

THE CONSUMER SERVICE AGENCY

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## Overview

This paper examines the operation of the Consumer Service Agency, a relatively small, locality-oriented, publicly funded consumer service organization which serves a county-wide consumer population by investigating and trying to resolve consumer complaints against merchants, by providing information and education for consumer self-protection, and by prosecuting criminal fraud. This organization is somewhat unique because it offers a range of consumer services and represents a voluntary service organization which was transformed into a public agency.<sup>1</sup> My purpose is to report this research as clearly as possible, indicating my interests in studying this organization, how I collected and analyzed data, and my findings, so that others can evaluate, replicate or apply this research, especially for generally improving human service organizations.<sup>2</sup>

The Consumer Service Agency originated in September, 1971 when five university undergraduate students decided to organize a consumer group which could serve community residents. These students had just returned from spending their summer working for the Consumer Protection Center in Washington, D.C., and were anxious to put their experience to further use. They approached a number of organizations, such as the university law school and the local city government, requesting sponsorship, a place to work, and funds to cover operating expenses. Although the people that they approached liked the idea of a consumer service organization, no one seemed able to provide

the necessary resources.

In January 1972 the students convinced the city Chamber of Commerce to sponsor a consumer service organization. Local businessmen were solicited and provided operating funds for an eight month trial period. The Chamber of Commerce provided office space, access and use of office equipment and supplies, and sponsorship with legitimacy for the nascent organization. During these initial months the founding students and community volunteers used telephones to take complaints and disseminate information.

When the academic year ended the people who were working for the Consumer Service Agency decided to hire a part-time coordinator to sustain the organization during the summer. In September, 1972 a full-time director was hired to continue the coordination of the Consumer Service Agency, to find an alternative source of funding, and to recruit and train volunteers. By September, 1973 the organization was operating with the support of a federal grant which transferred sponsorship to the county prosecuting attorney's office, transforming the Consumer Service Agency to a division of that office as a multi-service public consumer agency, and expanding the service population to include the entire county.

I began studying the Consumer Service Agency in late September, 1973 and continued through March, 1974.<sup>3</sup> Like other organizations the Consumer Service Agency is relatively well-defined in time, physical space and social space as a

behavioral situation.<sup>4</sup> The physical location (the "office"), the social composition or cast of characters (the "roster" or organizational chart of members), the program of activity to achieve organizational goals (usually found in a "charter, constitution, or articles of incorporation), and a schedule of hours for operating, usually sufficiently define an organization so that it has the appearance to those inside and outside its boundaries as a relatively identifiable social entity.<sup>5</sup>

The Consumer Service Agency is physically located in the county municipal building in a suite of offices adjacent to the county prosecuting attorney's office of which it is a subsidiary division although it is semi-independent because of its federal funding. The Consumer Service Agency, like other offices in the building, is open for business between the hours of 8:30 and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The office suite consists of three cubicles whose doors open into a rectangular area forming a block 'E' arrangement. The only door connecting the suite to the outside world is located in the center of the larger rectangular area. The core staff consists of three full-time employees, a director, an investigator and an information clerk, whose work is supplemented by volunteers.

The director coordinates and administrates the operation of the agency and as nominal executive is responsible to the prosecuting attorney, the county government, and the state

grant administration authorities. The director occupies the center cubicle which faces the entrance to the office suite. The investigator is the only other staff member with a cubicle. The investigator (a position which was vacant during most of my research) examines those consumer complaints which may involve violations of criminal law, such as statutes against false advertising, and is nominally responsible for developing evidence for cases to be prosecuted by the county attorney's office. An attorney assigned from that office cooperates and consults for developing and prosecuting these cases.

The information clerk who acts as an informal assistant to the director, clerical worker, and office manager, has a desk on one side of the large rectangular common workroom. The roster is rounded out by between five and twenty volunteers who generally contribute half a day per week to performing routine tasks. The volunteers work in the third cubicle and in the larger work area. In general the smallness of the Consumer Service Agency minimizes internal functional differentiation and maximizes the potential for all individuals to have to perform day to day "on the line" activities.

I use the term consumer service organization as a generic classification to denote a kind of organization which provides services to consumers which are direct products (not byproducts) of organizational goals and activities. A consumer is a person who purchases goods or services and uses them to satisfy

personal needs rather than to resell them or use them to produce other goods or services. Consumer service organizations may serve consumers as clients or may be constituency organizations formed by consumers to provide services to organizational members but I do not consider it necessary that consumers be the sole or major beneficiaries of these services. Such a classification seems broad enough to include organizations such as Better Business Bureaus which may be more business than consumer oriented while excluding organizations which might unintentionally benefit consumers.

Although an elaborate taxonomy of consumer service organizations is not necessary for this case study, since it seems that particular organizations tend to generally concentrate in one service area, it seems useful to differentiate consumer service organizations by the kinds of services which they provide for consumers. It is beyond the scope of this study to explain this differentiation, but the examination of the Consumer Service Agency as a new, unique multi-service kind of consumer service organization emphasizes the relevance of this question.

Consumer complaint organizations, such as Better Business Bureaus, investigate and try to resolve consumer complaints against merchants. Consumer education organizations, such as the Consumers Union, provide information and education for consumer self-protection. Consumer protection organizations,

such as the federal Consumer Product Safety Commission, prosecute merchants who violate governmental regulations which protect the public from dangerous products or illegal business practices. Consumer advocacy organizations, such as the Public Interest Research Groups (PIRG) initiated through the work of 'consumer crusader' Ralph Nader, work to strengthen and expand governmental regulation of consumer affairs in order to improve the power of consumers relative to the power of merchants.

#### Field Work Methods

I felt that formal hypotheses were not initially suitable for studying the Consumer Service Agency as my purpose was to be flexible, taking a broad scope of inquiry and narrowing the research as specific patterns might appear in the data.<sup>6</sup> The scope of the research had to be somewhat focused to prevent taking haphazard tangents. Consequently I decided to limit the inquiry to the social world inside the office of the Consumer Service Agency, eliminating interorganizational considerations as well as examinations of citizens as consumers who made complaints or relations with merchants. Such an organizational focus seemed most efficient from the standpoint of my research resources.

Having selected the internal activities of the Consumer Service Agency as my "sampling frame" I believed that direct observation would best fit my interests in collecting



information about the stable and processual forms of organizational activity. In addition I decided to use interviews to provide information about activities when I was not present, especially the history of the situation prior to my entry as an observer, as well as about the accuracy and reliability of my observational data and the developing notions that I had about the social construction of the Consumer Service Agency as an organization.<sup>7</sup> As Schutz notes, pure observations does not tap the meaning structures of those being observed.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to observations and interviews, I decided to collect certain agency documents, some of which could provide data about the internal construction of the organization's informational system and its operation, the everyday routine coding of activities into meanings, while others prepared for public distribution would indicate the organization's projected front.<sup>9</sup> I did not personally attempt to analyze the Consumer Service Agency's files because of the amount of work involved and the confidentiality of these records, requesting only those few public documents produced for external use or general use within the agency. I was not denied access to the files but avoided them since I was not pursuing the complaints, inquiries and services as they occurred outside of the office.

I decided that the combination of information from observations, interviews, and documents would broaden the scope of the data as well as cross-check the reliability for the entire

study.<sup>10</sup> Because of the limited archival materials I placed least emphasis on obtaining documents. I found that certain internal accounting was inaccurate in comparison to my observations. Because of my time limits and the commitments of the staff, there was only a limited amount of interviewing. In the end by intention and default observation became the most emphasized research activity.

The best description of my observational strategy for studying the Consumer Service Agency is expressed by the colloquialism, "hanging out", as I operated as a minimally participating observer.<sup>11</sup> By this I mean that although I interacted to some extent with those present and volunteered to do some minimal and occasional work, I resisted most attempts to co-opt me as a worker for the Consumer Service Agency. Usually upon entering the office I positioned myself to be as unobtrusive as possible, limiting my conversations as much as possible to conventional courtesies and to purposive conversational interviews.<sup>12</sup> I tried to present myself as an interested person who wanted to watch what was happening rather than as a student who had to produce some specific project.

When I had approached the director of the Consumer Service Agency about doing field work in the organization, explaining that I was a graduate student in sociology and social work who was interested in learning about consumer services and organizations, the director granted permission

stating that they "had nothing to hide." I had a general explanation of my research for those who were interested and found that I was only occasionally a passing object of curiosity. When certain people would question me, I interpreted this as mostly a conversational topic but sensed some uncertainty about why I was really present. It seemed abnormal for for someone to "hang out" who only occasionally asked direct questions.

The vagueness of my explanations of fieldwork and the purposes of my research was sometimes interpreted by people at the Consumer Service Agency as indecision or lack of precision and articulation which led to questioning of my competency. This is similar to a problem experienced by other fieldworkers as noted by Weinberg and Williams in their studies of nudists.<sup>13</sup> In a sense this minimized my specialness as an observer, so that questions about the rewards for participating and cooperating in the study were limited to "what do I gain from interacting with him as a person?" I tried to capitalize on this by being receptive to respondents as people, sometimes bored and sometimes enjoying the opportunity to break a period of silence by chatting about what they were thinking.

Informality had other drawbacks in that a respondent might be very open one day and distant another. As an interloper I was not a simple passing anonymous stranger but a recurrent

visitor.<sup>14</sup> As Glaser and Strauss note, my observational strategy was constrained by who was present to be observed, available to be engaged in conversation, overhead, or interviewed, and at what times.<sup>15</sup>

Irwin notes that it is important to blend in with the people being studied, to be honest and to present a coherent front.<sup>16</sup> I was able to present myself as a student since many volunteers at the Consumer Service Agency were students and the staff was familiar with the student role. Similarly my explanation of wanting to understand and learn the legitimate activities of the organization coupled with the routineness of my questions and data collection was less threatening than some evaluation of the personnel or the organization.

