

Certification of Examination of Thesis

We, the following members of the Thesis Examination Panel appointed by the Senate to examine the thesis entitled:-

"The Participation of Female Factory Workers in Voluntary Associations: Case Studies of Electronics Factory Workers in Malaysia and Thailand"

submitted by Puan Myrna L. Blake in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy hereby confirm that:-

- (i) we met on Tuesday, 3 January 1984 and submitted the candidate, Puan Myrna L. Blake to an Oral Examination in accordance with the Provisions of Part (A) Clause 8(3) of the Higher Degree Programme Requirements:-

"Unless exempted by Senate, a candidate will have to appear for an Oral Examination"

and

- (ii) that we make the following individual recommendations:-

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I, Noel Alfred Ogle, in my capacity as Secretary to the said Thesis Examination Panel, do hereby confirm that the Panel after full consideration of the recommendations of the External and Internal Examiners and of the individual recommendations of its members, has agreed to recommend to the Board of Postgraduate Studies and thereon to Senate that the candidate, Puan Myrna L. Blake be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date: 3/1/84

Noel Alfred Ogle  
(Secretary)

THE PARTICIPATION OF FEMALE FACTORY WORKERS  
IN VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

Case Studies of Electronics Factory Workers  
in Malaysia and Thailand

by

Myrna L. Blake

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of  
the requirements for the Degree of  
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## ABBREVIATIONS USED

AAFLI	Asian-American Free Labour Institute
BB	Bayan Baru
BL	Bayan Lepas
CAP	Consumers' Association Penang
EPF	Employees' Provident Fund
ESCAP	Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
FFPA,M	Federation of Family Planning Associations, Malaysia
FTZ	Free Trade Zone
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IC	Integrated circuit
ICFTU	International Confederation of Trade Unions
IMF	International Metal Workers' Federation
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
LCT	Labour Congress of Thailand
MIDA	Malaysian Industrial Development Authority
MTUC	Malaysian Trade Union Congress
NACIWID	National Advisory Council on the Integration of Women in Development
NCWA	National Commission on Women's Affairs
NCWO	National Council of Women's Organizations
NCWT	National Council of Women in Thailand
SEADAG	Southeast Asia Development Group
SOCISO	Social Security Organization
YWCEP	The Young Workers' Community Education Project
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund

## RINGKASAN

Kajian ini meninjau dua kumpulan pekerja wanita di perusahaan elektronik, dan juga dua buah persatuan yang di tubuhkan untuk memenuhi keperluan-keperluan mereka. Salah satu kumpulan ini bekerja di Kawasan Perdagangan Bebas di Malaysia, dan persatuan itu adalah sebuah agensi swasta. Kumpulan kedua pula bekerja di sebuah kilang di Negeri Thai, dan persatuannya adalah kesatuan buruh kilang tersebut.

Mengikut teori asas, keujudan persatuan-persatuan sukarela ialah akibat dari perubahan sosial. Fungsi adaptif dan integratifnya melibatkan penyelesaian masalah dan pergerakan penduduk-penduduk yang di pengaruhi oleh perubahan tersebut. Dalam kes-kes yang telah dikaji, perubahan sosial diakibatkan oleh penubuhan perusahaan elektronik syarikat-syarikat multi-nasional yang mempunyai kilang-kilang cawangan di negara-negara membangun.

Keutamaan yang diberikan oleh perusahaan ini kepada gadis-gadis remaja menyebabkan penambahan segolongan tenaga buruh yang baharu, yang sebaliknya mungkin bekerja di sektor perkhidmatan, pertanian atau bekerja di rumah tangga tanpa gaji. Sebagai pendatang baharu pekerja-pekerja ini mengalami beberapa masalah yang berkaitan dengan pekerjaan dan suasana tempat bermastautin.

Bolehlah dikatakan bahawa pokok pencapaian persatuan-persatuan tersebut adalah penyertaan pekerja-pekerja yang terlibat dan penganalisaan penyertaan itu mestilah mengambilkira beberapa faktor yang saling bergantung. Faktor-faktor ini berasaskan konteks sosio-ekonomi dan politik di mana persatuan-persatuan itu timbul, ciri-ciri persatuan-persatuan tersebut dan sifat-sifat pekerja-pekerja itu sendiri.

Analisa ini menunjukkan bahawa persoalan politik yang berkaitan adalah sikap rasmi kepada pelabur-pelabur asing, kepada kebajikan pekerja dan perhubungan buruh. Yang penting dalam konteks ekonomik pula ialah corak pembangunan perusahaan, dan kedudukan perusahaan elektronik dalam pembangunan tersebut.

