

“HAVE YOU HEARD THE TRAMPING OF THE NEW CRUSADE?”: ORGANIZATIONAL  
SURVIVAL AND THE WOMAN’S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION

by

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(Under the Direction of William Finlay)

ABSTRACT

For over 125 years the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) has been waging a crusade against alcohol and sin in the United States. As a wildly popular organization during the reformist reign of the late-1800s and early-1900s, the WCTU was instrumental in achieving alcohol criminalization with the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution in 1919. Today, however, the WCTU is an organization struggling against failing membership numbers and financial insecurity. In this two-year qualitative study, I use means of participant observation, interviews, surveys, focus groups with members, and analysis of organizational literature to examine the WCTU of today. The contemporary WCTU, as a routinized social movement organization, displays qualities of persistence without performance, qualifying it for classification under Meyer and Zucker’s category of Permanently Failing Organizations (1989). While their theoretical model is helpful to a certain extent, this research shows it best explains organizations which persist without goal achievement where other organizations succeed, focusing on the organization’s failure to contend, but yet persist, in an otherwise rational arena. Some organizations, however, continue to persist without goal achievement because the goals themselves have been abandoned or adjusted by other rational organizations to fit within the appetites of the current culture. In these persistent organizations, rationale schemes rely on anachronistic belief systems that are not readily supported in the society in which they reside. The goals, along with the organization, seem to be dying out, and yet the organization stays afloat. This allows for a new analytical category, The Permanently Dying Organization. As a case study that illustrates this new organizational type, the WCTU relies on elements of member age, religiosity, an organizational focus on alcohol, and the cultural-historical elements of ritual to sustain the organization. Through this frame of the Permanently Dying Organization, I examine the contemporary WCTU and endeavor to address its viability for the future.

INDEX WORDS: Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, WCTU, Social Movement Organizations, Permanently Failing Organizations, Permanently Dying Organizations, Temperance Movement, Age, Religion, Ritual, Alcohol

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## DEDICATION

For my grandfather, Mack A. Rollins. I love you with all my heart.

“Do you hear the tramping of the New Crusade,  
Trying to repair the wreck Repeal has made?  
We will increase our number while we’re marching on,  
Till the victory is won. (*sic*)  
From the Hills of Maine to the Everglades  
From the Great Old Atlantic to the Western Plains,  
You will hear the marching of the New Crusade,  
‘Till we conquer the Foe and raise our banner (*sic*).”

---*WCTU hymn, “The New Crusade March”*  
*by Mrs. Claude H. Mayo*

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Each of my committee members, Drs. William Finlay, Paul Roman, and Barry Schwartz offered their own unique perspectives on this work, which greatly enhanced its caliber. I am so fortunate to have known and learned from each of you. Thank you. My deepest respect – maybe even for anyone ever – belongs to Dr. Barry Schwartz. It has been an honor to be his student and I am thankful that even in retirement, he saw me through this endeavor.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) became a definite social force in the U.S. in the 1870's as crusading women sang, prayed, and protested for the abolition of alcohol consumption, manufacture, and trafficking. Although a wildly popular organization before 1900 and an equally influential one as Prohibition became a reality in the 1920's, an organization of this nature does not fit well in contemporary society. Given the ubiquitous nature of alcohol in society today, the WCTU should be only an historic reminder of the failed attempt to eliminate a cultural mainstay. However, even after Repeal's blow to the organization's collective ego in 1933, the WCTU continued to rally for a return to an anti-alcohol policy. In fact, the WCTU is alive today and continues to promote abstinence and prayer as the only means to living a healthy life.

In its celebration of its 125-year anniversary, the WCTU reaffirmed its crusade with an anniversary proclamation that speaks to the organization's current mission. The official contemporary mission of the WCTU as penned by the national president is:

### 125th ANNIVERSARY PROCLAMATION Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1999

- Whereas This year marks the 125th Anniversary year of service to America by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union; and,
- Whereas The Woman's Christian Temperance Union is the oldest voluntary, non-sectarian woman's organization in continuous existence in the world; and
- Whereas In its tradition of service and leadership, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union was, in 1888, a founding member of the National Council of Women; and in 1945, ... was a charter member in the United Nations Non-Governmental Organizations; and

- Whereas The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union has 39 state unions and 450 local unions across the United States; and
- Whereas As a powerful and committed advocate of temperance, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union has also advocated woman’s rights and human rights, including issues as:  
 Universal Voting Rights for Women and Minorities; Shelters for Abused Women and Children; Eight-hour Work Days and Oppostion to Child Labor; Equal Pay for Equal Work; Federal Aid to Education and Founding of Kindergartens; Prison Reform and Legal Aid; Unions’ Right to Organize; Passive Demonstrations and World Peace; and
- Whereas The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union is entering a new millennium with a rich heritage and powerful commitment to making a difference in the 21st century; and
- Whereas The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union’s involvement focuses on pressuring local city halls to shut down crack houses or encouraging restaurants to provide quality food without alcohol or educating state legislators and governors in every state across the nation to the truth behind the back-door efforts to legalize marijuana, the Woman’s Christain Temperance Unioin continues to make its presence felt.

The WCTU proclaims its contemporary viability through this document, indicating that it is ready to face the challenges of a new millenium. One may notice that while the WCTU seeks to legitimate itself through a reliance on its historical presence as the oldest continuous woman’s organization in America, it waters down its contemporary calling, focusing not on its ageold call to eliminate alcohol from society, but instead highlighting its encouragement of alcohol-free restaurants<sup>1</sup>. The apparent goal displacement evidenced in this document as well as the organizational tenacity displayed by the WCTU led this researcher to question the organization’s contemporary activities and purpose: Who makes up the current membership roster of the WCTU? Do members continue to sustained by the belief that one day alcohol will again be

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<sup>1</sup> It its list of alcohol-free restaurants receiving accolades, one finds such eateries as McDonald’s, Burger King, Taco Bell, and other establishments in which alcohol sales have never been a part of the franchise’s sales model. These honors were hardly difficult in their discovery and speak more to ritualistic pomp and circumstance than might canvassing and awarding convenience stores for their voluntary alcohol sales removal.

removed from American society? Is the organization constituted by mostly older members who were indoctrinated into the culture of WCTU during its heyday in the early part of the 1900's? Are new members and their corresponding funds readily available or is the organization failing?

By employing an organizational analysis of today's WCTU, and probing motivational elements of the organization's modern-day temperance force, I examine methods of organizational survival and organizational viability primarily from the membership's standpoint. Through interviews, surveys and focus groups with contemporary WCTU members and through observations of meetings, conventions and other WCTU events, this study provides insights into an historical-religious organization, its organizational persistence, its relevance in contemporary US society, and whether or not the WCTU will be able to continue on with its battle toward abstinence.

To frame this study I look to two useful social theories. Primarily, I borrow from Meyer and Zucker's work on "Permanently Failing Organizations" (1998), and for support, I rely on Merton's theory of ritualistic adaptations (1957). My time with the contemporary WCTU shows it to be an organization treading water. Its recent victories are small, its funds are drying up, and its numbers are dwindling. Yet, it stays afloat. Like those organizations Meyer and Zucker describe, there are elements of cultural momentum that have contributed to the continued persistence of the WCTU for the last 125 years. In addition, one must consider that contemporary members are not blind to the alcohol industry's power or the attachment that the population has to its libations in the U.S. today, and have on some level exchanged the organization's initial purpose for the solidary benefits found in its ritualistic elements (Merton 1957). Given the fact that few Americans today view alcohol as a *moral* impurity or wish to return to a prohibitionist culture, one may suggest that, despite the unpopularity of the WCTU

cause, and despite the lack of progress the WCTU has made toward recreating a national mandate of abstinence from alcohol, the organization has relied on institutional elements of embeddedness and stamina to maintain itself since Prohibition's repeal (Granovetter 1985).

Meyer and Zucker (1989) introduce an organizational type called a "Permanently Failing Organization" that defies much of organizational theory in that its model is driven by organizational inertia instead of efficiency or self-sufficiency. Examples of Permanently Failing Organizations abound in colleges that are never able to fill their classrooms, bureaucracies with no palpable functions, or unprofitable firms that may require government assistance to stay afloat. In Permanently Failing Organizations organizational performance is not shown to improve with age; however, because organizational mortality is shown to decline with age, the organization's presence is sustainable. Meyer and Zucker contend that goal attainment -- or even organizational efficiency -- is not necessarily the most important component of that organization's success. In fact, the goal structure is such that the permanently failing organization is set up to persist in the face of inefficient or unattainable goals.

Although Meyer and Zucker (1989) are mainly referring to production-oriented organizations that look to profit margins as indications of organizational viability, I believe that the WCTU, as a routinized Social Movement Organization, fits nicely into this classification. Since there have been no nation-wide prohibitionist policies concerning alcohol in more than 70 years in the U.S., one must assume there are organizational characteristics and goal-oriented factors in place that mitigate the WCTU's lack of success and still enable it to resist death. Namely, the WCTU has scaled down its aspirations, replacing certain movement activities with ritualistic adaptation strategies (Merton 1957). These structural elements create what I call a "Permanently Dying Organization," a variation of Meyer and Zucker's organizational type. As opposed to "failure," connoting an inability to meet organizational goals that other "passing" or



“successful” firms *will* achieve, the concept of “death” relies on the idea that the goals themselves are outmoded, having had a successful life in an earlier time, but marching toward an anachronistic demise in the present. Not only will the organization never meet its goals, but the goals themselves appear to be on their deathbed. Despite what appears to be an impending collapse, the WCTU is buoyed by certain extenuating factors of ritualism that allow the organization to stay in place at the present time (Merton 1957).

This research study, which includes surveys, focus groups and interviews with WCTU members as well as participant observation in local, regional, state, and national meetings and conventions, outlines *four* such explanatory factors that sustain this Permanently Dying Organization and promote member support and abstinence work. These are 1) the timeless importance of alcohol as a cultural element, and the WCTU’s ability to find a niche within the field of nationally-recognized alcohol organizations, 2) the age characteristics of the WCTU members that contribute to the membership base being both *Permanently Aging* and *Permanently Dying*, 3) the religious nature of the WCTU, and 4) cultural-historical elements that promote the organization’s ideology and sustain member commitment.

The following sections represent a three-year study of the contemporary WCTU, and evaluate the factors that have created this “Permanently Dying Organization.” In addition, I endeavor to assess the organization’s viability for the future. Can this organization stay intact in contemporary society, or is it better fit to another time? The fact that the WCTU remains today, with members involved in local, state, and national projects for abstinence may not be a function of obstinate adherence to the belief that alcohol will again be outlawed.<sup>2</sup> Instead, one would be better off viewing the WCTU as a Permanently Dying Organization that relies on issues of culture, age, religiosity, and history to override funding and membership deficits and to provide a space of traditional moral order and religious dedication for its members.

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<sup>2</sup> In addition to maintaining membership at all organizational levels, the WCTU owns and operates a publishing house (Signal Press) and a memorial library (the Frances Willard Memorial Library at Rest Cottage in Evanston, IL). Each of these components suggests an organization that is at least succeeding in maintaining itself.