Blending in too well, "going native," or overrapport is as great a problem for bias in field work research as underrapport.<sup>17</sup> Part of the reason that I chose the Consumer Service Agency was that I was only minimally interested in consumer affairs and I did not expect to be proselytized. As I studied the organization I found that the people did not require anyone to develop a high level of ideological commitment to consumer affairs or conversion into the organization.

More generally field work involves a fundamental tension in establishing relationships of mutual trust between a researcher and subjects which facilitate access to information and evaluation of the information's meaning.<sup>18</sup> Field studies

are deeply personal, involving a necessity to work for an intersubjective understanding of the "we-ness" of respondents in some setting as well as a commitment to be relatively detached.<sup>19</sup> In observing the Consumer Service Agency, certain "we-relations" developed which involved a trust which made me privy to certain information that could have been very damaging to an informant if it became public knowledge. The people of the Consumer Service Agency often referred to me as "our observer," indicating a niche created to explain my presence in the situation. Workers sometimes approached me for advice because of my overt neutrality, developing expertise, understanding of circumstances, and my lack of organizational power or vulnerability to the organization.

Getting information is useless if it is not recorded. Junker suggests using a field diary to initially record observational data.<sup>20</sup> I used such a diary as a recording device and as a prop for my field work front. At the beginning of the research while I was engaged in routine fact gathering and getting to be recognized, I did not often take notes while I was observing, recording immediately after leaving the agency. Later I began to carry the notebook in my hand, opening and closing it as a cue to "that's interesting" or "this is confidential."

After I became more accepted in the organization, I tried to unobtrusively record as much as possible while it was

happening. I retrospectively realize that this often "back-fired," although I think the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. I never recorded names or damaging information in the notes (usually recording them separately after leaving the Consumer Service Agency) but I did note seemingly picayune things such as time and routine activities. The field notes often became a source of curiosity and certain respondents who examined them out of curiosity seemed both amused and frightened by their contents.

With one person this became a running joke, perhaps revealing some animosity as this individual would remark, seemingly for my benefit, such comments as "Now I'm going to the bathroom." The reconstruction of observations from the field diary was a laborious process.<sup>21</sup> I tried to keep as complete and accurate record as possible, although I realized much of the data was probably unuseable for various reasons. Obviously if three or more people were present and simultaneously active at different tasks, the "noise" obscured even much of any one activity or interaction.<sup>22</sup>

Like my observations, my interviewing was more general than specific, more of a developmental process than standardized.<sup>23</sup> One interviews respondents to check observations and to generate ideas for further research.<sup>24</sup> I initially concentrated on the full-time staff members, asking how some-  
thing was done as I learned about various organizational

activities. I became aware that certain past events had strongly influenced the Consumer Service Agency so I sought interviews with some of the founders and earlier volunteers. I was also able to interview student volunteers, newer and experienced volunteers, and people who had become inactive, to learn about volunteering and organizational affairs.

The data collected by observation and interviewing can be classified as focusing on physical artifacts; actors, activities and shared meanings; and some information about the history of the Consumer Service Agency. I attempted to analyze these data within an interactional context, concentrating on physical trace analysis and simple observations of activities as being least influenced or reactive to the presence of field worker.<sup>25</sup> Because of the inability to observe myself, I have less confidence in interactionally-collected interview data.<sup>26</sup> As a cross-check on such interactional data I have tried to tie documents, observations, interviews and shared meanings together as much as possible.

About the mid-point of the field research, I worked out a system for preliminary coding and data retrieval based on the data that I had collected up to that time. I used a data index to condense, collapse, simplify and organize a set of working categories to construct an initial analytical framework. This data index was similar to Whyte's procedure for abstracting and coding.<sup>27</sup> The primitive "I think" statements

and coding categories shaped questions for further data collection and assisted me to notice where data were weak. The preliminary analysis guided me until the completion of the field research and was expanded and refined in later analyses.

Vidich and Shapiro note that field workers are often challenged about the reliability and validity of their data.<sup>28</sup> I decided to present potentialities for further research and theoretical development rather than tying the emergent theory and limited data as if the general research design had been neat and tidy. Even as ideal as the experiment is often considered to be for social research Campbell and Stanley note, "From the standpoint of the final interpretation of an experiment and the attempt to fit it into the developing science, every experiment is imperfect. What a checklist of validity criteria can do is to make an experimenter more aware of the residual imperfections in his design so that on relevant points he can be aware of competing interpretations of his data."<sup>29</sup>

McCall indicates a formal measurement procedure for data quality control in interview and observational data which evaluates external and internal consistency.<sup>30</sup> I informally cross-checked data for my consistency with previous information as they were collected. Some of my observations were superficially inconsistent with certain data collected by the Consumer Service Agency for their own purposes. These differences reflected biases relevant to organizational normative



constructions. For example, the information recorded by the staff counting incoming telephone calls undercounted them and the average number reported was relatively stable. This seemed to reflect a norm about how many calls should be received and a meaning of some moderate activity level.

#### Previous Findings and Theoretical Considerations

Although at the time when I decided to study the Consumer Service Agency I knew very little about the organization, I did not chose it at random. I was interested in its newness as it had just become a public agency and the use of volunteers. It seemed that new or beginning organizations with limited initial resources may rely on social incentives to attract and utilize volunteers as an organizing strategy for a minimum disbursement of economic or monetary resources. These seemed to be considerations with pragmatic as well as theoretical importance.

Stinchcombe indicates that new organizations arise out of an effort to meet needs which are presently unmet and to introduce a technology or series of technologies not currently being made available.<sup>31</sup> Consumer service organizations seem to support this proposition. Rosengren proposes that resource scarcity is one of the liabilities of newness and is a major issue in the formation of an organization.<sup>32</sup> Similarly newness and resource scarcity affect the social economics of organizational membership.<sup>33</sup>

Given these crucial implications and emergent patterns in my field research, one critical question concerns why people volunteer, working for an organization without receiving economic reimbursement. Secondly, how does the utilization of volunteers affect an organization? What are the effects on the organization's front and on the organization of work activities? How can they influence organizational development? Since a good theoretical framework for the study of complex organizations should encompass formal or bureaucratic organizations, voluntary associations, social movement organizations, and their variants, the problem of motivation for volunteering may be addressed as a problem of participation, since every organization must recruit and retain members.

March and Simon propose that motivation concerns organizational equilibrium.<sup>34</sup> This approach follows Weber in assuming that individual social action is teleological and rational so that the inducements for member participation are balanced with contribution utilities.<sup>35</sup> Wilson and Bennett elaborate this exchange model of participation, considering an organization as a system of participants in an interrelated pattern of social behavior.<sup>36</sup> Participants who contribute to the organization receive inducements or payments from or through the organization. It is assumed that unless inducements are as great or greater than individual contributions that people will leave the organization (turnover).

Usually the contributions by participants are the source from which an organization provides inducements. The organization will exist only as long as contributions are sufficient for providing inducements large enough in measure to draw further contributions.

The preceding postulates assume that an organization is to some extent synergistic, "creating" additional resources from contributions, or to some extent parasitic, extracting surpluses from the environment. There is a problem if an organization is instead relatively entropistic, tending to run down because of resource expenditures. Similarly there is a problem in matching organizational inducements to attract individual contributions.

Olson insightfully notes problems in organizing to produce public goods which relate directly to the inducements-contributions balance for political, social movement, and human service organizations.<sup>37</sup> If the benefits produced by an organization are common, public, collective or "free" goods, not restricted to the members of an organization, there is a "free-rider" problem. An individual who operates as a rational, self-interested decisionmaker, can benefit as much by not contributing to or joining an organization as if he did. Unless all who will benefit join or contribute, the return to any single contributor will be less than his investment. In such cases collective action can only be attained by the use of some incentives, negative and/or

positive, in addition to the indiscriminately distributed collective benefits, which selectively reward individuals within the organization. If the selective incentives are social, they operate best in small, face-to-face groups, as they have a more limited range than economic incentives.<sup>38</sup>

Hefferman and Warner have examined organizational participation using contingency theory such as presented by Olson.<sup>39</sup> Their research found that voluntary participation seems related to benefit contingency and that increased organizational size decreases participation. Similarly participant performance, one measure of contribution, seems related to benefit contingency. Since the benefits of voluntary association participation are often non-economic, it is difficult to assess the contingency and strength of rewards or benefits.

It seems that volunteer motivation might be somewhat adequately examined by using an exchange model of participation, considering that volunteers make more tangible contributions which can be measured economically in return or exchange for less tangible rewards such as emotional satisfaction. Although most studies of volunteers have not rigorously addressed rewards for volunteering, Sills reports that volunteers tended to report opportunities for self-fulfillment such as helping others and being an expert as well as the satisfactions of accomplishment, organizing and creativity as reasons for contributing volunteer work.<sup>40</sup> Similarly a Department of Labor survey reports that volunteers

give time and skills for humanitarian reasons.<sup>41</sup> The largest proportion of those surveyed (38%) reported that they did volunteer work because they wanted to help people, an organization or the community. As motivations thirty-six percent reported an enjoyment of their work and twenty-nine percent reported some sense of duty.

A contingency exchange participation explanation for volunteering is problematic if one assumes the necessity of a quid pro quo in return for individual contributions to an organization. Two models of mankind, equity and self-interest theory, have different implications for volunteering.<sup>42</sup> Equity theory assumes that organizational members try to obtain rewards or benefits consistent or equal to their contributions or investments, correcting for organizational "overpayment" by increasing contributions or "underpayment" by reducing contributions. Such an approach indicates that organizations can modify individual behavior by varying rewards.