Perbezaan diantara persatuan-persatuan itu adalah berkaitan dengan struktur dan fungsinya. Salah satu daripada persatuan ini ialah endogenous, dimana pekerja-pekerja diterima menjadi ahli dan isu-isu di tempat kerja di pertimbangkan. Persatuan yang satu lagi pula dipupuk dari luar, dan mencari jalan supaya dapat menggerakkan pekerja-pekerja untuk tindakan berkelompok bagi memenuhi keperluan mereka melalui perhubungan sukarela dengan persatuan. Perhubungan ini membolehkan pekerja-pekerja itu mengawal pengurusan persatuan mereka secara terhad.

Bukti dari sampel yang mengandungi lebih kurang 75 orang pekerja dari tiap-tiap golongan, menunjukkan bahawa faktor-faktor socio-ekonomi mempengaruhi latar belakang pekerja-pekerja, yang terdiri dari pekerjaan bapanya, pendidekan pekerja, pengalaman

tentang suasana bandar, pengalaman pekerjaan perusahaan, perpindahan tempat bermastautin, serta penglibatan dalam pekerjaan perindustrian. Ia juga menunjukkan bahawa faktor-faktor politik mempengaruhi jenis dan fungsi persatuan yang timbul. Faktor-faktor ini dan peranan yang ditetapkan oleh kebudayaan serta taraf gadis remaja mempengaruhi corak penyertaan mereka dalam persatuan-persatuan dan ciri-ciri mengenai peserta-peserta yang paling aktif.

Faktor-faktor yang menggalakkan pergerakan pekerja-pekerja wanita ialah kebenaran rasmi tentang penubuhan kesatuan-kesatuan kecil, pengalaman pekerja-pekerja sendiri tentang kehidupan di bandar dan pekerjaan perusahaan, kebaktian mereka kepada pekerjaan perindustrian dan penerimaan masyarakat tentang sifat kebebasan diri bagi wanita muda. Bukti-bukti itu menyarankan bahawa apabila syarat-syarat tersebut tidak wujud, penyertaan pekerja-pekerja wanita dalam persatuan-persatuan yang berkaitan dengan kerja mereka mungkin bercorak eksperimen dan sementara sahaja.

Kesimpulan bagi agensi-agensi yang cuba mengelakkan penyertaan dan penubuhan persatuan dari luar daripada populasi sasaran, ialah agensi-agensi tersebut perlu mengenal pasti faktor-faktor yang saling bergantung yang mungkin menjadi batasan ke atas penyertaan ramai yang ditujui.

## ABSTRACT

This study examines two groups of female workers employed in the electronics industry and two associations which formed to meet their needs. One group of workers is employed in a Free Trade Zone in Malaysia and the association is a non-government agency. The other group comprises the employees of one factory in Thailand and the association is the labour union of this plant.

The underlying theory is that the emergence of voluntary associations is a concomitant of social change and that their adaptive and integrative function involves problem solution and the mobilization of the population affected by the change. In the cases examined, social change is a consequence of the establishment by multinational corporations of the electronics industry, of subsidiary plants in developing countries. The industry preference for a young female work force introduces into the industrial labour force a new population which might otherwise have been employed in the service sector, in agriculture or in unpaid household work. As new entrants to the industrial sector the young women experience a number of problems relating both to their work and living environment.

It is argued that central to the achievements of the associations is the participation of the workers and that analysis of this participation must take into account the interdependence of

several factors. These factors derive from the socio-economic and political contexts in which the associations emerge, the attributes of the associations and the characteristics of the workers.

The analysis shows that of political relevance is the official stance towards foreign investors, to worker protection and labour relations. Of importance in the economic context is the pattern of industrial development and the place of the electronics industry in this development.

Variations between the associations relate to their structure and function. One of the associations is endogenous, admits members and deals with issues in the work place. The other is externally induced and seeks to mobilize workers for collective action to meet their needs through an informal affiliation with the association. This relationship allows limited control of the association's management.

The evidence from a sample of approximately 75 workers in each group, is that socio-economic factors influence the workers' backgrounds indicated by paternal occupation, the workers' education, experience of urban conditions, of industrial work and of geographical mobility, as well as their commitment to industrial employment. It is also shown that political factors influence the nature and function of the association that emerges. In combination with the culturally determined role and status of young unmarried women, these factors affect the pattern of participation in the associations and the characteristics of the core of active participants.

Factors conducive to the mobilization of women workers were found to be official tolerance of the formation of small unions, the workers' experience of urban life and industrial employment, their commitment to industrial work and the cultural acceptance of independence in young women. The evidence suggests that where such conditions do not exist the participation of women workers in associations related to their work is likely to be experimental and transitory.

