

The partial organization of intimate relations

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What keeps social relations together?

This paper is part of a larger project to investigate the basic elements of society: the construction of the bonds that keep social relations together. In the first part of the paper, I will discuss some possible ways of distinguishing a set of such parts that constitute all kinds of bonds between people. But first I will go into a discussion of the concept of social relations itself.

In the second part of the paper, the usefulness of this approach will be demonstrated in an application concerning love relations. In this paper, I will concentrate the analysis on a love relation formed by an adult couple in a family context. I will discuss variations in the bonds that keep such relations together and their consequences and of course also how such relations may be dissolved.

For Max Weber, social relations were the most fundamental building-blocks of society. A social relationship is the behavior of a plurality of actors for whom “the action of each takes account of that of the others and is oriented in these terms” (Weber, 1968, p. 26). There are, however, a large number of different kinds of social relationships and they have varying forms. They may be of a “very fleeting character” or of “varying degrees of permanence” (Weber, 1968, p. 28).

An important distinction that Weber makes is between open and closed relationships: “A relationship will be called closed against outsiders so far as, according to its subjective meaning and its binding rules participation of certain persons is excluded, limited or subjected to conditions” (Weber, 1968, p. 43). Weber distinguishes a large number of reasons for relationships to become closed and closure may be achieved in a number of different ways. He also notes that there is a tendency for many relationships to “shift from a phase of expansion to one of exclusiveness” (Weber, 1968, p. 45).

Another distinction is between associative relationships that generally rest on “a rational agreement by mutual consent”, and communal relationship that rest on “various types of affectual, emotional, or traditional bases” (Weber, 1968, p. 41). But in most long-lasting relationships, these two aspects are mixed. The content of a social relationship may be of “the most varied nature such as conflict, hostility, sexual attraction, friendship, loyalty, or economic exchange” (Weber, 1968, p. 27).

In this paper, I will reserve the definition of a social relationship for a repeated interaction between the same persons (Azarian, 2010; Crossley, 2011; Ahrne, 2014). Thus I am interested in “relatively permanent social relationships between the same

persons” (Weber, 1968, p. 41). And all relations that last for some time are closed in some way or the other.

A repetition of interaction with the same persons, however, does not happen by itself unless you are neighbors or happen to frequently go to the same bar or café (or among philosophers who met in the squares of ancient Athens). Relationships do not come into existence by themselves not even through strong feelings or some kind of mutual attraction. In order to continue and last, a relationship always needs some arrangements, but they are not necessarily organized. And there are relationships that do not admit any or perhaps very little organization such as friendship. Love relationships, on the other hand, are almost always to some extent organized (Ahrne, 2014).

All social relationships that last for some time have a tendency towards closure. To be able to meet and interact with the same people several times there has to be some notion about who these people are. A relationship rests on common experiences, common memories and a common history that cannot be shared with others. The fact that a relationship is closed does not imply that there is no fluctuation of people in the relationship, only that involvement is not unconditional and open for everybody.

The most typical form of a closed relationship for Weber was an organization. But all closed relationships are not organizations. For Weber the concept of network did not exist. Also a network must be considered as a closed relationship in which the participation of certain people is excluded or limited. But networks have other means for closure than an organization. There is also an institutional closure based on norms that are taken for granted. However, in the investigation of the basic elements of the bonds that keep relationships together, it is not enough to distinguish between organization, institution and network. Instead I believe we should find out *to what extent* it is organized and *how*: which of the elements that keep the relationship together really are organized and which are cared for in other ways? Relationships may be more or less organized or perhaps not organized at all.

Basic elements of social relationships

In order to analyze the character of a certain relationship it is not enough to know to what extent and how it is closed or open. When it came to organizations Weber, besides closure, distinguished two elements: rules and authority (Weber, 1968, pp. 48-51). In a discussion of organization outside organizations, Ahrne & Brunsson (2011) have distinguished five elements that are objects for organizational decisions: membership, rules, hierarchy, monitoring and sanctions. Three of these correspond to Weber’s elements. Membership is a form of organized closure. Rules are means to make clear what members in the same organization expect from each other. Hierarchy is an organized form of authority. Apart from these three elements organized social relationships also rest upon monitoring and sanctions¹.

