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Two Paths to Utopia:

Organizational Strategies in 70's Urban Communes and the Viability of Alternative Social Orders

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Abstract

Intentional communities, as individual organizations or products of a movement, present a unique opportunity to study potential alternatives to the current social order. Despite the decreasing scholarly attention to intentional communities in the past few decades, these voluntary micro-societies (also known as communes) offer important insights into group dynamics, community order and structure, and the possibilities of alternative social orders. In order to examine what communes can teach us about social alternatives, this paper will study three main aspects of intentional communities: commune organization, the durability and stability associated with these organizational strategies, and the relative ability of the strategies to solve the social problem of alienation so prevalent in modern society. I use the Urban Communes Data Set, a national survey of communes conducted in the mid 1970's, to study these questions quantitatively. First, I use multiple factor analysis to demonstrate that there are two organizational strategies in the communitarian movement of the 1960s and 70s, which I call "the Path of Involvement" and "the Path of Charisma." I examine the durability, stability, and solutions to alienation of the two paths using linear and multiple regression modeling. I find that my expectations for the implications of these strategies, based on prior research, do not align with the realities of communal life. Nonetheless, I find that the organizational strategies used in intentional communities, specifically the Path of Involvement, represent part of a strategy for wider social change, through social movements or through processes such as "eroding capitalism" wherein groups use the existing capitalist system to work towards an alternative social order.

Introduction: Why Intentional Communities?

I first approached the topic of intentional communities, often colloquially called "communes," out of a desire to study alternatives to the current social order, an order which, at least from my perspective in America, is woefully inadequate. There are far too few paths to fulfilling lives. The American ideal of "the pursuit of happiness" no longer seems available to many, if not most, of the American people. The capitalist system, despite providing many material benefits, has fostered what Erik Olin Wright (2018: 1) calls "poverty in the midst of plenty." Moreover, the accumulation of political failures, abuses of power, and systems which favor the already-wealthy and powerful over even the most driven and bright seem to undermine arguments that simply working "within the system" will suffice to fix rampant social ills. Despite a desire to critique the present order in light of potential alternatives, I did not want to presumptuously present my ideals of an alternative society. Thus, I looked to communes as historical experiments in alternative social orders. By judging these alternative orders with the criteria of success which they (the communitarians) set out for themselves, I would be able to weigh whether the alternatives can create viable micro-societies which are satisfying to their members in a way which the larger social order is not. This paper is a first step towards investigating the already-tested alternatives to the modern, late-capitalist, representative democratic system, and a preliminary analysis of the benefits and shortcomings of such alternatives. I will elaborate on these concerns in the conclusion to this paper, drawing from the empirical studies below.

All this is not to say that intentional communities cannot enrich policy-oriented, "within the system" research. The social and political system we all operate within on a day-to-day basis relies on a passive collective acceptance of certain norms and assumptions or principles. If those

assumptions are left untested, at best research and policy remains delimited and stagnant, and at worse it perpetuates the very problems it aims to solve. Through studying intentional communities, we can question the necessity or solidity of our common understandings and assumptions, allowing for more conscientious or even innovative research and policy-making. Policy, however, is not the focus of this study, and so the specific policy impact of communal strategy is left for future research to discover.

Beyond the personal, social-theoretical, and political reasons for studying intentional communities, they are also, simply by their nature, extremely fruitful sites for sociological research. They offer a uniquely accessible laboratory of sorts for social phenomena. Many scholars consider intentional communities to be social microcosms, small-scale societies which have to contend with problems of production, distribution and allocation of resources, conflict resolution, power disparities and stratification, incoming and outgoing members, and so on (Shenker, 1986; Kanter, 1973). Even if the notion that such small groups can represent society seems implausible (c.f. Zablocki, 1980: 6) intentional communities can certainly function as laboratories for the study of organizations and group behavior. Individual communes can be used as case studies for organizational strategies, or solutions to problems faced by groups such as decision-making and division of labor (Shenker, 1986: 4). Even the simplest commune would match the complexity of any typical organization of comparable size. Moreover, the uniquely alternative or experimental nature of communes enables scholars to question and test features of society or organizations which would otherwise be taken for granted (Kanter, 1972: vii-viii). Additionally, communes often go through organizational changes much more rapidly than organizations or societies, and therefore dramatic changes can be studied longitudinally even within a single project (Zablocki, 1980: 5-6).

Although intentional communities have existed for hundreds of years, this study will focus on those which formed in the most recent boom of communal living, starting in the early 1960s and dissipating through the end of the 70s and the 80s. This era represented the largest boom in communal living in history, with the number of communes in America multiplying over 100-fold (Zablocki, 1980: 32). Additionally, the variety and accessibility of communes increased dramatically during this period, enabling more experimental or transitory groups to form and test the waters of communal life. In brief, this study aims to investigate the insights communes can grant into the structure of alternative social orders and these alternatives' consequences. I will examine intentional communities in the same spirit as Erik Olin Wright's "Real Utopias" project. Just as Wright (2010: 155-60) presents communities like Porto Allegre in Brazil as proofs of the possibility of other social orders, I intend to study whether communes can offer or at least contribute to alternatives to the modern social order.

Despite the theoretical value of studying intentional communities, discovering social alternatives is not as simple as merely describing the way communes operate. Many communes are *un*successful. Jonestown and the Manson Family are classic examples of utopian communal living gone horribly wrong. Although these are extreme examples, they demonstrate that communes are not inherently viable as models for alternative societies. This paper will need to contend with fact that of all strategies of communal life, only some (or perhaps even none) will result in viable solutions to the problems of modern society. Some may fail due to instability or member attrition, while others may last but in a form not much better than the society the commune members left (e.g. authoritarian and despotic). I need to conduct specific, detailed research on the pros and cons of communal life before I can make any conclusions about the viability of certain strategies for alternative societies. Thus, I will pay special attention to both

pragmatic forms of success (long life-spans, member retention) and success in creating a society subjectively better than the one the members left.

This paper consists of four main parts, and tests three hypotheses, summarized in Table 1. First, I examine whether organizational practices provide a novel way to meaningfully categorize communes, in contrast to the more typically-used ideological differentiations. I hypothesize that communes can be meaningfully categorized on the basis of strategies of organization, as opposed to ideology. Using an inductive and a deductive method, I find that there are two main paradigms of commune organization, which I term the "Path of Involvement" and the "Path of Charisma." Next, I use this new classification scheme to examine differential outcomes for durability and stability by "path." I hypothesize that the Path of Charisma will have high durability and stability, while the Path of Involvement will not, due to organizational differences. Third, I look at reported feelings of alienation – that is, that one lacks coherent value systems, norms, power, purpose, or social groups. I compare the relative ability of each path to improve several measures of alienation over a control group. I hypothesize that the Path of Involvement will have relatively lower alienation than the Path of Charisma due to member participation and less stratification. Lastly, I discuss the results in light of the pre-existing literature on intentional communities and

	Path of Involvement	**Path of Charisma**
Durability	**Lower**	**Higher**
Stability	**Lower**	**Higher**
Alienation	**Lower**	**Higher**

Table 1: Hypotheses

examine communes as social alternatives from the lens of social movement and New Left literature.

Background and Literature

The literature on communes spans over a century, beginning with writings in the 19th century by communitarians and utopians like Charles Nordhoff, and continuing through the communitarian boom in the 60s and 70s counterculture to this day. Focusing on literature which discusses the latest major wave of communitarian living, from the mid-1960's to the late 1970's, I distill the main themes discussed in the wide and varied literature to 1) commune organization, 2) durability and stability, and 3) alienation.

Commune Organization

Most previous typologies and categorizations of commune organization have been focused on commune ideology, as it is explicitly stated by the group or implied through group operations. Some typologies differentiated group types by their associations with particular ideological currents prominent in the 60's and 70's, such as eastern mysticism, alternative families, activism or politics, and so on (Zablocki, 1980: 189-246; Rigby, 1974; Roberts, 1971). Features of explicit ideology or practiced ideology have also been used to divide communes into categories, such as spiritual or secular, or utilitarian versus transcendental (Hall, 1988; Zablocki, 1980: 205). Despite all this focus on ideology in the literature, not all communes place the same emphasis on ideology, and often there is diversity in individual ideologies, regardless of stated ideology of the commune as a whole (see Table 2). The table below, drawn from the UCDS (see below, under Data), shows that although there is a strong subset of ideologically-focused communes, many of them have some or even significant ideological diversity, while

		Ideological Variation			
		Ideological Unity	**Great homogeneity**	**Some homogeneity**	**Much diversity**
Ideological Importance	**hub of communal life**	14	13	7	1
	moderately great importance	0	4	14	1
	no importance	0	1	2	7

Table 2: Crosstabulation of Ideological Importance versus Ideological Variation

others do not value ideology at all. Even those communes which consider ideology central to communal life need to deal with the daily problems of division of labor, allocation of resources, and group decision-making. Ideology may inform the solution to these problems, but on the whole such solutions reflect a commune's organizational strategy, a set of principles or group dynamics which guide day-to-day life and the overall operations of the commune, of which ideology is only one part among many. Although some of the previous scholarship has discussed these features, at times in depth (e.g. Zablocki, 1980), the practice of categorizing communes on the basis of ideology obscures the not-insignificant minority of communes which do not hold a single ideology, or do not value ideology at all. I will develop a new categorization scheme in Part 1 based on organizational strategy.