The conclusions for agencies attempting to induce participation and association formation from a position external to a target population is the necessity to identify the inter-related factors which are likely to serve as constraints upon the popular participation sought.

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

This research is based on a study of two groups of female workers employed in the electronics industry. One group works in a Free Trade Zone in Penang, Malaysia, and the other workers are employees of one electronics factory in Bangkok, Thailand. In each situation a voluntary association has emerged in response to circumstances in which the workers find themselves. The association in Penang is a non-governmental body attempting to involve the workers in self-help programmes around common needs. The association in Bangkok is a trade union of the employees of the factory.

In more general terms, the studies concern the emergence of voluntary associations in situations of social change consequent to the introduction of a new industry as part of a planned industrialization programme in two developing countries. This new industry results from what some economists have labelled 'international subcontracting' (Sharpston) involving the location of labour intensive manufacturing processes in developing countries by multi-national corporations from the developed countries. The situation relies on several factors

... foreign capital, know-how, enterprise, management and marketing that are highly mobile internationally... combined with the plentiful but internationally immobile domestic semi-skilled labour. (Streeten p 394).

The young women employed in this industry represent a new group in the industrial labour force, a group which is likely to become a long-term feature of the industrial populations if the present trends in the use of micro-chip technology continue. This employment has spelled far-reaching consequences for the young women workers. The two associations examined were created to protect the interests of the workers in a situation in which they are vulnerable. The associations also represent attempts to organize this group of new entrants into the industrial work force, on the basis of shared interests. Such attempts require the participation of 'common people' in decisions and action which directly affect their lives, an ideal which is fundamental to democratic ideologies to which the two countries subscribe. Such a goal has been accepted by many nations in Asia as a prerequisite to development<sup>1</sup>, and its ramifications are especially important for agencies concerned with stimulating peoples' participation from the 'outside'.

In short, the research documents at micro-level, empirical examples of social processes significant in the economic and social development which the countries in question are trying to achieve.

#### A. THEORETICAL BASE OF THE STUDY

Because the empirical examples are linked to wider social processes, the theoretical base of the study must extend to a range

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<sup>1</sup> As a goal and method of development peoples' participation, or popular participation has been discussed at many United Nations forums, at both regional and international levels. See references to United Nations publications.

of problems relating to the nature of social change, with specific reference to the electronics industry, and to the emergence and function of voluntary associations. Of importance also is the notion of interdependence of social processes as a number of inter-related factors are at work in the development of voluntary associations and peoples' participation in them.

a. Social Change

While change is inherent in all society, even if only related to natural life cycles, the industrial revolution brought in its wake massive social changes, the repercussions of which are still being experienced all around the world.

Industrialization affected patterns of production, ownership and exchange, requiring fundamental change to economic and social institutions, the division of labour and the distribution of populations. These changes continue to occur in countries other than the birth places of modern industry. However the nature of the social and economic changes as they occur in other countries is necessarily different. Variation rests on the economic and cultural antecedents upon which modern industry impinges, the existence of advanced technology in industrialized countries, and the relationships between countries in the world. Developing countries promoting industrial programmes have the option of borrowing ready-made technology from more advanced countries. The agricultural economies on which industry is imposed may be marked by feudal or tribal social relations, or by the remnants of colonial government.

Contemporary industrialization in developing countries is generally motivated by the need for economic growth, for meeting the needs of growing populations, and for the reduction of reliance on agricultural or other primary products for earnings in foreign markets. These objectives are sometimes accompanied by nationalistic sentiments and goals of furthering the equitable distribution of the fruits of development. Shortages of technological expertise and capital for major investment in industry contribute to the dependence of some developing countries upon foreign input. These conditions set the stage for the introduction of the electronics industry.

#### The electronics industry and social change

In the last two decades the electronics industry has been established in several nations of East and South-East Asia. The first Asian subsidiary plant was founded in Hong Kong in 1960, and since then factories have sprung up in Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia.<sup>2</sup> In examining social change associated with the electronics industry it is useful to employ the analytical model adopted by Moore (1963), who approaches the study of social change by distinguishing between the preconditions of industrialization and modernization and the consequences and concomitants of these processes.

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<sup>2</sup> For fuller discussion see East-West Centre, Culture Learning Institute, 1979.