These five organizational elements can be understood as functional prerequisites for the reproduction of organized social relations. But all social relations are not organized. Organization, institution, and network can be seen as functionally equivalent forms for the continuation and reproduction of a social relationship; functional equivalents that enable the same people to interact with each other repeatedly. However, all of the preconditions in a continuous relationship do not have to be cast in the same form. Relationships are often combinations of various elementary forms: part organization,

1. It is interesting to note that the distinction of these five elements is supported by Elinor Ostrom’s five basic design principles in her investigation of a number of so called Common Pool Resource projects (CPR) in all parts of the world, for instance mountain grazing and forest CPRs in Switzerland and Japan and irrigation systems in Spain and the Philippine Islands (see Ostrom, 1990, pp. 185-186).

part institution, part network. In order to analyze other kinds of social relationships that are not completely organized, the five organizational elements can be translated into more general functions. These general functions or prerequisites are: affiliation, common expectations, initiative and power, visibility and consequences.

First of all, in order for a relationship to be realized some notion regarding who are involved in the relationship is required. The *affiliation* has to be clarified.

Second. Some common understanding regarding what the relationship is about is needed; things like what you are expected to do when you interact and how you are going to do it, which are your goals or aims, when and where you are going to meet and how often and for how long. For a relationship to be maintained those who are involved need to have some common *expectations* regarding what the relationship is about.

Third. In order for a relationship to continue there has to be someone who can take an *initiative* to meet or to do something; perhaps someone who has some form of *power* to do so.

Fourth. In order for someone to come back, to want to repeat the interaction with the same people, he/she will want to know if the others do what they are expected to do. There has to be some *visibility* regarding to what extent the others behave in accordance with what is expected from them.

Fifth. If the relationship is going to continue there may be a need for adjustments and changes. One or several of those involved have to have some possibilities to take measures and draw the *consequences* regarding how they evaluate the behavior of the others.

In Figure 1, an outline of the basic elements of social relationships is presented according to the five functional requirements (affiliation, expectations, initiative and power, visibility, consequences) and the three different forms (organization, institution, network).

	Organization	Institution	Network
Affiliation	membership	symbolic signs, clothes, tattoos	Acquaintances, contacts
Expectations	rules, orders, goal	norms, traditions, "scripts", fashion	habits, reciprocity
Initiative, power	hierarchy	status	central or strategic position, reciprocity
Visibility	monitoring	prejudices, rumours, rituals	gossip
Consequences	sanctions, grades bonus, prizes exclusion	respect/despise, in/out pure/impure	ignore invitation, bullying

Figure 1.
Basic units of social relations

I will discuss the resulting basic elements below.

Affiliation

Affiliation may be achieved through decisions as when someone is recognized as a member of an association or gets an employment in an organization of some kind. Membership is usually agreed upon by mutual consent, but it is always someone else

who makes the final decisions. Membership implies a right to come back but also a commitment to return. Membership comes with certain expectations concerning its implications. Members are listed and counted and in principle known by the other members. Members are treated differently than non-members.

An affiliation may also evolve without decisions as when people recognize each other as belonging to a certain group of people with special interests and experiences through the way they dress or speak or through other symbolic signs. One example of institutional recognition is the concept of categorical pair: "They do boundary work, defining ties and locating distinctions between members of different categories more reliably than they create internal solidarity, homogeneity, or connectedness" (Tilly, 1998, p. 72).

Affiliation in a network emerges as people tend to meet again, establish personal contacts with each other or get introduced to one another through a common acquaintance. Affiliation does not happen by mutual consent but rather by a mutual recognition, since no promises or commitments are being made in the process. Still common experiences and memories may evolve as a basis for a continued relationship.