Self-interest theory, on the other hand, indicates that a participant will act to maximize personal gain regardless of the norms or equity involved. Such an organizational actor is sensitive to decreasing rewards and will decrease contributions for decreased benefits, but increasing rewards will not necessarily motivate an actor to increase participation and contributions to an organization. In a sense the self-interested actor, in order to maximize the benefits-contribution

ratio, will try to find the lowest acceptable level of contributions. Common-sensically the self-interested social actor is not pro-social nor a potential volunteer.

Ideally for an entropistic organization volunteers would work for less than equity. Although such individual action does not seem rational, there is an interesting possibility that people may be relatively indifferent to the costs and benefits of small investments and contributions. Such an explanation seems to apply to public funding campaigns or volunteering where people are asked to contribute something, no matter how small, and often large amounts of resources are accumulated from small donations, especially when there are general as well as social values as incentives to promote the value of giving. Similarly intermittent reinforcement in such small scale social exchanges may be as powerful as continual reinforcement for contributing.

Becker's concept of "side bets" may also explain why volunteers might not seek equity.<sup>43</sup> A volunteer may become committed to an organization by "investing" time in volunteer activities. If a volunteer's work is an accumulative investment, a consequence of ceasing to volunteer would be the loss of this prior investment of labor as human capital permanently contributed to the organization. "Interest" on this contribution such as social status within an organization which may accrue over time would be lost along with the investment.<sup>44</sup> Consequently even if benefits are reduced or the cost of

volunteering increased, a volunteer might not necessarily withdraw from the organization.

I propose that volunteers with minimal benefits and contributions, as well as those with maximum benefits and contributions may be less affected by cost-benefit contingencies than one might ordinarily assume. Organizations which utilize volunteers may promote either extremes of participation because of the tendency to extract contributions most favorably in comparison to the outlay of organizational resources in emotional rewards. The moderate volunteer may be the participant most likely to expect a quid pro quo.

What kind of person is open to the emotional satisfactions of volunteering? The most comprehensive overview of volunteers was compiled by the federal government from a 1965 Department of Labor and Census Bureau joint survey.<sup>45</sup> Sixteen percent of the population were estimated to have done some volunteer work during the preceding year but only half of these (8%) had done volunteer work on five or more occasions. Less than 1% had worked as a volunteer for three hundred hours or more, an average of about one hour per week.

The typical volunteer was white, married, highschool graduate, female, and between the ages of 25-44 years. She was not employed in the work force and her husband was a white collar worker. The family's income was between \$5000 and \$7500 a year. She was likely to volunteer as a Girl Scout worker, as a teacher aide, or both of these. One interpretation

is that volunteers do not often sacrifice income or time with their families in order to serve others.

A University of Michigan survey of economically productive family work found that a family's number of household appliances was the best predictive factor for the rate of volunteer work.<sup>46</sup> With higher family income a family may buy more leisure time to spend on other than household or income-producing work. Such leisure time may be used for volunteer work. Consequently it is unlikely that the average citizen will be an active volunteer. Scheier, in a manual for using volunteers in probation programs, not only cites research reporting the uniqueness of volunteers, but also suggests that volunteers in such programs should be different from the average citizen.<sup>47</sup>

It seems that many assumptions and images of volunteers are elitist and reinforce an elitist perspective. Glasser, for example, gives increased leisure, the tradition of mutual helpfulness, the changed social position of women, the decline of the self-sufficient family, the need to belong, the need to serve as fostered by religion, the desire to gain knowledge or skills, opportunities to put dormant talents to work, and the desire for status and community recognition as motivations for volunteering.<sup>48</sup> If people believe that volunteering is humanitarian, they may be unlikely to report selfish motives for their altruism. How many volunteers would report loneliness or boredom as motivations, or even more dissonantly, report that their seemingly prosocial behavior was an escape from an



unhappy home life?

Although the exchange of contributions and rewards between individual volunteers and organizations may influence organizational goals and activities, it is only part of volunteers' impact on organizations. Sieder notes that the role of the volunteer has changed historically complementarily to the changing functions of the paid staff member in voluntary service organizations.<sup>49</sup> There seems to be a tension between volunteers employing a paid staff to undertake routine activities or professionals using volunteers for routine tasks. Sieder notes that the former situation represents the past of many organizations and the latter, the present situation.

This observation parallels Michels' classical formulation that organizational size and task complexity produces an active elite because some people must devote more work to an organization than most others and who consequently have access to concentrated organizational power.<sup>50</sup> The structural configurations of a small organization may also become centralized through differential commitments. Members who become more central and imbedded in the organization may become privy to more information, control more communication, possess more organizational skills, and assume more legitimacy as leaders. These active volunteer members may move from routine tasks to administrative functions, possibly forming some executive board or committee, or possibly becoming proto-professionals (as the early "friendly visitors" in social work) who may

eventually organize themselves for acquiring professional status and paid, stable careers.

Most studies of volunteers and organizations focus on relatively large scale national organizations or their local subsidiary units. Sills investigated the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis; Rein, Planned Parenthood Federation of America; Zald, Young Men's Christian Association; and Seeley, Junker, and Jones, Community Chest.<sup>51</sup> The Consumer Service Agency, by comparison, seemed an alternative case, an example of a beginning localized voluntary service organization which served consumers.

Ajemian's examination of three complaint organizations, two of which, "Action Line" and the Better Business Bureau, handled a large volume of consumer complaints, was closer to the type of organizational situation of the Consumer Services Agency, than any other research that I found.<sup>52</sup> Ajemian noted the recent proliferation of "citizen complaint organizations" and current organizational theory's limited explanation of these organizations. As a consequence Ajemian examined task responses to complaints and their impact on organizational structure.

Several of Ajemian's conclusions were especially appropriate to studying the Consumer Service Agency. The organizations tended to be informal, resembling primary groups, because of their small size. Consumer Complaints seemed to represent middle class individuals' problems as they are overwhelmed by unsuccessful encounters with bureaucratic structures.

Often the citizen complaint organizations were themselves overwhelmed by the volume of complaints.

Ajemian's analysis basically considers the effects of the external processes and forces on the citizen complaint organizations. I was more interested, on the other hand, in internal processes and forces which affect a consumer service organization. Especially for a beginning organization there may be considerable ambiguity inside the organization, not only about its purposes, but how to accomplish these purposes. There may be an unspecialized division of labor so that role expectations and statuses are ambiguous or poorly defined. Similarly tasks may be highly discretionary, demanding creativity, imagination and commitment from all personnel rather than obedience of some set of rules. If the staff of a new organization are volunteers, the confused situation may be further confounded. It seems that a new, voluntary service organization might be classified as what Cohen, March, and Olsen call an organized anarchy.<sup>53</sup>

The following properties are characteristic of organized anarchies: First, there is fluid participation; participants vary in the amount of time and effort that they devote and involvement varies from one time to another. As a result, the boundaries of the organization are uncertain and changing; the audiences and decision-makers for any particular kind of choice change capriciously. Second, there is an unclear technology; the organization is operated on the basis of simple trial and

error procedures, learning from the accidents of past experience and the pragmatic inventions of necessity. Third, resulting from the first two, the organization operates on the basis of a variety of inconsistent and ill-defined preferences; it discovers preferences through action more than it acts on the basis of preferences. The goals of such an organization are best described as a loose collection of ideas rather than as a coherent structure. Cohen, March and Olsen note that every organization may become or have been an organized anarchy but that public, educational, and illegitimate organizations seem to usually fit the classification.

Human organizations are not biological organisms but social inventions whose processes and structures are dynamic. Organization or articulation has to be periodically reaccomplished to maintain an organization, and consequently control accomplished by relationships and by people may be a prominent maintenance as well as organizing process. Similarly the operation of communication and exchange channels may be more a precondition of order and regularity than a product of goal consensus. Perhaps a definition of an organization as "a social unit oriented to the realization of certain goals" is misleading, reifying a fallacy into misplaced concreteness.

Paraphrasing Becker, the question of what the purposes or goals of an organization are, and consequently what things will help or hinder the achievement of that purpose, is very often a political question.<sup>54</sup> Factions within an organization

disagree and maneuver to have their own definition of the organization's functions accepted. The function of an organization may be decided in political conflict, rather than given in the nature of the organization. Often the initiation of an organization involves some conflict in shaping organizational goals which may reoccur during changing circumstances.

If potential constituents who would like to form an organization have only limited organizational knowledge, they may have a hard time inventing and coordinating goals and structures. On the other hand, if potential constituents have a more complete stock of organizational knowledge, they may be able to select explicit goals and structures. Often the process of forming an organization involves less than perfect information but more than no information, so that both inventions and adaptations may be tried and only those which work will survive.

As a heuristic distinction, it may be useful to differentiate two polar processes of organizational genesis. The first of these may be called the contrived organization. An example of a contrived organization is a colony. Some goal set and structure is transplanted by some population who share a consensus about such a form of organization. Often the organizational literature seems to focus administrative issues, seeking to discover the ideal means to contrive a new organization. The second process of organizational genesis may be called the emergent organization. An example of emergent

organization would be beginning "from scratch." An organization is made possible by the convergence of potential constituents' behaviors before the organization forms. Some organization is a consequence of narrowing, interlocking patterns of ideas and behaviors, producing a collective structure with an order and regularity which participants try to preserve. It seems that most organizational development contains both the formal and informal processes, often intertwined so that emergent elements often appear contrived.

Relatively new, multiple service organizations like the Consumers Service Agency usually represent a more noticeable mixture of 'contrived' and 'emergent' elements. Bureaucratic "building blocks" may be joined in a new arrangement, "cemented" by emergent structures and processes. Consequently such organizations often have serious coordination problems since priorities are at best competitive and at worst so unclear as to seem nonexistent, with similar confusion or conflict about criteria for evaluating results. The use of volunteers compounds problems of control since much administrative time and effort must be devoted to overseeing and supervising the work of operative personnel. In such a situation conflict is perhaps most acute and disruptive to an organization, and the description of organized anarchy seems to be very appropriate.