## 2. ORGANIZATIONAL LITERATURE AND THE WCTU AS A PERMANENTLY DYING ORGANIZATION

There are elements of organizational momentum that have contributed to the continued persistence of the WCTU for over 125 years. For any organization to have been in existence with the same focus and similar organizational model for over a century is an amazing feat in and of itself; however, the WCTU is a very special case in that it has sustained its presence in the face of public rejection for the last 70 years. Because of this, one may suggest that the organization has relied on institutional elements of motivation through goal displacement, along with ritualism and cultural embeddedness to propel itself since Prohibition's repeal (Merton, 1968; Granovetter, 1985). In this section, I examine the literature on organizations, focusing on them as collaborations set up to pursue a certain set of goals and the typical goal attainment modes in workplace versus voluntary organizations. This review of the literature provides a basis to analyze how efficiently WCTU goals are realized, which organizational goals are more easily met, and which goals contribute to a cycle of unmet permanence. The condition of permanence, goal displacement and goal failure that resides in the WCTU contributes to a type of organization deemed a Permanently Dying Organization. This concept is explored in depth below.

According to Swanson (1976) organizations are social structures created by individuals to support the collaborative pursuit of goals. How much work is accomplished as well as the quality of work constitutes goal attainment within organizations, making these vital to the survival of an organization. For work to get done there must be both coordination and control in any organizational setting. This is true regardless of the particular form the organization takes.

Although one may immediately think of the social coordination and control that is necessary to foster a successful workplace organization, similar forms of social control and coordination are found in social movement organizations (SMOs) as well. As we shall see, the WCTU is no exception in that it is a social movement organization that depends on the social coordination of its members to work toward goal achievement and mobilization of resources.

### ***Social Movement Organizations***

For some time political sociologists have been writing about social movements and their organizational dimensions (Lenin 1929; Michels 1949). However, it was not until the work of McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977) that theorists began discussing issues of resource mobilization and using the terminology “social movement organization” as the primary unit of analysis (McAdam 1997). Since that time, other analysts have been engaged in work to tease out the impact that organizational formalization within these movements has had on their success (Gamson 1990; Melucci 1989; Piven and Cloward 1977).

Drawing on the works of Gurr (1970), Turner and Killian (1987), and Smelser (1963), McCarthy and Zald (1994) argue that the core feature to any social movement is a shared assumption among constituents about the causes of a particular social grievance, as well as a possible means of resolution. The authors define a social movement more concretely to be “a set of opinions and beliefs in a population representing preferences for changing some elements of the social structure or reward distribution, or both, of a society” (1994:21). A social movement organization, then, is a formalized organization that aligns its goals with those of the social movement, and attempts to implement those goals in an organized fashion. For example, the overarching goals of the American civil rights movement of the 1960’s could be summed up as “equal treatment of and justice for black Americans;” however, the *social movement*

*organizations* working toward these goals were the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) (McCarthy and Zald 1994). In the same vein, the temperance movement can be seen to embody the charge of promoting “temperate” or “restrained” drinking behaviors, and was initially represented by groups such as The Washingtonians (1840), The Order of Good Templars (1851), The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (1874), and The Anti-Saloon League (1895). We can therefore situate these SMOs as organizational carriers that represented and contributed to both the broad and particular preferences of the larger movements in the United States.

These social movement organizations, like other organizational forms, are subject to a range of internal and external forces that affect viability, the internal structuring process, and success in goal attainment. They are comparable to workplace organizational forms in that they are both made up of constituents, both have payoff structures, and both must implement forms of coordination and control in order to attain organizational goals. Before a more complete examination of control elements within social movement organizations can take place, we must first examine global aspects of organizational control and coordination that are characteristic of *any* organizational setting.

#### A Comparison of Workplace Organizations and Social Movement Organizations: Control versus coordination

There is a need to obtain desired work behavior from organizational constituents in any organizational setting. In order for a social movement organization to promote its cause, it must be able to coordinate the efforts of its members, harnessing these efforts into forms of advancement toward organizational goals. The same need for coordination is true in a workplace organization in that efficient production is achieved through worker control.

According to Edwards (1979), coordination occurs in all social production, and is usually thought of in terms of managerial endeavors. It is the process by which the end product becomes realized through the efforts of a group of individual workers. Coordination may also be viewed as somewhat of an egalitarian process in that there are no forceful means of work extraction used; rather, managers govern the process of goal achievement by being accountable to the worker group and by working with the group to implement strategies, suggestions, and goals.

According to Edwards, control is a type of coordination that occurs mostly in capitalist workplace organizations, and differs from pure coordination in that it “necessarily takes the specific form of top-down coordination, for the exercise of which the top (capitalists) must be able to control the bottom (workers)” (1979:17). Because workers are selling only their labor power – not their skills in planning and suggestion – they are segregated from the decision-making process and subject to this hierarchical form of coordination that does not make managers accountable to employees. There is a system of control that governs the production within each workplace that combines authoritarian direction, evaluation, and discipline of the worker. These systems take on three different types of control within the workplace: simple control, technical control, and bureaucratic control (Edwards 1979).

Social movement organizations must also use some form of coordination, for in order to make organizational goals a reality, even volunteer worker efforts need direction. According to Killian (1987), there is a continuum of control over and involvement required from members in any kind of voluntary-based organization, ranging from mere “segmental involvement” (examples can be found in “inclusive organizations” where monthly Candy strippers volunteer at hospitals or the “meals-on-wheels” driver delivers food to shut-ins two or three times annually for the local food bank) to “total absorption” (found in “exclusive organizations” such as cults, or

intense week- or month-long training sessions) (Zald and Gardner 1987). For the most part, it is the more egalitarian form of coordination that prevails in SMOs rather than the top-down control approach seen in workplaces. There are several reasons why this is so. Primarily, most workers are volunteers in social movement organizations who are usually not selling their labor in exchange for wages like workers in workplace organizations. In fact, the payoff structures in volunteer and workplace organizations are quite different, and worker motivation stems from the two different origins (coordination versus control) in the different organizational settings. On the one hand, workers in workplace organizations are motivated to conform to the rules and to do the work required of them so that they are not responded to punitively by supervisors (e.g., loss of wages, opportunity for advancement denied, or even the loss of employment). Workers in social movement organizations, on the other hand, are working *with* supervisors to act out against some social grievance, believing that they can better their own lives and those of others in their community through their work.

Because members in SMOs are usually unpaid, the structuring of rules, goals, and payoffs is meant to harness and direct members' passions for the cause. Because employees in workplace organizations are paid, the structuring of rules, goals, and payoffs is meant to control their output. These are by no means dissimilar goals; however, they do differ in terms of the "accountability" Edwards (1979) notes as key. It would seem that the means to organizational survival based on the necessarily different forms of motivation, payoff, and goal structuring are enormous.

Although motivational patterns are somewhat different, coordination and control lead to similar organizational goal attainment structures in social movement organizations and in workplace organizations. Each setting may have differing specific goals, but the overarching

general goals are most similar. For example, in the workplace organization a specific organizational goal is to create a product while in a social movement organization, a specific goal is to make strides toward alleviating some particular social problem (McCarthy and Zald 1994). The most general goal of the two organizational types is that they both strive toward organizational survival. In the workplace organizational setting, a primary goal is to perpetuate the organization through an acceptable profit margin<sup>3</sup>, and in a social movement organization, the primary goal is organizational perpetuation through recruitment, maintenance of membership and member involvement in projects benefiting the cause.

When discussing the goal of organizational persistence through member coordination, such as that found in a social movement organization like the WCTU, there are several theoretical elements in the sociology of culture and organizations as well as analyses of social movements that one may draw on for explanatory aid. Within the resource mobilization model, some analysts focus on relation of collective action to the interest underlying broad changes in work and political structure (i.e., Charles Tilly); others put more emphasis upon the linkages among individuals and their mobilization within pre-existing structures (Oberschall 1973); finally, theorists like McAdam (1973; 1977) focus on the political process of mobilization, noting how opportunities for social movement success are created in epochs of strength and weakness within differing political eras. With these perspectives in mind, I borrow from an organizational theory put forth by Meyer and Zucker (1989). In their organizational text entitled *Permanently Failing Organizations*, these authors provide a theoretical shell by which to focus on the ways that one particular non-profit social movement organization, the WCTU, can purport

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<sup>3</sup> To be sure, profit margin security is enhanced by promoting such things as comfortable workspaces, worker friendships, benefits packages, or monetary or in-kind incentives for workers.

to mobilize and work toward nationally dictated goals while declining membership and financial support have continually crippled the organization's social presence for over 70 years.

### Permanently Failing Organizations as an Organizational Type

According to Meyer and Zucker (1989) there are such things as “Permanently Failing Organizations” that defy much of organizational theory in that they act on a model based on organizational inertia instead of one based on efficiency. Organizations that subsist long enough will continue to stay active, continue to have dues paying members, monthly meetings, national conventions, and continue to sustain themselves organizationally at different levels. In Permanently Failing Organizations organizational performance is not shown to improve with age; however, because organizational mortality is shown to decline with age, the organization's presence is sustainable. The authors assert that goal attainment or even organizational efficiency is not necessary for the organization's persistence. Mitigating elements within the organization's goal and character structures allow the organization to endure in spite of inefficient or irrelevant goals.

Permanently Failing Organizations are not those that merely suffer temporary lapses in efficient or effective behavior that often occur in periods of technological updating or managerial changeover. Instead, these are firms that have routinized goal and behavioral failure into their organizational expectations. Examples of Permanently Failing Organizations abound in colleges that are never able to fill their classrooms, bureaucracies with no palpable functions, or unprofitable firms that may require government assistance to stay afloat. Shrines, churches and historical sites, too, whose presence is functional for a select group but see little monetary sustenance in their coffers each year might also be lumped under the Permanently Failing brand. What is important is that these organizations continue, year after year, to employ, inspire, or



illicit commitment from individuals who see little in terms of returns on their efforts.

Organizations such as these remain operational in the face of economic or directional situations that would normally dictate abandonment. They are amazing organizational units for analysis as they defy both scientific and anecdotal knowledge of how organizations are supposed to perform.

Their definition of Permanent Failure includes, “ the combination of low performance and high persistence in organizations, organizational maintenance under conditions of low performance, [and] sustained low performance in organizations (1989:154).” In sum, low functioning organizations continually function poorly without the expected organizational death that normally occurs when organizations fail to meet their goals. In these organizations, individual actors that make up paid and unpaid positions within the organizational structure are *not* motivated to terminate or alter the firm’s trajectory or process unless the organizational goals are completely and clearly irrational. When only one or a very few specifically defined and clearly unattainable goals are present, organizational failure becomes the obvious product of bad goals. In order to get out of attainment failure, the goal is rejected or reworked to a more generalized one. This goal displacement is rational: *Adjust the goal and the organization will succeed. Failure to do so is the apparent reason for low performance.*

Within certain organizations, however, there is failure to remove the unattainable goal *along with* secondary goal promotion that enables the organization’s work to continue. By employing other attainable foci while not abandoning the inefficient core goal, the organization restores some of its motivational momentum or is at least able to maintain itself. Especially if the organization’s goal is religious in nature, members may choose continued belief in the core goal’s validity over its realistic achievement, seeing the crusade as an end in itself. In these organizations, the ritualistic elements that fortify the individual associations between members,

(for example monthly meetings, pledges said in unison, or special days of celebration), become sufficient for organizational persistence. Members let slide the idea of primary goal attainment and focus on the secondary goals and the associative or “solidary incentives” of membership (Zald and Ash 1966). In sum, gestures of movement activity replace actual effort toward goal attainment.