Durability and Stability

To measure durability and stability, the literature on intentional communities typically studies commune longevity and member turnover rates. Often, these two features are equated to the "success" of the group. In the interest of studying the viability of social alternatives, then, durability and stability are important factors to consider. There have been many studies examining the various factors which lead to commune collapse, or conversely commune

survival. Many past studies have concluded that communes with strong centralized power, especially in the form of a charismatic leader, survive longer (Kanter, 1972; Zablocki, 1980; Hall, 1988; Thies, 2000). Conversely, other studies found that groups which practice democratic decision-making and have less-stratified or non-charismatic power structures tend to be more short-lived (Hall, 1988; Cornfield, 1983). Charisma is used here in the Weberian sense, later described by Edward Shils as "awe-arousing centrality" (1965: 200). That is, charismatic authority derives from an extraordinary proximity to some central feature of social life. This feature could be God, divine power, mystical knowledge, percieved wisdom, or the like (Shils, 1965). Those under charismatic authority defer to that authority, giving the charismatic leader tremendous power in a small group like a commune, which lends itself well to keeping a group intact. These findings are not conclusive, however, since Brumann (2001) found that, in contrast to the aforementioned studies, some long-lived communes have strongly egalitarian decision-making processes and democratic forms of social control.

Religiosity or strong moral codes also have been seen to increase group longevity (Kanter, 1972; Hall, 1988; Brumann, 2001; Thies, 2000). Kanter (1972: 128) found that, among 19th century communitarian experiments, those which survived the longest tended to have strong commitment mechanisms (structures which incentivize investment and continued membership in a group). This finding has been supported by other studies, including Hall (1988) and Thies (2000). Cornfield (1983) concluded from her quantitative analysis of modern urban communes that conventionality led to longevity, and communal participation and involvement only added to longevity when it did not interfere with the members' privacy and personal time. Kitts (2001) argued that communes experience a liability of newness, of the sort discussed by Stinchcombe (1965), causing a sharp uptick in risk of mortality for young communes followed by a gradual

leveling off as communes age. Part 2 will investigate communal durability and stability in light of the organizational categorization scheme developed in Part 1.

Although durability and stability are often goals of organizations, some communes and commune members see commune collapse and turnover as part of the process of communal living, even as a valuable part of the life. In an ethnographic study of long-term, high-turnover intentional communities, Aguilar (2012) finds that turnover is often seen in long-lasting communes as productive, keeping the community from atrophying or becoming complacent and sending forth ex-members with new knowledge and experience, either to continue communal living or to bring communal values into the world at large. Hershberger (1973) demonstrates that urban communes are notoriously unstable, but that many of those interviewed felt that communal living was a way of life, independent of particular groups, and therefore collapse of a particular group does not amount to failure. So, while turnover and longevity may still be useful measures for the long-term viability of particular communal strategies, they do not encompass the entirety of communal success measures, and certainly do not elucidate much in terms of what it might look like to live in these alternative social orders. Therefore, it is useful to look at another feature of communes studied in the literature: their reaction to, and sometimes solutions for, the social phenomenon of alienation.

Alienation

Many commune members join communal life to escape the feeling of alienation present in the outside world. One respondent stated unprompted in an interview with Benjamin Zablocki that in a commune you have “a voice that counts in a minisociety. When there is no such

possibility in society as a whole, you create your own society" (Zablocki, 1980: 107). As Zablocki explains,

> Communal living…represents a retreat from the chaotic aftereffects of heavy experimentation with drug use, sexual behavior, politic al radicalism, and religious seeking…Precommunal alienation is frequently expressed in the inability to determine one's preferences, and thus to make decisions, under such cognitively kaleidoscopic conditions" (ibid.: 100).

If members join a commune to escape the alienation found in the outside world, then the reduction of alienation represents a major, if implicit, goal of the commune. The reduction of reported feelings of alienation in individual members is therefore a fruitful place of investigation into the forms and consequences of the social alternatives offered by intentional communities.

Although alienation has been defined in many ways, for the sake of this study I will define the term using a version of Melvin Seeman's five-part classification of alienation (1975) which summarizes the main threads in the long and contentious literature on the topic. The most fundamental form of alienation is *meaninglessness,* the inability to determine values and meanings to guide action, collective or personal (Zablocki, 1980: 262). Seeman describes meaninglessness as the incomprehensibility of personal and social affairs (1975: 93). Meaninglessness covers a large portion of Durkheim's concept of alienation: anomie. Anomie occurs when society at large cannot fulfil its role of regulating the desires and moral attitudes of its constituents. This happens at moments of great social change, like economic downturns or rapid upturns. During these moments, the socializing and value-constructing functions of society weaken, leading to a general increase in unhappiness and suicides (Durkheim, 2006: 276). In short, when an individual cannot derive coherent value systems from personal or social contexts or feels that the systems available in society are wrong or disordered, they experience meaninglessness.

Normlessness is an extension of anomic alienation as well (Seeman, 1975: 102), but rather than signifying an absence of value systems, normlessness occurs when social ideals exist but are not practiced. People pay lip service to social norms, but act toward their own ends, sapping the trust necessary to engage in regular social interactions (see for instance Goffman's discussion of misleading performances in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 1956). Because there are no norms to operate under, individuals cannot reliably trust in society to achieve their goals (Zablocki, 1980: 264).

The third level is *powerlessness*, where an individual feels they have little control over events in their life (Seeman, 1975: 93). The individual's values are set and ordered but believed to be unachievable under the current social order (Zablocki, 1980: 264). Marxian alienation falls into this category. Workers are alienated from the products of their labor, and even from the labor itself, because the logic of capitalism deskills labor and makes the actual product and laborer who produced it irrelevant, subservient to profit (Marx, 1990: 716-17). This form of alienation does not deprive the alienated of values or norms like anomie, but rather starves the individual of agency or the ability to satisfy goals through their actions.

Self-estrangement is also derived from Marxian theories of alienation, more directly even than powerlessness. An individual becomes self-estranged when they must engage in activities which are not intrinsically rewarding (Seeman, 1975: 93-4). This could be due to the capitalist mode of production alienating the worker from the work, or simply the drudgery of a social existence devoid of clear roles and purpose. Social theorist Barry Shenker argues that "[a] state of alienation exists wherever, and insofar as, a sense of identity is lacking" (1986: 21). This identity can be personal, regarding one's metaphysical purpose, or it can be societal, concerning one's place and role in society, and how individual preferences fit into that society. If there are

insufficient guidelines toward social identity, impediments in the attainment of identity, lack of options for identity, or no support for the creation of personal or internal identity, the individual is left without a role to play, and inevitably becomes self-estranged as they live without intrinsic purpose. For a society to be non-alienating, it would need to have clear and distinct social roles, but be flexible enough to accommodate a wide variety of people and identities. In this sense, self-estrangement could also be accurately termed as *purposelessness*, since the individuals have systems of meaning but have no purpose within those systems.

Lastly, and most broadly, an individual who is excluded or rejected from social groups or society at large experiences *social isolation* (Seeman, 1975: 109). Robert Nisbet (1953: 245-6) contends that alienation is, at its core, estrangement from community, a sense of being alien to one's peers and lacking meaningful social ties. Philosopher and social theorist Simone Weil described social isolation as a state of "uprootedness" (2002). This state is extremely prevalent in, and perhaps even a defining feature of modernity. The other four levels of alienation often result from social isolation of one sort or another. An individual without any community to guide them loses access to value systems, social norms, social routes to goal-attainment, or purpose in a social context (Weil, 2002: 40). A consequence of social isolation, and alienation in general, is therefore the desire for community (Nisbet, 1953; Seeman, 1975; Zablocki, 1980). The stronger the alienation from society, the more likely one is to pursue communal living. Part 3 of this paper will study the effect of commune organization, delineated in Part 1, on reported feelings of alienation across these five categories.

Data

Though several phenomenal ethnographies and qualitative studies of mid-20th century communes exist (e.g. Kanter, 1972; Zablocki, 1971), none of these studies offer a truly

representative picture of the latent strategies of the intentional community movement as a whole. To accurately study organizational strategies across the movement, one would need an adequately representative sample of communities, and data on the structure and practice for each group.

The Urban Communes Data Set (UDCS), a data set created by Benjamin Zablocki and his team in the mid-1970's, fills this role, enabling a nationally-representative study. The UCDS is a "stratified national sampling frame" of the boom-period of American intentional communities in the late-60s and early 70s (Martin et al. 2001: 54). It covers 60 communes in six major urban areas through the country, beginning in 1974 (although the earliest communes studied were founded at the beginning of the movement, in the mid-1960s).[1] The primary method of collection was through survey, although on many surveys participants included supplementary comments. Interviews were also used to bolster the explanatory power these surveys in the original research, but due to the inconsistency, sensitivity, and non-quantitative nature of this data, I will confine this study to the survey data itself. Though the survey data was updated periodically in ensuing years, I will concentrate on the first data collection period from 1974 to 1976, consisting of three waves, as the first wave contains the questions relevant to this study, and all waves beyond this had a different questionnaire and often a different cohort of intentional communities and individual members (Martin et al, 2001).

Having established my source, I selected a relevant subset of variables from the UCDS individual-level data and the group data. I chose variables which could first define communes by structural or strategic characteristics and second determine the degree of success (reduction of alienation or increase of duration and stability) for each Path. For my independent variables, I

[1] There is no accurate count of communes existing in America in 1974, but according to Zablocki (1980: 34) the UCDS includes roughly 1% of communes. This is, again, only a rough approximation.