Preconditions: The introduction of the electronics industry in Asian countries is founded on the need for high technology industry to upgrade labour force skills, for labour intensive processes to absorb a growing labour force, and for the exportability of the product to boost foreign earnings. To attract the industries, governments offer investors special incentives, tax free holidays, import and export privileges, infrastructural facilities, and a suitably qualified labour force. To facilitate the administration of these incentives, special industrial zones are created, and designated as export-processing or free trade zones (FTZs). It is clear therefore that the attainment of certain levels of development is a prerequisite for the establishment of the industry, as it requires the capacity to provide modern buildings, transport and communication facilities and a literate labour force.

Other preconditions relate to the development of the industry. The electronics technology has been developed in industrialized countries, and has resulted in the proliferation of sophisticated communications media, computers, military equipment, a growing range of smaller consumer items for domestic and recreational use. Fundamental to these products is the integrated circuit, a miniscule silicon chip which integrates several thousand transistors, resistors and other circuitry. The production of the integrated circuit is a highly labour intensive task, and it is therefore economically beneficial for manufacturers to locate this part of the production process where labour costs are low. Through a combination of direct investments and subcontracting arrangements that tap sources of cheap labour, the companies bring about an

international division of labour and take on a multinational corporate structure.

In this division of labour, research, planning and technological development takes place in the home bases of the corporations, which are located in the USA, Japan and the EEC. Preparation of the silicon wafers which form the base of the integrated circuit also takes place in parent companies. The wafers, 2 to 4 inches in diameter are specially treated to create electrically conductive and non-conductive areas. The circuit pattern is etched into the wafer with acids and solvents, and the wafers are baked in ovens into which special gases are introduced to alter the characteristics of each device in specified ways. Once prepared these wafers are sent to Asian countries where the labour-intensive, routine and intermediary steps of production take place. These processes require that each wafer be sliced into 500 separate chips, and each chip be bonded with as many as 50 gold wires, each wire as fine as a strand of human hair. At top speed, bonders produce 800 chips a day. Once bonded the chips are baked again and sealed in plastic or ceramic protective coating. Testers check the reliability of the components by dipping them into tanks of chemicals and subjecting them to electrical currents.<sup>3</sup> The completed components are then sent back to parent companies for the next stages of the assembly processes. The minuteness of the components permits air transportation between countries. The micro processes of assembly

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<sup>3</sup> For further description see Bernstein et al 1977, Grossman, 1979.

require infinite patience and manual dexterity, qualities which are attributed to young women.

Concomitants and consequences: The establishment of electronics plants in Asian countries has brought about massive employment opportunities for young women. In general, this work force is comprised of unmarried women between the ages of 16 and 24 years, with a minimum of 6 years of formal education. These young female workers constitute between 80 to 90% of the work force of any one electronics plant, and are employed mostly as production operators, daily-rated and working on rotating shifts so that production continues around the clock.<sup>4</sup> A few women may be employed in clerical positions. However, supervisory, technical and managerial positions tend to be held by men.

Apart from the qualities which young women bring to this micro assembly work, it is also evident that they constitute an abundant supply of the cheapest labour available. Young women are not likely to be the sole, or even main wage-earner in a family, and are therefore more easily satisfied with a low wage than a head of household. Nor would they or their families suffer great hardship from the fluctuations of work which is closely related to the international market demands for the electronic components. Furthermore, their youth would mean ignorance and inexperience with the processes of labour organization and action which might

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<sup>4</sup> See Lim, Yoon.

contribute to wage hikes or loss of work hours. Their unmarried status saves the costs of maternity benefits and absenteeism related to child care and domestic duties. As products of traditional patriarchal systems of Asian cultures, they are also expected to be docile and pliable.

What does this employment entail in terms of social change? Change is felt at three levels, the individual workers, women as a social group and society. For society, it means a new element in the industrial population, a group of workers who might otherwise have been employed in agricultural activities, or in the service sector which provides the more typical occupations for young girls of this level of education. It means a shift in the distribution of labour and income earning. Young women who might have remained dependents in their families, contributing unpaid labour in the home or in family agricultural activity for a few years before marriage, now contribute to total family income from their wages.

As the factories are generally located in urban areas, close to transport facilities, the industry has meant the migration of young women from small towns and villages into the urban areas. This migration coupled with the earning power of women, could mean change to family structure, deriving not only from the break with extended families and traditional ties, but also later marriages and fewer children. In the short run, it means an influx of young unmarried women into communities near the industrial zones, a phenomenon for which communities are not prepared and often do not adapt quickly enough.

