New Academic Fields as Admittance-Seeking Social Movements:

The Case of Strategic Management

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Abstract

Numerous histories of the early days of individual academic fields have been written, but scholars have generally stopped short of proposing generalizable frameworks or testable propositions for why these focal fields survived and prospered. We integrate logics from social movement theory and the sociology of science to model the rise of an aspiring academic community as an *admittance-seeking social movement*, consisting of three major elements: differentiation, mobilization, and legitimacy-building. The paper offers propositions based on in-depth analysis of the rise of a specific field within the administrative sciences: strategic management.

In March 1970, ten professors with interests in business policy – as the field of strategic management was then called – met in Chicago to discuss “the questions involved in defining the field…and to draw out ideas about where those of us who are interested in the field should go from here” (Guth, 1973).[1] This meeting led to the formation of the Business Policy and Planning Division of the Academy of Management the next year. By 1990, this division accounted for almost one-third of the Academy’s membership, and the strategic management field had achieved a significant place in the academic establishment. The ascendance of strategic management is naturally of great interest to its own members, but it raises even more fundamental questions: What are the factors that contribute to the rise of an academic field? And can these factors be synthesized in a model?

Scholars in the sociology of science have addressed a wide array of topics of intrinsic interest to fellow academics. These include the role of the state in shaping science (and vice versa) (Wagner, Weiss, Wittrock, and Wollman, 1991); the conditions that cause an established academic field to be prestigious (Cole, 1983); the benefits that accrue to a field from having prestige (Lodahl and Gordon, 1972), and others. Within this large domain, numerous histories of individual academic fields have been written, some of which focus on the early ascendance of these fields (e.g., Graham, Lepenies, & Weingart, 1983; Van de Water, 1997). With limited exception (e.g., Hagstrom, 1965; Merton, 1973), however, these accounts have been descriptive chronicles that have stopped short of proposing generalizable frameworks or testable propositions for why the focal fields survived and prospered. That is, there have been relatively few efforts to formalize or extract the learnings from one field’s trajectory to propose broader themes for other incipient fields. This is a notable void, because scholarly communities form all the time and often invest heavily in the pursuit of becoming “fields,” which we define as "reputational work organizations" (Whitley, 1984) that are granted both the right to evaluate their own members and some permanence in the academic establishment.

Although prior accounts of the rise of new fields have been largely descriptive rather than theoretical, they generally portray such ascendance as embedded in a sociopolitical process (e.g., Yoxen, 1982; Fleck, 1982). These reports consistently indicate that such factors as labels, forums, disciples, advocates, and publicity help to account for the successful rise of new fields. Although chroniclers have not ignored the role of intellectual advances, they have emphasized that success in academia is not simply a contest for verifiable intellectual correctness; it is also greatly influenced by social and political factors.

In this paper, we develop a generalized sociopolitical model for explaining the ascendance of a new academic field. Drawing on two principal logics, each of which alone provides an incomplete view, we propose a model of the factors that enhance the likelihood (and speed) of a new field's rise – a model of what we call an *admittance-seeking social movement*.

One of the logics is derived from Merton's (1973) portrayal of the rise of sociology. Merton argued that sociology had ascended in two overlapping phases: 1) differentiation, in which early proponents advocated that certain important phenomena were not being adequately addressed, and could not be addressed, by existing fields; and 2) legitimacy-building, in which the founders and their successors pressed the claim with status-arbiters in universities that a science of society was possible.[2] Merton did not propose that these two stages would characterize the trajectories of other fields. We believe, however, that Merton's model provides a substantial, but partial, foundation for making predictions about the likelihood and pace of success for new fields.

Missing from Merton's portrayal, and constituting the second logic in our model, is a consideration of the mobilization process that must occur among early participants for a field to ascend. Merton's account gives no attention to how early actors in sociology coalesced, how they formed a critical mass, how they derived energy from each other. This omission is perhaps due to the fact that, in the early days of sociology, mobilization was lacking – which might account for why the rise of the field occurred only very slowly (Merton, 1973).[3] In our conception, a new field will have a greatly improved likelihood (and speed) of reaching threshold acceptance to the extent that it has at hand, or puts in place, certain elements of a social movement (Mullins & Mullins, 1973; Tilly, 1978; Davis & Thompson, 1994).

We do not assert that our model describes the only possible pathway to success for an academic field. Indeed, the literature on social movements highlights an alternative approach. In contrast to the accommodationist orientation of our admittance-seeking model (McCarthy & Zald, 1977), theorists have generally portrayed social movements as more antagonistic and rebellious (Tilly, 1978; Oberschall, 1973), or what might be called "confrontational social movements." These confrontational movements are undertaken when participants want major changes in the social order – changes of regime or the righting of perceived wrongs.

We anticipate that relatively few aspiring academic communities attempt such major disruption of the academic *status quo*, but we can envision at least two types that might. The first is a community that is sure that its divergent approach will be widely (and quickly) seen as verifiably superior. Such confidence might occur in the hard sciences, as when the new field of radio astronomy readily proved its superiority over major parts of optical astronomy (Mulkay & Edge, 1976). In contrast, the demonstration of verifiable correctness is a rare prospect in the social sciences or the arts. The second type of community that will adopt a confrontational style is one whose basic purpose itself involves a repudiation of the social or academic order. The fields of critical management studies (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992) and gender studies (Kanter, 1977; Meyerson, 2001) would seem to qualify. If the purpose is social overhaul, confrontation is not only more feasible but perhaps essential. Our main interest, however, is in those aspiring communities that want to join, rather than alter (except by their joining), the social order.

We build our model in two stages. First, we present the overall model, including definitions and explanations of the basic elements. Second, we elaborate the model through an in-depth analytic account of the ascendance of the field of strategic management on the academic scene in the United States. From modest origins and only after a period of struggling obscurity, the field ascended relatively rapidly, commencing around 1980, to a position of some acceptance within the administrative sciences.[4] Like any field, strategic management has its detractors (e.g., Daft & Buenger, 1990), its self-doubts (e.g., Hambrick, 2004), and its internal disputes (Priem & Butler, 2001; Barney, 2001), but there seems to be little question that it is now an element in the academic establishment. As a relatively recent entrant into the academy, strategic management also offers readily accessible information that will help enliven and elaborate our model.

We should emphasize that the trajectory of strategic management was far from inevitable. It could have taken a different pathway, which might have led to greater, or different forms of, success. Alternatively, it might have languished or been absorbed by other business fields. As we hope to convey, the fact that strategic management had many of the ingredients of our admittance-seeking model was partly the result of good fortune and partly the result of purposive initiative; but it was not at all preordained.

Our objectives, then, are threefold. First, we present a generalizable model to explain the rise of new academic fields, thus contributing to a relatively unexplored topic in the sociology of science. Second, we contribute to the literature on social movements by refining and extending the original social movement model (e.g., Davis & Thompson, 1994; Swaminathan & Wade, 2001) into a new arena. Third, in elaborating on our model, we provide a comprehensive analysis of the dramatic rise of the field of strategic management – a relatively unexamined success story in the administrative sciences.

Concept of the Academic Field

In the postscript to the second edition of his book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* Kuhn (1970) distinguished between a paradigm and the group of scholars who adhere to that paradigm. Reacting to criticism that his original edition conflated the two, Kuhn said, “Scientific communities can and should be isolated without prior recourse to paradigms; the latter can then be discovered by scrutinizing the behavior of a given community’s members” (p. 176). If we define a community as a group of scholars “who identify themselves as such and who interact and are familiar with each other’s work” (Cole 1983, p.130), it becomes evident that scholarly communities exist at various levels. For example, industrial organization economists are a subset of microeconomists, who in turn are a subset of economists. Additionally, scholarly communities vary in their degree of formality and permanence within the academy.

An informal community might form around a theory, a phenomenon, a class of problems, an ideology, a methodology, or a technology. Members of an informal community distribute manuscripts and preprints to each other, cite each other, and strive to meet and engage in discourse at conferences (Kuhn, 1970). Among the many informal communities that exist, probably only a few aspire to become recognized as fields. Tangibly, we can say that a field, or a “reputational work organization” (Whitley, 1984), exists when a substantial number of major universities designate positions for its members, grant tenure to its members, seek peer tenure evaluations from its members, and allow its members to supervise graduate students (Hagstrom, 1965; Kuhn, 1970; Stinchcombe, 1994).

Because the campaign to become a field entails considerable effort and risks, members of an informal community will undertake such an attempt only if two conditions exist. First, they must view the community's agenda as permanent, or at least long-term. A group that exists to bring short-term attention to an issue or to solve a highly specific problem will not be oriented toward the establishment of a long-term entity. Second, the group must believe that it cannot achieve its objectives – either intellectually or professionally – by continuing only as an informal community. Its members must conclude that the *status quo* social structure will not allow them to get the funding, journal space, conference presence, or faculty positions they could get if they achieved the status of a field (Kuhn, 1970; Hagstrom, 1965). There are no definitive indicators that an informal community has aspirations to become an academic field, but partial signals include the following: the community adopts a name that essentially all members use; members start referring to the community as a "field"; and significant investments are made in new community structures, such as associations, journals, and conferences.