### Merton’s Ritualists

In his assessment of adaptation strategies, Merton (1957:149-150) asserts that individuals or organizations, unable to achieve cultural success through goal fulfillment, will oftentimes use ritualistic adaptation schemes and abandon or scale down the idea of achieving lofty cultural goals to the point where aspirations can be satisfied. According to Merton, there comes a point of unmet success when an organization must recognize its inability to reach the predefined goal. When this happens, the organization will let go of the idea of goal achievement and yet still cling to the extra-purposive pieces of ritual inherent in the organization, compulsively abiding by the institutional norms initially set in place (Merton 1957). Organizations such as these continue to have monthly meetings where they talk about the world’s social problems, they continue to sing songs about their past fights against these social problems, they continue to say pledges that formally pits them against the social problems, and they continue to wear organizational insignia that display their affiliation in the fight against these social problems. All the while, the organization ceases its action in the actual fight against the social problem it claims to attack.

In place of the unmet and unattainable goals, ritualistic organizations may take one or a combination of three courses. First, they may transform goals, replacing unattainable goals with diffuse goals so that the organization can pursue a broader range of social problems (Zald and Ash 1966). Second, organizations may devolve purely into an associative organization where

the main function is organizational maintenance and persistence (Etzioni 1961). Finally, oligarchization or centralization of power may replace the formerly democratic structure that defines the organization (Zald and Ash 1966). In each of these scenarios, the organization abandons or scales down the initial goal, replacing it with maintenance efforts that should ensure organizational continuance. While successful in sustaining organizational presence, these efforts are not useful in working toward the formerly primary goal.

Zald and Ash (1966) rename Merton's ritualists and Meyer and Zucker's Permanently Failing Organizations, deeming social movement organizations such as these "movements becalmed" (1994 [1966]:130).

Many MOs (Movement Organizations) do not represent either successes or failures. They have been able to build and maintain a support base; they have waged campaigns that have influenced the course of events; and they have gained some positions of power. In short, they have created or found a niche for themselves in the organizational world but their growth has slowed down or ceased. Members do not expect attainment of goals. . . , and the emotional fervor of the movement is subdued" (1994 [1966]:130)

The authors contend that these organizations are no longer Social Movement Organizations per se, as they are no longer actively working toward anything. Instead, their affiliative natures align them with what Etzioni calls "associative organizations" where membership maintenance and organizational persistence are key and the fight for the movement is lost, perhaps because there is no longer a movement for which to fight (1961). As an illustrative example, the authors look to the Townsend Movement, defined by the fight for pensions for older Americans in the early part of the 1900s. Once the movement was successful in influencing the creation of Social Security, it somewhat kept its initial focus by promoting and selling geriatric products to its members, but basically devolved into an associative organization for the aged, until it finally fizzled out in the early 1980s (Zald and Ash 1994 [1966]).

These three perspectives, Permanently Failing Organizations, Ritualistic Adaptation Strategies, and Movements Becalmed, resonate the same theme: There are certain former social movement organizations that rely on alternate foci to sustain the organization. Instead of abandoning the organization itself and all it embodies, members rationalize their participation through goal displacement, small successes in secondary goals, and above all, through continuing on with the organizational associative activities. That the organization remains legitimates its persistence. In the case of religious-oriented organizations like the WCTU, these ritualistic endeavors that lead to organizational staying power provide both affiliative and religious sustenance for members, and organizational presence is maintained through members' religious belief systems and secondary successes attained. It is at this point where Merton (1957), Meyer and Zucker (1989), and Zald and Ash (1994 [1966]) meet meets a combination of perspectives on Social Psychology and the Sociology of Religion (such as those from Durkheim, Geertz, Bellah) and Resource Mobilization Theory (Lofland, McAdam) and a subtype of permanent failure is created, the Permanently Dying Organization.

Meyer and Zucker are primarily helpful in outlining numerous characteristics that define Permanently Failing Organizations (1989). They are careful to promote a fully detailed description that examines structural nuances of what "Permanently Failing" means for both economists and socio-cultural researchers of organizations. Their model works best for production-oriented, non-religious entities, however, and therefore needs adjustment to incorporate the force of adherents' belief systems and important membership characteristics to frame an analysis of the WCTU. For the purposes of this study, I intend to use several, while not all, of their definitions to characterize a subtype of "Permanent Failure." I rely on the contemporary WCTU as an organizational model to introduce a subtype of Permanent Failure

that includes idea of *death* – member, goal, and organizational—to expand the theory on how low-functioning organizations continue to thrive in a religious social movement organization.

#### Permanently Dying Organizations – a Subtype of Permanent Failure

In Permanently Failing Organizations, the combination of persistence without performance is key. Because Meyer and Zucker are mainly referring to production-oriented organizations and those relevant indications of organizational viability, performance and persistence are easily defined. *Performance* can be examined by a quick glance at profit and loss statements, attainments of production and sales quotas, or annual stock growth to name a few examples. *Persistence* can be boiled down to organizational lifespan or years completed as an organization. In this sense, Permanently Failing Organizations have healthy lifespans (persistence) but feeble output (performance).

It is true, however, that other non-production, philanthropic, and religious organizations can find the classification scheme of persistence without performance useful when combined with perspectives borrowed from Social Psychology (Merton), the Sociology of Religion (Durkheim, Bellah, Geertz), and Resource Mobilization Theory (Loftland, McAdam). I believe that the WCTU, as a routinized Social Movement Organization, fits nicely into this new combination I define as a Permanently Dying Organization. As discussed above, the religious nature of the WCTU allows members to adapt their expectations for organizational success while holding on to core ideals of the organization that will probably never be realized (Merton 1957). Inability to attain core goals hinges on the anachronistic nature of the goals themselves, showing them to be outmoded and dying out in contemporary society. In the case of a religious social movement organization such as the WCTU, a Permanently Dying Organization is defined below.

**Permanently** – In this study I define “permanently” as: *Persisting in the same state for a very long time without undergoing significant change.* Within the WCTU there is permanence in goals, permanence in members’ goal-directed behavior<sup>4</sup>, and permanence in its reliance on historical elements.

The WCTU displays organizational permanence through its goals. For the WCTU, the core goal of nation-wide abstinence has not changed for over 125 years. The WCTU’s mission was handed down by the temperance crusades of the 1800s and is based on the conservative-Christian belief that the body is a temple for God and is not to be defiled with alcohol or other drugs. To be sure, the organization has always included other secondary foci in its work, but the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union stays true to its name, and at least makes gestures toward protecting the family from alcohol and other drug use.

The adherence to a goal of nation-wide abstinence based on religious principles is not one that the majority of Americans can stand behind today<sup>5</sup>. In fact, the majority of people who do not drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes or use drugs cite personal reasons of health, weight loss, pregnancy, genetic history of alcoholism or drug addiction, and other health-related reasons (Mayo Clinic online health statistics information, 2004). These personal health rationales are supported by physicians and researchers in contemporary magazines, television spots, websites,

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<sup>4</sup> The WCTU has an additional aspect of permanence that fails to generalize to other organizations of this type, but is necessary for a complete discussion. The contemporary WCTU focuses its recruitment and membership maintenance efforts on an elderly population of temperance workers, officially targeting women ages 45 and older. This aspect of the permanent agedness of the organization is discussed in detail in the following two sections; first, in the section on the organization’s contemporary structure and secondly, in the section on age, conservatism and membership as defining aspects of the WCTU.

<sup>5</sup> It must be acknowledged that “Blue Laws” that prohibit the sale of alcohol and other retail items on Sundays are religious in origin and put in place to inhibit Americans from imbibing on the Christian day of rest. While restrictions surrounding practices on the Sabbath date back to the 1600s in America, and are still found in over three-fourths of the states at present, they have declined in formal usage and enforcement in most states since the 1960s (Siegal and Inciardi 2001). The prohibition of Sunday alcohol sales still prevails in many southern and mid-western counties today; however, adhering to codified traditional purchasing practices does not mean that individuals cannot drink on Sundays, nor does it mean that they restrict their intake during the rest of the week for religious reasons. For the majority of Americans, alcohol consumption, or lack thereof, is a health-related issue.

billboards and other contemporary forms of mediated communication. Very little mass communication in the U.S. today is related to alcohol and immorality. The WCTU and a minimal number of conservative-Christian as well as Mormon organizations support this idea, but the remainder of the country views alcohol as a personal health issue. That the idea of alcohol as a moral impurity is sustained by the WCTU based on its adherence to its historic mission, and thus remains as a permanent fixture for the organization. Evidence of this permanence is most obvious in the continued use of the member abstinence pledge before meetings, continuing to use the word ‘Temperance’ in the national name, and the promotion of the Prohibition Party in national literature and member affiliation. These ritualistic elements say little about the WCTU's actual activities in the fight against alcohol; however, they do show a dogged adherence to the institutional norms of name, pledge, and focus set in place by the organization’s founders.

There is a permanence in goal-directed behavior as WCTU members base their work toward the organization in a religious context. While the primary goal for the WCTU has been to protect the moral integrity of the family through stamping out alcohol and other drug consumption in the United States, the organization has put in place secondary goals for its members, including the promotion of local and state regulations that govern when and where alcohol and tobacco products can be consumed and purchased (what some may call “Blue Laws” and public health ordinances), promoting the moral ills of homosexuality, pornography, prostitution, legalized marijuana, and the positive nature of prayer in schools, to name a few. It is the rationale expansion into secondary foci that allows the WCTU to continue with its crusade against alcohol, one of the most widely marketed and financially secure consumables in contemporary American society.

With rationale expansion occurring, the WCTU is free to promote its more palatable aspects while the core issue of alcohol remains intact, nurtured by members' religious beliefs. In Permanently Dying Organizations, it is the ritualism and the belief structures of religious adherents that enable an inefficient goal, such as the abolition of alcohol consumption and trade for example, to continue. While members of the organization may not see a payoff in the larger goal attainment arena, it is the actual work toward a never-realized goal that is motivational. The WCTU is a religious organization that believes steadfastly in the idea that the key to a true Christian life is to keep one's body pure from all harmful (read: intoxicating) substances. According to the members of the WCTU, God dictated this goal, and their work "may not be completed in this lifetime, but we'll meet our maker knowing we tried and gave our lives for the glory of God" (2000 National Convention Fieldnotes, Opening Prayer and Praise Service, Colorado Springs, CO). It is true that the organization continues to thrive based on the combination of secondary successes and minimal advances toward the primary goal; however, more importantly is the idea that *any* work for a godly cause will inspire continued organizational commitment and work toward its goals.

Permanence through Historical Elements – Historical elements of an organization are essential in reaffirming the organizational entity with its culture and its members with a collective identity. Borrowing from Geertz, historical artifacts remind the contemporary member of her place in the organization, detail to her what the organization and she, as a member, hold dear, and provide a blue-print to what a dedicated member should be like (1973). Tangible pieces of an organization's history represent its material culture and can be analyzed through ceremonial activities, insignia, commemorations of past leaders, flags, salutes, hand shakes and the like.