Table 3: Group-level variable descriptions

Variable	Factors
Charisma	No charismatic influence, Sporadic charismatic influence, Emerging charismatic influence, Definite charismatic influence, Declining charismatic influence, Charisma in process of routinization, Fully routinized charisma
Stratification	Numeric
Admittance Policy	Open anybody can join, Eligibility, Group readiness requirement, Room requirement, Trait requirement, Exposure requirement, Trial membership requirement, Novitiate readiness requirement, Group absolutely closed even to replace those who may leave
Chore Assignment	Assigned, Rotated, Voluntary choice, Totally voluntary, Other or mixed
Decision Process	Extra-communal, Monarchial, Executive committee, Democratic, Consensual deliberate, Consensual casual, Contractual anarchism, Pure anarchism
Ideological Importance	Hub of communal life, Moderately great importance, Little or no importance
Ideological Variation	Ideological unity, Great homogeneity, Some homogeneity, Much diversity
Extent of Authority	No authority recognized, High degree of authority, Medium degree of authority, Low degree of authority
We Feeling	Strong sense of We, Feeling of We on occasion, Minimal feelings of We, No feeling of We
Degree of Communism	Virtually total communism, Substantial communism, Minimal communism, No communism

Table 4: Individual-level variable descriptions

Variable	Mean	Dev.	N	Statement	Level of Alienation
Pursue*	3.56	1.55	353	I have very definite, established goals in life which I intend to pursue at all costs.	Meaninglessness
Confuse	4.09	1.23	348	As I view the world in relation to my life, the world completely confuses me	Meaninglessness
Guide	3.26	1.56	345	With respect to the relations between husband and wife these days, there are no clear guidelines to tell us what is right and what is wrong.	Meaninglessness
Lookout	4.09	1.23	348	Most people in this commune are more inclined to look out for themselves than to consider the needs of others.	Normlessness
Golden Rule	4.19	1.19	354	The present condition of society makes doing unto others as you would have others do unto you impractical.	Normlessness
Get Ahead	3.15	1.47	338	In order to get ahead in the United States today, you are almost forced to do some things that are not right.	Normlessness
Work Hard*	1.99	1.19	347	If people worked hard at their jobs, they would reap the full benefits of our society.	Powerlessness
Opinion	4.31	0.98	353	I have a hard time getting my opinions to count for anything in this commune.	Powerlessness
Nation	3.34	1.45	349	There is not much I can do about most of the important national problems we face today.	Powerlessness
My Work*	3.99	1.11	347	I am proud of my work	Self-Estrangement
Useless	3.18	1.45	354	I certainly feel useless at times.	Self-Estrangement
Anywhere	3.71	1.38	343	Sometimes I don't care whether I get anywhere in life or not.	Self-Estrangement
Family*	3.61	1.46	344	I feel that the people in the commune are my true family.	Social Isolation
Distant	4.47	0.94	351	I feel there is a great distance between me and the other commune members	Social Isolation
No One Cares	4.67	0.73	349	No one in this communal household is going to care much what happens to me.	Social Isolation

*Recoded 1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, and 5=1 to align the valence of the question with the others. A high value indicates lower alienation (disagreement with statement of alienation).
N.B.: I renamed the UCDS variables from the raw data names for clarity. Statements, factors, and so on remain unchanged.

selected group-level variables which reflected organizational strategies (see Table 3). The individual-level data does not include information about the commune, just a commune identifier. Thus, the group-level data was a better and more consistent source to evaluate organizational strategies and their implications.

For my dependent variables, the markers of commune success, I picked variables which captured aspects the levels of alienation discussed above (see Table 4). The markers of alienation were taken from the individual-level questionnaire, as they deal with psychological states. These questions were drawn from modules in standard national opinion polls like the GSS and were administered in the UCDS questionnaire as a statement the respondent could agree or disagree with on a scale of 1 to 5, one signifying "Strongly Agree" and five signifying "Strongly Disagree." I selected the three most relevant variables for each level of alienation, using the question wording as my guide, as there was a sharp drop-off of variable relevance after three for several of the levels. I recoded four variables (Pursue, Work Hard, My Work, and Family) such that a high value (4 or 5) always indicates lower alienation. A successful commune would have high values on all variables indicating low member alienation overall.

I also selected variables to measure durability and stability from the commune-level data. To measure stability, I used member turnover per year. I created a composite variable to measure durability, Longevity, the difference between the birth and death dates of the respective commune, taking death dates from later collection periods if the commune persisted past the initial stage of data collection. I also used a small control group of Barnard students (N=26, co-ed) who were given the same questionnaire as the UCDS participants, as a point of comparison for the ability (or inability) of communes to solve alienation. Though small and inherently biased

due to the demographic, it is the closest available control, since no other non-communitarians were given the UCDS survey questions in the same time-frame.

The main caveats to my method are the limitations of the UCDS itself. Conducted in the 1970's, many of the survey questions are rather dated. The results also only apply to the communities of the 1970s, and so predictions to the behavior of communes today are tentative at best. The only contemporary control group available for the UCDS is the aforementioned Barnard class, which offers a weak analog to society at best, and a misleading one at worst. Additionally, many participants left sections of the surveys blank, resulting in non-insignificant missing data (see Table 4). N for the individual-level dependent variables hovers around 350: still large, though quite a loss from 592. All these limitations will be taken into consideration during the analysis of the data, and special attention will be paid to statistical significance when needed.

Methodology

In Part 1, I use a deductive and an inductive method to test whether organizational strategies for communal living can meaningfully categorize the communes in the UCDS. I hypothesize that there are two main categories, which I call the "Path of Involvement" and the "Path of Charisma," so I begin with the deductive method which offers a clear, simplified schema by analytically defining each category by a single variable, cleanly sorting the communes into groups. I used variables Decision Process and Charisma to represent the decision-making process (democratic, monarchic, etc) and the level of charismatic authority. There were relatively few communes which had both democratic and charismatic features, and even fewer which had neither, creating a grouping of charismatic communes and one of

democratic communes. However, this method may inherently miss some factors of organizational strategy, such as division of labor. The inductive method presents more robust and organic evidence for the existence of the two categories, taking into account all independent variables through Multiple Factor Analysis (MFA). MFA is an extension of multiple correspondence analysis for qualitative data: ordinal or nominal. It tests for correspondence between factor levels of variables across cases, and groups them on the two-dimensional plane which most closely approximates the variance (inertia) across all variables. Each axis is then labeled with the percentage of the total inertia it depicts (Greenacre and Blasius, 2006). This method, though, is less clean and may accidentally exclude some communes. Therefore, I use both in parallel to develop my categorization scheme.

The second portion of this study tests the effect of membership in these categories on a group's durability, stability, and member alienation. I begin by using multiple-regression models, controlling for differences in group size, to measure typical markers of durability and stability: longevity and turnover. In Part 3 I use a battery of linear regression models, one each per measure of alienation (see Table 4 above,) to study the expected effect of Path membership, measured by the first dimension of the aforementioned MFA biplot, on alienation. The ideal types of each path are in a sense the poles of this dimension, so a strongly negative beta coefficient would indicate a result favoring the Path of Involvement while a strongly positive beta coefficient would favor the Path of Charisma. In this way, by looking at the beta coefficients across all the measures of alienation, I will be able to determine which path has relatively less alienation than the other. Although the measures of alienation are ordinal and thus not typically applicable as a dependent variable in a linear regression, for this study I will treat the scale (1 to 5, integers) as continuous. Since I am interested in relative amounts of alienation by path, rather

than in constructing a precise predictive model, ambiguity or inaccuracy in the scale is less of a problem. At the end of Part 3, I compare the mean values of the measures of alienation between the two Paths and the Barnard control group (discussed above) to determine the paths' ability to present a less-alienating alternative to the established social order.

PART 1

Two Strategies for Studying Two Paths of Communal Living

Communes are not all cut from the same cloth; there is significant variance in practice and structure, even among the communes of the 1970's. Before we can study the implications of communal life as a social alternative, we need to distinguish between these variants, and test the viability and implications of each variety separately. As discussed above, ideology may be an insufficient variable by which to categorize communes. So, I will use organizational strategy, including decision-making processes, division of labor, distribution of wealth, grounding and type of authority, and so on.

Although a large amount of focus has been placed on charismatic communes, especially for studies of the communitarian boom of the 60s and 70s, there is an ever-present undercurrent of democratic practice, suggesting the existence of a whole category of strongly democratic communes like the Kibbutz in Israel. Additionally, scholarship like Brumann (2001) highlights key examples of democratic practice in communitarianism, motivating the existence of a strong undercurrent of democratic communes previously marginalized. I hypothesize that there were two main organizational strategies used during the movement towards intentional communal living in the 1960s and 1970s. The first, which I will term "The Path of Charisma," has been discussed at length in the literature. This Path encompasses charismatic, authoritarian communes.

Communes in this Path respond to alienation with "investment of self" in a charismatic leader, reliance on deeply stratified organization, and centralization of power in a few members. The second, what I call "The Path of Involvement," has garnered little scholarly attention, despite its prevalence in the movement. This path places an emphasis on participation in decision-making and enables members to stay meaningfully involved in group activity.

Hypothesis 1: Communes can be divided into two main categories on the basis of strategies of communal organization: the Path of Involvement and the Path of Charisma.

I begin my analysis of this first hypothesis with parallel methods to test the existence of two Paths - deductive and inductive. The deductive method focuses on two variables central to the Paths of Charisma and Involvement: Charisma and Decision Process. A high degree of charisma would, not surprisingly, be expected for the Path of Charisma. Democratic or anarchic decision-making processes would be expected for the Path of Involvement. I collapsed the ordinal factors of each variable to binary groups, encoding the presence or absence of charisma and democracy, respectively. I cross-tabulated the results and discovered that the vast majority of communities have either democracy or charisma, exclusively (see Table 5.) This translates, as hypothesized, to a vast majority of the individuals living under either charisma or democracy, but not both. Thus, at the very least the core factors expected of each Path map fairly cleanly onto the intentional communities themselves.