Communities aspiring to become fields face an array of possible fates. Some quickly die or are re-absorbed into existing fields; for example, in the administrative sciences, the field of international business (IB) enjoyed dramatic growth in the 1960s and 1970s, but many of its elements were largely reabsorbed by other fields during the 1980s and 1990s (Dunning, 2002). Some aspiring communities achieve field status, but in a minor way; they survive for an extended period but in a marginal state, with limited resources, membership, and acceptance by the broader academic establishment. For example, the area called "social issues in management" (SIM) arose during the 1960s, a period of great interest in corporate social responsibility, and has operated with a steady but relatively modest base of participation and acceptance ever since

(Walsh, Weber, & Margolis, 2003). Finally, some aspiring communities, like strategic management, not only survive but grow and achieve considerable acceptance by adjacent fields and the broader academy. Thus, the success of a community that aspires to become an academic field is not evidenced in simply a binary fashion – successful or unsuccessful. Rather, success can be thought of as a scalar construct, a continuum. Following our in-depth analysis of strategic management, we will assess the trajectories of IB and SIM, both as a further application of our model and as an illustration that success as an academic field is not a matter of all-or-nothing.

The Aspiring Community as an Admittance-Seeking Social Movement: Development of the Model

We model the ascendance of a new academic field as a successful "admittance-seeking social movement," consisting of three major elements: differentiation, mobilization, and legitimacy-building. For a new field to emerge, it needs to differentiate itself from other existing fields, making claims about how a class of important problems cannot be solved by these *status quo* entities (Merton, 1973), but without repudiating them. Second, there must be a mobilization of resources; the elements of collective action – political opportunity structure, shared interests, and social infrastructure (Davis & Thompson, 1994) – must be in place or put in place. Third, the aspiring community must build legitimacy in the eyes of the academic establishment, by intellectual persuasion (Merton, 1973) and by adherence to the norms, styles, and standards of adjacent established fields (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Although we will develop and discuss the three elements of differentiation, mobilization, and legitimacy-building in this order, we do not assert that there is a fixed sequence that will typify the successful rise of a new field. Indeed, we can anticipate that the three elements interact recursively, as conveyed by the two-way arrows in Figure 1. For example, we could envision that an aspiring community might actively engage in differentiation, then acts of mobilization, then even sharper differentiation, and so on. It might be that the aspiring community enhances its likelihood and speed of success by cycling through all three elements multiple times, and in multiple directions.

---------- Figure 1 about here ----------

Differentiation

In Merton's (1973) formulation, the first step in the creation of an academic field is for early advocates to claim that some important phenomena fall outside the scope of existing disciplines. There must be something distinctive about the domain of the new field that established fields are unwilling or unequipped to address. Such distinctiveness is difficult to portray, however, if the new field is simply a subspecialty of an existing field; in such a case, the larger existing field will continue to lay claim to it. Instead, the aspiring community will ideally position itself at the intersection of multiple existing fields, rather than clearly inside any one (Hagstrom, 1965). More generally, the new field needs to minimize the appearance of being a threat or intellectual affront to established fields that are in a position to block its advance.

Because an aspiring academic community is vulnerable and seeks membership and assistance from many sources, it needs both to demonstrate its distinctiveness and assert its worthiness. It must frame its agenda so as to argue that the advancement of knowledge, and even society at large, will benefit by its existence (Benford & Snow, 2000). Hagstrom (1965) referred to claims of worthiness as "utopias" – not pejoratively, but in the sense of a declared vision of how the new field will make the world better: "Emerging disciplines require explicit utopias to legitimate their claims and to form the basis for the identification of scientists with the new disciplinary community" (p. 215). Examples of aspiring communities that made utopian claims as part of their differentiation include molecular biology, which positioned itself as "holding the key to the mysteries of life" (Yoxen, 1982), and industry psychology, the self-described "science of mental life" that combined the appeal of psychology's "human engineering" and scientific management's ideal of a "mental revolution" (Van de Water, 1997).

Mobilization

Social movement theory developed as a response to the inadequacy of existing explanations for collective action (Tilly, 1978). Whereas prior models had emphasized the role of incentives and leader charisma in propelling grass-roots action, social movement theorists proposed that emergent collectives will advance to the extent that they are effectively organized and able to secure resources (McAdam, 1982). Social movement theory has been used to explain the initiatives of an array of aggrieved groups (summarized in Jenkins, 1983). Recently, however, researchers have shown the usefulness of social movement theory for explaining the advances of moneyed groups that do not fit with the theory's original focus on the disadvantaged. For example, Davis and Thompson (1994) adopted a social movement perspective to explain how activist shareholders increased their influence in corporate governance in the early 1990s; and Swaminathan and Wade (2001) used social movement theory to explain how collectives of entrepreneurs can enhance the acceptance of new business concepts. Thus, social movement theory is useful for modeling the initiatives of collectives that seek to gain ground within the social order – including aspiring scholarly communities.

Mobilization is a major factor in determining the pace and success of a social movement. Described as "the process by which a group secures collective control over the resources needed for collective action" (Jenkins, 1983, p. 532), mobilization has become a major theoretical perspective in its own right (McCarthy & Zald, 1977).[5] Following Davis and Thompson (1994), we envision three factors that determine the effectiveness of mobilization: political opportunity structure, shared interests, and social infrastructure.

Political opportunity structure. Social movements have greater chances of success when environmental conditions are conducive to their advance. They often emerge in response to unfulfilled public agendas (Davis & Thompson, 1994) and gain momentum under conditions of social and political instability, which renders the *status quo* more vulnerable (Tilly, 1978). A non-hostile or benign attitude on the part of the establishment, combined with munificence in support of the movement's agenda, can enhance the likelihood of emergence. Political opportunity structure may include static components, such as tradition and institution, as well as dynamic elements, such as emergent geopolitical or economic conditions. Examples from two academic fields show "political opportunity" in action: In the late 1800s, Britain's colonial ambitions provided the impetus and sociopolitical foundation for the rise of tropical medicine (Worboys, 1976); and during World War I, the extensive use of mental testing by the U.S. Army greatly helped to advance the new field of industrial psychology (Van de Water, 1997).

Shared interests. In order to mount a social movement, a group of actors must have a bounded set of common interests (Davis & Thompson, 1994). These interests, which help to define the group's identity and solidify its membership and efforts, may be intellectual, political, or economic in nature; in some cases, these interests derive from personal or career concerns of early advocates. To be effective, however, the group's interests need to be limited in number and clearly articulated. In the field of artificial intelligence, for example, a small and close-knit group of founders groomed a cohort of protégés at a few select institutions (Stanford, MIT, and Carnegie) in the late 1950s, who had a shared vision of what the new field was all about (Fleck, 1982). In tropical medicine, a cohesive group of British physicians (several of whom had served in tropical outposts) tied their professional and career interests to the advancement of this new specialized field and its promotion of British colonial interests (Worboys, 1976)

Social infrastructure. A group's ability to mobilize toward a common objective depends in great part on the existence of social ties among early advocates, as well as forums for discourse and social rallying (Marwell, Oliver, & Prahl, 1988). Preexisting social organization greatly enhances the potential for mobilization (McCarthy & Wolfson, 1996) by reducing the costs of organizing (Swaminathan & Wade, 2001), helping to recruit members (Snow, Zurcher, & Ekland-Olson, 1980), providing networks (Gould, 1993), and reinforcing clear roles among sub-groups (Conell & Voss, 1990). For example, the Rockefeller Foundation was the social-institutional base for the rise of molecular biology (Yoxen, 1982). In artificial intelligence (AI), a 1952 conference on "automata studies" led to a landmark 1956 Dartmouth conference on "the possibility of constructing intelligent machines," providing essential early forums (Fleck, 1982).

Indeed, the study of social movements reveals a substantial association between the strength of relations among key actors and chances of success (Marwell, Oliver, & Prahl, 1988). Specifically, collective action will emerge more vigorously when key actors are socially interconnected (Wade, Swaminathan, & Saxon, 1998). In the academic context, these close networks would seem to function in two ways: providing cohesion and enhancing the carefully controlled dissemination of the incipient field's purpose, philosophy, and agenda.

Legitimacy-Building

Leaders of an ascending academic field need to convey that their aims are legitimate, and demonstrate to potential members, allies, and resource-providers that they – the leaders – are qualified to spearhead the cause. Legitimacy-building is essential to admittance-seeking social movements, because the aim of the aspiring community is to work alongside, and to be taken seriously by, the other fields in the academic establishment. Thus, the community needs to claim its distinctiveness, while demonstrating that it qualifies to be at the academic table.