As an organization that has been in existence for over 125 years, the WCTU relies greatly on its historical presence as a force of organizational perpetuation. Given its age and rich cultural history, contemporary members are able to locate themselves as participants in a traditional crusade of anti-alcohol and pro-family sentiment by recalling the dedication and commitment of important temperance figures, by retelling organizational creation stories, by commemorating important WCTU events and temperance triumphs, and by use of historical symbol and ritual. All of these ideological metaphors are mechanisms for reaffirming the group goals and promoting a sense of belonging and community for WCTU members (Durkheim [1912] 1995, Geertz 1973, Bellah 1985). In addition, these elements endeavor to foster an organization that honors its founding goals and revels in the permanence of the longitudinal presence of its organization.

The WCTU's historical crusade is extremely important to current members, and the motivation that this study's participants attribute to the work done by and for the organization in the past helps to locate their contemporary mission. This aspect is best described in its own section (see Chapter VIII on Cultural-Historical Elements for a full discussion), where detailed analysis of the elements of the past as transmission of current inspiration can be explored. I mention this factor here as merely a brief introduction to the later part of the paper.

**Dying** – I define *dying* with the help of Webster's dictionary as, "occurring as something that is about to reach its end". The dying aspect of a Permanently Dying Organization entails an element of anachronism or of something that is no longer necessary and is on its way out of existence. Organizations that are dying display functions no longer relevant to their particular societies, and are competing with the Darwinian inevitability that they will cease to exist soon.

Herein lies the important distinction to the sub-type of the Permanently Dying (versus a Permanently Failing) Organization. Whereas the concept of “Permanent Failure” includes the idea that the particular organization continues to be unsuccessful in meeting otherwise attainable goals that could be accomplished by other organizations (given such things as better funding, political placement, etc.), “dying” embodies moving toward elements of finality. A “dying” organization rests on tenets that are not consistent with the rest of the cultural climate and will eventually be forced into nonexistence unless a sweeping cultural revolution that drastically changes belief systems takes place. To be “dying” is to be marching toward extinction, surrounded by a world that no longer needs the proscribed organizational values that continue to support the organization.

The WCTU’s fight against alcohol seems to fit this dying construct, as contemporary society has an obvious place for alcohol, has nurtured it, sponsored it and consumed it and has rejected the notion that the U.S. government can take it away from its citizenry. With a celebratory drink appropriate for almost every special occasion and holiday, the institutional retention of alcohol is high (Schudson 1989). The American populace has spoken and it would prefer its alcohol over the WCTU. For all intents and purposes, the 125-year old organization should be on its last metaphorical leg. And yet it is not. This is where the concept of “permanently dying” comes into play. The WCTU has managed, through the adherence of its members, to continue to sustain itself in the face of public rejection and even scorn. While the organization does not enlist support from the majority of the population, it does continue, if ever so lamely, to persist and to enlist support on local, state and national levels. Additionally, it does continue, if ever so slightly, to make strides in the areas of public awareness of alcohol and

morality problems, with projects to combat Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, pornography in libraries, homosexuality in class lectures, and smoking in restaurants.

**Organization** – The WCTU is an organization, similar to other social movement organizations. It has a hierarchical structure on local, regional, state, and national levels that contains offices and departments and enlists support from the youth and male auxiliary arms of the organization. Members pay dues, cast votes, work toward projects, display insignia, attend state and national conventions, take pledges, and know songs and handshakes like members in other voluntary organizations. It can be offered up for analysis like any other voluntary organization, outlining how and which goals are met, how members get recruited, how its organization operates, how and what projects members take part in, and the ways in which financial and in-kind contributions fulfill its mission.

It is through the frame of a Permanently Dying Organization that I seek to analyze the WCTU. It is an organization that adheres to this inefficient organizational model and yet sustains its viability and staves off organizational death in several ways. This research finds four mitigating factors that sustain member support and promote abstinence work among WCTU members. These are 1) the timeless importance of alcohol as a cultural element, and the WCTU's ability to find a niche within the field of nationally-recognized alcohol organizations, 2) the age characteristics of the WCTU and the organization's propensity toward becoming a "permanently aging organization," 3) the religious nature of the WCTU, and 4) cultural-historical cultural elements that promote the organization's ideology and sustain member commitment. These sustaining aspects are discussed in-depth in individual chapters to follow.

### 3. METHODS AND DATA

#### Methods

This research is an ethnographic study of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union that seeks to understand the WCTU's organizational tenacity and to address whether or not the organization will be able to continue on into the future. To do so, I rely heavily on identifying organizational efficacy through the stories of its membership. Because membership is a vital element to any organization (McCarthy and Zald 1987; Lofland 1996), members' attitudes and beliefs about the organization and its mission play a necessary part of the organization's drive and ultimate success. Just how the organization endears itself to its members, inspires them to work toward its goals, and encourages them to uphold its ideologies (even unrealistic ones) are important determining factors of organizational perseverance (Trice and Beyer 1986; Geertz 1973).

Emphasizing the importance of membership, I approached this research with four main methods of member-focused qualitative analyses. *First*, I relied on in-depth individual, along with focus group interviews with WCTU members and officers; *second*, I conducted participant observation at local, state, and national meetings; *third* I informed the first two qualitative means by a textual analysis of two years of WCTU literature at both state and national levels (including state and national newsletters, national periodicals and public relations materials). *Fourthly*, in addition to these strictly qualitative means, I relied heavily on a mail-in survey form of the interview questions to poll members I was unable to meet with in person. This survey enabled

me to quantify member demographics as well as ask open-ended questions of a much larger population of members.

From this four-pronged approach, I was able to garner two perspectives: First, by speaking with and by polling WCTU members about their feelings of dedication and organizational viability, I was able to probe the first-person/insider membership perspective, trying to understand what motivates individuals to participate in the temperance cause. Second, by attending local meetings and state and national conventions as an outsider, I attempted to understand the particular structural and goal-related factors at work within the organization that have contributed to the WCTU's longevity. The combination of these methods and perspectives, I feel, supports a balanced view of this national organization.

Besides those mentioned above, I used photography and scrapbook making to establish rapport and find common ground with interview subjects and focus group participants. After a few participant observation sessions at state and national events, I created scrapbook with photos of members and WCTU keepsakes. I took care in labeling each picture and describing the situation pictured in each photo. I carried this scrapbook to every interview in every state, adding to it each new picture or piece of memorabilia I received. I found this extremely helpful with some of the shy interviewees, and was overwhelmed with the abundance of pictures and gifts that members wanted to contribute to the scrapbook.

### ***Feminist Research***

It has been important to me to view this process as a feminist research endeavor, drawing in part from Reinheartz (1992) who stresses the important dynamic that occurs when women interview other women and when female researchers practice participant observation in women-only groups. WCTU members express pride that the WCTU has remained a single-sex

organization standing firm on issues of familial protection and moral purity for over 125 years. The female orientation of the group is therefore an important part of the organizational analysis, with members employing traditionally feminist rationalizations of abstinence and their organization's importance (i.e., feminist – alcohol promoting the break-up of the family, and religious – alcohol as defiling the temple-body, and therefore, an affront to God). As a female researcher, I relied on my personal knowledge of female-particular morality and how traditional notions of religiosity and self-containment are still applied to women in contemporary culture. I found that this bit of insider knowledge contributed to rapport with the interview subjects, and facilitated a “free(r) interaction between the researcher and the interviewee” (Reinhartz 1992).

Although I sincerely hoped to draw on my female status as a commonality with the interview subjects, some personal characteristics made it difficult for me to fully empathize with the interview population. To be sure, there are personal beliefs and organizational characteristics that attract women of the WCTU to that type of organization that I could not completely understand nor support. Particularly, I was unsure if some of the women would mistake my scholarly interest for organizational support, and I was fearful that eventually I would be called on to either accept or reject the pledge of abstinence or that I would be questioned about my religious affiliation. To my surprise, this never happened. I counted on my outsider status as a non-religious person who does drink alcohol on occasion as a source of insight into an unknown organization with a somewhat foreign belief structure. Luckily, in my research, I found dedicated women with an amazing love for their organization who rarely questioned my motives and were more than helpful in my endeavors.

### ***Evolving methods***

At the onset of this research, I intended for the in-depth individual interviews to be my primary means of data collection. I hypothesized that in-depth interviews with members and officers would provide personal and motivational information important to issues of organizational survival. However, after attending my first national convention in August 1999, I was fortunate enough to have the WCTU publicize my project idea in the Fall 1999 issue of the national quarterly newsletter, *The National Happenings* that is distributed free to every dues paying member (see Appendix B). In response to that publication, I was invited to speak at several annual conventions in different states, where the attendees' free time was precious and convention schedules did not permit the few hours necessary for individual, one-on-one interviews. Instead, state leaders agreed to let me interview their convention attendees in groups. These allowances led me to incorporate the focus group methodology into the project.

In preparation for the focus groups, I asked that state leaders send me a list of 10-15 names that I might send questionnaires to prior to my arrival. I reasoned with them that the more member information I received before the focus groups, the more efficiently I could conduct group sessions once at the convention. Because the questionnaire questions I sent were intended to be answered in in-depth interviews, it was important to flesh out detail in the focus group conversation. From this need to gather information prior to my convention talks and focus groups, a questionnaire form of the interview was born.

As it would turn out, the questionnaire proved to be one of the best sources of information in this project. After returning from the national WCTU convention in 2000, I sent out two to four questionnaires to every state president and to every national officer, asking them to distribute them in their local unions. I mailed each questionnaire with an introductory letter, a

copy of the published announcement of my project in *The National Happenings*, and a postage-paid return envelope for their convenience. I found that I was able to get information from otherwise unavailable members with this questionnaire method. Many WCTU members who filled out a questionnaire lived in states too far for me to travel, or were ill, and would rather fill out a questionnaire than accept a strange visitor into their home for a lengthy interview.

According to Reihartz (1992), in-depth interviews, or “oral histories” are an appropriate means of qualitative data collection for a project like this one. Since my objective was to shed light on the organizational facets that promote member adherence and loyalty within the WCTU, it seemed important to speak with active members<sup>6</sup> and to glean from them their definitions of the organization, how they see themselves as members within it, and what benefits their WCTU affiliation brings for them. By speaking one-on-one with WCTU women, I hoped to get a sense of their similarities demographically, structurally, and belief-wise with the consideration that these constructs are important to organizational viability. Although certain aspects of organizational and individual behavior could be revealed through questionnaires, particular meaning structures that were more likely to emerge in a semi-structured interview provided an added richness to the research question, and seemed to be more fruitful for this project. The combination of the in-depth interview, focus groups, and the questionnaire provided for a fuller understanding of the membership population.

### ***Interview Guide***

In order to combine these issues of insider and outsider statuses while remaining sensitive to feminist issues I used an interview guide to facilitate the interview process (see Appendix A

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<sup>6</sup> I also spoke with members who did not currently participate in WCTU activities. Due to the prevalence of poor health due to advanced age among members, there are many ladies who have led formerly active lives in the WCTU, and who are still on the membership roster, but who can no longer participate in current activities. It was my belief



for interview guide). Although interviews were semi-structured, and allowed for free conversational movement, an interview guide helped to organize the interview process, as well as provided some comfort both for me as the interviewer and for the participant (Reinhartz 1992).