The inductive method is somewhat more complex and is intended to motivate further the

Individuals		**Democracy**	
		NO	YES
Charisma	NO	21	254
	YES	215	67
Communities		**Democracy**	
		NO	YES
Charisma	NO	2	30
	YES	22	7

Table 5: Deductive Method Crosstabs

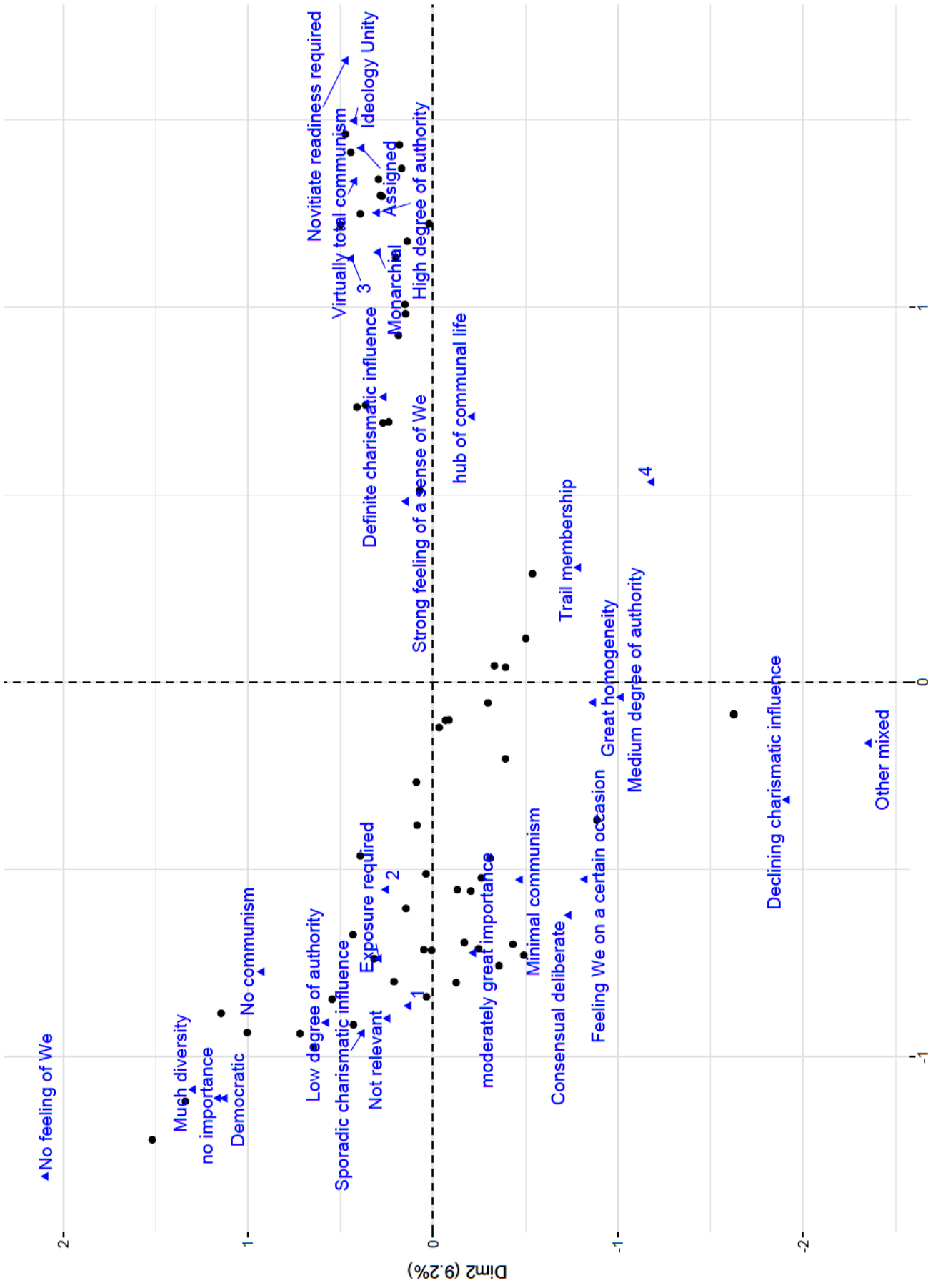

Figure 1: MFA biplot. Individual communes are black points. Factor levels for each variable are plotted (blue triangles) and labeled in blue.

existence of two distinct paths. I used multiple factor analysis (MFA) to confirm that the selected variables reflected actual strategies of sets of intentional communities, and not merely collections of communal features. For the MFA, I used all the aforementioned group-level independent variables which would indicate communal structure. Including the dependent variables would confound results if, as hypothesized, the paths differ on their outcomes for durability, stability, and alienation. The results of the analysis are represented in Figure 1. The primary dimension of the MFA accounts for 15.3% of total inertia and corresponds to variance between all variables used in the test. I culled all factors which had a Cos^2 of less than 0.2 from the visualization, as the position of these factors would not be accurately represented by the chart. I also included the corresponding positions of each intentional community on the chart. The further from the origin a factor (blue triangle) or a community (black dot), the stronger the correlation with the biplot's two dimensions. That is, if a community lay far to the right of the chart, it would have a strong positive correlation with the factor associated with Dimension 1. The closer the angle from the origin between two points, whether individual or factor, the greater the correspondence. So, points which cluster together tend to be have more factors in common than points farther away. By analyzing how intentional communities cluster, we can see which communes are associated with each path.

Right off the bat, it is clear that although the paths are not all-or-nothing, they do reflect two opposing strategies and consequently two distinct groups of communities. The Dimension 1 axis represents the Path of Charisma at the right end, and the Path of Involvement at the left end, with individual communities falling somewhere along this spectrum. Communes tend to cluster towards one Path or the other, supporting the idea that there are two distinct categories of organizational strategy. Dimension 2 does not differentiate communes in as coherent a way as

Variable	R2	p-value
Decision Process	.89	2.5e-23
Extent of Authority	.84	2.1e-22
Chore Assignment	.75	4.5e-16
Ideological Variation	.72	5.8e-16
Ideological Importance	.66	2.5e-14
Stratification	.71	4.6e-13
Degree of Communism	.63	3.2e-12
Admittance Policy	.65	2.2e-11
Charisma	.62	3.9e-9

Table 6: Variable contributions to Dim1

Dimension 1, and so will not be discussed in this paper. Table 6 shows the relative contributions of each variable to Dim1 measured by an R-squared value, and thus their relative importance in this inductive definition of the two Paths. Decision-making processes, the extent of authority, the manner in which chores are distributed, and the degree of variance and importance of ideology contribute most strongly to the positions of the communes seen in Figure 1, which supports the notion that organizational practices can usefully group communes.

Table 7 gives a more detailed picture, showing the contributions of each *factor* of the variables shown in Table 6 to the Dim1. From Table 7 and Figure 1, we can see that communities located at the far right of the chart (a high Dim1 value) have strong correlations to assigned chores, a high degree of authority, ideological unity, virtually total communism, monarchial leadership, and high degrees of power stratification, clustering around the factor marking three levels of stratification ("3"). In addition, these communities tend to have a definite charismatic influence, and strong commitment mechanisms in the form of requiring novitiates to pass a certain readiness threshold, often through proving their dedication to the group and assimilation to the ideology. All of these features are characteristic of the charismatic communes discussed in the literature. Moving to the left, towards the negative values on Dim1, we see decreasing numbers of distinct strata, less charismatic influence, more democracy or consensual

Variable	Factor Level	Estimate	p-value
Decision Process	Extra-communal	1.44	5.2e-4
Chore Assignment	Assigned	1.23	5.4e-19
Ideological Variation	Ideological Unity	1.21	1.9e-14
Admittance Policy	Novitiate readiness required	1.19	9.7e-6
Extent of Authority	High degree of authority	1.12	3.2e-19
Degree of Communism	Virtually total communism	1.05	7.9e-12
Decision Process	Monarchial	1.02	5.7e-11
Ideological Importance	Hub of communal life	.91	5.9e-15
Charisma	Charisma in process of routinization	.88	5.0e-2
Stratification	5	.78	2.0e-2
Ideological Importance	Not relevant	-.61	1.9e-4
Degree of Communism	No communism	-.63	2.5e-2
Admittance Policy	Exposure required	-.74	5.5e-10
Decision Process	Democratic	-.78	2.1e-3
Charisma	Sporadic charismatic influence	-.79	4.8e-4
We Feeling	No feeling of We	-.83	2.5e-2
Ideological Variation	Much diversity	-.84	4.6e-4
Stratification	2	-.99	6.5e-4
Stratification	1	-1.24	1.6e-4

Table 7: Factor positions on Dim1

decision-making processes, and greater ideological diversity. The disjunction between the two clusters of communes indicates that the Path of Involvement is indeed a separate strategy from the Path of Charisma for communes in the dataset. It is worth noting that the MFA measures *variation* and *reported importance* of ideology, not specific ideologies *per se.* The charismatic communes actually include a wide variety of reported ideologies, including Christian, Eastern Religious, Countercultural, and so on. Though these were used in traditional categorizations of communes, the MFA biplot shows that doing so would leave out the large cluster of communes around the Path of Involvement which do not value ideology or have wide variance in member ideology.