There are two main forms of legitimacy-building: persuasion and emulation. Merton (1973) stressed the importance of the former, proposing that a field gains status by showing, through sound arguments and evidence, unique contributions to knowledge or to society. But a field also gains legitimacy through emulation, by conforming to the methodological or paradigmatic conventions of more well-established fields (Cole, 1983). Because the substantive correctness of early research in a new field is often difficult to judge, scholars in more established fields will look for indicators that the new area's research resembles a style they hold in high regard, or that it is "on the right track." Thus it is important that the new area's research have the look and feel of, or emulate, the more established adjacent fields – typically by adopting the conventions of normal science (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). As an example, the early legitimacy of AI has been attributed in part to the fact that the field associated itself with, and emulated, the prestigious neurosciences rather than psychology (Fleck, 1982).

Summary

The contours and evolution of an academic field depend on social and political forces – in a classic case of a social institution. How the path unfolds, and how the sociopolitical factors play out, will affect the field's rise, its survival, and ultimately its prosperity. Having laid out our model, we will now apply it to analyze the ascendance of strategic management, with two purposes in mind: in-depth illustration and, more importantly, conversion of the model into concrete, potentially testable propositions.

The Case of Strategic Management: Elaboration of the Model

The origins of the field of strategic management can be traced to the introduction of a course on business policy at the Harvard Business School in the 1920s (Schendel & Hofer, 1979).

Placed at the end of the MBA curriculum, the course was intended to put the student in the role of the general manager of a business and allow an integration of all the specialized subject areas of business. By the 1970s, business policy courses were being taught to undergraduate and MBA students at hundreds of business schools, predominantly by senior faculty who had spent most of their careers in other fields of business (Porter & McKibbin, 1988). These courses typically relied on case studies as a way to put students in the general manager's shoes. One of the widely used case books at the time opened with this definition (Uyterhoeven, Ackerman, & Rosenblum, 1973, p. 3):

> General management, or business policy, focuses on a company in its totality: its external posture (corporate strategy) as well as its internal structure (corporate organization). The general manager, therefore, provides leadership both as strategist and as organization builder.

Thus, the course had a distinct perspective (general management) and a specific protagonist (the general manger), but by its very nature resided at the intersection of all other business subjects, including marketing, operations, finance, and organizational behavior.

Incremental efforts were taken in the early 1970s to develop a research agenda for business policy, but they were far exceeded by attention to teaching. In a telling indication of the early preoccupation with teaching, the minutes of the 1970 meeting of "The Committee on Business Policy," convened by William Guth in Chicago, were devoted entirely to teaching and pedagogy, even though the advance agenda listed primarily topics pertaining to theory and research (Guth, 1973). In 1973, Guth laid out a "research strategy" for the BPP Division in which he decried "the widening gap between business policy and the functional fields when measured in terms of underlying discipline and knowledge." Guth quoted the opinion of a skeptical colleague in another field: "Business Policy has all the characteristics of a religion. A lot of belief, no empirical knowledge."

The call for more research led to various efforts in the mid- to late 1970s. But it was not until about 1980 that business policy, a community striving for status, had enough mass and momentum that it could put in place, and take advantage of, several key initiatives that were instrumental in establishing it as an academic field. In 1979, the field was re-named "strategic management," and the concept of strategy was set forth as the fulcrum for examining general management problems (Schendel & Hofer, 1979). In 1980, the Strategic Management Society and its journal (the first refereed journal devoted to general management), *Strategic Management Journal*, were launched; in that same year, the embryonic field was given a major boost when Michael Porter set forth the implications for general management from the most prestigious of social sciences – economics – in his influential book, *Competitive Strategy*.

The rise of the field of strategic management can be quantified in various ways. First, consider basic identification with the field. In 1972, with 60 members, the Business Policy and Planning Division (later renamed Business Policy and Strategy (BPS)) had about half as many members as any of the three then-largest divisions of the Academy of Management: Organizational Behavior, Organizational Management and Theory, and Human Resources – a ratio that changed little by 1980. But by 1991, following a decade of dramatic growth, BPS was larger than all other divisions except Organizational Behavior – a rank it still holds.[6] Second, in 1990 BPS received more submissions for its annual program than did any other division – a status it has maintained since. (Because there are Academy-wide strictures about acceptance rates, the growth of submissions cannot be ascribed to relative ease of acceptance). Third, and perhaps most noteworthy, there was a substantial increase in the number of strategic management articles appearing in major refereed journals. As Figure 2 shows, in 1975-76, *AMJ*, *AMR*, and *ASQ* published a total of six strategy/policy articles. In 1980-81, the number grew to

25 and was supplemented by 51 articles published in the new *SMJ*. By 1985-86, the total in all four journals reached 99, and it remained substantial after that. (The methodology for identifying these articles is described in the notes accompanying the graph.) All of these indicators confirm the quantitative rise of strategic management, and they consistently suggest that the period around 1980 was the "tipping point" for the field.

---------- Figure 2 about here ----------

In the sections that follow, we convert the broad elements of our model into propositions by analyzing the field of strategic management. In keeping with the earlier portrayal of our model, the propositions we present are all offered on a *ceteris paribus* basis. Specifically, we anticipate that each condition in our propositions will contribute to an increase in an aspiring community's likelihood (and speed) of achieving the status of an academic field. At this point in our theory-building, we do not envision that all of our proposed conditions are absolutely necessary for success; nor do we envision that any one condition is sufficient. Future empirical research may reveal a more parsimonious set, or a clearer hierarchical ordering, of causal factors (e.g., Ragin, 1987; 2000). Based upon our limited case data, we simply assert that each proposed condition is an incremental contributor to an aspiring community's chances of ascendance.

Similarly, we word our propositions so as to anticipate a general positive relationship between each proposed condition and a community's likelihood (and speed) of achieving the status of an academic field. Future research might indicate the more precise functional form of each of these relationships – which might be binary (presence versus absence), linear (more is better), or nonlinear (ceiling effects, possibly even with downturns). Again, at this point, and with our evidence, we can most reasonably envision a set of success-enhancing conditions.

We also need to acknowledge that our analysis of strategic management focuses on the field's rise within the U.S. academic establishment. Although the substance of an academic field accumulates through contributions by scholars in various locales, the sociology of an academic field may differ considerably by country and region (Merton, 1973; Graham, et al., 1983). European social scientists, for instance, tend to take a more qualitative, inductive, and philosophical approach than their American counterparts; business disciplines tend to be of relatively low status in European universities; and European universities have different faculty evaluation criteria and processes than American institutions (Graham, et al., 1983). All of these differences highlight the need for separate consideration of the sociology of academic fields in different countries and regions. It would be interesting to use our model to explain the trajectory of the field in other countries and to conduct cross-country comparisons.

Differentiation

In our formulation, the first step in the establishment of an academic field is for early advocates to claim that some important phenomena fall outside the scope of existing disciplines. For strategic management, this claim of distinctiveness came both from inside and outside.

As early as the 1930s, management theorists asserted that the work of top executives, or general managers, was qualitatively different from the work of managers at lower hierarchical levels (Barnard, 1938; Selznick, 1949). Among the distinctive tasks faced by general managers were formulating company purpose, adapting the firm to the environment, and creating an organization for implementation. Indeed, the justification for business policy courses, and in turn for the policy perspective, was that the task of general management amounted to more than being able to understand and draw upon the specialized fields of business (Schendel & Hofer, 1979). Rather, it required being able to integrate these perspectives into a comprehensive concept of the firm's direction and internal design (Guth, 1973). In turn, business policy writers portrayed their domain in lofty terms. For example, Kenneth Andrews, one of the leading figures in the business policy group at Harvard and co-author of the most widely used casebooks of the 1960s and 1970s, opened his 1971 (vii) book, *Corporate Strategy*, with this passage:

> This small book is devoted…to the important class of businessmen and women who run our companies or corporations…. Its members have responsibility for leading the organizations that develop material wealth in our society and…make life worthwhile.

Upon the relabeling of the field, Schendel and Hofer (1979, pp. 5-6) similarly wrote of the large stakes involved in developing a distinct field of strategy:

> [It is often fatal to presume…] that all there is to managing the total enterprise is the task of coordinating the various functional fields…. Since the end of World War II, major changes have occurred in the environment and nature of businesses that have required an explicit identification and understanding of the concept of strategy and its management.

Thus, the systematic study of policy/strategy was portrayed as a societally essential undertaking that would contribute to economic vitality. Without a body of knowledge about the general management task, businessmen and women would be deficient, and the overall system of economic enterprise would suffer.

> Proposition 1: The portrayal of a mission that is socially important will be positively related to an aspiring community's likelihood (and speed) of achieving the status of an academic field.

Other outside forces also contributed to the claim that general management, or business policy, was worthy of dedicated attention. In their extensive analysis of business schools, sponsored by the Ford Foundation, Gordon and Howell (1959) prescribed that "the capstone of the core curriculum should be a course in business policy which will give the students an opportunity to pull together what they have learned in the separate business fields." Ten years later, in 1969, the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), added an accreditation requirement that undergraduate and MBA students be exposed to the "study of administrative processes under conditions of uncertainty, including integrating analysis and policy determination of the overall management level" (AACSB, 1969). This standard did not literally require a business policy course, but it clearly validated the material and intent of such courses. AACSB's validation, then, greatly helped to support the early field's claim of a distinctive charter that was not being fulfilled by any existing entities.