For the individual worker, change means adaptation to routine work under production pressures and the prolonged use of microscopes for the minute processes of assembling the electronics components. Frequent shift changes and night work are part of the new work world. Wages are barely enough for subsistence, opportunities for promotion are few and the employment insecurity linked to world economic fluctuations, means occasional cut-backs of work-days, and accompanying loss of the daily-rated wage, temporary lay-off or retrenchment. On the other hand, when demands for the products are high, opportunities for overtime work and therefore higher earnings, may be available for long stretches of time. The minimal skills acquired are not easily transferred to other employment, and low wages do not permit substantial savings to meet periods of cut-back or retrenchment. Contractual work in a modern factory means new formal and informal relationships and unfamiliar situations relating to cash incomes, administrative details and meeting basic personal needs. The individual worker must also adapt to foreign managerial styles, and to the new communities in which she seeks accommodation, if she has migrated from her home. However, the employment means not only economic independence but also an escape from early marriage and parenthood, freedom and independence from the constraints which traditional families and communities place on young unmarried women, and opportunities for exposure to different values and behavioural options, and for acquiring knowledge.

For women as a group, employment in the modern sector and in urban conditions means a release from the entrapments of unskilled and unpaid work, low levels of education and drudgery associated with rural life and other more typical female jobs in the private

sector. It is not unlikely that the demonstration of earning capacity may bring about the indirect benefits of increased formal education, as it becomes evident that investment in women's education results in economic returns. However, employment in the electronics industry does not fulfil the maximum promise of modern employment. As the corporations capitalize on the marginality of women's position in the labour force by maintaining them at low wages and in semi-skilled untenured jobs, they reinforce women's secondary position in society. The inferior position thus bestowed on women, is both economic and social. In a hierarchical work triangle in which women form the base of unskilled or semi-skilled labour and men the apex of management, administration and supervision, women's subordinate position in a patriarchal system is nurtured.

The large scale employment of women is not unprecedented. In the early stages of the industrial revolution, in countries where it took root, women were employed in large numbers in the textile industries, for many of the same reasons which are cited above, namely that they formed a docile labour force, would work long hours without complaint and could be paid lower wages than men (Cole 1948, Smelser 1959). In more recent times, large numbers of women have been, and are still, engaged in the textile and garments industry in several Asian countries, Hong Kong, Korea, Indonesia, Taiwan and Thailand.

The electronics industry introduces some distinctive features of women's employment, which are worthy of note. For one, the firms are run generally as replicas of parent companies, and introduce

ideas, values and management styles foreign to the culture of host countries. Secondly, the products are associated with advanced and futuristic technology which has little connection with women's domestic and traditional role, in the way that the textile industry was logically linked with women's task of weaving and of providing clothing for her family.

Of greater importance to this study, is a third feature, namely the higher level of education and literacy required of electronics workers as compared with textile workers, and fourthly, that there is little evidence of labour organization among them. Furthermore, they are likely to remain a significant group in the industrial labour force until machines can profitably replace their labour. Therefore, they provide a unique opportunity to examine the processes and dynamics of voluntary association foundation and function in a situation which spells social change for a major group in a population.

#### Voluntary Associations and Social Change

A necessary preface to any discussion of voluntary associations is a working definition of them. Scholars reviewing the literature on voluntary associations (Anderson 1971, Johnson 1975, Kerri 1976, Sills 1968, Tomeh 1973) have noted the diversity of definitions and approaches to this subject. For present purposes, the definition formulated by Sills in the International Encyclopaedia of Social Science (1968) will be employed. The definition is as follows:

A voluntary association is an organized group of persons (1) that is formed in order to further some common interest of its members; (2) in which membership is voluntary in the sense that it is neither mandatory nor acquired through birth; and (3) that exists independently of the state (p 362 - 3).

Sills observes that despite the broadness of the definition, it admits some exception. He notes, for instance, that membership in labour unions and professional societies is not truly voluntary when it is a prerequisite for employment; membership in a church group or family society is to some extent 'inherited' from one's parents; and official requirements for registration of associations introduce an element of state control. Accepting these exceptions, the definition is adequate for the associations studied here.

While it is clear that social change as a consequence of industrialization and concomitant with modernization takes many forms which are influenced by antecedent cultures, there is some convergence or regularity in the kind of social institutions and processes which emerge. Among these are the development of bureaucracies and a modern civil service, the mobility of labour, change in the basis of social status and social differentiation, the distribution of services, particularly education, the development of the media of mass communication, change in family patterns and the proliferation of secondary social groups based on common interest. Reasons for the commonality of interest which form the basis of secondary social groups lie in the nature of the new systems of economic exchange and divisions of labour which require the support of new social formations. The relationship between economic change, social change and the need for new forms of association is spelled out by Little (1965) as follows:

The substitution of a market economy for an economy based upon subsistence involves the disturbance of traditional ideas of status. New roles are created whose fulfilment necessitates the interaction of individuals on a basis of common interest in such things as wages, education, religion, and politics rather than genealogical origin and descent. Before, however, the new forms of association can be fully institutionalized there is required a system of relationships which will link the old with the new structure. This is needed because the gap in terms of social values being very wide, traditional roles have to be adapted and fresh social institutions integrated within a wider social system than previously (p 1).