Since both the deductive and inductive analyses supported the Paths hypothesis, I separated the UCDS communes into two groups to test descriptive statistics by path for durability, stability, and alienation. For the deductive method, I included all communes with

charisma but without democracy in the Path of Charisma, and all those with democracy but no charisma in the Path of Involvement, as there were few communes which had both charisma and democracy, or neither charisma nor democracy. However, the inductive grouping may offer a more nuanced and stronger selection of groups, as it incorporates factors such as extent of authority which are absent in the deductive method. Consequently, when discussing the descriptive results in the remainder of this paper, I will focus primarily on the inductive grouping. I will still show results for the deductive method as support, however. For the inductive method, I grouped all communities with a Dim1 value above +0.5 into the population associated with the Path of Charisma, as all the most relevant factors have Dim1 values over +0.5 as well. Such a cut keeps only those communes which correspond strongly to the factors of the Path of Charisma. For the Path of Involvement, I grouped the communes associated with democracy and low stratification (those with Dim1<-0.25). The communities with Dim1 values between -0.25 and +0.5 do not clearly correspond to any Path, so they are removed from the upcoming portion of the analysis. There is significant overlap between the deductive and inductive groupings. Forty-four of the sixty communes are in the same Path for both the deductive and inductive methods. Two are excluded from both, and the remaining fourteen are present in only one method, eight for deductive and six for inductive. There is no case of the methods conflicting in their categorizations. For all following descriptive statistics, the categories of “Charisma” and “Involvement” refer to this inductive categorization, unless otherwise noted.

To illustrate these results, I will now look in detail at two communes, one representing a typical commune from each path (i.e. a roughly average value for Dim1 given the path). Both groups were founded in 1973 and grew out of prior organizations or non-communal associations.

Commune 35, which I will call “Shepherd” falls squarely in the center of the cluster of charismatic communes in the above MCA biplot (Figure 1). The group is small, with only 8 members, and is situated in a middle class urban neighborhood. Some members have their own rooms, but most share rooms and other communal spaces. Members work regular jobs outside the commune to bring in income, but collectively pool their earnings to be shared by the group. Decisions are made by a single charismatic leader, who often, but not always, lives with the rest of the members. All members of Shepherd are Christian, and the faith combined with the strong central authority results in a three-tier hierarchy with the leader at the top, an intermediate level of administrators, and the rest of the members at the bottom. The group is dedicated to their faith, and the express purpose of the group is Christian living. Chores are assigned, and members eat all major meals together.

Commune 45 (which I will call “Melody”), on the other hand, reflects a typical urban Involvement commune. Roughly the same size as Shepherd, Melody has only 10 members at the time of the survey. It is located in a gentrifying neighborhood of a major metro area. Individuals room alone but live collectively in one household. They, like the members of Shepherd work regular jobs outside the commune. However, the degree of income sharing is minimal. Decisions are made by group majority, and there is no single head of the group. The decision-making process is pragmatic and rational, but there are few explicit rules set out to govern behavior in the community. Ideology is important, and there is some homogeneity, but the ideology at hand is less concrete than that of Shepherd, focused instead on 70’s counterculture, including experimenting with group marriage. Jobs are chosen voluntarily, and tasks are distributed and completed democratically.

Now it is clear that there are two separate strategies for communal organization, and that the intentional communities tend towards one or the other. So, we will not reject the first hypothesis. I will now test the other two, which deal with the group and individual-level effects of following the strategies embodied in each Path. It remains to be seen whether these alternative organizational strategies can resolve the problem of alienation, and if they are able to survive and remain stable while doing so. The following sections contain statistical analyses which answer each of these questions.

PART 2

Communal Durability and Stability

The literature summarized earlier suggests that the Path of Charisma ought to ensure greater group longevity and lower turnover (Kanter, 1972; Zablocki, 1980; Hall, 1988; Thies, 2000). They should tend to be the most long-lasting communities, due to durable central power and the maintenance of strong norms and stringent commitment mechanisms (Kanter, 1972: 127-9). The Path of Involvement, in contrast, operates through democratic and member-involving processes, which tend to lead to disagreement and schism if not maintained properly, and have been shown to produce shorter-lived groups (Hall, 1988). This path should therefore not be as successful at keeping a stable commune, and so members come and go, eventually dissipating the commune. Brumann (2001) is the only exception, arguing that egalitarian and democratic communes can still be long lived. However, the prior evidence seems to favor the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: The Path of Charisma has relatively high durability and stability due to charismatic and central authority, while the Path of Involvement has relatively low durability and stability from the inherent instability of democratic group processes.

I will now look at differences in durability, measured by group longevity, and stability, measured by turnover, across the two paths. Table 8 shows mean results and standard deviations for longevity, turnover, initial size, and size at the time of data collection. The mean turnover value for communities in the Path of Charisma is approximately three times larger than that of the Path of Involvement. This cannot be accounted for by an older average age of Charismatic communes, as the mean founding year for communities in either path or method was 1972. So, charismatic communes lose on average three members per year while Involvement-oriented communes lose only one. Disparity in average size also does not account for disparity in turnover rates. Based on a multiple regression model (see Table 9), two groups would need to differ in size by roughly 100 members to equal the effect of path on turnover, and the median group size is only 8.[2] I chose Dim1 as the predictor since it offers a more detailed picture of adherence to Path strategy. The binary division used for the descriptive statistics above only denotes which

	Inductive				**Deductive**			
	Charisma		Involvement		Charisma		Involvement	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev
Turnover	9.06	8.98	2.45	1.82	8.38	8.48	2.64	1.82
Longevity	5.17	3.76	6.46	4.59	5.00	3.73	6.20	4.24
Size (1975)*	14.9	14.01	7.47	2.05	14.18	13.52	7.80	1.98
Size at founding	9.42	7.17	6.70	2.37	9.33	6.83	6.85	2.44

Table 8: Durability and Stability means across Paths (*Removed outliers)

[2] In addition to size, I also tested several potentially confounding group-level UCDS variables. Most of them (ETHNIC p=0.15, MODEORG p=.616, SCHOOLK p=.284, PRESCH p=.215) had no statistically significant effect on turnover. Those that did have an effect could not entirely account for turnover between the two paths, the strongest being FEDSTAT (if the commune was part of a federation) which predicted turnover rates of 6.85 and 3.99 for Charisma and Involvement, respectively. However, so few communes had responses for FEDSTAT (N=29) that it is unclear whether this applies to the data as a whole.

	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-value
Intercept	3.6128	0.8488	0.0000
Path (Dim1)	3.2888	0.8089	0.0001
Size (SIZENOW)	0.0713	0.0367	0.0569

Table 9: Turnover Regression

	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-value
Intercept	5.8091	0.7917	0.0000
Path (Dim1)	-0.7626	0.7324	0.3030
Size (SIZENOW)	0.0249	0.0350	0.4810

Table 10: Longevity Regression

Path the commune is similar to, not the degree to which they embody the ideal type. This makes the regression model more predictive of how durable and stable an ideal commune of either Path might generally be. According to this model, the average Charismatic commune (Dim1 = 1) would have lost 6 more members by 1975 than the average Involvement commune (Dim1 = -1).

Longevity varies significantly within Paths, and only slightly between Paths.[3] The mean for Charisma and Involvement are well within one standard deviation of each other, and the deviation is massive. Additionally, the regression model in Table 10 shows that there is very little effect of Path on longevity. Even the commune most strongly associated with the Path of Involvement, having a Dim1 value of around -1.2, would be expected to last only 2 years longer than the charismatic commune with the highest Dim1 value, roughly 1.5. Moreover, the model is not statistically significant, so this prediction is fuzzy at best. Neither strategy significantly determines how long a community lasts, although there is a slight increase in mean longevity in the Path of Involvement likely due to smaller average size.[4]

It is also worth noting that a large part of what is tested in longevity is not merely durability, but liability of newness. This phenomenon, proposed by Stinchcombe (1965) and confirmed in many empirical studies of young organizations occurs when an organizational form

[3] Longevity is right-truncated at 1985, the latest wave of data I had access too. Any communes still existing at that point were given 1985 as their end year, which may bias longevity results towards shorter lifespans.
[4] I ran the same multiple-regression models for turnover and longevity over the binary division into Charismatic and Involvement communes, with 'Charismatic' coded as 1, and 'Involvement' coded as 0, to corroborate the above models. The results were similar, indicating that Charismatic communes lose 6 more members, and that longevity is not significantly dependent on path.

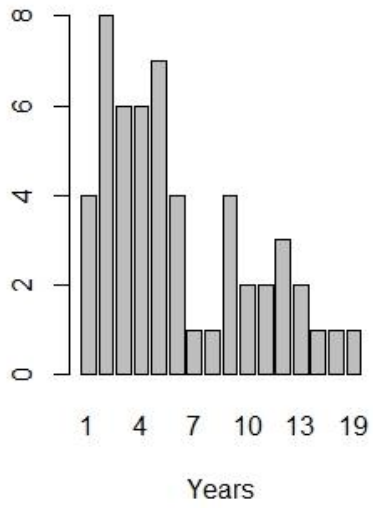

Figure 2: Longevity Histogram

has a high risk of group mortality for young groups which degreases over time (Kitts, 2001: 129-30). Kitts found that communes, and communal "templates" or general organizational strategies, like the paths, show a strong liability of newness, meaning that many young communes fold, while those that survive the initial few years survive for many years (ibid.: 174-6). The communes of the UCDS follow a similar trend, with a fairly rapid fall-off around six years, the rest remaining for over a decade (see Figure 2). Kitts also found that size accounted for a large amount of group mortality, as large groups are more unstable and prone to fissure or collapse, which supports the model discussed above and presented in Table 10 (ibid.: 175).

Overall, the results suggest that we ought to reject the second hypothesis. Path membership had the opposite effect on turnover to what we expected based on the literature, with Involvement communes tending to be more stable than Charismatic communes. Moreover, longevity depended more upon group size and the effect of a liability to newness rather than upon membership in one path over another.