These theoretical considerations and interests influenced my research and the research influenced my interests. In summary, how does the utilization of volunteers affect a

consumer service organization? Why do people volunteer? The purpose for studying the Consumer Service Agency was to construct an analytic description of this complex organization. This paper is primarily an application and modification of organizational theory as it relates to the Consumer Service Agency as a voluntary service organization which is being formalized as a subsidiary public agency, rather than as a powerful test of hypotheses derived from theory.

An Ethnography of the Consumer Service Agency

History Reconsidered: The Paths Not Taken

One cannot fully understand the contemporary operations of the Consumer Service Agency without examining the history of its development. In September 1971 the students who eventually founded the Consumer Service Agency could have tried any number of ways for organizing. They could have attempted forming a social movement organization instead of approaching various established organizations seeking sponsorship. In a sense the students were oblivious to this alternative because their model for organizing was the Consumer Protection Center where they had learned their skills. Perhaps more importantly, they were all interested in becoming lawyers and attending law school, evidence of a pre-professional orientation to problem-solving. These students were not alienated from the "system" but rather had a high sense of personal efficacy and trust in the current social order.<sup>55</sup>

New organizations often arise to meet needs which are currently unmet. Since there were not any local consumer service organizations, the students were not creating an organization which would compete with existing agencies. Since there were only two Better Business Bureaus in the state, it seems plausible that the local Chamber of Commerce perceived an opportunity to have these students provide certain services like those offered by a Better Business Bureau at a minimal cost to the business community but with an enhanced credibility as consumer mediators since the organization would not technically be a part of the business community. As one founder stated, "Somebody was happy that students were doing something constructive." Support was available for an ameliorative organization which would in effect privatize and individualize consumer problems, rather than convert them into public issues. challenging the status quo of the marketing system.

In January 1972 the Consumer Service Agency began operating in the Chamber of Commerce's office, staffed by five founders, a few friends and several community volunteers. Although the original Consumer Service Agency was a small primary group it was internally factionated by different interests and commitments. As one founder related, "We always had a problem with people not showing up on schedule." One founder tried to coordinate the group and was perceived by the others as attempting to be dominant. Yet it was conceded that this person put the most effort into starting and keeping the organization



going and was responsible for the success of the Consumer Service Agency as well as the internal friction.

The participants began to construct the Consumer Service Agency to look like an organization. As one founder indicated:

When we started we had files but nothing to put in them. So we started gathering pamphlets, books, etc. We were trying to build information for those who called us. It became a part of consumer education... I took care of the files. I kept them in some order. We had an office and it had to look like an office. We got a bulletin board and put up notices. We always wanted to have a couch, coffee and pamphlets for people who might walk in. We never could because our office was so small... And paper work. We developed forms. We were always modeling ourselves after the set-up that we had worked at in Washington. I never did know what we did with all those copies. At least in D.C. there were several offices and they got the copies.

These attempts carried over to the Consumer Service Agency as a public office. It is of interest to note that the main problems were perceived to be interpersonal relations.

Another early volunteer described the situation as follows:

In the beginning everything was simple. The phone rang and someone answered it. It was rough, we didn't have much information for people who wanted to know something and we would get swamped with complaints. It was hectic but a lot of fun. As the organization got more recognized we got lots of information... We had to have a way to index it so we could use it. It also became clear that we had to have some continuity. I mean we had some bad things, it was difficult as all five founders were diverse and they had different personalities ... It became ridiculous...sometimes I wonder that it worked. There were little, different factions involved in power struggles.

This seems further support for the idea that the function of an organization is decided in conflict, not given in the nature of the organization.

At the end of these first months of operation several participants became afraid that the organization might cease to exist. Only two of the original founders would be returning after the summer as the others were graduating. Very few volunteers were going to be in the city over the summer. Everyone wanted the Consumer Service Agency to survive and to continue during the summer but there was some disagreement on how to best do this. It was decided to hire a part-time coordinator to run the Consumer Service Agency for the summer and two student volunteers who were not founders were considered for the position. One of the two returning founders objected because of a conviction that people should not be paid. "When one person gets paid, you know, and no one else, that's a key point in bureaucratizing. Then there was the combination of titles and pay. I think that that creates an attitude that someone knows more than someone else." (When this person returned at the end of the summer to find a full-time paid director, the person became inactive and left the organization.)

All of the knowledgeable subjects thought in retrospect that this summer director did an excellent job, although one noted that "actually it was a pretty posh job for the summer, and most of us were already committed to leaving town." At

the end of the summer there was a transition to a full-time paid director, who was paid a nominal \$100 a week. Everyone was very vague about the decisions surrounding this change. Some respondents interpreted this change as being a decision by the local Chamber of Commerce rather than as a democratic choice by all participants. Others indicated that they were consulted in choosing the director. It seems that no one disputed the choice of the person who became director but some people were very upset at the decision itself.

It seemed that the success of the various coordinators and the problems in trying to maintain a viable decision-making group caused the Consumer Service Agency to drift from a small group without formal leadership through a part-time coordinator to a full-time paid director. As an early volunteer told me, "When no one was in charge, people were pretty lax. There wasn't anyone to bitch at people who didn't show up to do their volunteer work. We needed direction... We all felt pretty strongly that we needed an overseer." In addition to deciding not to be a social movement organization, the participants decided not to have some collective decision-making arrangement.

The current director has held this position since September 1972. When this person was hired as the full-time coordinator there were three major responsibilities: to further organize the Consumer Service Agency, to recruit volunteer workers, and to search for a source of funding

which was independent of the local Chamber of Commerce. As one former volunteer stated, "We were looking around for funds. We wanted to get out of the Chamber. The association was bad for our image. A lot of us didn't feel comfortable being under them and getting money from them, even though they had pretty much of a hands off policy." As noted earlier in constructing the office, the image or front for the organization seemed to be very important and changed with the hiring of the director. One respondent said that "there was more respect for the organization. Having \_\_\_\_\_ as director helped this. He changed the image from student, he wasn't a hot head, to more respectability."

The activities and services of the Consumer Service Agency remained the same, taking complaints, trying to resolve them and giving information about particular businesses. The Consumer Service Agency was a pseudo-Better Business Bureau, less expensive for the local Chamber and more legitimate than a student organization. Volunteers provided services which would otherwise have to have been purchased and students could be "constructive."

The Consumer Service Agency director offered a course in consumer affairs at the local university. Students who took this course for elective credit had to work as volunteers at the Consumer Service Agency. The bulk of volunteers were students although certain community people also contributed their time. The task of organizing the activities of the

Consumer Service Agency focused around coordinating the volunteer workers, developing forms and filing systems for agency workers, and justifying the existence for the organization. Time was also devoted to making speeches to interested groups.

The search for an alternative source of funding also provided certain options and possible directions for the Consumer Service Agency. As potential funding bodies were approached it became apparent that either the Agency must incorporate as a non-profit organization in order to get foundation or united appeal funding, or it must become a subsidiary of some organization which was eligible for receiving federal funds. To the best of my information, funding through either option was very uncertain. A sequence of events which were not clearly reported led to a grant proposal being submitted to the state office of Criminal Justice Programs for monies available to local prosecuting attorneys for expanding the prosecution of consumer frauds and the Consumer Service Agency becoming a public agency with this funding.

Several counties were awarded funds for setting up consumer service programs. To the best of my knowledge, the Consumer Service Agency was the only such organization to be incorporated into a local prosecuting attorney's office. This change represented the final transition which occurred prior to my research. In many respects it can be considered quite a major change. The number of paid positions was

increased from one to three and the services of the Agency were expanded to include prosecution and a greater emphasis on consumer education. The success of these consumer service organizations created by local prosecuting attorneys has been mixed and there seem to be many organizational problems in their operations.<sup>56</sup>

My interviews with subjects who were knowledgeable about the history of the Consumer Service Agency indicate that there were a number of climactic situations when the participants made organizational changes, choosing from a number of alternatives. Although these changes involved some conflict and uncertainty about the outcomes of a particular course of action, most respondents now interpret these changes as inherent in the nature of the organization. This past is not immutable. Perceptions of the past are connected to and interact with current reality so that 'tradition' justifies itself as well as the present. Often organizations concoct a history which minimizes attention to past alternatives, the paths not taken, so that organizational development seems very linear and logical, creating a consensus about "the way we were." One subject asserted, "You can only expect an unpaid organization to survive for a brief period of time." When I questioned this assumption, the subject countered, "We had no other practical alternatives." Organizations and participants justify the meaning of structure.

Building and Maintaining the Organizational Front

Goffman has indicated that fronts operate to preserve organizations since outsiders do not completely understand the reality within which an organization functions.<sup>57</sup> An organization presents a front which idealizes the organization's goals, methods for achieving goals, and the fundamental motivations for decisions and actions. A new organization such as the Consumer Service Agency possesses only a limited range of sign-equipment with which to socially construct an organizational front, developing an image which will be associated with the setting and the participants.

The history of the Consumer Service Agency indicates previous developments of the organization's front. I found organizational and image changes to be interrelated, especially the hiring of a full-time director. A single actor could more coherently and consistently represent and construct the emerging organizational front than could a small, factionated group who only devoted a small portion of their time to maintaining the organization's activities and developing images.

As the founding group disbanded, more personnel, "outside" volunteers had to be recruited to maintain the organization. Since the organization had a full-time coordinator, volunteers did not have to be involved with both administrative and routine task activities. Consequently volunteers needed only a minimal amount of training and socialization to adequately

perform routine functions. Most volunteers were university students who worked at the Consumer Service Agency for course credit. They only participated a half-day per week during a four month term and could be considered as minimal participants or organizational transients.