Expectations

Rules are decisions about how people involved in a relationship are expected to behave; when they shall meet, what they shall do, how they shall do things together. A rule may be decided by one person that has the authority to do so, but a rule may also be decided in a democratic way in a meeting with all those involved in the relationship present. The important thing is that it is known where the rule comes from. This is not the case with norms. They are taken for granted but they have no origin, or perhaps some imagined mythological background. Norms may also be lumped together into scripts that "provide models for participation in particular classes of social relations" (Tilly, 1998, p. 53).

In networks the functional equivalent to rules and norms is reciprocity. Reciprocity cannot be decided, and it is more or less the opposite of decisions. The norm of reciprocity is related to gift-giving, but gift-giving does not happen by mutual consent; on the contrary. There is no agreement between the person who gives a gift and the one who receives it. Yet, there is an expectation that the gift (or invitation or service) should be returned. But gifts are not immediately returned. There is a period of indeterminacy, and one cannot take it for granted that the gift will be returned. Perhaps the receiver is not able to return the gift or does not want to. Even if gifts or invitations have been returned a number of times the indeterminacy remains. It is this uncertainty that accounts for the flexibility of network relations, since the norm of reciprocity "is a kind of plastic filter, capable of being poured into the shifting crevices of social structures, and serving as a kind of all-purpose moral cement" (Gouldner, 1959, pp. 249-250).

Expectations in networks may also be expressed in terms of a process of gradual habitualization, in the sense that Berger & Luckmann (1991) have given it, before it becomes firmly institutionalized and therefore a more general and widespread institution.

Initiative and power

Within a social relationship it is not unusual to make decisions and agreements regarding who is expected to take an initiative when it comes to when to meet and

what to do, or to choose a leader. Such a simple form of hierarchy is developed in many relationships. In larger assemblies there may be several people who have positions with the authority to make decisions and take initiatives. As far as the others involved respect this, such a position implies a form of power combined with authority.

Unlike hierarchical positions, status cannot be decided. Status may be ascribed to certain persons because of traditions and norms that are taken for granted. Such a status may also involve a possibility to make people do what one wants them to do. Status, however, may also be granted to someone by people who admire and look up to that person because of her or his special qualities or performance. In networks the number and types of contacts that people have are the most important sources of power and influence. Having more and important contacts gives greater possibilities to make people do what one wants.

Visibility

The chances that a relationship will be reproduced and continue also depends on the possibilities to get to know if those involved really do what they are expected to do. Opportunities to observe other members may be organized as in examinations or contests of various kinds. Performances may also be measured and compared in other ways through different forms of monitoring. One important measure is to register presence at meetings.

Institutions are grounded in past experiences. This means that the performance of people belonging to a group with certain types of characteristics and attributes often is judged on notions of how such people behave. These notions are taken for granted, *i.e.* they are some kind of prejudices or rumors.

In certain types of gatherings like ceremonies and rituals or during birthday celebrations, weddings or funerals, it is also possible to observe to what extent people live up to institutional expectations and norms in terms of for instance how they dress, how they behave, how serious they seem to be, which gifts they give, who they talk to, etc. (Hechter, 1987). In networks, the most frequent mechanism for achieving a visibility and a possibility to know what the others are doing is gossip. Gossip often contains some evaluation of specific persons (Burt, 2005, p. 105), and such evaluations may be both negative and positive (Grosser *et al.*, 2010). Gossip is a central feature in many networks and opportunities to exchange gossip are central for the cohesion of networks (Elias & Scotson, 1999, p. 80).

Consequences

There are many ways to decide about positive sanctions that are appropriate to some observed performance: giving prizes or grades, ratings and certifications, bonus payments or wage raises. Negative sanctions may be decided in the form of warnings or a lower pay and the ultimate negative sanction is exclusion.



