resource dimensions are not likely to develop an overarching group identity spontaneously, how can we account for the emergence of a common identity? In fact, active recognition of strategic group membership may be predicated only on the presence of a contrasting group that provides an external threat to critical resources (Doz & Baburoglu, 2000) or a threatening ideology (Simons & Ingram, 2004). This is particularly true of domains and organizational communities that have previously been marked by open competition, or among more heterogeneous organizational populations, where a new type of relationship must be negotiated to accomplish the identification required for cooperation (Phillips et al., 2000).

Just as social identity theory holds that the presence of a rival group or "out-group" leads to increased cohesion and cooperation within a group, increasing the likelihood of collective action (Brewer & Kramer, 1986; Kramer & Brewer, 1984; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961), so, too, is interorganizational cooperation encouraged by the presence of a salient out-group. For example, Ingram and Inman (1996) find that the presence of rivalry among similar strategic groups competing for the same resources – in their study, between hotels in Niagara Falls, New York, and Niagara Falls, Ontario – can promote within-group cohesion and, consequently, coordinated strategy. Likewise, in their study of chain stores, Ingram and Rao (2004) find that the emergence of an antagonistic social movement can spur an organizational community to identify as a group and

take collective action through counter-mobilization (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001). In addition, the presence of a rival group has been shown to encourage cooperation by reducing free-riding (Bornstein, Erev, & Rosen, 1990; Erev, Bornstein, & Galili, 1993), thus increasing the efficacy of co-operative strategy.

Thus, we argue, the presence of a common, salient, and threatening out-group, and the common identification of that out-group, is sufficient to unite even ideologically different organizational populations, even when only certain subgroups are engaged in direct competition for resources. This is certainly the case presented by our analysis of the micro-radio movement in the United States, and is supported by other examples. In February 2005, the National Sugar Association, aided by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a frequent critic of the National Sugar Association, and the National Grange, an agricultural and rural advocacy group, filed suit against McNeil Nutritionals, the division of Johnson & Johnson that markets Splenda, the most popular artificial sweetener in the U.S. Also joining in the legal effort were Merisant Worldwide, manufacturer of the artificial sweetener Equal, and other artificial sweetener manufacturers. The lawsuit was aimed at stopping McNeil Nutritionals from producing advertising that suggests that Splenda is natural because it is made from sugar, whereas its competitors claim that it is "a highly processed chemical compound" (Burros, 2005). The unusual group of complainants, all of whom were either competitors or ideological adversaries, banded together to thwart the growth of a dangerous newcomer to the artificial sweetener market. Introduced in 2000, Splenda's share of the tabletop sweetener market rose from 37.3% in 2003 to 48.5% in 2004, while Equal's share dropped by almost 4.5% (Warner, 2004). In this case, the presence of a successful competitor, which had created its own out-group through its differentiating advertising, was sufficient to bring together groups with competing ideologies that did not compete for resources, as well as organizations in direct competition with one another, indicating that sufficiently strong threats may help organizational populations overcome their differences to enact collective strategies.

Drawing on the examples of both micro-radio and Splenda, it seems that a critical element to the successful framing of a common enemy in engendering group identification and collective strategy is the recognition of differences in relative intensity of competition for both resources and ideology. Identification of commercial broadcasters as the grand foe was possible only when the different factions of micro-radio activists recognized that their ideologies, although different inasmuch as they advocated for different features of a low-power radio service (totally non-commercial versus

commercial, e.g.), were still much closer to each other than any were to the ideology of commercial, chain-owned radio, which sought to delegitimate the low-power form and validity of the community radio concept completely. Moreover, acknowledgement that the local nature of competition for spectrum space made micro-radio activists only indirect competitors in the vast majority of cases (although a number of competing applications for LPFM broadcast frequencies were filed with the FCC), whereas commercial, chain-owned radio was a direct competitor for bandwidth in each location made intra-group competition much less salient than inter-group competition. This, in turn, promoted the feeling of identification as a micro-radio activist, and promoted collective strategy.

Proposition 3. Representatives of a new organizational form will identify themselves as members of a common group only if they recognize the presence of a salient, shared rival.