The interview guide was divided into three sections, and separated issues of personal and demographic characteristics, personal WCTU participation, and attitudes about the larger goals and future of the WCTU. In conjunction with other means of fieldwork, the interview guide assisted me in developing 12 themes which show how alcohol, age, religiosity, and cultural-historical elements combine to form and sustain the WCTU. In the next section, I present these 12 themes, following each of them with the specific interview questions that address each of these ideas.

### ***Themes***

#### **ALCOHOL**

- Theme I: The contemporary WCTU distinguishes itself as an organization of abstinence, not moderate or responsible drinking (like MADD or SADD) or as a support organization for those with alcohol problems (like AA or Alanon).*<sup>7</sup>
- Theme II: WCTU members combine elements of religiosity and abstinence, believing that an individual's body is a vehicle through which one is to do God's work. Alcohol, drugs, and tobacco defile this temple, making the individual powerless and unfit to do God's work.*<sup>8</sup>

#### **AGE**<sup>9</sup>

- Theme III: The WCTU makes a concerted effort to be an organization of older women.*
- Theme IV: WCTU members see their age as beneficial to the organization. Whereas younger women do not have as much time to devote to the WCTU because of family and work obligations, elderly retired women have more time to be dedicated members.*

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that these women would provide valuable historical information even though they were not currently attending meetings or participating in rallies, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Reflected in questions I.18, III.55

<sup>8</sup> Reflected in questions I.26, II.30

<sup>9</sup> In addition to the demographic question of the participant's specific age, two questions III.59, III.60, address all age-themes.

- Theme V: Aging members are able to relate to the organization's struggle to remain socially viable. This ability to relate commits them to work for the WCTU, helping to insure organizational survival*

## RELIGION

- Theme VI: The element of religiosity within the WCTU mitigates culturally unrealistic goals, as members liken themselves to "Christian soldiers" who will continue to "wage war" against moral impurities such as alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. As moral impurities are limitless, WCTU women should always have a foe to work against.<sup>10</sup>*
- Theme VII: Like their foremothers, contemporary WCTU members continue to use ideological rhetoric to demonize alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, perpetuating the idea of these substances as "folk devils" within society (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). These ideas motivate members to continue their work toward abstinence, and in turn, perpetuate the organization (Blee 1991).<sup>11</sup>*
- Theme VIII: The religious element of the WCTU provides an outlet for members' "moral needs" in that they are able to fulfill a sense of moral obligation through their work toward abstinence (Wuthnow 1987).<sup>12</sup>*
- Theme IX: Because most WCTU members are older women, maybe even at the end of their lives, the religious element is an important one in that through their work toward abstinence they are able to feel close to God at a time when death is a consideration.<sup>13</sup>*

## CULTURAL-HISTORICAL

- Theme X: WCTU members rely on the 125-year presence of the organization to legitimate their cause and its organizational persistence.<sup>14</sup>*
- Theme XI: Members rely on the heroic stories of the early WCTU and the temperance crusades, as well as iconography of initial crusaders as an important organizational forces that promote community and inspiration in members.<sup>15</sup>*
- Theme XII: Rituals that are historically based or contain historical elements of the organization will serve to commit members to the organization, and help to ensure organizational survival.<sup>16</sup>*

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<sup>10</sup> Reflected in question III.69

<sup>11</sup> Reflected in question III.30. In addition to survey and interview data, support for this theme can be found in WCTU literature and convention rhetoric.

<sup>12</sup> Reflected in question II.28

<sup>13</sup> Reflected in questions II.50, III.60, II.28

<sup>14</sup> Reflected in question III.52

<sup>15</sup> Reflected in question III.50. Support for this theme can be found in contemporary WCTU literature, hymns, rituals, and other important symbols.

## Sample

Through survey, interview, and focus group data, 188 individuals are represented in this study; 124 from surveys, 29 from interviews, 35 from focus groups (who were neither surveyed nor interviewed). From this sample, the typical WCTU member has a mean age of 74.3 with ages ranging from 37 to 98. Age turned out to be an important factor in this analysis, with over two-thirds (70.2%) of the sample self-defining as aged 70 or older. In TABLE 1. below, an age distribution details the elderly nature of the WCTU.

TABLE 1. Age Distribution

Age Group	Frequencies (N)	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
< 50 years	9	4.8	9	4.8
50-59 years	10	5.3	19	10.1
60-69 years	37	19.7	56	29.8
70-79 years	77	41	133	70.8
80 and over	52	27.6	185	98.4
Age refused	3	1.6	188	100.0
Totals	188	100.0	188	100.0

Members are from 26 different states<sup>17</sup>, with two interviewees of international origin (India and England)<sup>18</sup>. Dedication to this organization is shown in the average number of years spent in WCTU membership, with the average member sustaining her ties for 36.5 years, with a maximum of 79 years and a minimum of 3 years of membership. Most members describe themselves as middle class (45%), with 25% of the sample self-describing their socio-economic status as “working class,” and 27% as “upper middle class.” Most of the women I came in

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<sup>16</sup> Reflected in question III.40 and III.49 Evidence supporting this theme was also found during participant observation at monthly meetings and state and national conventions.

<sup>17</sup> California is split into two different unions, California-North, and California-South; so although there are 26 states represented in this study, there are 27 unions.

<sup>18</sup> These two informants are members of the World WCTU and were in the US to serve on a panel of NGOs at the United Nations when I had the opportunity to meet them. These members are mentioned in the sample section

contact with were white, with only three black participants out of 188 contributing to the sample<sup>19</sup>. At the two national conventions I attended, I did notice African Americans composing anywhere from 15% to 17% of the convention populations,<sup>20</sup> with one woman being Hispanic. Overall, however, the membership base is predominantly white.

Members identify themselves as devoutly religious and conservative in their thinking, with all 188 members indicating church membership affiliation, and over 80% replying that they attend church every week. Most of those who responded that they attended fewer church services each month indicated why they were unable to do so, citing reasons of personal health or immobility. The members' and the organization's conservatism came across in interviews, surveys, focus groups, convention rhetoric and WCTU literature. Members are largely against such telltale issues as abortion, homosexuality, pornography, legalization of marijuana and are for prayer in schools, nation-wide prohibition and public displays of the Ten Commandments in state buildings.

Based on the information I gathered initially, I thought it best to interview 50-70 women from as many different unions as possible. This number was not intended to limit the data, but rather meant to provide a rough estimate that should eliminate confusion. Due to the spread-out nature of the organization, the age of the membership, and their declining health, I was forced to use other means in addition to in-depth interviewing. Instead of focusing solely on interview information, I modified my interview schedule into survey form. Data was gathered until

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although they themselves are not included in the sample numbers or in the analyses to follow; however, their perspectives are used, when needed, as comparative sources.

<sup>19</sup> All of these African American participants were from the Southern California union. Anecdotally, Highland Park, a local union within the S-CAWCTU this is thought to be the largest union in the country, with over 150 dues paying members (Ward 1999).

<sup>20</sup> While this number of black convention attendees, (15%-17%), is indicative of an overrepresentation of African Americans that exist in the contemporary U.S. (2000 census figures indicating 12%), other research done by the WCTU shows African American membership to comprise around 10% of national member statistics (Notch Bradley Marketing Research, 1998).

theoretical saturation was reached (Glaser and Strauss 1961:61) and until themes, driven by the loosely-based hypotheses, emerged to provide a grounded sense of the means of organizational survival employed by the WCTU.

I secured interview arrangements in as many regions of the U.S. as possible, utilizing contacts made at the 1999 national convention, and employing means of “snowball sampling” through these contacts in particular unions (Neumann 1997:207). All in all, I visited nine states, (CA-N, CA-S, CO, GA, IN, NY, PA, VA, WV), conducting interviews, focus groups, participation observation and distributing surveys in each. Due to the social nature of the organization, members were able to put me in contact with several other WCTU members in their area. In addition to known contacts, the printed letter of my research national newsletter, *The National Happenings*, explained my research project and requested assistance from any interested WCTU member. My research became an impromptu national project for the organization, and subsequently many unions were willing to lend assistance (See Appendix B).

#### Interview Procedure

I made preliminary contacts with participants to schedule each interview. At the interview location, interview subjects were briefed on the purpose of the interview through an interview script I devised. The participant and I then signed two consent forms, one for them to keep and one for my files (See Appendix C). All interviews were recorded on audio cassette tape and later transcribed. I initially thought that interviews would last around one to three hours, but quickly discovered that participants were so willing to speak about their affiliation with the WCTU that several interview sessions lasted four and five hours. Each interview took place at a location chosen by the participant, and occurred mostly in member’s homes, but interview locations also included a nearby eating establishment, in a chartered touring bus on a

three hour bus trip during one convention outing, at a park and in a member's car. One interview was conducted by telephone. If there were any issues to be clarified during the interviews, participants were free to contact me by telephone, postal mail, or email after the session. I received several letters with additional information, newspaper clippings, and WCTU literature. While I informed members that I might need to phone them for additional information after the interview, I never had to make any such follow up calls.

### Questionnaire and Interview Data

The data collected during interviews, focus groups and through surveys generated information on six aspects: 1) membership characteristics and members' demographic characteristics, 2) member attachment to the organization, and the belief systems employed by members concerning the WCTU and its survival, 3) member attachment to organization's historic roots, 4) member definitions of alcohol, and how alcohol and morality are related, 5) what members gain by their participation in the organization in terms of identity, friendship networks, piety, feelings of service to society, etc., 6) member-defined future prospects of the organization. This information was helpful in substantiating the themes outlined in the section above.

In addition, this information allowed me to contextualize the health of the organization. I asked members several questions about union projects and activities, recruitment of new members, their personal involvement, leadership structures, and others. Responses from members showed the organization to be sustaining itself but performing at very low levels. While contemporary members indicated an enormous amount of dedication to the WCTU, its history, and its cause, their testimonies illustrate an organization that is dying, as it is losing membership to age and immobility. Participants tell me that their message not well-received within the majority of contemporary society, that their recruitment efforts falling on deaf ears

within younger populations, and that their friends and temperance co-workers are dying. I outline this concept in the theoretical frame section above, deeming the WCTU a Permanently Dying Organization. Further discussion of how this permanently dying concept applies is found in the chapters to follow.

### ***Participant Observation***

Primary participant observation took place from September 1999 to May 2000 during monthly meetings with a local union in a Southeastern state. During my time with them, this local union had seven active members and three others who are on the membership role, but who are, according to the union president, “not well enough” to attend monthly meeting or to be very active in WCTU endeavors. Meetings took place during the first week of each month at one member’s house, and, followed the suggested guidelines from the national Program Manual, consisting of Bible and inspirational readings and discussion, formal business concerning current local, state, and national projects, praying and singing, and a period of “informal fellowship<sup>21</sup>” in which a light dinner or snack was prepared by that evening’s host. Each month the meeting took place at a different member’s house and each attending member contributes some money toward the refreshments.

During my time with the local union, we met every month, celebrating Christmas and Easter with potluck dinners and small gifts, and members’ birthdays with songs, hats and cake. Each meeting took place in the evening and members were very welcoming of me, filling me in with additional information I would need to understand the personal stories they were telling to each other. These ladies were obviously very close friends, and when one of the members became ill with stomach cancer, we all cried together when she told me, the last of the group to know. Members passed around pictures of their grandchildren, shared recipes, and sang

harmony together like they were a professional troupe. Being part of this group was an amazing experience for me, as the youngest in a group whose otherwise average age was 72.