Ars longa, vita brevis,
Pieter van Steenwyck (1680)

In networks, consequences are not decided nor communicated. Instead consequences are expressed as not returning invitations or stopping to invite somebody. And a positive sanction is to direct more invitations to those who have got a good reputation. Another negative non-decided consequence may be different forms of bullying in order to try to squeeze someone out of the network (Burt, 2005, p. 105).

Institutional consequences may be paying respect and granting honour to somebody who live up to institutional norms or alternatively to show despise and contempt for those who do not.

Social relations as combinations of organization, institution and network

One reason for the confusion regarding institution, organization and network is that they are seen as alternative ways of arranging social relationships; a relationship is assumed to be either organized or a network or an institution. At least, the connections between them have been vague and indeterminate. If we analyse social relationships according to the five functions that we have distinguished, however, it will be easier to see how social relationships may be formed in combinations of institution, organization and network; it is not necessarily a question of only institution, only organization or only network; actually such pure relationships are uncommon.

There are relationships in which some ties are organized while others have a network or institutional character. Networks, for instance, may be partly organized with a decided membership but lacking other organized elements. And there are organizations without some of these elements, for instance without rules. Organizational elements may also exist isolated from each other outside organizations, for example as standards (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2011).

The social forms of institution, organization and network may sometimes exist together forming the same bond: a decided membership may be strengthened if it is supported by institutional norms or symbols as well as network ties. Power may be strengthened if a hierarchical position is accompanied by a high status and important contacts. On the other hand, the exercise of power may be complicated if these three forms do not coincide but instead challenge each other.

Such combinations of social forms are common in most relationships including also large organizations. Examples of relationships in which a number of combinations may be discovered include social movements, organized crime, friendship, kinship.

In the following I will discuss how the basic elements are formed in different kinds of love relations and in families. When it comes to families, I primarily focus on the relations between the “lovers”, the couple (usually) of adults, and not relations between parents and children or relations between children. Then, I will discuss some of the consequences of understanding families as partial organizations, and some of the problems. Before that, however, I will briefly discuss the concept of family in social sciences.

Families and similar love relations

In social sciences it is customary to talk about families as institutions. In most societies there have been rather strong norms and traditions when it comes to how a marriage should be arranged; how a family should look was more or less taken for granted. This talk about families as institutions has been criticized. David Morgan, for instance, has written that it is necessary to separate between “ideas

and understandings of the family on the one hand and actual day-to-day family living on the other” (Morgan, 2011, p. 3). He suggests that we should talk about “family practices” instead. Others talk about “doing family” (Finch, 2007) and argue that families “work with a mixture of social processes which combine the taken for granted and the actively shaped” (Finch, 2008, p. 722). What I want to demonstrate here is that many of these practices also are organized.

What is taken for granted today regarding how a family should be formed and how it should look like has changed considerably during the last fifty years. Nowadays, families can be rather different and they can also be constituted (and reconstituted) in different ways. In the 1960s norms regarding the way families should be established were broken when people started to live together without being married. During the last twenty or so years the discussion and recognition of same-sex marriages have changed the norms concerning families and as a result they are even more blurred. There are simultaneously a number of different norms or institutions regarding the forming of a family. Those who want to establish a new family have to make a number of choices and decisions: if they want to get married or not, if they shall have a common surname and in that case which name, if they want to live together or not, how to organize work division in the family, etc. (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Yet, like in all organizations, institutions still play a role and one cannot just ignore all institutions, but institutions also have to be organized to be adjusted to practical circumstances. Below I will discuss how institutions and organization are combined in the establishing of family-like relationships. I will also briefly touch upon ideas concerning networks.

Affiliation

Not even very traditional families can exist without decisions about membership. Even though there may exist clear norms regarding who you should marry there are always some choices to be made. And the boundaries of a family should be very obvious to everyone. In this respect families have always been organized.