PART 3

Solutions to Alienation

As discussed earlier, durability and stability are not the only relevant outcome variables, as commune members join communal life to escape their feelings of alienation in society at large. Alienation comes in five main forms: meaninglessness, the inability to derive coherent value systems from personal or social contexts; normlessness, the state where social ideals exist but are not practiced; powerlessness, where the individual's values are set and ordered but believed to be unachievable under the current social order; self-estrangement, where the individual engages in activities which are not intrinsically rewarding; and social isolation, exclusion or rejection from social groups or society as a whole. This next section will discuss the relative levels of alienation or un-alienation in each path, and the ability of each path to solve these forms of alienation compared with a control group.

We would expect the Path of Involvement, based on the correlations in the MFA biplot above, to create a democratic environment of egalitarian distribution of decision-making power and building systems which reward dedication and involvement in the commune. In exchange for stability and guaranteed cohesion, commune members should have a higher degree of power and voice in the community and social power structure. As Dewey argues, democracy is "the idea of community life itself" (1954: 148). That is, pure communal living as such, where each member relies on the other are power is distributed equally across the members, is the heart of democracy. Consequently, democracy done properly can restore the missing sense of community and solidarity which often drives alienation (Nisbet, 1953). Through the use of their power and voice, the members of communities following the Path of Involvement should gain independent motivation for action and clearer pictures of their personal value structure, thereby reducing the

alienation they feel from life and society; where they felt powerless before, like their life had no meaning, now they have concrete experiences of their personal power and are able to actionize their ideals and goals.

Aiken and Hage (1966) found in a study of social welfare organizations that alienation from work and from social relations is stronger in highly centralized and formalized organizations. The lack of participation in decision-making processes correlated strongly with reported alienation. Consequently, centralized and charismatic communes are expected to strip members of decision-making power, thus increasing their feelings of alienation. These groups may also create alienation through periodic charismatic crises and power struggles driven by social inequality and power stratification, which result in group schisms and peer-to-peer alienation (Zablocki 1971; Kanter 1972). Given this formulation of the concept of alienation, we would expect that the Path of Charisma would not accomplish its alienation-reducing goal. In fact, it would likely replicate the highly stratified and unequal society it strives to escape. Taken together, we can formulate our third hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 3: The Path of Involvement solves alienation through participation, while the Path of Charisma cannot solve it, and may even recreate alienating environments in the community.*

Regression models were not used to test the first hypothesis regarding commune organization due to the vast majority of group-level variables being nominal or ordinal, making multiple regressions with so many factors unwieldly and inaccurate. However, the Dim1 axis from the above MFA is of a scale on which regression would provide meaningful results and is in a sense an amalgamation of all the most relevant organizational features of communes. Although the communes do tend to cluster in one path or another, as seen above, there is still

	VARIABLE	COEFFICIENT	INTERCEPT
Meaningles sness	Pursue	0.3918***	3.5558
	Confuse	0.1545*	4.0842
	Guide	0.5523***	3.2349
Normless-ness	Lookout	0.2334**	4.0579
	Golden Rule	0.2666***	4.1836
	Get Ahead	0.4128***	3.1326
Powerless-ness	Work Hard	0.3987***	1.9850
	Opinion	-0.1188	4.2984
	Nation	0.2182*	3.3425
Self-Estrange-ment	My Work	-0.2009**	3.9723
	Useless	-0.0143	3.1547
	Anywhere	-0.0606	3.7016
Social Isolation	Family	0.5040***	3.5937
	Distant	0.1986***	4.4657
	No One Cares	-0.0542	4.6622

Table 11: Regression Models

quite a bit of variance within paths, some groups tending closer to 0 on the Dim1 axis. Using a battery of linear regression models, I found that of the fifteen variables which code for alienation (or the lack thereof), ten had statistically significant beta coefficients for the independent variable, 'path' (measured by Dim1 from the MFA). This result indicates that path has a statistically significant effect on at least certain forms of alienation (see Table 11.) A positive beta coefficient shows that the respondents in the Path of Charisma were more likely to show less alienation on that particular measure, while a negative coefficient shows that those in the Path of Involvement were relatively less alienated.

Referring to Table 11 above, it is clear that the Path of Charisma solves all levels of alienation but self-estrangement better than the Path of Involvement. The strongest results are on Guide and Family, meaning that those in the Path of Charisma are more likely to feel that there

are clear guidelines for right and wrong, and that the community is their true family. My Work is the only variable with statistically significant coefficients which favors the Path of Involvement, suggesting that through involvement and participation in the division of labor this path makes work more satisfying and fulfilling. The close association of the Path of Charisma with assigned chores in the MFA corroborates this conclusion, since this would point to voluntary chore choice for the Path of Involvement (see Figure 1 and Table 3). To summarize, the Path of Charisma is relatively better at providing values, meanings and norms for members to follow, empowering members to achieve goals, and providing a social circle so close that it becomes a member's "true family." The Path of Involvement, on the other hand, is less successful at achieving these features, but instead makes work satisfying through participation and choice in work assignment. These results will be discussed in more detail below.

The regressions, though useful for distinguishing the relative ability to solve alienation by path, are somewhat limited as they cannot say anything about the *absolute* ability of each path to solve alienation. To study that, we would need a point of reference with which to compare the mean results by path. Therefore, it is worth investigating Zablocki's control group, a class of 26 Columbia-Barnard students given a subset of the same questionnaire as the UCDS respondents. Though a very small sample size, none of the students were communal members, so cross-comparison of means offers a rough picture of non-communal responses to the alienation questions. Mean respondent age for the UCDS was 26.6, so the control group of college students is not altogether non-representative of commune members in general. Unfortunately, the demographic homogeneity, biased towards white, wealthier, educated young adults, makes generalization from comparisons difficult. In other words, they do not represent society at large, and so any comparisons between the control and communes would only reflect how that certain

subset of Americans might be affected by communal living. Nonetheless, the control group is the only one of its kind, as no other non-communitarian groups were given the UCDS survey during the period of data collection in the 1970s, so even a comparison with caveats is better than no comparison at all. Thus, I compared the mean values for each of the variables, separated by path (as in the inductive method discussed above), with the control group (see Table 12).

Both paths see improvements over the control on Pursue, Confuse, Golden Rule, and Nation, meaning that communal life as a whole has an effect on the first three levels of alienation (meaninglessness, normlessness, and powerlessness.) Commune members have goals to pursue, are less confused about the world than those outside communal life and have faith that people will look out for the interests of others. The Path of Charisma saw significant improvements over the control for Pursue, Golden Rule, and Nation, with weaker improvements on Guide, Confuse, and Get Ahead, all of which point towards the power of the Path to solve fundamental forms of

	Charisma			Involvement			Control
Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Difference	Mean	Std. Dev.	Difference	Mean
Pursue	4.113	1.444	1.343	2.959	1.481	0.189	2.77*
Confuse	4.285	1.264	0.665	3.976	1.000	0.356	3.62
Guide	4.331	1.065	0.851	2.663	1.445	-0.817	3.48
Lookout	4.500	0.978	NA	3.864	1.263	NA	NA
Golden Rule	4.552	0.987	1.272	4.018	1.255	0.738	3.28
Get Ahead	3.703	1.346	0.583	2.671	1.486	-0.449	3.12
Work Hard	2.463	1.211	-0.077	1.576	0.982	-0.964	2.54*
Opinion	4.226	1.027	NA	4.527	1.404	NA	NA
Nation	3.610	1.429	1.070	3.078	1.414	0.538	2.54
My Work	3.733	1.160	-0.227	4.292	0.968	0.332	3.96*
Useless	3.320	1.484	0.280	3.006	1.411	-0.034	3.04
Anywhere	3.683	1.416	-0.007	3.783	1.376	0.093	3.69
Family	4.309	1.167	NA	2.938	1.452	NA	NA
Distant	4.746	0.737	NA	4.287	1.376	NA	NA
No One Cares	4.718	0.781	NA	4.713	0.592	NA	NA

Table 12: Means and Deviations by Path

* Recoded such that a higher value indicates lower alienation to remain consistent with other variables, using the same method used to recode the UCDS data.

alienation. Work Hard and My Work were marginally worse than the control, suggesting a weakening in the confidence of Charisma members on the power and value of labor. Nonetheless, the success of the Path of Charisma in improving alienation comes as a surprise given the literature discussed above. Although the Path of Involvement had moderate improvements over the control on My Work, Confuse, Nation, and Golden Rule, it only marginally improved Pursue and Anywhere. Additionally, it shows significantly worse results than the control on Work Hard, Guide, and Get Ahead, and somewhat worse results for Useless. Consequently, the Path of Involvement is not only worse at solving alienation than the Path of Charisma - another unexpected result - but also, on the levels of meaninglessness, normlessness and powerlessness, it actually adds to members' feelings of alienation. The only exception to this is self-estrangement, where the Path of Involvement shows improvement over the Path of Charisma. Nothing can be said about social isolation, as the control group was not given questions dealing with immediate social groups, since those questions explicitly referred to the commune in the question wording. I will analyze this unexpected result below.

Summary of Results

As seen from the above results, hypothesis 1 should not be rejected. There is strong evidence supporting the claim that there are two main paths of commune organization, one which tends toward centralized, charismatic leadership, and another which tends toward democracy and participation. The second and third hypotheses, however, should be rejected. My key finding from this study is that overall, charismatic communes tend to be less stable than democratic communes, but relatively better at solving alienation. Conversely, democratic communes offer greater stability than charismatic communes, at the cost of relatively less ability

	Path of Involvement		Path of Charisma	
	Expected	Found	Expected	Found
Durability	**Lower**	**No Effect**	**Higher**	**No Effect**
Stability	**Lower**	**Higher**	**Higher**	**Lower**
Alienation	**Lower**	**Higher**	**Higher**	**Lower**

Table 13: Results for Hypotheses

to construct meaningful goals for community members. The one notable exception is the Path of Involvement's demonstrated improvement of self-estrangement, the one level of alienation which the Path of Charisma was unable to improve. Organization by path does not significantly affect longevity, which depends mostly upon group size and a liability of newness. I will now interpret these results in the context of the literature.