> Proposition 2: The affirmation of distinctive worthiness by outside influential parties will be positively related to an aspiring community's likelihood (and speed) of achieving the status of an academic field.

As with other new fields, the emergence of strategic management required the assertion that existing fields were incomplete and ill-equipped to address the problems of general managers; importantly, however, the new field did not entail the outright repudiation, or claim of incorrectness, of any existing fields. Policy researchers in the 1970s liberally drew from the fields of marketing (e.g., Hatten, Schendel, & Cooper, 1978), economics (Hofer, 1975), and organizational theory (Miles & Snow, 1978), for instance. Although scholars in these adjacent fields may have been skeptical about the theoretical or methodological sophistication of business policy, and they may have had latent concerns that the new field would pull resources away from them, there were no apparent indications that they felt under attack. The new field of policy was putting their ideas to new uses, rather than criticizing or rejecting them.

The perception of complementarity between strategic management and the more established fields of management – particularly organizational behavior (OB) and organizational theory (OT) – occurred partly through serendipitous factors. At most schools, new slots for policy/strategy faculty were bestowed on management departments. Thus, in interdepartmental contests for resources, the OB and OT faculty in these departments actually benefited from the rise of the new field. Relatedly, a significant proportion of the young scholars who were in the first major wave of PhD graduates (in 1978-81) in policy/strategy (outside Harvard) were trained in management departments, with OB and OT faculty on their PhD committees, and dissertation topics and styles that were closely allied with those of the more established management areas.[7] Initially, then, the new field was welcomed, not resisted, by its sister management disciplines.[8]

> Proposition 3: The portrayal of a mission that is complementary to, rather than competitive with, existing adjacent fields will be positively related to an aspiring community's likelihood (and speed) of achieving the status of an academic field.

Mobilization

Political opportunity structure. Social movements thrive if environmental conditions are conducive to their advance (McAdam, 1982). In the late 1970s, conditions in support of strategic management were abundant, and it seems that no established field had its eye on these opportunities or felt threatened by the possibility that a new player would pursue them.

American corporations faced an exceptional level of complexity. The oil embargo earlier in the decade had signaled a new level of global interdependence; products and services were increasingly moving across national boundaries; advances in information technology were providing direct business opportunities and threats; and signs of impending deregulation were already evident in several industries (Schendel & Hofer, 1979). Moreover, the majority of major US firms had become diversified (Rumelt, 1982). In short, American companies confronted external challenges with their own internal complexity. While there is no evidence that firms expected or asked the academic world to develop solutions to their concerns, there are considerable indications that corporations took steps that bolstered the claims of policy scholars that their domain was distinctive, important, and amenable to sophistication.

Many companies installed elaborate strategic planning systems, complete with sophisticated environmental forecasts, assessments of company strengths and weaknesses, and other elements that were at the core of the field of business policy (Schendel & Hofer, 1979). In an initiative that has been likened to an agricultural extension service, over 200 companies joined the PIMS (Profit Impact of Market Strategies) program, contributing comprehensive data about their individual business units and then receiving detailed reports on how various strategic initiatives were associated with performance for similar businesses in the database (Hambrick, 1983). At the same time, consulting firms were developing tools that fueled the impression that strategy was a rigorous, scientific endeavor. For example, the Boston Consulting Group set forth its findings about the experience curve and introduced its product portfolio matrix as a technical aid to resource allocation decisions. McKinsey and Company introduced a competing model, the GE/McKinsey Business Screen, reinforcing the idea that strategy was susceptible to analytic order and decomposition (Hofer & Schendel, 1978). Thus, there was a readiness in corporate America for systematic, rigorous examination of strategy.

> Proposition 4: The existence of external demand, or at least the appearance of external relevance, for an aspiring community's body of knowledge will be positively related to the community's likelihood (and speed) of achieving the status of an academic field.

It is difficult for an academic field to emerge if it has few students to teach. Although an aspiring academic community might conceivably grow with or without student enrollments, the reality is that universities create faculty slots in proportion to teaching demand – especially in those units, such as business schools, that have limited access to government research grants. The AACSB accreditation requirement of an integrative course (in both undergraduate and graduate business curricula), imposed in 1969, not only helped to validate the field, as noted above, but it also caused a huge surge in demand for permanent policy instructors.

Through the late 1970s this demand was largely met through a combination of senior professors from other fields and young Harvard-trained disciples, as discussed below. The numbers, however, were not nearly sufficient to meet the foreseeable need, and it was concluded that there was room – indeed great room – for more doctorates in policy than Harvard could produce. While there is no indication that efforts were coordinated, several management departments – all in about 1972 to 1975 – admitted their first cohort of doctoral students interested expressly in business policy. These schools included Michigan, Northwestern, Penn State, Pittsburgh, Purdue, and Washington. By regulatory fiat, the AACSB requirement thus triggered a large increase in demand for policy courses, which in turn propelled an increase in the intellectual resources, or at least scholarly headcount, available for the emerging field:

> Proposition 5: The existence of internal demand (whether by fiat or student preference) for the knowledge taught by an aspiring community will be positively related to the community's likelihood (and speed) of achieving the status of an academic field.[9]

Shared interests. To mount a social movement, a group of actors must share some common interests that require change in the *status quo* (Davis & Thompson, 1994). For the field of business policy in the late 1970s, two interests prevailed – one intellectual and one practical. On the intellectual side, faculty drawn to business policy had an interest in advancing knowledge about the work of general managers. They believed this was a topical domain of great significance that more established fields were unequipped or not inclined to address.

At a practical level, members of the policy/strategy movement sought to advance their careers and status within business schools. By this point, the movement consisted of two socially intertwined cohorts, both of which stood to gain a great deal professionally if this new field could somehow prosper. First, there were the tenured faculty who had risen through other fields but whose interests had shifted to policy. Many of these professors were hired during the dramatic build-up of business school faculties in the 1960s, so they typically still had 20 or more career years ahead of them. Most of these individuals had cut back or ceased their involvement in their original academic fields, in favor of teaching, reading, and writing in business policy. If the field did not advance, these professors faced a long period of status- and resource-deprivation within their schools, while members of other fields gained resources and influence.

The second cohort consisted of the non-tenured Harvard DBAs in policy who had dispersed to various business schools. Their professional concerns had a grim urgency: by 1979, no one who had cloaked himself as a policy professor had received tenure at any elite university outside Harvard. Indeed, several tenure cases had been turned down in the late 1970s, including highly visible cases at Northwestern, Columbia, and MIT. Further complicating the situation for these young scholars, there were no apparent publication outlets for policy-oriented work to help them build their resumes. Since most of these professors were located in management departments within business schools, the logical places to attempt to publish would have been the two well-regarded journals published by the Academy, *AMJ* and *AMR*, as well as in *ASQ*. However, as noted earlier, these journals had published very few policy-oriented articles in recent years, and their editorial review boards were not oriented to consider such manuscripts.

These two groups, then, had clear and specific interests in career advancement. And unless something changed, the non-tenured faculty had exceedingly limited prospects.

> Proposition 6: The existence of a bounded set of shared interests among an aspiring community's members (even those of distinctly different cohorts or subgroups) will be positively related to the community's likelihood (and speed) of achieving the status of an academic field.

Social infrastructure. In order to mobilize toward a common objective, a group must have available forums for discourse and rallying (Tilly, 1978). Mobilization will be further aided if members have social ties (Knoke, 1990). In the case of strategic management, forums for discourse originated in the early 1970s, but were substantially enhanced between 1977 and 1980. Moreover, the network among actors in the field at that time was relatively dense, due largely to the common bond to the business policy group of the Harvard Business School.

In 1977, a group of 93 academics, consultants, and managers met at the University of Pittsburgh to discuss theory and research in the field of business policy. Organized by Dan Schendel and Charles Hofer, the purpose of the conference was to: "(1) describe and define the field of strategic management by discussing major research findings in the area; (2) critically examine the research methodologies and data sources in use in policy research; and (3) suggest directions that seemed fruitful for future research" (Schendel & Hofer, 1979: viii).

At least three things are worth noting about the Pittsburgh conference of 1977. First, it was the inaugural occasion for floating the idea of a new name for the field. Although the conference was called "Business Policy and Planning Research: The State of-the-Art," papers were commissioned and sessions organized around a new label, "Strategic Management," in an intriguing instance of academic rebranding.[10] Second, this conference was the first notable forum for focusing on theory and research in the field. Although the annual program of the BPP Division of the Academy involved research presentations (typically about five to ten papers per year during the 1970's), the few previous special conferences had focused primarily on pedagogic issues associated with the capstone policy course (Guth, 1973). Third, the Pittsburgh conference had a distinct undercurrent – as conveyed by the list of invitees, the organization of the sessions, and even the formal objectives – that this was to be an occasion to consider the virtues of normal science, theory, generalizability, and research methodologies other than case studies.

In 1980, another piece of social infrastructure was put in place. Dan Schendel took the lead in forming the Strategic Management Society (SMS). A professional association devoted exclusively to the study of strategic management, SMS convened conferences that provided occasions for members to meet more frequently than the once-a-year Academy meetings.