It is only during recent years that this idea has been questioned. The theory formulated by Anthony Giddens that many couples in late modernity are involved in “pure relationships” is a negation of this organization of the love relationship (Giddens, 1991; 1992). In a “pure relationship” people do not make any decisions or plans for the future and they make no promises, and the relationship only exists as long as both partners feel that it gives “enough satisfaction for each individual to stay within it” (Giddens, 1992, p. 58).

Giddens’ theory has been very heavily criticized, however, and all evidence shows that most love relationships are organized sooner or later in some type of manifest relation, when those who have decided to become a couple announce their being a couple to the environment and that they expect their friends and relatives to treat them as a couple. Even though there is a “commitment phobia” (Illouz, 2012, p. 59) and the establishment of organized relationships takes a longer time, love relations are still organized through some form of membership.

In their book, Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim give an interesting explanation: “While men and women are released from traditional norms and can search for a life of their own they are driven into seeking happiness in a close relationship because other social bonds seem too tenuous or unreliable” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995, p. 24).

One can also understand the wish to organize a love relationship from the perspective of transaction costs and the idea of asset specificity. When two people have found something that is very important for them, something that they really need and do not expect to be able to find easily on the market, they decide to become a couple.

A couple today does not have to get married nor even live together but those involved still have made a decision to be together that changes their own relationship as well as their relationship to their environment. It is important to be recognized as a couple. Not least the discussion regarding same-sex marriages is an evidence of this (Weeks *et al.*, 2001; Chauncey, 2004; Badgett, 2009).

The literature on same-sex marriages gives interesting evidence on the effects of making the decision to become a couple or sometimes to get married into a kind of ceremony and to declare this decision in the presence of other people. A woman describes the effects of such a ceremony which was not a conventional marriage: “But on the more serious side I did feel differently afterwards. I don’t know what did, I’ll try and describe to you. It was like we had, sort of, it was nothing tangible, but it was like something had sort of passed between us that made us belong more really” (Smart, 2007, p. 70).

In Sweden the number of weddings has increased, but people do not get married until they have got their first child. But there is also among young people in Sweden a demand for a new kind of ceremony to manifest a relationship, but a ceremony that does not include a promise to stay together forever.

So far I have generally been talking about couples that decide to be “together”. It is interesting to note that also in an investigation among people who see themselves as polyamorous it is shown that such relationships are organized. Polyamorous relations are not networks. On the contrary, according to their norms it is important that all relations are clearly defined and decided so that everybody shall know which other love relations a partner has (Egelstig & Gustafsson, 2012).



Le colporteur, Anonyme, école française

It is not a project either. Even though two individuals that have decided to become a couple are aware that their relationship may have an end it is not something that they decide from the start. They do not decide on a date when the relationship is going to be dissolved. In order to be able to live together they need to believe that the relationship will last for a long time: “they work at making it work” (Weeks *et al.*, 2001, p. 125). And organization is always an attempt and it often fails. But from the beginning you have to believe that it will be successful.

Initiative and power

In traditional families there are no organized hierarchies. The authority of the husband rests upon his status as a man; it is a power that is gained through institutional norms concerning the roles of men and women. Much of what goes on in traditional families originates from institutional norms and traditions and if such norms are followed there is not much need for organization and decision-making.

To break with traditional gender norms, however, requires organization. In an investigation concerning resistance to marriage, one interviewed woman says: “Love and relationships have to be organized if inequality between the sexes is not going to be reproduced in the name of love” (Adeniji, 2008, p. 84).

And nowadays, many couples want to break with such traditional norms, but to do that they need to discuss their common affairs and to make decisions in order to organize their life together. It is typical for modern families that there is much need for organization and decision-making (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Roman & Peterson, 2011).

But how does this decision-making take place? It is hardly a question about establishing a decided hierarchy. In research on modern families there is much talk about negotiations. This notion of negotiations is very vague and has been criticized. Much of what is described as negotiations could better be seen as mutual adjustments. There are also, however, in the literature on the division of labor in families’ descriptions of real negotiations where the partners put forward their demands and formulate conditions for the fulfillment of these demands and they also talk about what they would do if their demands were not met (Halleröd & Nyman, 2008). Such cases seem to be rare, however.