We followed the national guidelines for meeting topic and structure each month, and some members could be very creative when it came to sharing Bible scripture. There were three evenings when we either had to act out the piece of scripture as in a charades game, or put together a homemade puzzle out of pictures with a large bible verse inscribed across the finished piece, or played the whispering game of telephone to see if the Bible verse could successfully make it around the circle without becoming misinterpreted (I must admit that I was the one who fouled up the verse's translation, being only somewhat familiar with the scripture myself). The meetings were fun and full of members' love for each other, their God, and the organization.

The meetings were never full of tasks or project directives though. We never met outside of our meeting circle to distribute literature, flyers or bumper stickers. We never stood in a mall to get people to sign a petition about alcohol. We never canvassed local establishments to get them to stop selling alcohol or tobacco. During those nine months with the ladies in the local union, we never went outside of our fellowship circle or acted in a way one would believe typical of a member on a crusade. This is not to say that we were not involved in some projects. We did judge a local poster contest sponsored by the state and national WCTU and one member counted her pie making for her church's Thanksgiving Day dinner for the homeless as WCTU work. We also were commissioned to pray on the nationally directed day of awareness for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, for those people less fortunate than ourselves, for soldiers overseas, for the individual members who were too ill to participate in monthly meetings, and for the one member who contracted stomach cancer during my observation time. The power of prayer is not to be underestimated and is discussed further in the section on Religion and the WCTU, but it needs to

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<sup>21</sup> See Lofland (1996:241) for notes on the importance of "informal fellowship" to the success of the organization.



be noted here that minimal social movement-like activities occurred during my observation time with the local WCTU.

Additional means of participant observation were also used during state and national conventions, and in meetings occurring in other states. During these occasions, I recorded on audio cassette all meetings, sing-alongs, prayer and praise services, and convention presentations. In addition, I took written fieldnotes and use means of photography to capture as much of each event as I was able. I later transcribed each audio recording and analyzed for thematic patterns. In all, there were over 400 hours of audio cassette transcription, providing for an enormous amount of rich data for this study.

### ***Peripheral Means of Data Collection: Scrapbooks and Photography***

In some previous research on debutante societies and other women's memorial organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Untied Daughters of the Confederacy, I have found that many women create and maintain scrapbooks cataloging their organizational participation and the organization's history and progress. During these past studies, women have produced these scrapbooks and together we have gone over them with an intimacy that is not possible during a standard interview. These books seem to be crafted with the elements of care and consideration that produce pride for the interview subject, and often they contribute to the sharing of stories and memories that might not have otherwise come out of the proposed interview questions. I found that by bringing my own scrapbook to an interview that chronicles that particular organization's history or features the interview subject along with some of her constituents at an organizational event, the participant is able to feel more at ease, tell more stories, and relate better to her place in that organization. For these reasons, I made my own WCTU scrapbook during my first National WCTU convention in New York as a means of

not only chronicling my research progress, but also as a social lubricant that was intended to make me and the participant feel more at ease with the interview as well as illicit more information during the out time together.

In creating these scrapbooks, I used photographs taken at meetings, conventions and other WCTU events, as well as promotional and historical information to create a visual representation of the contemporary WCTU. Signal Press, the publishing company of the WCTU, distributes a wealth of anti-alcohol, anti-tobacco, and anti-drug information that, when displayed in a scrapbook, helps to characterize the WCTU's purpose and message<sup>22</sup>. My scrapbook proved to be invaluable. Assisted by these means of display, I was able to immensely to contextualize other information gathered during interview and participant observation sessions.

### Conclusion

In this study, I use several methods of data collection to provide relevant information on the contemporary Woman's Christian Temperance Union in the United States. In my estimation, combining the methods of survey, interview, focus group, participant observation, and textual analysis provided me with an enormous amount of rich data for this project. The members of the WCTU deserve a large amount of the credit for their assistance and support. Without their help I would not have encountered such insider information for this study. It is my belief that utilizing several methods of inquiry, while it may muddy or prolong the analysis process, provides a researcher with a full scope of an organization. The use of both qualitative and quantitative means of data collection, in addition, serve to better generalize the research, promoting its reach as a fuller evaluation of the organization.

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<sup>22</sup> At the onset of this research, I intended to visit Rest Cottage in Evanston, Illinois, the site that houses the Frances Willard Memorial Library and contains an enormous amount of organizational history in library archives. This research trip never came to fruition, however, as the data collected in questionnaires, interviews, focus groups and participant observation proved to be more than adequate for thematic saturation.

While I am not claiming to understand every nuanced aspect of the WCTU, this research does represent many of the perspectives of nationally and locally affiliated members in the United States; it has visited with them in their local, regional, state, and national settings; and has analyzed their organizational character to the extent that no other research project outside of the WCTU itself has since Gusfield's analysis of the organization in the 1950s and 1960s. In the sections to follow, I outline the organizational workings of the WCTU, present information on its historic beliefs about alcohol, reveal the ways in which religion inspires members to work for the godly temperance cause, examine the ways in which members' ages contribute to fostering the conservative nature of the organization, and underscore the cultural significance of organizational ritual and culture in perpetuating the WCTU as a Permanently Dying Organization. Through these analyses, the reader will notice that the WCTU is not a healthy organization, full of new recruits clamoring for a competitive membership space; nor is this an organization of unlimited funds and endowments. The WCTU is dying, organizationally and ideologically. I use these observations to provide a snap shot of the organization, and in doing so, attempt to address the WCTU's viability for the future.

#### 4. THE WCTU CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Breaking the WCTU's organizational structure down for analysis, I find six components for discussion: 1. organizational hierarchy and structure, 2. membership statistics, 3. recruitment techniques, 4. financial information, 5. organizational culture as perpetrated through the religiosity of the organization, and member involvement in organizational history and ritual, and 6. organizational projects. Each of these speaks to a method by which the organization transfers its mission into practice and underscores four important facets of the permanently dying WCTU.

##### Hierarchy and Structure: Three Arms of the Organization

The WCTU has three participation units: Women's, Men's, and Children's. Christian women and men who pay dues and take the WCTU abstinence pledge<sup>23</sup> may join as either full members (women) or honorary members (men). Dues may be as little as \$3.00 per year for a national member unaffiliated with a state or local union, but additional donations, "tithings" or "offerings" could make dues payment as much as the member would like to contribute.

Honorary members may participate in all the projects and meetings of the WCTU but may not hold office or vote. A breakdown of dues payments and the income they produce is included in a separate section below.

Men's involvement in the WCTU has been a hotly contested issue over the course of the organization's history, with many members at various times over the years supporting men's full voting rights and office holding privileges. The majority of voting (and therefore female) members who participated in this study, however, feel that it is not only important to keep true to

the historical nature of the WCTU as a women's organization, but also that a female-run WCTU provides a space for women's leadership training, speech making, and community involvement. In this study, 92% of respondents advocated for keeping the WCTU as a women-only organization, with men as honorary and helpful participants, but not as full voting members.

Worth mentioning is one other potential participation level in the adult WCTU, the Iota Sigma union. These unions were specifically created for working women who had occupational obligations during the day and could not meet with the regular local union, but could meet after work or on the weekends. They are geared toward fostering membership among younger, professional women, hopefully providing them with a WCTU space of their peers that can meet for fellowship and temperance work on their own schedules. Iota Sigma unions have been decidedly unsuccessful, with no members mentioning active Iota Sigmas in the twenty-six states represented in this study. Several members told stories in their interviews and surveys about endeavoring to start an Iota Sigma union for younger women, but that these efforts failed when the women could not sort out schedules to find an agreeable meeting time or could not arouse enough support from other peers in their community to justify continuing on as an organizational unit. Those few young members who remained without a union of their peers often affiliated with a WCTU local or regional union, but could not attend meetings or be involved in organizational projects and activities.

Youth-related activities are the final portion of the WCTU's participant body, currently supporting 208 members nation-wide (Email correspondence, NWCTU Treasurer, March 2005). At the National Convention in 1874, the WCTU took up the cause of juvenile work with a fact-finding committee that organized into the juvenile temperance organization the following year

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<sup>23</sup> WCTU Membership Pledge: "I hereby solemnly promise, God helping me, to abstain from all distilled, fermented, and malt liquors, including wine, beer, and hard cider, and to employ all proper means to discourage the

(Ward 1999). Called many different names in the past, such as Cold Water Recruits, Cold Spring Volunteers, Band of Hope and Temperance Soldiers, the contemporary youth-related arms of the organization are named The Loyal Temperance Legion (LTL) and the Youth Temperance Council (YTC). Most states require that at least five children attend meetings regularly before an LTL or YTC can be considered an established unit. LTL membership is open to both boys and girls, age six to twelve or elementary school age. Each member must take a pledge similar to that of WCTU members to be drug and alcohol free and to live a Christian life. According to the current national president, “The purpose of the LTL is to help boys and girls know the effects of alcohol, other narcotics, and tobacco on the mind and body; to encourage them to adopt personal standards of total abstinence; and to teach other principles of good citizenship” (2000 National Convention Speech, Colorado Springs, CO). The principles taught in LTL include Spiritual Growth, Mental Stability, Social Guidance, Total Abstinence, Character Training, World Friendship, and Future Leadership (Ward 1999).

The Youth Temperance Council (YTC) has been a part of the WCTU since its earliest days in the 1870s. Initially called the Young Ladies’ Leagues, the name changed through the end of the 1800s to include Young Women’s Work, Young Women’s Branch, and Young Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (Bordin 1990). Commonly called The Y’s, this branch of the organization was confined to women-only membership until 1909, when this unit became known as the Young People’s Branch and began admitting young men (Ward 1999). In 1935 the name changed again to The Youth’s Temperance Council and subsequently the apostrophe has been dropped to create the Youth Temperance Council (Ward 1999). Comprised mostly of teenagers, the YTC has a four-pronged focus: Spiritual, Intellectual, Physical, and Social. The

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use of traffic in the same” (taken from: *Favorite WCTU Songs*).

WCTU cites Luke 2:52<sup>24</sup> as the basis for this arm of the organization, whose motto is “A good time with a purpose” (Ward 1999).

Each, the LTL and YTC, has pledges, mottos, handclaps, symbolic flowers and colors, initiation ceremonies, and a suggested meeting structure handed down by the national level. Membership is confined to Christian children and youths who fall into the appropriate age categories mentioned above. They, like their adult counterparts, must also take a pledge of abstinence, with LTLs reciting: “That I may give my best service to God and country, I promise, God helping me, not to buy, drink, sell, or give Alcoholic liquors while I live. From other drugs and tobacco I’ll abstain, And never take God’s name in vain” (LTL Bulletin, April 1999). The YTC takes a different pledge, promising: “I promise, by the help of God, never to use alcoholic beverages, other narcotics or tobacco, and to encourage everyone else to do the same, fulfilling the command, ‘Keep thyself pure’” (YTC Manual, Signal Press).