More importantly, SMS launched *Strategic Management Journal* in 1980,[11] with Schendel as editor. About one-third of the 31 academic editorial board members had attended the Pittsburgh conference, thus providing a continuity of the discourse that had been launched at that occasion. Soon after its inception, *SMJ* was included in the Social Science Citation Index; by 1984, the journal's citation impact placed it in the same league as the two Academy journals (according to calculations provided to us by William Starbuck, who has long tracked such statistics); and a 1984 survey of strategy academics at major research universities placed *SMJ* in the top tier of research outlets for the field (MacMillan, 1991).

> Proposition 7: The existence of multiple credible forums for discourse and rallying will be positively related to an aspiring community's likelihood (and speed) of achieving the status of an academic field.

The Pittsburgh conference represented an initiative to move the field of business policy beyond the repertoire and ethos of Harvard Business School (HBS). At the same time, HBS's influence and involvement in the field had been so substantial that any refashioning could not have occurred without bridges to that school's intellectual legacy and social infrastructure. It is noteworthy, then, that 29 of the 82 academics who attended the conference (or 35 percent) had either been trained or had taught at HBS (Evered, 1983). An even higher proportion (19 of 40) of the authors commissioned to write papers and commentaries had a connection to the Harvard business policy group. Charles Hofer, one of the two conference organizers, was a graduate of the Harvard program. Thus, a large group shared a Harvard connection: they studied common materials, learned the same style of research and teaching, and almost certainly maintained relatively close ties, though many of them had dispersed to schools across the country. This group was accompanied, though, by others who had been intellectually drawn to the field of policy, but with different training and connections. As noted earlier, these individuals tended to be senior scholars who had risen through other fields (including OB and marketing) and who were trained in and accustomed to doing research in the normal science mold.

Although we will turn to the issue of legitimacy-building in a moment, it is useful to note here that these two groups each brought a form of legitimacy. Those with Harvard connections had the imprint of a highly prestigious university. Although HBS had an idiosyncratic emphasis on managerial practice rather than theory (an emphasis that began to shift somewhat in the late 1970s (Porter & Siggelkow, 1999)), the school was very highly regarded for its seminal work in such areas as human relations (Roethlisberger& Dickson, 1939), organization design (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), and business history (Chandler, 1962). Those without Harvard connections brought a different form of legitimacy. These were primarily senior scholars who had accumulated significant records in other areas of management, but who were now committed to the new field. Among them were several former presidents of the Academy of Management, five of whom attended the Pittsburgh conference.[12] Thus, the emerging field of strategic management was endowed with significant social and reputational capital.

This combination was perhaps ideal for mounting an academic social movement (Marwell, Oliver, & Prahl, 1988; Uzzi, 1996; Mizruchi & Stearns, 2001). On the one hand, the group had a well-interconnected core, which facilitated community identity and peer support. But the group also possessed variety, which allowed for the importation of new ideas and norms, and which almost certainly helped the embryonic field achieve legitimacy in the eyes of the more established fields from which the non-Harvard senior scholars had come. This profile is in line with Reagans and Zuckerman’s (2001) finding, in their study of corporate R&D teams, that a combination of high network density and heterogeneity lead to greater team productivity.

> Proposition 8: The existence of a socially interconnected core *and* complementary variety will be positively related to an aspiring community's likelihood (and speed) of achieving the status of an academic field.

The coexistence of the BPP Division of the Academy and the SMS was highly beneficial for the growth of the field. SMS had several distinctive features: It aimed for an international membership, and accordingly alternated its annual meeting between North America and elsewhere. It intended to bridge the worlds of scholarship and managerial practice by setting a target for one-third of its members to be academics, one-third business managers, and one-third consultants (Schendel's "ABC" philosophy). Further, it differentiated itself by adopting a premium pricing structure that placed annual dues and meeting fees at about 10 times the amount charged by the Academy. Thus, Schendel went to lengths to differentiate SMS from BPP, so as not to pose a direct threat. In its early years, SMS funded a BPP doctoral dissertation award, and the two entities were in many other ways synergistic.

Nonetheless, SMS clearly posed a challenge to the BPP Division and the overall Academy. By this time (1980), the BPP Division had 1400 members (among 5000 total Academy members). When the inaugural volume of *SMJ* published 25 articles, and 31 academics appeared on its masthead, it was clear that the new journal, and its parent SMS, provided a potential new home for strategic management scholars. If the Academy could not become more congenial to this new field, particularly by opening up its journals to such work, it ran the risk of losing a significant part of its membership (perhaps especially those strategy scholars who were at prosperous schools and could afford SMS's prices). As important, it ran the risk of losing out on a quickly expanding, albeit largely unproven, body of research.

It is little surprise, then, that between 1979 and 1985 the number of policy/strategy scholars on the review boards of *AMJ* and *AMR* increased from eight to 20.[13] The number of policy/strategy articles in these two journals increased even more greatly, from five (out of a total of 111 articles published) in 1979 to 32 (out of 127) in 1985 (based on the methodology described in Figure 2). The creation of SMS and its *SMJ*, two vital elements of social infrastructure, not only provided forums and research outlets for strategy scholars, but also put the Academy of Management under pressure to be more open to this new field's research. If the Academy had faced no external pressure to be more receptive to policy/strategy research, it is less likely that its journals would have opened up to the new field to the extent they did. Conversely, if the external competition from SMS had been head-on and aggressive, the leaders of the establishment Academy might have rejected outright the immature field. Consistent with Chen and MacMillan's (1992) finding, in their study of interfirm rivalry, that oblique or peripheral actions provoke less retaliation than do head-on attacks, we propose the following:

> Proposition 9: The existence of new forums (societies and journals) that pose oblique competition – as opposed to no competition or direct, hostile competition – to forums of the establishment will be positively related to an aspiring community's likelihood (and speed) of achieving the status of an academic field.

Legitimacy-building

In order to be granted a position in the academic establishment, an aspiring community's ideas and body of work need to be seen as legitimate in the eyes of other scholars. One way of achieving legitimacy is through logical argumentation (Merton, 1973). As discussed previously, early writers in business policy argued forcefully for the importance of their domain (Andrews, 1971) and asserted that it was amenable to systematic inquiry (Schendel & Hofer, 1979).

Prior to the mid-1970s, research in business policy had been overwhelmingly oriented toward qualitative case studies, with little interest in theory or generalizability (Schendel & Hofer, 1979). Although there were some efforts in the 1970s to adopt the conventions of normal science (e.g., Rumelt, 1974; Hatten, Schendel, & Cooper 1978), it was not until the proceedings of the Pittsburgh conference were published in 1979 (Schendel & Hofer, 1979) that the call for theory-based quantitative research was formally voiced or heeded.

And it was heeded. Of the 25 articles in the 1980 inaugural volume of *SMJ*, 11 included formal hypotheses or propositions, and eight used quantitative analysis of substantial samples (as opposed to case reports). In an analysis of the most highly-cited empirical strategy works published in the period 1980-1985, Hambrick (1990) reported that they overwhelmingly featured tests of explicit hypotheses using multivariate analysis of significant samples. Thus, very quickly, the new field adopted the style of research that those in more established adjacent fields – particularly marketing and organizational behavior – deemed as credible.[14]

The emerging field of strategic management was also able to adopt, and even cloak itself in, the language and logic of the most prestigious of the social sciences – economics. Beginning with Rumelt's study of diversification (1974) and Hatten, Schendel, and Cooper's study of strategic groups in the brewing industry (1978), the constructs and tools of economics were imported into the emerging field of strategy. Porter's (1980) book, the most highly cited work in the new field in the 1980-1985 period (Hambrick, 1990), was expressly dedicated to introducing and applying the concepts and findings from industrial economics to the topic of strategy. The next several years saw widespread use of the terminology, logic, and methods of economics (e.g., Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1986; Rumelt, Schendel, & Teece, 1991). Interestingly, the new field's incorporation of economic thinking did not evoke any apparent consternation from economists. Indeed, during the 1980s, several prominent economists published pieces in *SMJ* and other management journals, reinforcing the appearance of an intellectual alliance between the new field and "the physics of the social sciences" (Stinchcombe, 1994).

Of course, not everything published in the new field in the early 1980s was in the mold of normal science or economics-based. In fact, there continued to be a wide proliferation of topics, research styles, and methods (summarized in Hambrick, 1990; Hoskisson, et al., 1999). Nonetheless, the new field achieved enough legitimacy, from its appearance of sophistication during those early days, that it was able to obtain its foothold in the academic establishment.

> Proposition 10: The adoption of the norms and style of research of more established adjacent fields will be positively related to an aspiring community's likelihood (and speed) of achieving the status of an academic field.

Table 1 summarizes our portrayal of the rise of strategic management as an admittance-seeking social movement.

---------- Table 1 about here ----------

Brief Application to Two Fields

It is useful to consider the validity of our model for explaining the trajectories of fields other than strategic management. International business (IB) and social issues in management (SIM) particularly come to mind as relevant parallels within the administrative sciences. Both originated in about the same era as SM, and their early participation levels were only slightly below SM in its early days (Guth, 1973). They both received a boost (as did SM) from AACSB accreditation requirements calling for their subject areas to be included in business curricula. But their eventual trajectories diverged greatly from that of SM, as well as from each other.