The Consumer Service Agency had to present a front to three audiences, the public-at-large, the organizations involved in funding and evaluation, and the volunteers. The front was a minimal problem for the public-at-large since the Consumer Service Agency had only a limited exposure to the average citizen and these contacts were buffered by the use of the telephone and the mail as major communication channels. Although volunteers actually penetrated the inside of the organization, they offered only a minimal problem in front management since these contacts were limited. Overall the Consumer Service Agency had to worry about presenting a sufficiently coherent front to these audiences without being seriously threatened by any one audience.

The Consumer Service Agency had to address its front to an external and an internal audience. I observed a number of changes which were more externally oriented (although they also had internal consequences). When I began my research in September 1973 the office of the Consumer Service Agency was unmarked, unlike the other major offices in the building which were identified by some sign. By October 1973 the staff purchased sign lettering and put them on the door



entering the agency to form a sign which designated the office as the "Consumer Service Agency, A Division of the Prosecuting Attorney's Office." A week after the sign was made for the door an eye-catching yellow poster which identified and gave information about the agency was positioned on the wall beside the door.

The outer walls facing into the corridor were made of glass panels. Anyone walking by the agency could look into the agency and observe the internal activities. In December 1973 the Consumer Service Agency purchased and hung draperies over the glass walls, shutting the view of the office off from the outside except through the glass door. Staff members interpreted this change as giving them more privacy, keeping their attention from being distracted by traffic in the corridor, and presenting an "official" image to the public. The agency director also obtained a used display case which was modified into a pamphlet rack. The staff put various informational pamphlets on consumer affairs into this rack and positioned it in the outside corridor by the door. These changes "identified" the Consumer Service Agency and drew attention to its existence, especially since the office was located in a high use area near the main stairway and elevator for the county municipal building.

This external setting developed the organizational front, giving some substance to the agency as more than an address, a voice on the telephone, or people who made speeches or presentations on cable television or before public meetings.

The staff considered themselves very adept in representing the Consumer Service Agency over the telephone and getting the caller to articulate the problem. I did not find the external front to be phony or bogus. It was instead an honest attempt to present the organization as accurately as possible in a favorable light and to make a good impression.

External fronts which are presented to the public at large do not as a rule have to be very coherent if contacts are brief and nonrecurrent because outsiders do not really penetrate the front. Unlike many organizations, the Consumer Service Agency does not have a separation of what Goffman has called "front-regions" and "backstage".<sup>58</sup> In a sense the office is "backstage" to the external front which is presented to the public-at-large and to funding organizations but this same setting is a "front region" for volunteers. Although the penetration into the organization by most volunteers is intermittent and minimal, an internal front is maintained for their benefit as well as for others who might "walk-in" on the organization.

When I first began observing the Consumer Service Agency the office was very sparsely furnished. Certain basic operating tools and materials were present: telephones, filing cabinets, desk and chairs, typewriter and office supplies. In addition to their previously collected files of information and complaints, the Consumer Service Agency carried with it into its new setting its previously developed forms and a

message box which had been used to leave notes and forms for the various volunteers.

During the period while I was observing the Consumer Service Agency several new articles were introduced into the setting. Two bulletin boards were improvised, one over the secretarial desk and the other in the area set aside for volunteer workers, a coffee pot was purchased, and various new forms were developed and old ones revised. This equipment slightly modified the setting, moving it more towards the participants' image of what the organization should be like. It also identified the setting as a workplace, more particularly as an office.

In January 1974 the director drafted a manual of operations which explained the why and how of agency procedures. Such a manual indicated the organization of activities and related meanings. This document and the various reporting forms were a part of the Consumer Service Agency's internal front, presenting for the volunteers an image of the "big picture", the overarching scenario which ties their routine acts and activities into some more meaningful whole. For example, in one situation a volunteer told one of the staff members about a complaint and how he handled it. The volunteer was told to write up the report because it might help someone in the future.

Generally the student volunteers and new volunteers accepted the Consumer Service Agency's front as a given.

Since they were unfamiliar with the information that was available and how to handle consumer inquiries, this internal front was often of the variety that Douglas has called "technical".<sup>59</sup> Volunteers were dependent on the "expertise" of the full-time staff for solving the consumer problems. This dependency was usually interpreted by the staff as being dysfunctional since much of their time became involved in coordinating and supervising volunteer activities. From the observer's perspective, on the other hand, this dependency served to shore up the internal front and reinforce the permanent workers' sense of competency.

In a sense the Consumer Service Agency's front was 'contrived' in that it was constructed considering both the organizers' preconceptions of what the image of a consumer service organization should be and the expectations of outsiders. In another sense the front was 'emergently' organized as an interactive process arising out of narrowing patterns of behavior and ideas about how the agency is and, consequently, how it should be. The front about the internal activities of the Consumer Service Agency protected the organization and its employees from outside interference. The image of the organization as being organized deterred outsiders from meddling in the ongoing process of further organizing or disrupting the operation by challenging the internal social order.

In addition, the permanent staff members organized and

maintained personal fronts which were congruous to the total organizational front. Staff members generally dressed to project a "business-like" or professional demeanor and acted according to some service ethic. Males wore coats and ties while females generally wore suits or conservative pant suits. The staff was courteous to citizens who contacted the Consumer Service Agency, trying to be empathetic without taking a side for merchants or consumers. Similarly the staff members related to volunteers on a less formal, personalized basis, than one might expect from a bureaucratic organization, while maintaining the appearance that they had sufficient expertise to justify the fact that they were paid personnel.

#### The Organization of Work Activities

Although the Consumer Service Agency is ostensibly a multi-service organization, most of the agency's work focuses on two services, handling consumer requests for information and trying to investigate and resolve consumer complaints, services usually performed by a Better Business Bureau. The Agency was not very active during the period of my research in investigating and prosecuting consumer fraud because the staff position of investigator was vacant. The amount of time which was devoted to educational activities other than the university consumer affairs courses was limited by work pressures and low demand for these services.

There were several factors that influenced the Consumer

Service Agency to focus on information and complaints as services to individual consumers. The factor of organizational inertia, the strong influence of doing things as they have been done in the past, was of some importance. The experience of the permanent staff was predominantly in this area of service, a consequence of narrowing patterns of activities and meanings into a fairly coherent system of organization. Procedures for taking complaints and inquiries had been more or less operationally organized while the other services represented goals about which participants were unsure of the best way to proceed. The prosecution service was most outside of the realm of previous experience.

This organizational inertia was reinforced by the high demand by consumers for these individual ameliorative services which reduced the citizen's uncertainty in dealing with the problematic situations occurring prior to purchase or after trouble was encountered. This demand was structured by the channels of communication which connected the Consumer Service Agency to its potential clientele. The telephone was the main link between the internal workings of the Consumer Service Agency and its external environment and was most suited for providing certain services.<sup>60</sup>

The activities of the Consumer Service Agency were influenced by the telephone, especially since work was punctuated by the ringing of the telephone and the rhythm of work was dependent on the frequency of incoming calls. The

telephone as a tool was so important that it was taken for granted and there was very little conscious reflection by workers on the impact of the phone for structuring the work world. I asked one staff member about the importance of the telephone and received this response: "It's a very integral part of our operation, if not the most, because most of our business, investigation and mediation, is done over the telephone." Since the activities of the Consumer Service Agency were reactions to outside stimuli, the messages received over the telephone were the primary organizational inputs.

Concomitant with telephone technology, consumer demands and organizational inertia was the impact of using volunteers in service delivery. The expertise of most volunteers and the limited amount of time that they committed to the Consumer Service Agency best suited them to routine tasks which could be done piece-meal. Volunteers could answer the telephone, listening to complaints or giving out information, and leave for a week without breaking up organizational continuity. One volunteer might read a written complaint which had been discussed over the telephone by another worker and proceed to contact the merchant in question. Although a few, more experienced volunteers were involved in "educational" services, most volunteers only worked at simple tasks such as handling complaints and inquiries.

When the Consumer Service Agency's telephone rang, it

initiated a set of organizational information processing activities. The staff member or volunteer who answered the telephone had to find out the caller's purpose and decide how to best serve the caller's needs. This initial contact was sometimes problematic as some consumers were seeking a "ready ear", "reassurance", or a "sounding board" on which to try out a gripe in addition to or rather than registering a complaint or inquiry which could be handled by the organization or the worker. As a consequence, staff members and experienced volunteers reported that they believed that the dynamics of this initial contact required the worker to have a combination of intuition or "feeling", training, knowledge and expertise in order to quickly find what a caller wanted and if the agency could be of help.

Although I observed that there was a general norm about efficiency in determining the nature of a call, this was balanced by another norm about being a good listener, allowing an agitated consumer to release emotional feelings if this facilitated getting the necessary information for deciding on how to react to the consumer's needs. When a caller was relatively coherent and articulate about a situation, workers handled the initial contact with relative dispatch and efficiency, interacting to get the necessary information. If a caller was obviously upset, on the other hand, workers generally listened carefully, allowing the person to "get it off the chest", while noting important



information. After the agitation had abated, the worker summarized the situation and interacted to get the necessary information. This latter procedure was more time consuming than the former and consequently less efficient. In reporting these more problematic initial contacts, workers sometimes indicated that they were problematic and tagged them with some label which indicated deviance.

"Average" or "normal" calls were not usually labeled while the exceptional or problematic call was generally noted and discussed by workers. Some callers were labeled as "crank" because the problem was judged by the workers to be insignificant or the caller's reasoning seemed bizarre. Insignificant inquiries or complaints were evaluated by the amount of money which was involved. As an example, there was a discussion over a caller who wanted to sue someone in small claims court for damage to a \$5 lampshade. The workers thought that the effort involved was not worth the amount involved.