One possibility to talk about decision-making in families is to use the concept of “adhocracy” (Mintzberg, 1993). The term adhocracy is coined to denote the opposite of bureaucracy or hierarchy. Adhocracy is seen as a kind of democratic form of decision-making, but without any clear rules. Adhocracy is a form of decision-making that is often practiced in organizations where experts work together and no-one really has a possibility to make decisions for others, since they only are experts in their own fields. This form of decision-making, however, takes a lot of efforts and is time-consuming: as Mintzberg (1993, p. 277) writes: “people talk a lot in these structures”. Conflicts are also common. Adhocracy may be a rather democratic form of decision-making but in the long run it is also exhausting and inefficient. But this form of decision-making seems to be rather common in many families today, people have to communicate a lot on the telephone, by SMS, etc. If no-one has the responsibility, the partners have to talk about all their decisions.

This type of decision-making also evokes frustration. When a “democratic” process is too time-consuming and frustrating many families fall back into institutional norms and a gender specific division of labour that does not require so much talk. According to Mintzberg many adhocracies are slowly transformed into stable bureaucracies: “the organization simply selects the standard programs it does best and goes into business of doing them” (Mintzberg, 1993, p. 278). And a gender specific division of labor is such a standard program.

Expectations

The woman that was quoted above saying that love relations have to be organized also told about how she and her partner struggled with their cleaning schedule which they had decided upon. Rules are another way to avoid the trouble of making new decisions all the time. And it is also an alternative to institutional norms. Family therapists often advice couples to talk about what they expect from each other and to make some common decisions in order to organize their relation and to avoid misunderstandings and disappointments. In many families today it is common to have certain forms of rules or schedules for cleaning or cooking or bringing the

children to the nursery, etc. But still, much of the division of labour in families also rests upon traditions and institutions.

There are, however, many other issues that a couple or a family has to decide about. The institutional pressure today is weaker and more blurred and mixed than before, which makes organization necessary. One important area for decisions is the economy. Most couples have to decide about routines and rules for how to pay their bills and expenses (Nyman, 1999; 2002).

One of the strongest institutional expectations on a couple that has decided to be “together” is that they should live together. The norm of cohabitation is very strong and couples who do not live together are constantly asked when they are going to move together, or conversely if they are going to separate. Still, there is a choice and 5 % of couples in Sweden do not live together, but are still recognized as a couple even if they are not married (Trost & Levin, 2000).

As (partial) organizations, families give an identity to their members. And the family name is an important part of such an identity. Today, however, there are several options when it comes to choosing a family name which requires a decision.

Visibility and consequences

Families can be understood as greedy organizations (Coser, 1967). A family demands a lot of its members and the members spend much of their life in the family. It is typical for greedy organizations that their members often live together. This is also the case in most families. Living together automatically increases the visibility of the relationship. A couple that decides to live together at the same time makes a decision that implies a high degree of monitoring of the relationship, although they may not be aware of this from the beginning. And being monitored is not by definition a bad thing. Lovers want to be together and see each other; people want to be seen. And if you appreciate what your partner is doing you will encourage him/her and maybe give some kind of rewards. But if you do not like it there will perhaps be other types of consequences.

In organization theory it has for long been an established fact that working or living together increases visibility and control. It is often called a “direct control” (Edwards, 1979). The establishment of the first industries can probably be explained with the possibility to control the workers rather than with some technical rationality (Marglin, 1974).

Charles Perrow has pointed out that the type of control that is achieved by working or living together often works without reference to conventional items of rules and commands. He calls this “unobtrusive control” and it is a control of premises and the premises of decision-making (Perrow, 1986, pp. 128-129). It is a form of control that limits information content and flow, sets up expectations so as to highlight some aspects of the situation, plays down others and limits the search for alternatives thus ensuring more predictable and consistent solutions. This is a form of control typical of families living together.