In other words, voluntary associations "facilitate the transition of the individual and societies to participate in the modern world" (Anderson 1971, p. 216). In general terms, their functions in circumstances of transition have been viewed as 'adaptive' and 'integrative' (Anderson 1971, Banton 1968, Gray 1976, Kerri 1976, Johnson 1975, Little 1965, Meillasoux 1968, Smith 1966).

The adaptive and integrative functions of voluntary associations have been interpreted and described in various ways, at both individual and societal level. Little (1965) and Meillasoux (1968) for instance, have demonstrated the value of voluntary associations for individuals in transition from rural to urban life in some African states. In this transition voluntary associations have met needs for social security, for new social networks and for solutions to problems of sex relationships in the modern context. Johnson (1975) observed similar functions played by voluntary associations in Hong Kong, arguing that they "can be critical in the resocialization of migrant families" (p 61). Nash (1958) illustrates how a factory union enhanced the adaptation of workers to factory employment in a village in Mexico.

At the societal level, voluntary associations facilitate the integration of individuals bound together by their affiliation, into wider social processes thereby contributing to social progress. Geertz (1962) for instance asserts that the rotating credit institutions help the peasant to develop "trader attitudes towards money and its uses" (p 242), thus preparing him for modern economic activity. Sills (1968) maintains that the fact of participation in associational processes provides training in organizational skills. Based on his work in Cantel, Nash (1958) has observed that the revolutionary decade in Mexico found sympathetic response in Cantel because of the prior formation of the social basis of the factory workers' union which had developed with the introduction of a factory in the district. In Smith's view (1980) the value of voluntary associations, or FVOs (formal voluntary organizations) as he calls them, is that they serve as channels to communicate ideas, values and motivations, and to mobilize large parts of society in a short time. He observes that these modernizing influences of voluntary associations are comparable to the influences of formal education, the mass media and factory work (p 152). In many countries services now assumed to be the responsibility of government, such as education, health, care of the handicapped and aged, were initiated by voluntary associations.

In view of all these functions for societies in transition it is not surprising that voluntary associations have been discussed in terms of 'instruments of planned change' (Sills 1969). However, some cautions have been sounded and questions raised about their effectiveness in this respect (Anderson 1971, Lenkersdorf 1976, Sills 1959) a discussion which will be pursued later.

At the core of the capacity of associations, to perform the functions of adaptation and integration are several attributes variously discussed by several scholars. Anderson (1971) for instance, draws attention to the intermediacy of their position, stating that a voluntary association "is always at the point of tangency of several institutions or of subsystems within an institution" (p 217), a feature which permits the facilitation of integrative functions. Kerri (1976) points to the pliability and flexibility of voluntary associations, characteristics which derive from the commonality of interests of members and the voluntariness of membership. In combination, these attributes permit associations to change or to be short-lived, in accordance with the needs and interests of members or potential members, thus endowing voluntary associations with special value in situations of transition. Smith (1966) adapts Parsons' structural-functional analysis of an integrated social system to explain the social value of FVOs.

Smith's model is useful as it draws together the various characteristics and functions of voluntary associations in a manageable form. Its limitation is its neglect of the context of change.<sup>5</sup> Smelser (1959) however, adapts the Parsonian model to explain change, an analysis in which the foundation of new social units, such as trade unions, is seen as part of the proliferation process, which is the essence of his structural differentiation theory. The proposition is that certain social phenomena proceed in a definite sequence to produce specific types of structural change.

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<sup>5</sup> For a fuller discussion of the limitation of the functional model in studying social change, see Moore 1963 (p 94 - 98).

The sequence is presented in seven steps:

1. Dissatisfaction with the goal achievements of the social system or sub-system in question and a sense of opportunity for change in terms of the potential availability of facilities.
2. Symptoms of disturbance in the form of 'unjustified' negative emotional reaction and 'unrealistic' aspiration on the part of various elements in the social system.
3. A covert handling of these tensions and a mobilization of motivational resources for new attempts to realize the implications of the existing value-systems.
4. Encouragement of the resulting proliferation of 'new ideas' and institutional patterns which will become the objects of commitments.
6. "Responsible" implementation of innovation carried out by persons or collectivities which are either rewarded or punished, depending on their acceptability in terms of the existing value-system.
7. If the implementations of Step 6 are received favourably, they are gradually routinized into the usual patterns of performance and sanction; their extraordinary character thereby diminishes (p 15 - 16).