Callers who were extremely angry or "raving" became labeled as uncooperative or unreasonable and the worker assumed that the person was "crazy" or "mentally unstable", "obviously a crank". One very experienced worker reported having disconnected one caller in desperation as the person became increasingly abusive and uncooperative. "A guy called up and just started shouting. Then I did something I've never done to a consumer. I hung up on him." This caller

had ignored all cues to be cooperative and triggered a response of avoiding his situation all together.

This type of worker reaction and label was very infrequent. A more frequent, although sporadic occurrence was a reaction by workers to a questioning of their approach to problem-solving or their evaluation of a situation. Staff members especially were sensitive to callers who did not share these perceptions and became defensive. Among themselves they reacted to this criticism as a product of the caller's inexperience in consumer affairs, not knowing about the "grey area" which blurred simple distinctions between right and wrong.

Although these problematic initial contacts were an infinitesimal proportion of all contacts, not every caller had a problem or needed information that was considered germane to the services offered by the Consumer Service Agency. In these cases a caller was referred to another, perhaps more appropriate agency. There was a norm that such referrals were phrased so that they didn't sound like a "brush-off". The Consumer Service Agency served in giving referrals as a "people-processing" or general sorting organization, using the initial contact not only as an intake process but to divert certain problems, giving callers information about more specialized citizen complaint organizations.

Calls which were screened as being potentially in need of services of the Consumer Service Agency were differentiated +

into two categories, complaints and inquiries. Questions about the reputability or reliability of a specific merchant were classified as inquiries. Complaints were charges or accusations against some specific merchant, expressing consumer dissatisfaction with purchased products or services. Inquiries were generally handled immediately, while the caller was still on the phone, while complaints were deferred until a consumer had attempted to obtain satisfaction from a merchant, and had written and mailed a summary of the problem and his attempts to resolve it to the Consumer Service Agency.

The source for information which was given in response to inquiries was the Agent's complaint files. A worker would check the name of the merchant against the two year record of complaints and report to the inquirer. Answering reputability inquiries was a delicate matter. In general workers tried to provide a complete, relevant, and usable answer. This was interesting, since the files contained what can be interpreted as negative cases. An effort was made to not give misinformation or untested referrals.

I found this an interesting phenomenon since the "best" referral would seem to be the absence of complaints. In actuality an absence of complaints indicated an absence of information. The Consumer Service Agency was equipped to warn against certain merchants but not to vouch for reliability. In a sense the Agency could not answer most inquiries. On the other hand, even warning consumers about merchants was

a delicate matter. A person providing information about a merchant's reputation was supposed to be scrupulously objective and unwilling to generalize beyond the available facts.

The ethics and legality of answering inquiries were not a matter of open discussion at the Agency. Merchants who seemed to warrant the most warning were only disreputable by heresay evidence, past convictions, and unwillingness to cooperate. The best information that the Consumer Service Agency could give centered on businesses with a high volume of business who acted to resolve complaints. Thus the evidence which the Agency had available was not only limited by what was known to the agency but by the subjective evaluation of that material by the worker. Essentially the answering of inquiries could easily be interpreted as useless to most consumers.

The service provided by the Consumer Service Agency in answering consumer inquiries operated to warn and alert consumers to questionable, possible "fly by night" business enterprises. Such a service is intrinsic to most local Better Business Bureaus and acts to reinforce the legitimacy of the "established" merchant. During the time which I observed at the Consumer Service Agency there were several "runs" of inquiries about particular new businesses or door-to-door solicitations. In each case the staff tried to get information about the reputability of these enterprises to

determine if they were legitimate or if they were suspicious.

A second major service of the Consumer Service Agency was the investigation and attempted resolution of consumer complaints. Until the summer of 1973 workers took complaints and complaint information over the telephone and did not require any complaint to be in writing. It was unclear exactly why policy was changed to only accept written complaints, preferably made on official complaint forms. It was my impression that the transition to being a public agency involved shifting to complaint forms. Respondents indicated that the requirement that a complaint be written screened out casual irritations and encouraged the complainant to organize the information so that what happened was reasonably clear and complete. It seemed that a written complaint became a somewhat indisputable record, protecting the Consumer Service Agency from the embarrassment of possible accusations of "making up" complaints.

Only more experienced volunteers and permanent staff members handled inquiries, but most inexperienced and student volunteers were encouraged to work on a few complaints. Workers began processing a written complaint by checking it for completeness and checking the complaint files to determine who to contact at a business along with the previous record of cooperation with the Consumer Service Agency. Next the worker would telephone the consumer to inform the consumer of who was working on the complaint and to get necessary

information. The final step was to contact the business being complained against. The worker's actions were recorded on a worksheet, a running record of the progress of the case.

In the operation of complaint processing, the Consumer Service Agency acted as an intermediary between the two parties. A stated role of the Consumer Service Agency workers was that of mediator, one who tries to bring both the complainant and other party to settle their differences. This was an interesting phenomenon because a mediator, unlike an arbitrator, does not control any sanctions to force conciliation on the conflicting parties. Respondents reported successfully settling many complaints but were vague about the reasons for their success. My impression was that the very act of intervention by a public agency made businesses more responsive, but this impression is not backed by any observations.<sup>61</sup> I did not observe any formal mediation meetings, although one was set up by a student in the fall. Most mediation occurred on the phone with a Consumer Service Agency worker in contact with the merchant. A quarterly report presented in November 1973 stated that the Consumer Service Agency had processed 197 complaints from June 1 to September 30, 1973, saving \$11,399.95 in consumer refunds, return of goods or services performed. (By my computations, a mean of about \$58 savings per complaint and about 50 complaints per month.)

There was usually a hiatus between the initial contact

with a consumer and the return of a completed official complaint form. My data indicated that for those forms which were mailed out and subsequently returned, almost three quarters were received by the Consumer Service Agency within a week. After a complaint form was received, there was sometimes a delay in assigning the complaint to a worker, especially if there was a backlog of complaints. Consumers often recontacted the Consumer Service Agency to find out whether the form had been received and if so, what progress had been made towards resolving the problem. These recontacts were sometimes embarrassing for the full-time staff if it seemed as if a complaint was being ignored.<sup>62</sup> Consequently the director attempted to better organize the work on complaints, both to expedite the processing and to keep track of who was working on the complaint and what they had done.

It was assumed that the waiting period between the time that a consumer called the agency to complain and the time that the consumer received the complaint form screened out some complaints. The Consumer Service Agency staff had a norm of recontacting a complainant if the complaint form was not returned. In late December 1973 the agency director decided to systematize the "follow-up" procedure complaint forms by number, noting to whom they were sent and when a completed form was returned. I used this monitoring system as a means for quantitatively and unobtrusively measuring

this one aspect of organizational activity as well as for estimating the "loss factor" between initial contact and organizational action.

From the beginning of January to the end of March over four hundred complaint forms were given to consumers. A mean of seven to eight forms was recorded for each work day. At the beginning of March, I noted that forty percent of the complaint forms for January had been returned to the Consumer Service Agency. This gross rate of returned seemed quite impressive until I corrected for forms which seemed to have not been mailed but rather filled out in the office. I estimated that about two hundred thirty forms were mailed out over a six week period in January and February but that only about one-quarter of these were returned. Although these data may have been unrepresentative, they seemed to indicate that the effects of waiting strongly affect whether the consumer decides to actively pursue the complaint.<sup>63</sup>

Other activities occurred at the Consumer Service Agency besides the two main activities of handling inquiries and complaints. Time was spent in ancillary work such as typing, recording general information like newspaper articles which were of consumer interest, filing complaint forms and general information, and making reports. Informal socializing, such as drinking coffee, smoking cigarettes, conversing and snacking occurred during lulls in other activities, especially answering the telephone, or during "breaks" which



workers made to relieve the pressures of very active periods. Certain informal activities were associated with information sharing. Conversations which shared information about work activities often occurred immediately after a worker experienced some new interesting information, usually about some consumer problem, or upon the return of some absent person who was interested in the situation. Certain student volunteers were most likely to report what they had accomplished, maintaining a running documentary of their activities, and perhaps seeking approval or reassurance that they had performed correctly.

### Volunteers

From the founding of the Consumer Service Agency until it became funded as a public agency, the organization's survival depended on the recruitment and work of volunteers. The voluntary service ideal influenced the development of the organization and the kinds of services that it offered to the public-at-large. When a part-time summer coordinator was hired, two experienced and active volunteers were considered, and one was "promoted" to fill this position. Although the volunteers had been subtly differentiated by experience and activity prior to this, the creation of a paid position and a title made one individual more central than the others and delegated certain powers to control the activities of the whole organization and its participants.

This transition diminished the importance of volunteer activities and was the precedent for creating a position for a full-time paid director. Originally all of the Consumer Service Agency's work was done by volunteers but the transition to a publicly funded agency further displaced the importance of the average volunteers as the average time committed by a volunteer was only one-tenth that of the full-time staff. This separation was moderated by the circumstances in which the staff gained their expertise. The current director of the Consumer Service Agency had been active as a community volunteer since the first month of operation and the information clerk was one of the five student founders. Insiders were promoted to positions of authority who had "paid their dues as volunteers" and were committed to the ideal of volunteer work both as a method of consumer education and as a means of carrying out organizational activities.

While I was observing the Consumer Service Agency volunteers were generally employed at a level of activity commensurate to their skills. Although all volunteers did some work on complaints, their work tended to be the most routine and the least complex. Even volunteers with more experience, although they worked on more complex tasks, were encouraged to help in the more routine operations. The division of labor was very subtle, since there was plenty of routine work and everyone did some routine work, yet even with the small size of the organization, there were gradations which distinguished

the more central full-time paid staff from the more peripheral volunteers.