PART 4

Expectations and Realities

Now that the UCDS data has been examined in detail, I can return to the literature discussed at the beginning of this study and the hypotheses laid out in order to critically evaluate the results in the context of prior studies of intentional communities. I found, through both the deductive method and the inductive method, that there are in fact two main structural paths in the modern communitarian movement. Although this does not invalidate the ideological categorization schemes of earlier scholarship, it certainly lends credence to organizational and structural categorization. Since the Path of Involvement tends to feature communes which have ideological diversity, or do not value ideology strongly, prior categorizations would have either miscategorized these groups, or misrepresented them as more ideological than they actually

were. On the whole, the first hypothesis, that there exist two main organizational strategies, can be accepted given the tests above. This means that research on communes need not be conducted through the lens of ideology, which opens up space for studies on behavior, organization, and strategy like this one. Moreover, while ideologies are vague and are enacted in quite different ways depending on context, strategic paths reflect concrete sets of related practices which can be directly applied to other contexts. For instance, the democratic strategies embodied in the Path of Involvement could be utilized in other contexts to increase organizational stability. The implications of applying communal strategy to social movements will be discussed in more detail below.

Regarding the durability and stability of the Paths, the literature predicted that the Path of Charisma would be more durable and stable than the Path of Involvement, due to strong commitment mechanisms (eg. “novitiate readiness requirement” in Figure 1), centralization, and powerful charismatic authority (Kanter, 1972; Zablocki, 1980; Hall, 1988; Thies, 2000). Additionally, the Path of Involvement, being strongly democratic, having little in the way of commitment mechanisms, and have large ideological heterogeneity should have been much more unstable and short-lived (Cornfield, 1983; Hall, 1988). The data did not end up supporting this hypothesis. The Path of Involvement tended to have much lower turnover rates on average, and to be slightly more long-lived than the Path of Charisma, although this is likely due to the smaller average group size. This result offers support, though, to Brumann (2001), who argued that long-lived communes could have strong and purposeful democratic decision-making processes. It does undermine the first part of his thesis, however, as the more authoritarian groups tended to be much more unstable and slightly more at risk of collapse.

A possible explanation of this discrepancy between expectation and reality can be found in Kanter's study of 19th century communes. Kanter found that the most successful groups derived from previous groups (as the Bruderhof did) and often took many years to become stable and successful. It is likely that given the relative youth and novelty of the groups studied above (on average only a few years old at the time of the study, and often with no prior ties) the stabilizing effects of commitment and charisma had not been fully operationalized. This explanation is somewhat weak, though, as the Path of Involvement communes were on average the same age as the Charismatic communes. Consequently, this line of reasoning can only explain the liability to newness discussed by Kitts (2001), rather than the difference in longevity between the two paths.

Zablocki's ethnographic account of the Bruderhof provides perhaps a stronger explanation. The Bruderhof, an intentional community formerly associated with the Hutterites, and which still exists today, has an extremely stringent (even grueling or psychologically devastating) initiation process, which pushes many new members to exit before becoming full members (Zablocki, 1971: 246-265). A similar process could be taking place in the Path of Charisma, as the Path tends to have very strong commitment mechanisms (eg. novitiate readiness requirements, wherein a new member must go through an initiation or "novitiate" period before becoming a full member). This would explain the higher turnover rates, and possibly the larger average size, as many failed or disillusioned novitiates would leave after membership for a few months or even years, while full-fledged members would be unlikely to leave the group after such rigorous training and commitment to the community (Kanter, 1972).

Another unusual result was the incredible and unexpected ability of the Path of Charisma to improve the feelings of alienation in its members relative to the control and the Path of

Involvement. The Path of Charisma showed strong associations with centralization, formalization, charismatic authority, and stratification, all of which I would expect, based on the literature, to lead to either no improvement over the control, or even worsening reported feelings of alienation (Aiken and Hage, 1966; Zablocki 1971; Kanter 1972). I would have expected the Path of Involvement to show strong improvements in alienation, due to its associations with democracy, participation, decentralized organization, and low stratification (Nisbet, 1953).

Surprisingly, I discovered that the Path of Charisma shows strong improvements on four out of five levels of alienation: meaningless, normlessness, powerlessness, and social isolation. The only level where it did not improve over the control was self-estrangement. In short, this means that the Path of Charisma provides a coherent value system, a set of mutually-understood social norms, the ability to satisfy individual goals, and a strong feeling of community inclusion (Durkheim, 2006; Nisbet, 1953; Seeman, 1975; Zablocki, 1980). The inability to solve self-estrangement, the Marxian form of alienation wherein a member feels their actions and work is not intrinsically rewarding, or contributes nothing to their identity, likely results from the rigid assignment of chores as seen in the factor analysis, and likely is not helped by the rigid stratification of such groups (Seeman, 1975; Shenker, 1986; Marx, 1990).

There are a number of reasons why this may be true. First, the urban communes are much younger and more experimental than the federated rural communes of the sort most often studied in the literature. The young Path of Involvement groups have not yet settled into their ways, and so democratic systems may not be effective enough to provide satisfactory results or meaningful opportunities for participation and input. Charismatic leaders may not have had enough time to gain concrete followings or to implement rigid structures of authority, and thus do not have the alienation-inducing grip on the life and ideas of the commune members.

Alternatively, the superiority of Charismatic communes in resolving alienation could be caused by a combination of strong commitment mechanisms, which weed out those who would chafe against the ideological unity and lack of personal choice in charismatic communities (Kanter, 1972: 126), and the voluntary "investment of self" in the charismatic leader, essentially a wholesale identification of the self with the leader, and by extension the community (Zablocki, 1980: 267-9). These two factors would not only result in communities with extreme ideological homogeneity, as seen in the factor analysis, but also would leave only those members who accept the constraint of charismatic authority and align their previous goals and values with those of the group. This sort of pseudo-brainwashing initiation occurs in the Bruderhof (Zablocki, 1971: 246-265). New members are slowly introduced to group values, practices, and goals, and stripped of their old habits and preconceptions, until they reach a point of psychological "rebirth," emerging with a worldview voluntarily aligned with that of the charismatic commune. Brainwashing may also explain the weaker effect of communal life on higher levels of alienation. In a sense, brainwashing itself is a form of self-estrangement; a blurring or erasing of the lines between one's own values, goals and practices and those of one's community. In this sense, the third hypothesis may still be accepted; Charismatic communes replace individual alienation with brainwashed group-level alienation, and consequently do *not* actually resolve the problem of alienation.

The one level of alienation I have not talked about might also be one of the most contentious. Self-estrangement, or as I think it is better called, *purposelessness*, is the backbone of Marxist theories of worker alienation. Of course, it occurs not only in the workplace but anywhere in life where one's actions are seen to be aimed at nothing, having no greater purpose. This may happen, as Marx claims, when a laborer produces but has no personal connection to the

product, nor any personal stake in the labor beyond their own subsistence through wages (1990: 203-4). It might also occur when a married couple just "goes through the motions" to ensure stability for their family, despite no longer caring about the relationship itself. Either way, the fact that the Path of Involvement showed an improvement both over the control and over the Path of Charisma is significant. This means that although the Path of Involvement cannot offer a coherent moral or religious system which provides meanings, norms, goals, and methods of accomplishing them, it *does* give the member a sense of purpose to their work or everyday actions. For those who enter communal life with a coherent ideology but who feel that they have no purpose in general society, then, the Path of Involvement represents a meaningful solution to alienation. That said, given the sorts of people who generally enter into communal arrangements – those already experiencing alienation (Zablocki, 1980: 100) – and given the control responses, the number of people who would benefit from the community and moral grounding of a charismatic community is likely higher than those who would be best suited to an involvement-based community.

Broader Applications

Now that we have seen that there are two main strategies of organization in the most recent communitarian movement, and we have identified some group- and individual-level features of each, we can take a stab at evaluating these features normatively. In other words, what do these features mean in the context of "success"? And, moreover, what would "success" look like for an intentional community? There are two opposed, although not mutually exclusive, ways of framing commune success. First, we can take the typical organizational frame of success, centered on group longevity, accomplishment of stated or implicit goals, and member

satisfaction. Most literature on commune success uses this definition and framework, treating communal success like the success of a firm or of a voluntary organization (e.g. clubs, unions, etc.) This success framework is already implicit in the above analysis. The Path of Charisma can be seen as successful in the sense that it accomplishes its goal of providing an alternative to the alienating external society, but unsuccessful because it as an organizational model cannot persist for long periods of time. The Path of Involvement might be considered successful since it tends to last slightly longer and minimizes member turnover, but unsuccessful since it cannot achieve the communal goal of providing an un-alienating social alternative. If a group intended simply to persist as an organization, the Path of Involvement offers a better set of organizational practices and strategies to achieve that goal. However, if the group wants to offer an alternative to society, as most communes in the 1970's attempted to do, the Path of Charisma represents a possible alternative, albeit one which comes at the cost of the group's stability.