While this analytical model explains change within a social system it does not explicitly deal with the influence of external factors in this change. Moore's (1963) simpler sequence model distinguishing between precondition, concomitants and consequences, more clearly takes cognizance of the importance of several factors. He sees the rise of interest groups and participation in associations as two concomitants and consequences of the industrialization process.

It is argued that both these contributions are important to the study of voluntary associations in a situation of change. The dissatisfactions, which start the change sequence in Smelser's model

are synonymous with the common interests and needs which motivate the foundation of associations. However the nature of the dissatisfaction depends upon the preconditions in which change occurs. The management of the dissatisfactions and the forms of 'responsible implementation' carried out by collectivities as well as the rewards or punishments received, must be affected by the concomitants and consequences of the new situation.

A study of voluntary associations naturally implies the belief in their importance for society and a concurrence with the view that "even the most minor of FVOs in our midst can have a powerful and far reaching implications when the pattern is multiplied a thousandfold and understood in its broader social context" (Smith 1966a p 483). However some qualification must be made. The importance of the 'broader social context' cannot be understated. It is necessary for a study of voluntary associations to keep them in proper perspective, as they do not necessarily replace primary groups of kin and family as instruments of adaptation (Axelrod 1956, Dotson 1951).

A reminder of the appropriate perspective is in the concluding paragraph of Meillasoux's work on voluntary associations in an African community (1968). Here he comments that

Voluntary associations ... seem like bubbles rising and disappearing on the surface of boiling water. It is from deeper sources that people who stir them find their motivation, and it is at more significant levels that we must try to explain society in which associations are no more than indicators of social problems (p 147).

However in a bow to their significance, Meillasoux also states that "they furnish the points of convergence of many social factors" (ibid).

To extrapolate from the above discussion, the basic premises employed in this study are:

I. The adaptive and integrative function of voluntary associations in a situation of change involves:

- a) problem solution for a population sharing needs and interests arising out of the change which affects them;
- b) the 'mobilization' of this population, meaning the process of uniting them on the basis of shared interest, a process which implies self-help.

II. The process in which this function occurs is as follows:

- a) industrial development brings about social change, the nature of which is determined by the preconditions of industrialization;
- b) one of these changes is a multiplication of roles and therefore of interests and needs;
- c) these interests and needs, synonymous with dissatisfactions, are shared by many people;
- d) the commonality of interests unites people and leads to attempts to experiment with new ways of fulfilling their shared needs;

- e) these processes once formalized produce voluntary associations;
- f) in meeting the needs of members, these associations also perform several important functions for society.

III. In the analysis of these functions and processes, account must be taken of the inter-relation of a number of social factors which can be identified as they converge on the formation of voluntary associations. Of fundamental importance to the foundation of voluntary associations is peoples' participation, without which the associations would not emerge at all.

The factors which converge at the point furnished by peoples' participation in voluntary associations are central to the approach of this study, and the concept of the inter-relation of these factors is now addressed.

b. Interdependence of Social Factors

Peoples' participation

A consistent feature of peoples' participation in voluntary associations is an unequal distribution not only throughout the population in a society, but also within any one particular association. Several researchers have attempted to illuminate the phenomenon by seeking characteristics which distinguish participators or joiners from the rest of the population (Axelrod 1956, Babchuk and Booth 1969, Booth 1972, Curtis 1971, Dotson 1951

and 1953, Scott 1957, Spinrad 1960, Tomeh 1973). However, joining an association is only one part of the picture, as membership can be nominal, requiring little in terms of personal commitment. Uneven patterns of participation relate also to active involvement in the associations' tasks, and membership is generally characterized by an active minority core and less active peripheral majority. This tendency has been termed "the iron law of oligarchy" a phrase first mooted by Robert Michels (1915) in relation to democratic political parties and subsequently applied by some writers to other voluntary associations (Barber 1965, Sills 1968).

Several propositions have been offered to explain the phenomenon of rule by the minority. Barber (1965) identifies 3 sources, of 'mass apathy' namely, the social structure, democratic values and organizational structure. Drawing on participation patterns in the USA, Barber observes that the American social structure not only segregates "a large number of specific interests from kinship and occupational ties", but also "defines them as being of less importance than family and job obligations" (p 486). The result is 'a pull away from membership' even in voluntary associations of relevance to individual interests, and furthermore, "the individual's interest is so limited that it leads to minimal participation" (p 487). According to Barber, the second source is the democratic values of voluntary associations, the pursuance of which leads to representative government. The third source derives from the structural features of the associations which require internal specialization of function, so that the association might act effectively.