International Business

The field of international business originated in the 1950s, as an outgrowth of the internationalization of corporations (We rely on the following sources in this section: Buckley and Lessard, 2005; Dunning, 2002; Fayerweather, 1974; 1986; 1994; Hawkins, 1984; Kwok, Arpan, and Folks, 1994). The field gained momentum through the formation of the Association for Education in International Business in 1958 (later renamed the Academy of International

Business, or AIB), the founding of the *Journal of International Business Studies* (*JIBS*) in 1970, and the creation of IB departments at a number of prominent business schools, such as Columbia, New York University, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin. IB attracted scholars from various other disciplines, including economics, marketing, management, and finance.

In some ways, the field went on to flourish greatly. Membership in AIB increased substantially; the number of internationally-oriented courses taught in business schools expanded; and articles on international topics became more common in major journals of all the fields of business. In other ways, however, the field of IB waned in its distinct identity and influence. During the 1980s and 1990s, IB departments at a number of major business schools were eliminated, and absorbed into other units. Today, many business schools have interdisciplinary centers or institutes devoted to international issues, but very few distinct IB departments remain. (For example, none of the schools listed in the prior paragraph still have distinct IB departments.) *JIBS* continued as a viable specialty publication, but did not achieve the status of a top-tier journal (SSCI data; Harzing, 2006). Our sense (but without concrete data) is that it is rare today for tenure cases to be proposed under the label of IB. It might be said that IB served its purpose by helping to internationalize business schools, rather then by assuring its own continued identity and status as an academic field.

The trajectory of IB can be explained, in great part, by our model. Working in its favor, IB was able to draw a strong differentiation from other existing fields. Asserting a socially important mission that was responsive to major trends on the business landscape, IB benefited from the AACSB accreditation requirement. In terms of resource mobilization, there was a growing student interest in international topics, and the creation of the AIB and *JIBS* were important elements of infrastructure.

Perhaps the key elements working against IB, and contributing to its difficulty in sustaining its status as a distinct field, were insufficient shared interests among its members and insufficient legitimacy-building. Members of the IB community were united by their interest in international business, but were otherwise very diverse in their professional orientations and allegiances. As a precursor of this heterogeneity, the 19 individuals who were at the first organizing session of the AIB included a mix who "represented a diverse span of subjects: accounting, economics, industrial relations, law, management, marketing, and public relations" (Fayerweather, 1986, p. 3). This breadth persisted, in the pursuit of both a three-prong agenda – education (teaching and curriculum), research, and influencing business and governments (Hawkins, 1984) – and an extraordinary array of topical areas. For instance, in a recent portrayal of IB, Buckley and Lessard (2005, p. 595) noted the various levels of analysis in the field: "the individual manger, the firm, the industry, and the environment. In each category there is vast heterogeneity." The bonds of the IB community may have been further weakened by the divided allegiances of many, perhaps most, of its members. In contrast to strategic management scholars, most of whom threw their lots in with the new field and had no way to hedge their bets, a large proportion of IB professors had intellectual homes in other fields (Fayerweather, 1986). These split allegiances may have also contributed to problems of legitimacy for the field. Because so many IB members were primarily associated with other established fields, they were under professional pressure to publish their best works in the top journals in their respective areas. In a 1985 survey of AIB members, *JIBS* was rated highly for its professional interest, but only moderately for its weight in promotion and tenure decisions (Fayerweather, 1986). Because *JIBS* was (and still is) synonymous with the field of IB, the journal's inability to secure top-tier status may have added to the timidity of IB scholars to overly commit to the field, and it may have raised questions of legitimacy in the eyes of others.

In 1984, Hawkins (then AIB president) said, "For our influence to grow, our status in scholarship and academia must become more secure." About 20 years later, a pioneer in IB both celebrated its accomplishments and bemoaned its "inability to convince non-IB colleagues… to recognize the unique contributions which IB scholars can make" (Dunning, 2002, p. 83).

Social Issues in Management

In the 1950s, a number of scholars became interested in the non-market aspects of business, or business and society; the formation of the Social Issues in Management (SIM) Division of the Academy of Management in 1971 was among the first major organizational efforts for this aspiring community (This section draws from the following sources: Epstein, 1999; 2002; Frederick, 1994; 2006; Mallott, 1998; Walsh, Weber, and Margolis, 2003; Wokutch, 1998a; 1998b.) The agenda of SIM includes an array of profound topics, including business and public policy, corporate social responsibility, stakeholder analysis, and business ethics. The field enjoyed considerable growth in the 1970s and early 1980's, both in membership and research visibility in major journals (AOM membership data; Walsh, et. al., 2003). The field was buoyed by an AACSB accreditation requirement for its courses, by a series of grants from the GE Foundation to conduct conferences, and by creation of publication outlets (notably, *Business and Society* (established in 1963), *Journal of Business Ethics* (1982), and the annual series, *Research in Corporate Social Performance and Policy* (1983).

By the early 1990s, however, SIM had lost considerable ground within the administrative sciences – a condition that has not been reversed. SIM-oriented papers appeared with less and less frequency in the top journals in management (Walsh, et. al., 2003). Currently, only about seven percent of Academy members are affiliated with SIM (down from ten percent in 1980). Although SIM still has a significant, dedicated membership and produces some excellent work on crucial topics, the field now operates at a relatively low level of participation.

SIM had several elements of our model working in its favor, and which helped account for its significant rise in the 1970s and early 1980s. Beyond the early positive developments noted above, SIM was able to claim a distinctive, socially important mission – one that no other field was prepared to take on. And the political opportunity structure was highly favorable for the new field. Widespread social unrest of the 1960s prompted a major reassessment of American institutions, including corporations and their profit orientation. This questioning of corporate purpose contributed to the formation and ascendance of SIM. As an early leader, William Frederick, said in an interview (Wokutch, 1998b, p. 221),

> But look, we [SIM] were all saved by these social protest movements. A week didn't go by without Ralph Nader raising hell about something, or the environment…and then there was the women's movement, and the black movement.

By the late 1980s, however, the political opportunity structure for SIM was reversed, and the pursuit of shareholder wealth regained primacy on the American business landscape. Several trends have been documented by Useem (1996), Ward (1997), and others: Profitable companies became the targets of takeovers – because they were not profitable enough; increasingly powerful institutional investors leaned on executives to raise profits; and many Americans started investing directly in corporations and intently watching share prices. In short, from about 1988 to 2000, an academic field that asked society, or business students, to question the primacy of profit-seeking would have faced severe skepticism. More recently, the Internet bust and a series of major corporate scandals in 2000-2002 may have created a new eagerness for SIM's agenda, but it is too early to tell if the field will be able to capitalize on this "second chance."

Much like IB, but even more so, the early members of SIM came from various intellectual traditions – economics, law, political science, philosophy, marketing, management, and others. Members applied these perspectives to a wide array of topics, including public policy toward business, corporate social responsibility, and business ethics. There was no apparent nucleus that had been trained in the same way or at the same place. The centrifugal forces within the field may have been complicated by the geographic distances between the early centers of SIM activity (at Columbia, Berkeley, and Washington) and the absence of regular forums for coalescing. One might conclude, then, that SIM was hampered by insufficient shared interest and by lack of a strong core among its members.

The social bonds of SIM seem to have been further weakened when it joined forces with the relatively new Society for Business Ethics in 1981. Although SIM previously had an interest in ethical issues, its prevailing perspectives had been economics, law, public policy, and management. The new alliance with scholars of ethics, who tended to be philosophers and moralists, was in some ways a logical expansion for SIM; but it also created an intellectual schism, which diffused the agenda of the field and (according to our interviews with SIM members) caused friction, even an antipathy, that mounted over time.

These brief analyses of IB and SIM illustrate the general applicability of our model. While we have not attempted to describe the two fields in depth, Table 2 summarizes our interpretation of how they fared in terms of our propositions. As the table and our discussion indicate, IB and SIM – by our reading, at least – were each missing some elements, perhaps most notably a “bounded set of shared interests” and a “socially interconnected core.” This observation leads to a meta-proposition: *each of our proposed elements adds, in a ceteris* *paribus manner, to an admittance-seeking community's likelihood and speed of achieving success*.

---------- Table 2 about here ----------

Implications and Summary

We have set forth a model to explain the factors that cause a new academic field to ascend, proposing that an aspiring community's chances of becoming recognized as a field will depend on the extent to which it has at hand, or puts in place, the elements of what we call an admittance-seeking social movement. We have identified the main sociopolitical ingredients that enhance an aspiring community's likelihood of success: differentiation, mobilization (a favorable political opportunity structure, shared interests, and social infrastructure), and legitimacy-building (intellectual persuasion and emulation of existing adjacent fields). In short, a new academic field will ascend not only, or even primarily, because of its intellectual advances, but also because of its sociopolitical context and undertakings.