#### Hierarchy and Structure: Offices and Departments

There are four possible levels of organizational activity for adult female members within the WCTU: national, state, regional<sup>25</sup>, and local<sup>26</sup>. Each level is governed by a hierarchy of positions and directorships. The positions at each level are the same, with each local, regional, state, and national union supposedly containing a President, Vice-President, Promotion Director, Treasurer, Recording Secretary, Loyal Temperance Legion Executive Director, Youth Temperance Council Executive Director, Christian Outreach Director, Education Director, Home Protection Director, Legislation/Citizenship Director, Public Relations Director, Social Service Director. A visual rendition of the hierarchy of the positions each level can be seen in FIGURE

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<sup>24</sup> Luke 2:52 (NIV): And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

<sup>25</sup> Regional unions are found active in only two states in this study: WV and PA.

1 below. Note that the positions indicated in the last three blocks of the figure above are singular, national positions that are not duplicated in the lower levels of the organizational structure however.

FIGURE 1. HERE

Many of the positions in the figure above are mirrored in the state, regional, and local divisions of the organization. Each member state of the WCTU is governed by officers like those national ones. Additionally, there are state Executive and Department Directors<sup>27</sup>. The positions indicated in the last three blocks of the figure above are singular, national positions that are not duplicated in the lower levels of the organizational structure however.

My research in Pennsylvania alerted me to the existence of regional unions, where sparsely populated local unions combine and convene together. The positions in the region mirror those at the state and national levels. More common than regional groups, however, are local unions. The local union is the basic organizational unit of the WCTU, and is the group with which most members are familiar. Local unions, like their regional, state and national counterparts endeavor to fill the same five officer and eight directorship positions; however, small membership numbers often force members to combine or eliminate offices and/or to place members in multiple positions of leadership. This inability to fill leadership positions within the lower levels of the WCTU is a dimension of the organization that needs examining, as it indicates failure to sustain basic organizational units.

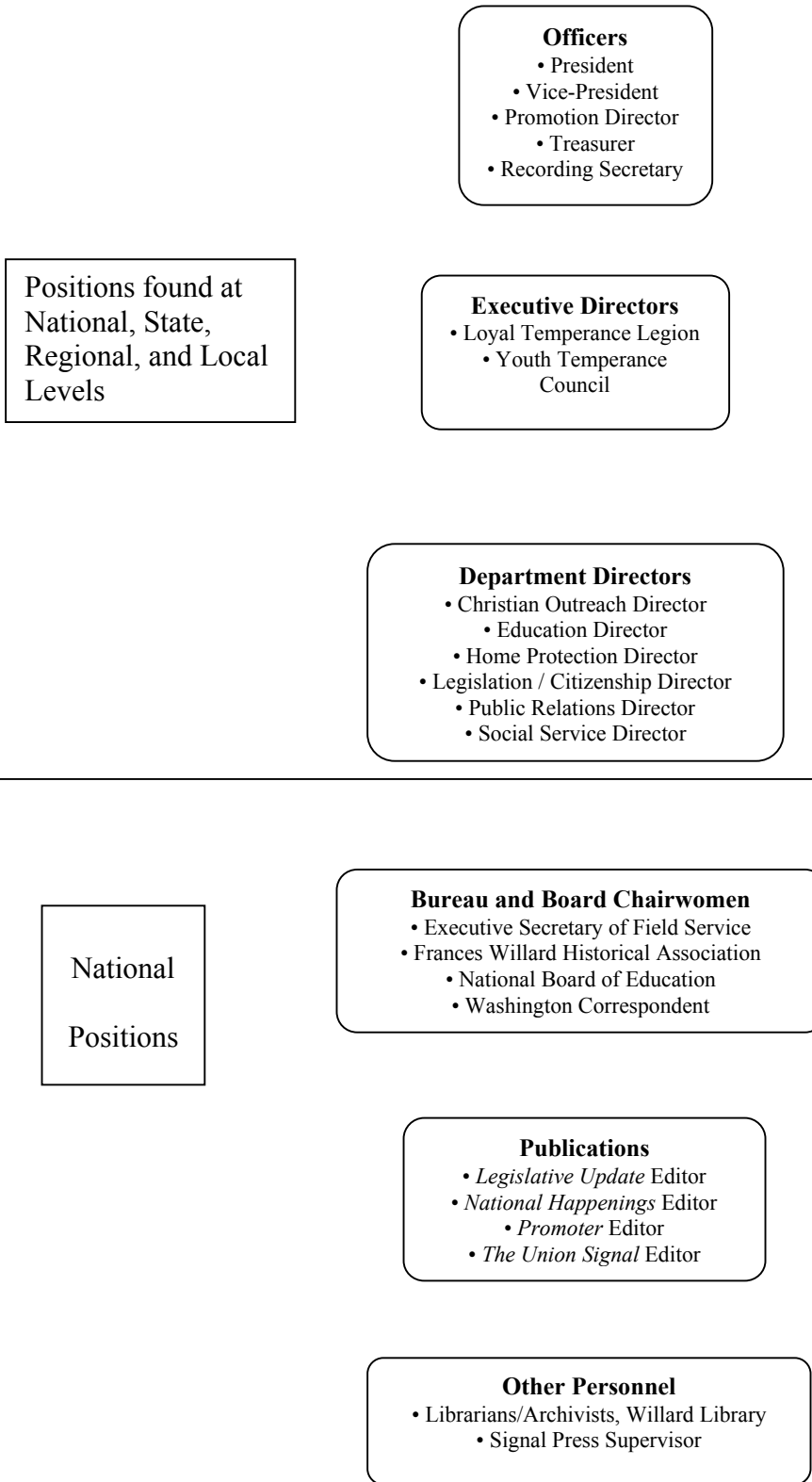
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<sup>26</sup> There is also an International WCTU, found mostly in the US, Australia, India, and the UK. While some anecdotal information on international organizational efforts is provided in this paper, its inclusion for analysis is beyond the scope of this research.

<sup>27</sup> Large states such as California are split into two state sections, Northern California and Southern California. Each section has a president, vice-president, etc. I believe that each section of California has its own Executive and Department Directors as well, although I will only be certain once I have been able to interview a representative from that state.



FIGURE 1.



## Offices

Five officer positions are available at each level, varying with respect to responsibility and character. The National WCTU provides a definitional template for state unions that outlines the responsibilities for each leadership office that is found in Article IV of every State Constitution. While the definitions of and responsibilities for each office will vary slightly from state to state, each state constitution Article IV states: “The general offices shall be president, vice president (at large), promotion director, treasurer (and recording secretary)<sup>28</sup>, recording secretary, who shall be the trustees of what is known as the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union of the state of \_\_\_\_\_”. The definitions below are a representative example taken from the Virginia WCTU Constitution (1999) and the West Virginia WCTU Constitution (1996-1998):

The **President** shall be the chief executive officer. She shall preside at the State Convention and shall be Chairman of the Official Board and Executive Committee. She shall have general oversight of the work. Recommendations, plans and policies pertinent to the state work may be submitted after consulting with other state officers. She shall prepare an address for the annual convention and with the recording secretary shall issue the call for the meeting. When a special meeting is considered necessary by the President or any (three, five) members of the executive committee, she shall issue the call, which must include the purpose of the call. She shall be ex-officio member of all committees. She shall perform all other duties incident to the office.

The **Vice President** shall serve in the absence, death, or inability of the president. In the case of the inability of the vice president to act, the duties shall devolve upon the general officers in the order of their precedence. She shall assist the president when requested. She is responsible for sending, receiving and evaluating Standard of Excellence Reports from the local unions.

The **Promotion Director** shall conduct the general correspondence of the state union, promote the organizational work and conduct the annual membership campaign through the medium of the local union. She shall send region and local promotion directors a report blank to be returned by August 31. She shall prepare greetings, condolences,

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<sup>28</sup> In many state unions, for example WV, CA-N, CA-S, IL, and others, these two offices are combined. At the national level, they are kept separate,

questionnaires, report blanks, etc. at the request of the president. She shall be responsible for special memberships and organization plans in the state.

The **Treasurer** shall be the custodian of all funds of the organization. She shall keep an accurate account of all receipts and disbursements and have the records audited yearly by a public accountant. She shall pay, by check, all bills on an order of the President. She shall present a semi-annual report to the president and an annual report to the convention. Expenditures, except those itemized in the budget shall be authorized by the official board, or upon written authorization of the president or recording secretary.

The **Recording Secretary** shall keep an accurate record of the conventions and meetings of the official board and executive committee. She shall send proper notice of any official board or executive committee meetings, and shall notify all committees of their appointment. She shall send notification of the annual meeting to each local president for herself and her delegates at least four weeks prior to the date set. She shall prepare and edit the annual reports and minutes.

At the national level, officers have the important task of defining the character of the historical organization's national leadership. In Gusfield's acclaimed examination of the WCTU, he notes the devolution of leadership status from that of upper- and upper-middle class status women-leaders during the organization's heyday to working class national leaders in the 1950s and 1960s (1986 [1963]). Today's WCTU leaders define themselves as middle or working class, with four out of the five officers having had career employment in the past, and one focusing on motherhood as her occupation. Today's leaders are, for the most part, married, with only the national president listing her marital status as 'never married.' Officers have been bookkeepers, teachers, or clerical workers in the past, and most of them currently live in rural areas or in small towns, with the exception of one officer who resides in Oakland, CA. Their personal attitudes are fairly typical of those of the average member at large, locating importance in similar political issues and WCTU goals. They are more readily able to identify lists of WCTU projects, both nationally and locally, and seem somewhat more conservative in their

beliefs for the organization's future, noting unanimously that they do not believe there will be another Prohibition period, but also that the nation will suffer for it.

These five officers set the tone for what projects will be set for the organization each year, and while they are happy to mention WCTU side projects at national conventions (such as homes for teens in IA, successful youth camps in CA, and historical efforts in ME, where Neal Dow, promoter of the Volstead Act and 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, left his estate to the WCTU), they dictate to the rest of the state unions what their work will entail each year. This concentration of power is important in that it officially defines what the WCTU will focus on and how the rest of the nation will know the organization today.

One may notice that while the WCTU concentrated on the elimination of alcohol from society in the past, this is hardly what leaders focus on today. As the organization has devolved into more of an associative as opposed to a purposive one, leaders choose projects that diffuse the traditional goals of the WCTU, highlighting mini-successes in the areas of alcohol and drugs (Etzioni 1961; Zald and Ash 1994 [1966]). Projects today include rewarding restaurants that do not serve alcoholic beverages with certificates, as well as half-hearted letter-writing campaigns to local officials concerning alcohol-related issues. While members tell me of their dedication to ridding the nation, one person at a time, of alcohol consumption and the sins that go along with it, the leadership of the WCTU may not think this is a practical way to maintain the organization. Instead, those in power focus on bureaucratic projects, and endeavor to partner with other anti-alcohol organizations, sometimes at the membership's protest. For example, during the 2000 National Convention, a prominent author and minister from The Church of Latter Day Saints was chosen as the keynote speaker, as his efforts toward eliminating Anheuser-Busch's sponsorship from the 2002 Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, UT caught the national president's

eye. Sitting in the convention hall audience, I overheard members say, “But he’s *Mormon!* I don’t know what she’s (the National President) thinking bringing him here!” and “Well, he may be against alcohol, but he’s not for Jesus, is he?... You know they say the Mormons are going to overtake the Baptists (for control or in population numbers) in the next 30 years” (2000 National Convention Fieldnotes, Colorado Springs, CO). The disjunction between the members’ and leaders’ feeling over the partnership was palpable at that event. In sum, members saw the organization’s affiliations as very different than did the national leadership. While national leaders may be desperate for aligning their cause with other successful and financially backed organizations, the membership rejects the watered-down nature of the new cause.