It is also important to note that the inclusive, community-oriented ideologies presented by the majority of micro-radio activists, in sharp contrast to earlier pirates, facilitated the development of a group identity on the part of external stakeholders, as well, with significant consequences for the legitimacy of the form and the success of collective strategy. Polos, Hannan, and Carroll (2002) pose organizational form as a type of socially coded identity, which provides organizations with assumptions about acceptable and expected behavior. This literature is focused on the social code – implying both categorical and penal codes that govern organizational behavior based on organizational structure and niche, defining identity space as equivalent to resource space (Baron, 2004; Hannan, 2005; Hannan, Carroll, & Polos, 2003). Similarly, resource partitioning theory asserts that the legitimating effects of specialist organizational identities depend on the normative status of the specialist form, as well as its social visibility (Carroll & Hannan, 2000). Therefore, by reaching out to existing community groups, and by engendering a strong defensive reaction on the part of entrenched radio broadcasters, micro-radio activists promoted a certain understanding of the low-power organizational form, which created an identity for the overall movement. With a coherent external identity, it was easier to overcome intra-group competitive forces and to develop a coherent internal identity, which both enabled pro-social behavior and constrained legitimate action to exclude the relatively anarchistic behavior of earlier pirates. Thus, cooperation with outside groups may help in the development of a group identity that facilitates collective strategy among erstwhile competitors.

CONCLUSION

This essay was motivated by two gaps in the literature on collective strategy. Although strategy scholars have catalogued the types of collective strategy and the characteristics of industries in which they emerge, they have not sufficiently addressed the need for identification with a group on which collective strategy is often predicated. Similarly, whereas organizational ecologists have begun to address the question of identity, their perspective focuses more on the organizational structure defining forms and their behavioral and penal codes than the consequences of identifying with a group.

We argue that group identification is essential for certain organizational communities to engage in successful, sustainable collective strategy. Specifically, we assert that emerging specialist forms struggling for legitimacy, particularly in industries undergoing the process of resource partitioning, will only enact collective strategies when they identify themselves as a group. Moreover, we contend that this identification is likely to emerge, particularly among groups of organizations competing on the bases of both resources and ideology, only under certain necessary and sufficient conditions. First, the presence of an external threat or a salient out-group encourages the development of a strong group identity that structures the opportunity for cooperation by calling attention to the commonalities among the emerging organizations; the salience of such a rival is absolutely imperative in inducing cooperation among groups that might otherwise be ideological foes. Second, competition with that out-group for critical resources provides the motivation to mobilize organizational communities to implement collective strategies.

As the case of micro-radio demonstrates, both conditions must be met for cooperative strategy to be enacted. In the first, pirate phase of micro-radio activism, the presence of an enemy – the FCC – was insufficient to mobilize consistent, effective cooperation. It was only when micro-radio activists identified commercial radio, a group with which they were in direct competition for airspace and which was actively seeking to delegitimate the new organizational form, as its primary threat that it was able to develop a strong group identity capable of engaging in sustained, coordinated activity. Moreover, identification as a strategic group facilitated the development of an ideology among micro-radio activists capable of attracting ideological affinity groups, the community organizations that worked with the radio enthusiasts, and that themselves framed commercial radio as their enemy, to bring about regulatory change.

This case highlights an important gap in theory on organizational ecology. Although resource partitioning theory argues that new organizational forms emerge to service underserved market segments when market share becomes concentrated in the hands of generalists (Carroll, 1985; Carroll et al., 2002; Carroll & Hannan, 2000; Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000), it generally neglects the mechanisms through which those specialists gain legitimacy. Yet, in industries that are dominated by entrenched incumbents, particularly when subject to government regulation and marked by scarce resources, barriers to entry are high, and may be broken only through collective action. The case of micro-radio activists, however, suggests that group identification through the recognition that incumbents are more salient rivals for legitimacy and resources than are other new entrants can spur collective strategy. Through coordinated action, new organizations may overcome strategic barriers to lobbying, thus gaining legitimacy and numbers necessary to compete effectively against incumbents.

We also add to the theory of resource partitioning by specifying conditions, the under which specialists will emerge when production resources are homogeneous, constrained, and regulated. Generally, resource partitioning theory assumes heterogeneous resources, primarily as relates to dimensions of taste and consumption (Carroll, 1985; Carroll et al., 2002; Carroll & Hannan, 2000). In this essay, we study an industry in which production resources – in the case of micro-radio, radio bandwidth – are completely homogeneous and sharply limited; thus, even if new organizations appeal to specialized groups of consumers, they must fight for constrained production resources. This requirement makes collective action, in the form of lobbying for access to scarce resources, even more important. Given the significant barriers to joint action in such industries (e.g., Maijoor & VanWitteloostuijn, 1996), group identification is critical to the enactment of collective strategy.