There is also another way to frame communal success, one which has been alluded to previously in this paper but has yet to be explicitly stated. Even if individual communes fail, we can still see success in communitarianism as a *social movement*. Since communitarian life is aimed at living out, through a community and its daily practice, alternatives to the standard, accepted social order, the most successful communes from the perspective of a social movement would be those which truly offer an alternative, and do not reproduce the same structures they stand against. Additionally, successful forms need not have long-lived individual groups or a water-tight success rate. Rather, they need to be inspiring or effective enough to encourage those engaged in communal living to reproduce that form or strategy. Both the Path of Charisma and the Path of Involvement can be framed in this manner, as they reflect forms or ideal types of communes which individual groups manifest to a greater or lesser degree. By looking at other

sorts of social movements, we can compare the features of the Paths and consider how these features might be applicable to modern communal living, or even modern non-communal social movements.

Doug McAdam (1988: 161-198) found in his analysis of the impact of the Freedom Summer movement that above and beyond its direct impact on American civil rights, those who participated in or came in contact with those in the movement were more likely to embrace the same ideas and practices. The Berkeley Free Speech movement, for instance, was catalyzed by an influx of Freedom Summer activists who brought with them tactics, know-how, and gusto (ibid.: 162). Despite only being tangential to the concerns of the original Freedom Summer protests, the Free Speech movement kept the student movement momentum going. The Freedom Summer activists also became involved in various counterculture or New Left movements throughout the 1960s, including the anti-Vietnam protests and the Women's Liberation movement (ibid.: 171-185). Although just one example, Freedom Summer offers an example of how a single, driven movement could be mobilized towards vast social change. A localized movement built up of small-scale, short-lived communes all oriented towards some feature of major social change (e.g. environmentalism, labor rights, racial and gender equity, etc.) could in turn catalyze people in other parts of the country or the world to work towards similar change. In this way, the burden of building an alternative society would fall not on the shoulders of a few alienated commune members, but on a wide and adaptable network of diverse yet like-minded groups. Note that this does not mean that individual communes ought to encompass the entire movement. Rather, each group can function as a small and transitory part of a larger, more enduring movement of communitarianism.

If communal living is to become a social movement, or a catalyst for one, then there is much to be gained from studying scholarship on the strategies of successful social movements. Francesca Polletta (2002: 5-12) argues that participatory democracy similar to that of the Path of Involvement is not only possible in the context of a social movement, but even advantageous. Democracy, particularly the give-and-take participatory form, as opposed to the winner-takes-all voting form, allows for innovation in strategy and structure. In situations where a more rigid or hierarchical movement could not adapt, or might create instability through its very rigidity, the flexibility of democratic decision-making can keep the movement afloat. Additionally, the hands-on nature of participatory meetings, rotating leaders, or other practices of direct democracy help develop the decision-making and leadership skills of members who might not otherwise have access to such training. Consequently, the Path of Involvement might represent a particularly viable principle for organizing a social movement. The practices which keep turnover low and longevity high would also keep groups around long enough to attract new members, and the accessibility of the democratic practices would make it more likely that new groups would form. Interestingly, she notes that "[a]bsolutism in the practice of participatory democracy may be one of the 'commitment mechanisms' described by sociologist Rosabeth Kanter" (2002: 13). Such mechanisms would function for the movement much like they do on a group-level; keeping old members in, and making it difficult for new members to join. While this might be useful to a group, it does not lead to a long-lived, sustainable social movement, cutting off much of the public support it might otherwise gain by being too esoteric or difficult to align with. As a result, the Path of Charisma, though successful as a group-level strategy, might fail as a strategy for a full-scale social movement. In fact, this may explain the sharp decline in commune formation following the boom in the 1960s and 70s, given that many of those

communes (especially those in rural areas) had charismatic and centralized structures. There are still some major logistical problems which are specific to communal life, including concerns of how to raise children, especially if the movement of communitarianism is built upon inherently transient groups and frequent communal restructuring. These concerns need to be addressed in future research.

Communes as a social movement may also be seen as a form of what Erik Olin Wright calls strategies for "interstitial transformation" (2010: 321). Starting from the standpoint that society does not and cannot provide for the needs, physical, social, or psychological, or its members, he asks what alternatives might be possible to this order, and how such alternatives may be implemented. One such option is a system of democracy, ideally one which is as direct and participatory as possible, implemented outside the confines of traditional society but without any sort of revolution or radical alteration of the status-quo society. The Path of Involvement fits this definition well, since it represents a method of escape from undemocratic capitalist or elitist society to one which allows for participation and direct democracy. A desire for escape does not mean that intentional communities cannot be sources of wider social change, though. Wright explains:

> Intentional communities may be motivated by the desire to escape the pressures of capitalism, but sometimes they can also serve as models for more collective, egalitarian and democratic ways of living. Certainly, cooperatives, which are often motivated mainly by a desire to escape the authoritarian workplaces and exploitation of capitalist firms, can also become elements of a broader challenge to capitalism and building blocks of an alternative form of economy (2018: 8).

However, if this path does not involve "the deliberate development of interstitial activities for the purpose of fundamental transformation of the system" it might only be an interstitial *process,* an alternative which operates within the system but will not result in any

substantive or long-term change (Wright, 2010: 324). Given what we now know about the Path of Involvement, it seems possible that the Path could be transformed into a strategy for interstitial transformation, one which might have a chance at long-term viability, a sort of perpetual social movement of the sort described by Polletta. In order to do so, however, the communities would have to find a stronger solution to member alienation. Though democratic communes tend to be more long-lived and have higher member retention, they do not seem to represent enough of an alternative to society at large. Additionally, since they would likely function best for those who already have a set and coherent ideology, those who would be most likely to join a Path of Involvement community would be motivated, likely politically-minded individuals, the sort who would be more likely to join a more active social movement for rapid change than seek escape. If the Path of Involvement offered more relief from the alienation of modern capitalist society, it might be a viable interstitial strategy. Until then, it is just one strategy for group organization with its particular benefits and shortcomings.

Wright also describes a new, and promising strategy for building an alternative society – what he terms "eroding capitalism" (2018: 10). Instead of seeking dramatic rupture like Orthodox Marxism, or piecemeal change like modern social-democratic state systems, interstitial movements like the communitarian one described above could combine their outside-the-system approach with more traditional legal and institutional reform. In doing so, more spaces for diverse and adaptable social alternatives could emerge (Wright, 2018: 10-12). Following the evidence of McAdam, these new radical spaces could incorporate the strategies (like the Paths) or the members of prior movements to further erode the power of capital. This cyclic, snowball effect, through a combination of happenstance and hard work, might eventually be able to replace the toxic, alienating system of capitalism with something newer and better. The realism

of this utopian vision, though, depends on the specific circumstances of the future and the practical strategies developed in response to those circumstances, which cannot be discussed here for obvious reasons. At the very least, the idea of "eroding capitalism" gives potential movements based upon communal strategies a point of reference, and a long-term goal to seek, which can only give strength to those who seek social change in the coming years.

Network and systems theory may be fruitful places to search for strategies for any such anti-capitalist movement. Fred Turner (2006) points out that the very same communitarians and New Left activists discussed in this paper embraced the wave of information and communication technology beginning in the 1960s. These counter-culturalists included Stewart Brand, founder of the Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link, a utopian project aimed at extending the ideas of 70's communitarianism to the burgeoning internet age. Unfortunately, these very same emancipatory technologies tended to alienate and divide those who sought a newer, more united global society, as they faced greater exposure to social pressures. Communes turned inward, instead of uniting to form a movement (Turner, 2006: 255-257). That said, the newest forms of democratic information technology and social media, like Reddit, may offer the emancipatory solution that the early internet and information technology could only suggest as a possibility.

Communal strategies can also serve as a new paradigm for the Left in 21st century politics. In the face of a strong, mobilized global right, built upon the paradigm exemplified by Thatcherian "There is no alternative" thinking, the Left needs a principle to strive for, beyond simply opposing pro-market politics (Cohen, 1994: 4). The wave of intentional communities studied in the paper, though flawed and ultimately transitory, reflects groups of people striving for various reasons and in various ways to recreate a sense of community which has declined in modern society. Community and solidarity, originally staples of socialist and leftist movements,

have been neglected in recent decades, replaced with more immediate pragmatic concerns as the Left responded to the growth of Neo-Liberal politics from the mid-1970's until today (Cohen, 1994: 11). By aiming at recovering the lost sense of community in the future while simultaneously working in the (albeit non-optimal) political conditions of the present, leftist politics may be able to regain the support it once had. Communal justifications for social action could replace market or self-interest justifications, which could in turn build solidarity and reduce the widespread modern phenomenon of alienation. Utopian ideals once dreamed of on a small scale by the communitarians of the 1970's may someday in this manner be translatable to society at large.

Conclusion

Although the findings in this study are somewhat preliminary, the questions and research paths opened for future scholarship are intriguing. First and foremost, this study focused on a bygone era; the communal living strategies and the strategies of the movement as a whole may be quite different in the 21st century, especially with the prevalence of social media and the internet. Communal living is certainly less prevalent a movement than it was historically, but it is almost certainly present and thriving in its niches, if the historical trajectory of American communal living remains consistent (there has never been a year in American history *without* communes). Future studies could examine the relationship between organizational strategy, durability, stability, and alienation in the context of this modern environment, one which is less millenarian and likely more pragmatic or utilitarian. Additionally, being survey-based and quantitative, this study could not say much about the personal lived experiences of the individual members of these groups. Interviews, ethnographies, and other more qualitative studies could

illuminate some of the more puzzling results, especially regarding the ability or inability of the two Paths to solve alienation. Lastly, the findings of this study need not be applied only to communes. As discussed in the previous section, communes are simultaneously organizations, communities, and potential parts of social movements, and therefore the properties applicable to communes may shed light on social phenomena in other contexts. In this manner, even the eventual decline of the 1970's movement, and the collapse of many of the communes studied here can still be seen as a success; the ideals, principles, and practices of these groups can offer a better picture of our social world and its possible alternatives.

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