Experienced volunteers were somewhat threatening to the evolving consciousness of the full-time staff as proto-professionals in the field of consumer services, since they could challenge certain facets of the staff's expertise. The fluctuating workload of the agency made it convenient to have a few volunteers present to assist when the volume of work was very high, but staff members indicated that the presence of too many inexperienced volunteers was problematic because of the supervision which was necessary to make this work useful. This lack of experience was a very real problem since there was a high rate of turnover for volunteers after they had acquired enough expertise to work with a minimum of supervision.

Most of the volunteers were students who were receiving university course credit for their volunteer work. A few students who had volunteered in order to get course credit continued to volunteer after they no longer received formal credit. The remainder of the volunteers were white, younger females who were not otherwise full-employed (one was pregnant, another was legally blind, and a third was between jobs) and retirees.

I was not initially very interested in the motivation of the students who were volunteering to earn course credit towards their university degrees as this seemed

self-explanatory and very obvious. I later became aware of an interaction between intentions to pursue a legal career and volunteering at the Consumer Service Agency. I found that students evaluated their volunteer work as an excellent opportunity to gain para-legal experience and credentials. This motivation was similar to what I had observed while I was a student working in a volunteer tutorial program in that in that situation students volunteered not only to help others but to parlay the experience into credentials for furthering their own self-interests.

My interviews and observations indicated that people volunteered at the Consumer Service Agency in the expectation of some return on the time which they invested. The availability of time to devote to volunteer work was reported by most respondents as a necessary but not sufficient cause for volunteering. Respondents not only reported this as true for themselves but generalized this to others. Volunteers must have some interest in order to be potential volunteers at the Consumer Service Agency, but a general interest in consumer affairs did not lead to volunteering unless a potential volunteer found out about the Agency and felt that they had time to volunteer. In a sense volunteers were people who were waiting for something whether it was a college degree, a job, birth of a child, or death. Volunteering was a socially valued means of passing time, perhaps an escape from inactivity and boredom. The small number of

volunteers makes these findings tentative and impressionistic, indicating an area for further research.

Volunteers indicated that they worked because they liked helping others and because they were learning by doing. It seemed reasonable to expect that until information acquisition was plateaued, that learning was a strong motivation for volunteering. The few volunteers who had become inactive indicated that boredom with the routine activities of the Consumer Service Agency and a change in their situations which curtailed the time that they had available for volunteer work were their primary reasons for leaving.

There were, however, some volunteers who continued to work past the point where their knowledge seemed satiated. They reported that their volunteer work gave them some sense of power. I tentatively decided that an exchange model of volunteer participation seemed appropriate as volunteers evaluated the benefits that they received in return for their work. The most powerful contingency that the Consumer Service Agency controlled was access to a certain kind of consumer education, learning by doing. Similarly the acquisition of a feeling of personal power, while it may reinforce volunteering, seemed dysfunctional as more experienced volunteers might usurp and use organizational power for their own personal ends.

Respondents indirectly supported this fear of dysfunctional volunteers in their descriptions of the "good volunteer",

asserting that it took a special kind of person to be a good volunteer. The main requirement for such a volunteer was an even temperament but it was also reported that a volunteer must not be a vengeful person "who had it in for merchants." A volunteer who overidentified with consumers was perceived as a bad volunteer but a lack of empathy was also perceived as undesirable. Especially problematic was a person who believed that consumers deserved to have their problems because such problems were the result of the consumer's personal stupidity. Respondents indicated that the ideal volunteer was a moderate person who readily assumed the role of a mediator without allowing personality or prejudice to interfere with volunteer activities. Most volunteers, however, admitted that they secretly favored the consumer and the consumer's story when working on a complaint and saw nothing wrong with this attitude.

Considering the diminishing importance of volunteer work, problems in supervising volunteers and ideal of volunteer work, I was interested in how much volunteers contributed to the workload of the Consumer Service Agency. Those volunteers who spent the most time at the Agency did a lot of work on complaints and routine activities. One volunteer, for example, worked on twenty complaints during one month. My observations and the records of the Consumer Service Agency, however, indicated that this was the exception rather than the rule. Most volunteers were only nominal volunteers, showing up

irregularly and maintaining little continuity. Most volunteers did very little work and student volunteers did the least amount of work. Many students began working on complaints and never completed them.<sup>64</sup>

In conclusion it seems the rate of turnover of volunteers, low work productivity and problems in supervision made the importance of volunteer work diminish as the Consumer Service Agency became more organized as a public agency. Similarly the inclusion of volunteers in the organization often increased workload problems rather than alleviated them, and served to introduce more uncertainty into an uncertain environment. As the Consumer Service Agency has become more organized the organizational role of volunteers has become more problematic and the staff has begun to systematize the training and routinize the work of the volunteers.

### Conclusions

Although I do not have any definitive answer for the question of why people volunteer, the study of the Consumer Service Agency indicates the utility in probing beyond individual altruistic explanations by pursuing an organizational-participant exchange analysis. The motivations for volunteering seem to be a complex of self-interest and pro-social considerations. The importance of organizational contingencies was illustrated in the Consumer Service Agency's major reliance on students whose course credit was contingent

upon their satisfactory volunteer participation. Similarly the inducements available to the Consumer Service Agency seemed to be the emotional satisfactions for learning more about consumer affairs and the concurrent sense of expert power for helping others and mastering the market place.

Throughout the history of the Consumer Service Agency the utilization and presence of volunteers has affected the organization's social construction: its development, its work activities, and its front. The fluid participation of volunteers, the unclear service technology, and the poorly defined goals of the Consumer Service Agency make it seem best described as an organized anarchy. Although the Consumer Service Agency is becoming more formalized, it is more of a process of emergent or operational organization than being contrived after some model. The diversity in the founder's ideas was not hammered into a coherently structured ideology but was narrowed by the attrition of early members through turnover, and unchallenged by the limited commitment of volunteers. A service technology seems to be slowly becoming organized. Interestingly, the structure and the processes of the Consumer Service Agency seem to be lagging behind its front.

There are perhaps two perspectives on consumer service organizations, advocacy and protection. As centralization and bureaucratization seems to increase, the relative power of the individual seems to be infinitesimal and decreasing,



and these seem especially true in the economic marketplace dominated by superconglomerates. Even as the idea of the ombudsman for governmental affairs seems to be increasing, the alternatives for consumers as individuals in economic affairs are being considered. On one hand, consumers could organize themselves to negotiate with productive organizations. Although such a move would facilitate the information exchange between consumers and producers, it might increase competition and decrease profits for producers. On the other hand, government can create more organizations to regulate and protect consumers.

The Consumer Service Agency's activities were essentially ameliorative rather than advocative. The implicit result of a consumer service organization's operations may be the promotion of harmony and consensus rather than conflict, persuading individual consumers that the current social order is acceptable, although individual relationships may get out of adjustment. Perhaps some merchants are dishonest or an individual consumer may have a misunderstanding with some individual merchant, but such occurrences are exceptional rather than average. The economic system may occasionally require "tinkering" and minor adjustments but overall it functions acceptably and equitably for consumers and merchants. I do not assert that any individual who worked for the Consumer Service Agency would necessarily hold these

beliefs, although I suspect that the ideal volunteer might readily accept them. I do assert that the collective organizational behavior of the Consumer Service Agency reinforces such a world view implicitly. Considering this assertion, how did the Consumer Service Agency differ from a publicly funded Better Business Bureau, which operates specifically to protect business interests and the American way of free enterprise?

Upon critical examination the differences seem slight and superficial. The major services which were offered by the Consumer Service Agency and Better Business Bureaus involved answering inquiries about specific businesses and processing complaints. Although the complaint resolution by the Consumer Service Agency was more personal to the consumer, involving time consuming telephone calls, the movement toward standardized procedures and the dependence on written forms blurs the distinction. In the future the Consumer Service Agency may further converge with the Better Business Bureau style of operation.

## NOTES

1. Cf. R. M. Kramer, "The Future of the Voluntary Service Organization," Social Work, Vol. 18 (November 1973), pp. 59-69.
2. Cf. Y. Hasenfeld and R. A. English (Eds.), Human Service Organizations (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1974), pp. 1-22.
3. I averaged 1-2 hours direct observation for each of the twenty-seven weeks that I studied the operations of the Consumer Service Agency. I attempted to observe at least once every seven calendar days and invested over 58 hours in 32 site visits which involved at least 1/2 hour of observation. I attempted to balance hours and days of observation although I did not pre-construct a time sampling plan. Twenty-four percent of my observations were on Mondays; 17% Tuesdays; 21% Wednesdays; 12% Thursdays; and 26% Fridays. Seventeen percent of my observations were from opening (8:30 a.m.) - 9:30; 12% 9:30-10:30; 16% 10:30-11:30; 22% 11:30-1:30; 16% 1:30-3:30; and 17% 3:30-closing (5:00 p.m.). Mondays and Fridays were slightly over-represented while Thursdays were underrepresented since I structured my site visits around the end of the week, trying to observe on Mondays if I was not present on Fridays. My modal times for observation were Friday mornings and Wednesday afternoons and I found that I had under-represented the 12:30-2:30 p.m. hours substantially (12%).
4. N.K. Denyin states in The Research Act (Chicago: Aldine, 1970), pp. 10-11, that a methodological principle for an interactionist perspective is to consider the 'situated aspects' of human behavior.
5. Cf. T. Caplow, Principles of Organization (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964), p. 1
6. As H.M. Blalock, Jr. notes in Social Statistics (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960, pp. 90-96, hypothesis testing must anticipate all possible outcomes, operating to eliminate hypotheses rather than to directly check propositions or theories. The strategy which I followed is suggested by B.G. Glaser and A.L. Strauss in The Discovery of Grounded Theory (Chicago: Aldine, 1967). Similarly M. Dalton in "Preconceptions and Methods in Men Who Manage," in P.E. Hammond (Eds.), Sociologists at Work (New York: Anchor, 1967) pp. 58-110, warns against framing hypotheses that restrict research and the perception of a dynamic field.