Sociology of science researchers have long been interested in status differentials, or the pecking order, among established academic fields (Cole, 1983). Our paper complements that focus by examining the factors that allow a field to arise at all. Although the well-known problem of survivor bias makes it impossible to know how many attempts are made to start and promote new academic fields, we can readily envision that such efforts abound. Consider just a few of the communities within the administrative sciences that currently seem to be striving for more secure footing: entrepreneurship, business ethics, postmodernism, and critical studies. No doubt, a host of academic entrepreneurs are similarly engaged in trying to advance new fields in the humanities, social sciences, and other areas. Thus, our model has wide relevance, serving both as a basis for explaining the eventual fates of aspiring communities and as a prescriptive roadmap for those leaders who want to enhance their chances of success.

Our model not only lays out the types of initiatives that an aspiring field's leaders might take in order to enhance their likelihood of success, but it also suggests some of the sacrifices, or the price, that must be paid. For example, we argued that legitimacy-building is enhanced if a new field emulates the styles of adjacent better-established fields; but in some instances such research styles might be very confining, or even inappropriate, for the new field's central research questions. In this vein, the field of strategic management overwhelmingly adopted the large-sample empiricism of more established social sciences; but it largely abandoned, as part of the bargain, its interest in a deeply textured understanding of strategic decision processes. Bowman (1990) bemoaned the absence of book-length, in-depth research reports of the type that had provided the early field of business policy its distinctive character.

Indeed, it is worth reiterating that strategic management might have taken a very different course. It might have stayed with a clinical orientation; it might have aligned with military science; it might have built more on sociological or psychological perspectives. There is no way to know how these pathways would have turned out. We would surmise, however, that the broad contours of our model could still be used to explain the outcomes of alternative trajectories.

We hope our paper will stimulate research on the rise of academic fields. Although conducting empirical research on a substantial sample of academic fields will be challenging, our propositions are testable. For example, analysis of citations could be used to test our proposition about the importance of a socially interconnected core and complementary variety. Content analysis could be used to investigate our proposition about the importance of proposing a mission that is complementary to, rather than competitive with, existing adjacent fields.

Our model suggests additional lines of research as well. We could imagine very fruitful examination of the differentiated roles within an academic social movement. We have referred to a new field's "leaders" in aggregate terms, but there surely are distinct cohorts and aptitudes that make up a successful academic social movement. It would be interesting to learn what the ideal mix of human qualities is. It might also be revealing to examine how different sets of actors (those of different cohorts, or those with different social ties and training, for instance) push for different agendas within a new field. Namely, there is an opportunity to extend our emphasis on social relations to include more attention to intra-field political dynamics. Additionally, we believe there is great opportunity to model the later phases of a field's trajectory. Merton's (1973) third phase, "reconsolidation," might serve as a starting point for consideration; we can envision that, once a field has successfully traversed the early phases we have described, it is then susceptible to additional processes of hegemonization, splintering, and decay. It would also be interesting to conduct cross-border comparisons of the rise of academic fields. Our model might provide a basis for examining an academic field in a global context.

In emphasizing the sociopolitical factors that underpin the rise of a new field, we have downplayed the role of intellectual advances. In great part, this is because we believe that the appearance that good intellectual work is underway is at least as important as the substance of the intellectual thrusts of the field. For example, while Porter's 1980 book stimulated a great deal of research in the field of strategic management, other approaches might have provided just as vigorous an impetus. Similarly, the later popularity of the resource-based view might have been due both to its intellectual appeal *and* to the legitimacy and social ties of its early advocates. Academic fields – particularly in the social sciences – exist and prosper not only because they are "right" in a technical sense, but because they comprise a cohesive, critical mass of scholars able to deliver the appearance of being on a promising track. Intellectual advances are necessary ingredients for the rise of a new field, but they are by no means sufficient.

NOTES

1. We have benefited from archives provided by William Guth, the first chairman of the Business Policy and Planning Division of the Academy of Management. To conserve space, we do not list separate references for each piece of communication in these archives, but rather refer to them collectively as Guth, 1973.

2. Merton's model also included a third phase – reconsolidation with other disciplines – which we omit from our consideration, because it described events after sociology's rise.

3. Indeed, there is evidence that prominent sociologists active at the turn of the twentieth century, including Weber and Durkheim, were essentially unaware of each other (Parsons, 1937).

4. Some of our understanding of the history of strategic management comes from our own experience as participant-observers in the field since 1977, which between us has included three periods of service on the executive committee and two terms of the division chair of the Business Policy and Planning Division (later Business Policy and Strategy), two periods of service on the board of governors of the Academy of Management, and one term of service on the board of directors of the Strategic Management Society.

5. Social movement literature uses the term "resource mobilization." Resources can take many forms and may involve a wide range of organizational and social activities. Hence, we use "mobilization" and "resource mobilization" interchangeably.

6. From Academy of Management membership records, which are incomplete before 1980.

7. We speak here of such individuals as Bourgeois, Burgelman, Hambrick, Hitt, Huff, Ireland, Jemison, Lenz, and Lubatkin.

8. There may have also been intellectual reasons why the fields of OB and OT did not attempt to appropriate the domain of strategic management. OB scholars (then and now) are primarily interested in individual and small-group phenomena, rather than macro-organizational issues. And OT, at the time when strategic management was making its most aggressive push (1978-85), was distinctly leaning away from any attention to managerial volition – as typified by OT's strong interest then in population ecology and neoinstitutional theory.

9. Even though student demand for courses helps to create faculty positions (which are beneficial for the ascendance of a field), student demand does not necessarily confer prestige on a field.

10. Actually, the proposal to change the name of the field may have been first raised in an unpublished paper by Dan Schendel and Kenneth Hatten, "Business Policy or Strategic Management? A Broader View for an Emerging Discipline," presented at the 1972 program of the BPP Division of the Academy of Management.

11. There had been previous efforts to launch policy-oriented journals, but none that were peer-refereed.

12. The five former presidents of the Academy of Management who attended the Pittsburgh conference were John Miner, William Newman, Max Richards, George Steiner, and Charles Summer.

13. A panel of three senior strategic management scholars corroborated our identification of strategy-oriented editorial board members.

14. It is also interesting to consider how advances in computing power and the creation of large-scale digitized data vases (PIMS, Compustat, FTC data, etc.) may have greatly helped the emerging field of strategic management achieve legitimacy.

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Figure 1

From an Aspiring Community to an Academic Field:
An Admittance-Seeking Social Movement