The common place to live sets the premises for the interaction and decision-making in the family. A couple that lives together have many possibilities to watch what the partner is doing when they are at home and also check when he/she is leaving the home and comes back. In such cases as when the couple has decided about some rules or practices concerning for instance cooking, cleaning the house or paying the bills,

the monitoring of these activities may be rather explicit and the other partner may be quite open about complaints and disappointments if the partner does not follow the rules and agreements. In many other cases, however, there are probably no clear decisions concerning what the couple expects from each other, for instance when they are expected to return home in the evening or what to watch on TV, etc. So even though some parts of the life together may be organized to a certain extent there are numerous things in the daily life that have not been the object of decisions and are instead influenced by institutional norms and mutual adjustments. But this is also the case in many “ordinary” organizations. Some institutional norms, however, may serve as forms of control of loyalty and care, such as the celebration of birthdays or wedding days, etc. Such ceremonies are excellent opportunities for control (Hechter, 1987). Or it is of course also possible to make decisions and agreements concerning such celebrations, if one is going to care about them or ignore them. Thus even though there is a high visibility of the relationship in a family that lives together, unobtrusive control is far from being completely organized.

And above all, there is rarely any clear agreement on what will happen if someone breaks the rules. There is no repertoire of accepted forms of sanctions in most families at least not in the relationship between the adults. But there may be many types of spontaneous sanctions.

If we apply Hirschman’s (1970) concepts of exit and voice for how to deal with grievances concerning relations within organizations, we get a possibility to discuss sanctions in love relations and families. The ultimate sanction in a love relation is to dissolve the relationship, *i.e.* exit. In families and love relations, exits are almost always preceded by voice in the form of demands and threats to leave the relationship. Such threats are not uncommon. In an investigation we found that about one third of those living together had experienced such situations in their present relationship (Ahrne & Roman, 1997).

A decision, however, to dissolve a relationship is not always a decision that is accepted unanimously. But unlike exits from friendship relations, exits from a love relationship is almost always decided and made public.

Some final remarks

The organization of love relations varies a lot, but almost all lasting relations are organized with at least some type of membership. Who belongs to a relationship is decided and made public. A decision to be together gives some strength and value to the relationship. If someone is prepared to go in for a lasting relationship he or she would want to know whether the other partner is prepared to do the same. And that decision itself increases the value of the bond. Such a decision, however, also concerns other people and the couple expects their relatives and friends to treat them differently than before; as a couple.

It is, however, probably very unusual that a love relation is organized with all five organizational elements. For instance, it usually lacks an organized hierarchy and decided sanctions. Many couples rely on institutional norms concerning what they expect from each other and who has the power in the family. In order to break with such institutional norms, organization is required. Many modern couples that have decided to be together make a number of common decisions concerning what they expect from each other. But there is usually no fixed way to make these decisions;

it is a kind of adhocracy where decisions are made all the time and where people have to talk and discuss a lot. It is not a very efficient form of decision-making. And sometimes the partners do not agree that they have made a decision at all.

In this paper I have concentrated the analysis on the relationship of an adult couple (married or not). But it is also possible to extend this type of analysis to a nuclear family including children. Although the relationship between parents and children usually are somewhat differently constructed it is interesting to be able to understand a nuclear family as a partial organization. If we treat families as organizations it is easier to see how different they are than if we see them as institutions. In many respects, families act as organizations; family members can represent the family and they can talk on behalf of their family. Families have common resources that they share. They also have a common identity as based on living together at a certain address, sharing common values, hobbies and sometimes even political and religious beliefs.

But a nuclear family is not a complete organization either. When a family is dissolved the resources are shared between the members and they form separate new families. In a family the members are not substitutable and the family does not continue with new members (as for instance a football club or a theater, but probably not a rock band). In this sense, kinship is more like a complete organization than a family, but kinship relations may also be organized in many different ways and are often combinations of institution, organization and network ■

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