Olson (1965) discusses the feature in terms of group size, and the factor of 'public goods', which accrue to all members whether or not they bear the cost of providing these goods. Smith (1966) relates the different levels of participation to individual personality traits of members.

These view-points support the hypothesis of this study, namely that people's participation in associations, draws together several aspects of the social processes which converge in the formation and function of voluntary associations. It is argued that of relevance to these processes are:

1. The socio-political contexts in which the associations emerge, and particularly the factors linked to the changes to which voluntary associations are a response;
2. structural and functional characteristics of the associations;
3. the characteristics of the participants in the associations.

Each of these aspects will be considered in detail, identifying the particular variables of importance to the interdependent relationship.

#### Socio-political factors

In the most general terms, voluntary associations are inextricably linked with political climates. In order that they may exist at all subsumes constitutionally guaranteed freedom of association. In addition, their utility varies according to government stance.

Where citizens are assured the right to form and join associations, and where the government is tolerant of associational activities, voluntary associations function as checks and balances in the distribution of power, constituting pressure groups through which conflict and dissent can be expressed. Where the government permits only associations which support and confirm official policies, the social role of associations will be to support the status quo (Lenkersdorf 1976). As a variation of this, government may well view voluntary associations as aids in governing (Gray 1976). In totalitarian regimes, voluntary associations may be permitted only in so far as they can be used to maintain control over the population or to suppress opposition to the ruling power (Smith 1966).

The discussion of voluntary associations and change has already drawn a connection between their emergence and social factors. To take these points further, it might be added that a relationship can also be drawn between specific features of societies and the formation of associations. Banton (1968) correlates the numbers of associations with a society's advance in technology, complexity and scale (p 358). Lenkersdorf (1976) commenting on the applicability of theories derived from industrialized countries to the Mexican scene, observes that before the need for the creation of voluntary associations can be felt "people must be sufficiently individualised or isolated from one another" (p 315). Reviewing voluntary associations in Ghana, Gray (1976) demonstrates that certain types of associations found in the USA do not exist in Ghana, not from lack of need, but because of different social and economic

priorities. The promise of employment from industry, for instance, is of greater importance than the environmental damage caused by industrial growth, with the result that the impetus for conservationist groups is not strong enough for their formation.

Stinchcombe (1965) argues that particular types of organizations are formed in spurts at points in a country's history, and that the historical time period at which associations are created influences the social structure of the organizations (153 - 164). In Stinchcombe's view the phenomenon relates to two kinds of structural variables: the concentration and distribution of resources, of which the most important are power, wealth and moral commitment or legitimacy; and the structure of the labour markets (p 167). This theory encompasses both political and social factors and conveys, in different terms, the points discussed in the last two paragraphs.

Applying this general proposition to the specific situation in which the participants of the voluntary associations are industrial workers, of particular socio-political importance are:

- a. the structure of the industrial work force, determined by the pattern of industrialization;
- b. the terms on which power and wealth are available to them.

Structural variables of an industrial population would include its distribution in terms of geographical area and type of enterprise. A sizeable concentration of industrial workers in urban areas poses a different set of problems from a small total number, dispersed in small enterprises each employing a handful of workers.

In the latter distribution, there is likely to be personal contact between employer and employee and individualism in standards of work conditions, and the management of employee grievance. Where the labour force is large and concentrated, dissatisfaction can more easily become collective concerns, posing a threat to the smooth operation of industry. High rates of unemployment, however, are likely to counter balance the probability of collective action, a situation which would be compounded by the ready availability of migrants from rural areas seeking work.

In economies based on free enterprise, there is a basic conflict of interest between employer and employee. History has provided examples of how capitalist interests lend themselves to the exploitation and abuse of labour (Cole 1948). Concomitant with larger and concentrated industrial labour force, therefore, is likely to be mechanisms to regulate the power of both sides. Such provisions can be expected to vary from one country to another, though international forums of the contemporary world will have reduced the differences somewhat.<sup>6</sup> Measures to protect the labour force would include enforcement of minimum standards of environmental conditions of work, the control of dangerous machinery and substances, establishment of wage levels, work hours and work benefits. These provisions, generally formalized by legislation, provide indications of official attitudes to wage earners, and also serve to alter the grounds for worker dissatisfaction.

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<sup>6</sup> ILO conventions, for instance.