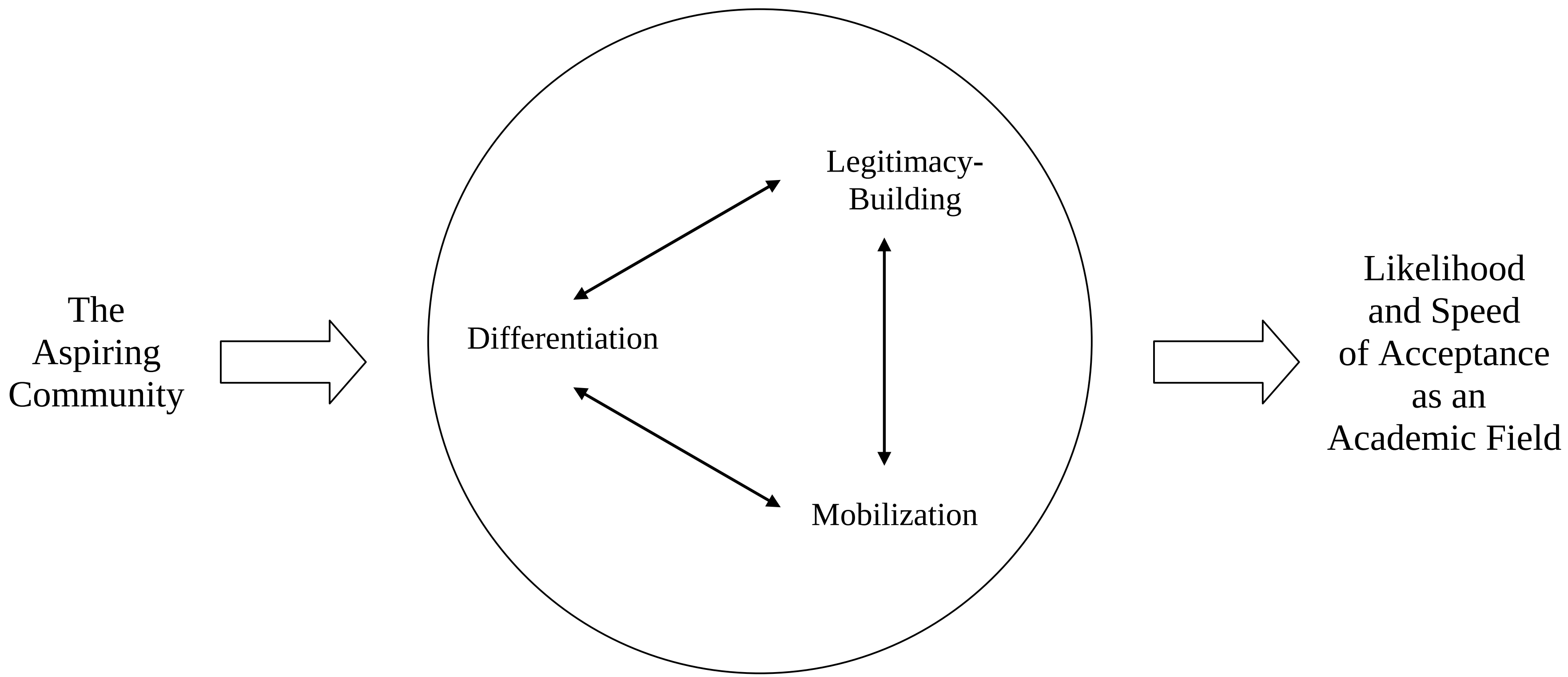
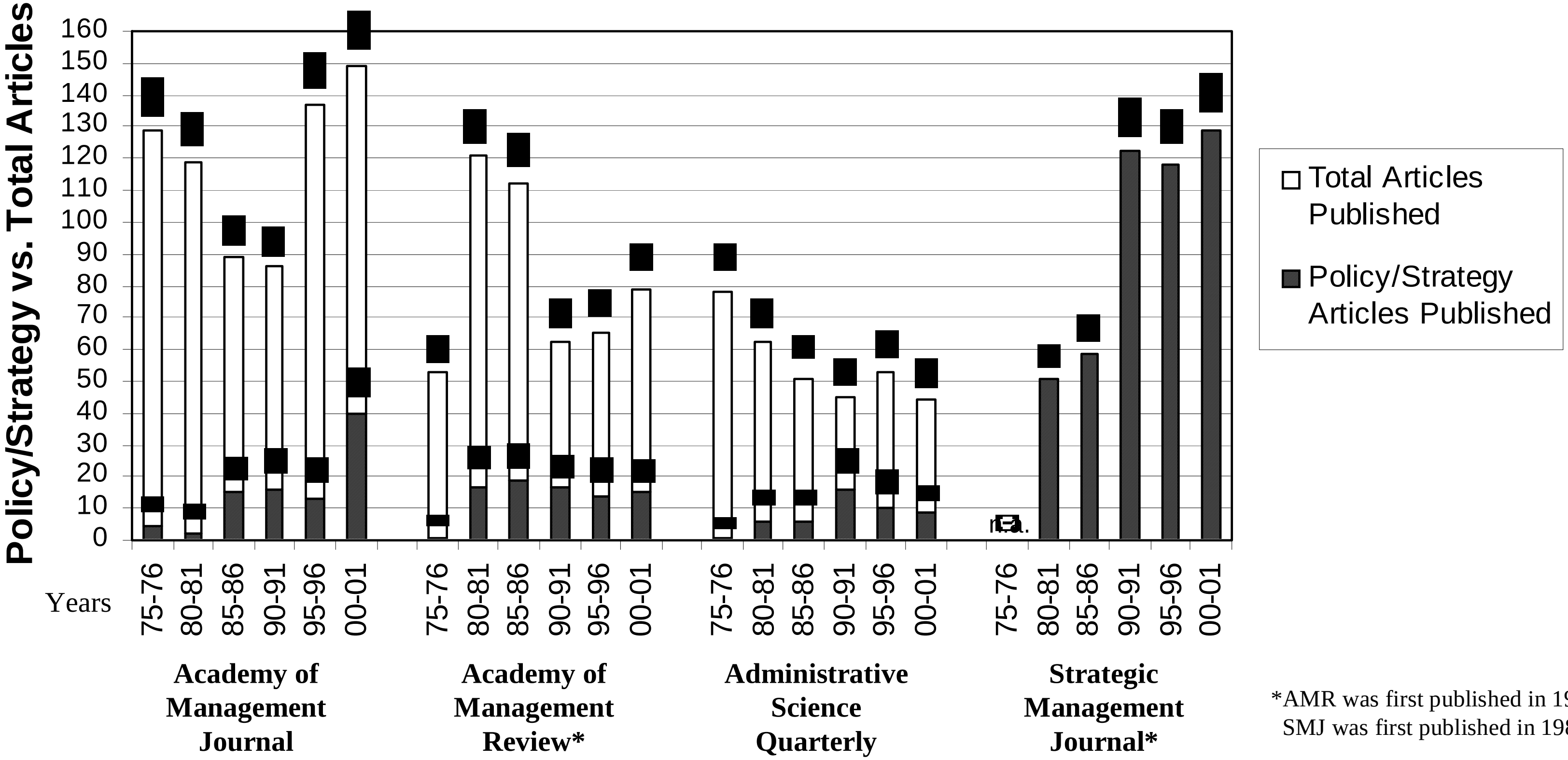


Figure 2
Policy/Strategy Articles Published in Four Major Refereed Journals, 1975-2000



*AMR was first published in 1976; SMJ was first published in 1980

Methodology

The counts of strategy/policy articles in SMJ simply matches the total number of articles in that journal. However, we used an elaborate multistage process to identify the strategic management articles in AMJ, AMR, and ASQ. First, we identified all the articles in these three journals, in the years of interest, that might even remotely be considered as strategy/policy in nature, taking care not to exclude any that might fit under a very liberal conception of the field. We identified 447 such articles (out of 1489 published in total). Second, we recruited a pool of raters who were diverse but knowledgeable about the field. Specifically, we asked 585 individuals who were authors of papers presented at the 2002 and 2003 BPS programs of the Academy of Management to serve on our panel. Of those contacted, 269 (46%) agreed to participate. Each rater received an on-line survey consisting of the titles and abstracts of 20 randomly selected articles and was asked to rate each article on a 4-point scale: 4=definitely a strategic management article, 3=probably a strategic management article, 2=probably not a strategic management article, 1=definitely not a strategic management article. Each article was rated by at least nine raters, and interrater consistency was very high (intraclass correlation = .50, p<.01; Shrout & Fleiss, 1979). Here, we count as a strategic management article any piece that received a mean rating above 3.0 and a standard deviation below 1.0.

Table 1

The Rise of Strategic Management Modeled as an Admittance-Seeking Social Movement

	Differentiation	Mobilization			Legitimacy-Building	
		Political Opportunity Structure	**Shared Interests**	**Social Infrastructure**	**Intellectual Persuasion**	**Emulation**
Prior to 1970	The work of general managers is portrayed as qualitatively different from the work of other managers (Barnard, 1938; Selznick, 1949). Distinct business policy course created at Harvard, adopted by most business schools.	Gordon & Howell (1959) prescribe a capstone course in business policy. AACSB requires an “integrative course” for business school accreditation.			Chandler’s (1962) study of the rise of American corporations demonstrates the analytic importance of the concept of corporate strategy.	
1970-74	Business policy portrayed as a societally important field (Andrews, 1971).	American corporations adopt sophisticated strategic planning systems, in face of increased external complexity. Consulting firms greatly expand, creating quasi-scientific tools for strategy analysis.	Senior professors from other fields are drawn to the field of policy. Young Harvard graduates disperse to other business schools to teach policy.	Business Policy and Planning (BPP) Division of Academy of Management formed; they start annual meetings. Several special conferences held, largely devoted to teaching.	Rumelt’s (1974) study of corporate diversification yields relatively strong results, pointing to the drawbacks of unrelated diversification.	Rumelt’s study adopts the style of normal science.
1975-79		AACSB requirement fuels huge demand for policy instructors. Several business schools start doctoral programs in policy/strategy.	Two intertwined cohorts share intellectual interests, but face career obstacles (absence of legitimacy, research outlets).	University of Pittsburgh conference (1977) leads to volume (Schendel & Hofer, 1979), renaming field “strategic management.”	Hofer (1975) presents a large inventory of testable hypotheses for the field of policy. The Schendel & Hofer volume extols the promise of the concept of strategy.	Several Purdue studies of the beer industry adopt the style of normal science – with theory, hypotheses, and multivariate statistical tests.
1980-84				· Strategic Management Society is created. · *Strategic Management Journal* is launched. · Academy of Management is under pressure to be more open to policy/strategy.	Porter’s (1980) book, Competitive Strategy, indicates the potential for applying the concepts and tools of economics to the study of strategy.	A large number of published papers adopt the style of normal science, several directly invoking concepts and tools from economics.

Table 2

The Proposed Elements of an Admittance-Seeking Social Movement: Analysis of International Business and Social Issues in Management

	International Business	Social Issues in Management
Differentiation		
1. portrayal of a socially important mission	✓	✓
2. affirmation of worthiness by outside influential parties	✓	✓
3. portrayal of a mission that is complementary to adjacent fields	✓	✓
Mobilization		
4. external demand for the community's body of knowledge	✓	yes, 1970-1985; no, 1985-2000
5. internal demand (from students)	✓	
6. bounded set of shared interests		
7. existence of multiple forums	✓	✓
8. socially interconnected core *and* complementary variety		
9. forums pose oblique competition to forums of the establishment	✓	✓
Legitimacy-building		
10. emulation of norms and styles of adjacent established fields		