This argument applies not only to the emergence of specialists through the process of resource partitioning, but also the emergence of new organizational forms more generally. Similar to McKendrick, Jaffee, Carroll, and Khessina's (2003) assertion that perceptually focused identities facilitate the emergence of new organizational forms, we argue that group identification more generally enables the establishment and legitimation of a new form. It is not the fact of group identification itself, but rather the ability to overcome rivalry to enable collective action that enables this legitimation. As demonstrated in the contrast between radio pirates and later micro-radio activists, without forging a common identity that is capable of reaching out to others with complementary ideologies and goals, it is much more difficult for emerging organizational forms to establish their legitimacy.

Moreover, although this model of collective strategy applies specifically to the entry of new sub-forms within existing industries, it can be generalized to the emergence of entirely new organizational forms or industries. When new forms emerge within existing industries, incumbents represent a salient rival on both ideological and resource dimensions, providing a natural focus for group identification. This does not rule out the possibility, however, of organizational communities in new industries defining a common identity that would enable them to overcome internal competition for legitimacy and resources and enact coordinated action. Under such circumstances, such identification is more likely to take shape implicitly, through repeated interaction, than it is to emerge through a conscious decision to work together.

Thus, our argument will apply to any industry, new or extant, in which a new organizational form is emerging and in which a salient enemy can be identified. For our argument to hold, it is necessary for the new organizational form to be engaged in a fight for both market and non-market resources, and for the market resources to be sharply constrained or regulated, such that collective action is required to gain access. Without the struggle for both legitimacy and resources, and without the constraints to acquiring those resources, collective action among commensal organizations is likely to be less critical to organizational survival, making group identification less necessary. In the chapter by Shipilov et al. (2006), for example, wherein potential partners compete only in market domains, this type of identification is clearly not necessary, and resource, size, and status complementarity are more important predictors of interorganizational cooperation. Finally, this collective action can only emerge when there exists a salient out-group competing for both market and non-market resources capable of generating group identification.

An important limitation to the generalizability of our argument is the character of the resource space and the market in question. For example, in the United States, the broadcast media industry is fairly conservative, and its regulation is highly politicized, further constraining the legitimacy of new entrants. In other countries, however, radio may be governed by a more liberal regime, or one more sensitive to outside viewpoints, lessening the need for specialist organizations to struggle to obtain legitimacy. Moreover, the size of the resource space may be consequential. Generalists in a market as large as the United States have more to lose, and thus may be more difficult to challenge, than they are in smaller markets. In smaller markets, therefore, the competition for resources and legitimacy may be less intense, so that collective strategies are not required to ensure the survival of new organizational forms.

It is important to note that we are not making a case for the superiority of collective strategy over cooperative strategy. Rather, we are arguing that cooperative strategies may not emerge naturally among commensal communities. In these cases, the development of a collective identity promotes the development of explicit collective strategy, which is likely to be more effective than cooperative strategy because of its explicit nature. Thus, we are not making a universal assertion, but rather one specific to the development of collective identity in fighting a common foe.

Given these limitations, our argument should be seen as a complement to the essay by Shipilov et al. (2006) in this volume. Their chapter focuses on the choice of strategic partner when organizations are not involved in direct competition, and when they possess complementary market resources, whereas our area of inquiry relates to organizations in direct competition for market and non-market resources. In both cases, membership in a group or network is critical to the development of collective strategy among specialist organizations, although identification with such a group is not necessarily a precondition for cooperation in Shipilov et al.'s model. Future research might extend both models by testing the relationships each hypothesizes under the market conditions specified by the other.

Finally, our essay points to a future direction for research on cooperative strategy: the sustainability of collective action. That is, for how long can would-be competitors work together to compete against a common threat? Can identification with an organizational community, which is based on the presence of a salient out-group, survive the presence of that threat? One is tempted to argue that, when identification is based on shared group characteristics – particularly ideology – it should persist and encourage future collaborative efforts. Although such positive identities might persist, even absent institutionalization through the development of communal organizations, the opposite is likely to be true of identities forged only of common enmity, as is the case with the complainants in the anti-Splenda lawsuits. Such cooperation is not borne of the desire to reduce competition in general, but rather to weaken the competitive position of one particularly strong rival. Future research should test this proposition to further discover the limits to collective strategy.

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