7. Cf. M. Zelditch, Jr., "Some Methodological Problems of Field Studies," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 67 (1962), pp. 566-576.
8. A. Schutz, The Phenomenology of the Social World (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1967).
9. Cf. B.H. Junker, Field Work (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 34-35, for categories of types of information. The work of A.V. Cicourel and J.I. Kitsuse, The Educational Decision-Makers (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963) indicates the importance of records as evidence of organizational process. Denyin, op. cit., p. 267, reports that Cicourel suggests that observers study the generation of organizational records as they would the formation of rumor, gossip, and history in everyday activities.
10. Cf. E.J. Webb, D.T. Campbell, R.D. Schwartz and L. Sechrest, Unobtrusive Measures (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1966) for discussion of triangulation or multiple measures of data.
11. Cf. R.L. Gold, "Roles in Sociological Field Observations," Social Forces, Vol. 36 (1958), pp. 217-223 and B.H. Junker, op. cit., pp. 32-39.
12. I seemed to fit in rather well since there were students volunteering for course credit as well as professional students from the University School of Social Work who were working as part of their field placement. The latter were also interviewing and observing the agency. Their style and need for information contrasted with mine as they often demanded time to conduct lengthy interviews while I concentrated on shorter, conversational interviews.
13. Cf. M.S. Weinberg and C.J. Williams, "Field Work Among Deviants," in J.D. Douglas (ed.) Research on Deviance (New York: Random House, 1972), pp. 167-171.
14. I became aware that the role of a "reporter", actively demanding answers, and of a "spy", passively observing, were more well-defined than the role of an overt observer. I often felt that I was problematical for respondents because my behavior was inconsistent with their perception of a researcher as someone who made up and administered questionnaires or who had very formal interviews. Consequently I sometimes felt that they defined my role as that of an idiosyncratic freak or snoop.
15. Cf. Glaser and Strauss, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

16. Cf. J. Irwin, "Participant Observation of Criminals," in Douglas, op. cit., pp. 123-125.
17. Cf. S.M. Miller, "The Participant Observer and 'Overrapport'", American Sociological Review Vol. 17 (1952), pp. 97-99 and J. Douglas, "Observing Deviance," in Douglas, op. cit., pp. 27-33.
18. Cf. C.A.B. Warren, "Observing the Gay Community," in Douglas, op. cit., pp. 157-158.
19. Cf. E. Bittner, "Objectivity and Realism in Sociology," and H. Spiegelberg, "On the Right to Say 'We'," in G. Psathas (Ed.), Phenomenological Sociology (New York: Wiley, 1973).
20. Junker, op. cit., p. 22.
21. I estimate that I spent 75 hours in the field and about 150 hours to translate notes in the field diary to notes, since it took me about 2-3 hours to write up every hour of observation.
22. Cf. A. Strauss et al., "Field Tactics," in G.J. McCall and J.L. Simmons (Eds.) Issues in Participant Observation (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969), pp. 73-74
23. Cf. J.P. Dean et al., "Limitations and Advantages of Unstructured Methods," in McCall and Simmons, op. cit., pp. 19-24.
24. Warren, op. cit., pp. 158-159.
25. Cf. J. Lofland, Analyzing Social Settings (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1971), pp. 14-15.
26. I tape recorded several interviews as a cross-check of notes and found that my awareness was limited while I was engaged in active social interaction as well as that my memory was not perfect.
27. Cf. W.F. Whyte, Street Corner Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955, second edition), pp. 308-309, or McCall and Simmons, op. cit., pp. 75-76.
28. A.J. Vidich and G. Shapiro, "A Comparison of Participant Observation and Survey Data," in McCall and Simmons, op. cit., pp. 295-303.

29. D.T. Campbell and J.C. Stanley, Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1963), p. 34.
30. G.J. McCall, "Data Quality Control in Participant Observation," in McCall and Simmons, op. cit., pp. 128-141.
31. A.L. Stinchcombe, "Social Structure and Organizations," in J.G. March (Ed.), Handbook of Organizations (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965), pp. 142-193.
32. Cf. W.R. Rosengren, "The Careers of Organizations and Clients," in W.R. Rosengren and M. Lefton (Eds.), Organizations and Clients (Columbus, O.: Merrill, 1970), especially pp. 121-130, "On Newness."
33. Cf. Rosengren, "The Social Economics of Membership," in Rosengren and Lefton, op. cit., pp. 205-222.
34. J. March and H. Simon, "Theory of Organizational Equilibrium," in A. Etzioni (Eds.), A Sociological Reader on Complex Organizations (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969, second edition).
35. Cf. A. Schutz, The Phenomenology of the Social World, (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1967), J.H. Kunkel and R.H. Nagaswa, "A Behavioral Model of Man," American Sociological Review, Vol. 38 (October, 1973), pp. 530-543, A. Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy (New York: Harper, 1957), pp. 3-35, and M.J. Shapiro, "Rational Political Man," American Political Science Review, Vol. 63 (December 1969), pp. 1106-1119.
36. C.Z. Wilson and A.S. Bennett, "Participation in Community Action Organizations," Sociological Inquiry, Vol. 37 (Spring 1967), pp. 191-204.
37. M. Olson, Jr., The Logic of Collective Action (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971, second edition).
38. Ibid., pp. 1-52
39. D.L. Rogers and W.D. Hefferman, "Benefits and Role Performance in Voluntary Organizations," Sociological Quarterly, Vol. 13 (Spring 1972), pp. 183-196, W.K. Warner and W.D. Hefferman, "The Benefit-Participation Contingency in Voluntary Farm Organizations," Rural Sociology, Vol. 32 (June 1967), pp. 139-153, and W.K. Warner and J.S. Hilander, "The Relationship Between Size of an Organization and Membership Participation," Rural Sociology, Vol. 39 (March 1964), pp. 30-39.

40. D.L. Sills, The Volunteers (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957), pp. 155-157; 233-252.
41. Americans Volunteer, U.S. Department of Labor, Manpower Administration (Manpower/Automation Research Monograph #10, April 1969), pp. 9-10.
42. Cf. D.W. Johnson and S. Allen, "Deviation from Organizational Norms Concerning the Relationship between Status and Power," Sociological Quarterly, Vol. 13 (Spring 1972), pp. 174-182.
43. H.S. Becker, "Notes on the Concept of Commitment," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 66 (July 1960), pp. 32-40.
44. As with initiation rituals, the more menial the tasks and the difficulty of the passage to esteemed status, the greater the commitment may become.
45. Americans Volunteer was the published report from this survey.
46. J.N. Morgan, A. Suageldin, and N. Baerwaldt, Productive Americans (Ann Arbor: ISR, 1966) Survey Research Monograph #43, pp. 141-162.
47. I.H. Scheier, Using Volunteers in Court Settings, U.S. Department of HEW, Social and Rehabilitation Service, Office of Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Development (Juvenile Delinquency Publication #477.)
48. M. Glasser, "What Makes a Volunteer," Public Affairs Pamphlet (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1955), No. 224.
49. V.M. Sieder, "The Historical Origins of the American Volunteer," in W.A. Glaser and D.L. Sills (Eds.), The Government of Associations (Totowa, N.J.: Bedminster Press, 1966) pp. 4-12
50. R. Michels, Political Parties (New York: Free Press, 1962)
51. Sills, op. cit.: M. Rein, "The Transition from Social Movement to Organization," in Glaser and Sills, op. cit.; M.N. Zald, Organizational Change (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); and J.R. Seeley, B.H. Janker, and W. Jones, Jr., Community Chest (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957).
52. J.A. Ajemian, "The Unrepresented Citizen in Bureaucratic Society" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1971).

53. M.D. Cohen, J.G. March and J.P. Olsen, "A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice," Administrative Science Quarterly Vol. 17 (March 1972), pp. 1-25.
54. Cf. H. Becker, The Outsiders (New York: Collier-McMillan, 1963), p. 7.
55. Cf. R.E. Peterson, "The Student Left in American Higher Education, in S.M. Lipset and P.G. Altbach (Eds.), Students in Revolt (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), pp. 202-231.
56. Trudy Lieberman, "Wayne Prosecutor's Office Shunning Consumer Frauds," Detroit Free Press (Sunday, October 21, 1973), pp. 3A and 22A.
57. E. Goffman, Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (New York: Anchor, 1959), especially pp. 22-30. Cf. also D.J. Douglas, "Managing Fronts in Observing Deviance," in Douglas, op. cit., pp. 93-115.
58. Goffman, op. cit., "Regions and Region Behavior," pp. 106-140.
59. D. Douglas, op. cit., p. 109.
60. The use of the telephone as a major communication medium indicates that most clients never saw the Consumer Service Agency itself, so the external appearance changes may have been as much oriented to other governmental agencies and their members as to the public-at-large.
61. When the staff called a business, part of the introduction included the line "a division of the prosecuting attorney's office." It seems safe to assume that this increased the caller's credibility and made an implied threat of negative sanctions for non-cooperation, which may have increased the success of their mediations.
62. This embarrassment was a hole in the organization's front. My impression was that it was a serious problem because an excuse for inaction could be easily interpreted as a "put-off." The one-to-one nature of mediation might "shorten" a complainant's perception of the Consumer Service Agency to their own problem and not organizational constraints.
63. Cf. B. Schwartz, "Waiting, Exchange and Power," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 79 (January 1974), pp. 841-870.
64. This criticism of student volunteers may be an artifact of my period of observation and data that I used from one term for a quantitative analysis. In discussion of an earlier draft of this paper, the director noted that those particular students seemed least interested of any the Agency had worked as volunteers.