In the Weberian sense, oligarchization may be defined as the concentration of power in the hands of a minority of the organization’s members, and for the purposes of this study, bureaucratization is that form of oligarchization that stresses a hierarchy of offices and prescribed rules for the conduction of affairs (Weber 1947 as cited in Zald and Ash 1994 [1966]). When the leadership prescribes too much of the membership’s duties and calling, members become apathetic and lose interest in much other than the ritualistic elements of membership. They remain in the organization for its “solidary” or “associative” benefits, but they are not inspired to work for the organization’s original mission or toward its official (if even “becalmed”) cause (Etzioni 1961; Zald and Ash 1994 [1966]). If only through the presumptive power of observation, I believe this to be the case for today’s WCTU: the members are old enough and disenchanting enough to continue on with minimal and ritualistic effort, but while they believe in the organization itself, they may not believe that the course they are currently on is sufficient for revival<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> The issue of member belief in the WCTU's course is discussed in detail in the chapters below. I mention it here to contrast certain gaps in belief between leaders and members.

## **Departments**

Organizational work is divided into eight departments, each headed by a director who is responsible for carrying out the projects that fall under her departmental scope. The departments are LTL Director, YTC Director, Christian Outreach Director, Education Director, Home Protection Director, Legislation/Citizenship Director, Public Relations Director, and Social Service Director. While every state union has a representative member in each office, local unions normally only fill the offices of President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. A typical case in many state unions is for a few loyal members to fill several leadership positions at once during one program year that runs September 1 to August 31. Members told me that “there are just not enough warm bodies to fill all the slots!” (GAWCTU Fieldnotes, 1999).

The responsibilities of the **National LTL and YTC Directors** include formatting monthly meetings, including suggesting the monthly lesson materials that may be purchased from Signal Press, creating or formatting and then distributing activity sheets such as coloring pages, crossword puzzles, or word-finds, and tabulating the activities of all the states’ youth endeavors. One very important part of youth activities is a yearly anti-alcohol/-drug coloring sheet, poster, and essay contest, with the youngest children coloring a standardized coloring sheet that contains an anti-alcohol/-drug message, the middle ages creating their own anti-drug/-alcohol poster, and the older children writing essays about the harms of alcohol and drugs. These are judged first on a local and state level and then on a national level each year at the National Convention. State LTL and YTC directors are responsible for distributing materials to local branches, keeping records of these branches’ activities, setting up statewide youth camps and rallies, and supporting locals unions’ youth activities within her respective state.

The second departmental position, that of **Christian Outreach Director** is headed by one member at each state union and at the national level (and only sometimes at the local union

level) and reinforces the *Christian* portion of the Woman's *Christian* Temperance union. The WVVWCTU Journal defines the work of the Christian Outreach Department as "encourag(ing) every member to be Christlike in their daily walk and striv(ing) to win souls for His Kingdom. Also to help members realize that reaching out must be done in Christian love" (WVVWCTU). Members contribute to the work of this department by choosing prayer partners, having personal prayer time, holding union prayer meetings, observing Noontide Prayer (see footnote 37, p. 126 for Noontide Prayer definition), sponsoring Temperance Days at local churches, conducting Prayer Walks around sites such as school and courthouses, distributing WCTU Pastor's Packets with sermon notes, biblical references, and alcohol related statistics to local ministers for their use in the pulpit, sponsoring a Bible Study Group or a Prayer Breakfast.

The department under the **Education Director** works to spread the WCTU's message about the effects of alcohol and drugs to both adults and children. According to the WVVWCTU Journal, 1996-1998, the Education Director and her department are charged with "help(ing) children and youth know the truth about the harmful effects of alcohol, other narcotics and tobacco on the mind and body. (This department) encourage(s) them to adopt personal habits of total abstinence as their choice for life" (WVVWCTU, 1996-1998). Normally, the education department's efforts are directed toward reaching Christian children by working with the state's LTL and YTC directors and through local union members guest-teaching children in their weekly Sunday School classes. Members have access to educational puppets, coloring sheets, storybooks and games with anti-alcohol and anti-drug messages. Additionally, each year members sponsor coloring and essay contests within their local unions that surround an anti-alcohol and other drug theme. Adult educational literature is available from the WCTU's publishing house, Signal Press, for distribution in church pamphlets or other public events.

The **Home Protection Director** is a position that encompasses the WCTU's continuing goals to protect the family from moral impurity. According to the WWCTU Constitution, "the purpose of the Home Protection Department is to help protect the entire family from the influence of the liquor traffic" (WWCTU Journal, 1996-1998). This arm of the organization strives to "promote high ideals of purity in all avenues of life and to stress total abstinence for better family living" (1996-1998). Specific home protection activities from various state unions in 1998-2000 included dedicating children to the abstinence cause with a White Ribbon Recruitment Ceremony,<sup>30</sup> nominations and contest for "Family of the Year,"<sup>31</sup> letters to newspapers or elected representatives of protest or commendation on topics such as prayer in schools, drug and alcohol issues, access to pornography in libraries, and the mention of homosexuality in school textbooks.

**Legislation/Citizenship Director** – "This department is responsible for promoting the importance of abstinence through contacts by letter, phone calls, petitions and one-on-one meetings with those who make our laws and govern our great nation and state. The necessity of every member taking part in the work of this department cannot be over emphasized. The citizenship phase of the department includes encouraging voter registration and participation helping immigrants prepare for citizenship in naturalization classes and patriotic observances of various kinds" (WWCTU Journal, 1996-1998). Helping immigrants to prepare for citizenship, while part of the early WCTU focus (Gusfield 1985), was not witnessed at all during this study. Instead, directors of this department encourage their members to pray for the President of the

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<sup>30</sup> Discussed in detail in Chapter VIII, a White Ribbon Recruitment Ceremony is similar to a baptism in that the child's parents and those in attendance dedicate that child to the abstinence cause, swearing, as the adult sponsors in a religious ceremony, to help the child uphold a Christian life, free from alcohol and drugs. Instead of a christening the child with holy water, a white ribbon is tied around his wrist to symbolize moral and physical purity.

<sup>31</sup> While not every state actively participates, Family of the Year is a title supposedly given to one dysfunctional family in each state each year. Usually the family has had issues with alcohol and/or drugs and is currently utilizing



United States and other elected representatives, “vote (their) conscience” as it pertains to alcohol and drugs, write to and meet with elected representatives on issues of “national morality” such as gambling, alcohol and drugs, homosexuality, and pornography, and support the National Prohibition Party with campaign contributions to delegates (WCTU Legislative Update, April 2000).

The department of **Public Relations** is “a vital avenue of service whereby the purpose and program of the WCTU is made known to the general public. The methods of divulging information about abstaining from all harmful substances is publicized through various media such as newspapers, radio, TV, films and videos” (WVWCTU Journal, 1996-1998). It is the responsibility of the public relations director to promote the WCTU’s activities and mission whenever possible. The WVWCTU suggests that this office use “(e)xhibits of posters, literature, etc. in public places... and (f)ruestas<sup>32</sup>, (which) are quite popular everywhere today because people are becoming more health conscious” (WVWCTU Journal, 1996-1998). The national Public Relations Director produces an enormous amount of information for the states in terms of the means to attract media attention for the cause and consequently is one of the three paid positions on the national level. Instead of focusing mainly on exhibits and fruestas, however, the national director suggests members use templates created for press releases and gives each state union a detailed checklist for contacting radio and TV stations. Additionally, the national PR director suggests state and local unions utilize the power of the internet to send emails to their friends and family members, as well as elected representatives about issues important to them.

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community support systems to “get back on track to a successful Christian existence without the heartache of alcohol and drugs dragging them down” (Home Protection Seminar, 1999 National WCTU Convention, NY).

<sup>32</sup> A combination of the words *fruit* and *fiesta*, “fruestas” are nonalcoholic party drinks made from fruit. The WCTU provides nine fruesta pamphlets through Signal Press, each containing numerous recipes for tasty alternative drinks, many of which have holiday themes, and can be served instead of alcohol at public functions and parties. Providing alternative beverages for the public has been part of the WCTU mission for over 100 years. Whereas in the past

While many state and local public relations directors are beginning to use the technology suggested to them by the national director, most continue to rely on exhibits and literature to promote the WCTU message.

Lastly, the **Social Service Director** is somewhat of a catchall position in that she is responsible for involving her union in community-oriented endeavors that would not fall under any other directorship category. For example, members in each local and state union participate in benevolent activities that do not involve crusades against alcohol drugs or immorality, and it is the Social Service Director's job to see that these deeds are recorded as part of the WCTU work. Union members all over the country collect toys for needy children during Christmastime, make soft sculpture dolls to send to orphans in China, write letters to anonymous military personnel overseas and cards of support to sick members and their families. They volunteer at the local Salvation Army, hospitals, Pregnancy Help Centers, nursing homes, and rescue missions. Members in Georgia collect soup labels for school assistance drives; members in West Virginia participated in efforts of Emergency Aid for flood victims. These endeavors are tallied by the Social Service Director, who sends the numbers onto the state and national directors as indication of the help local WCTU unions contribute to their communities.

### Membership Statistics

In any social movement organization structural issues of membership, recruitment, and goal attainment are inseparable as important characterizing aspects of the organization's viability. In their basic form, social movement organizations such as the WCTU are communities of like-minded individuals who come together and solicit the help of others to promote and sustain a common ideological goal. Just like in other communities, elements of consensus, boundary

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state and local organizations donated public water fountains to be placed outside of saloons, today's public relations directors provide free fruit punches and literature when they exhibit their materials at health fairs and public events.

maintenance, and solidarity are at work (Bellah 1985, Shils 1975, Erikson 1966, Geertz 1973). In other ways social movement organizations are structurally similar to social entities in that an identification of membership as well as the organization's hierarchical infrastructure produce badges of prestige and wellbeing, leading to an individual's overall sense of cultural capital and contribution.

Membership in a social movement organization has been defined by organizational sociologists to encompass a range of characteristics such as sympathetic attitudes toward the goals of the organization (McCarthy and Zald 1987:20), participation in some organizational event, such as a rally, meeting, march etc. (Oegama and Klandermans 1994; Klandermans and Oegama 1987; Sherkat and Blocker 1988; Opp 1988), and contributions of money or in-kind goods at some event or to a specific Social Movement Organization (Cohn 1993). These definitional degrees may be best expressed on a continuum of control of involvement required for membership. Ranging from mere "segmental involvement" to "total absorption," the dynamics of membership relations, as well as the character of the organization, will vary widely depending on the type of membership requirements in place (Zald and Gardner 1987).

Membership can also be viewed in terms of the base of individuals who make up the organization: What are the demographics of the membership? Are members young, old, rich, poor, religious, etc.? Is the group homogeneous or do membership characteristics vary widely among those in the population? How do these membership characteristics fit in with the goals of the organization? For organizations like the WCTU that have been in existence for a long time, answers to these questions are important to consider coupled with historical knowledge of the ebbs and flows of moral sentiment in the larger public culture.

In his famous work on the WCTU, Gusfield (1965) relates the importance of membership base in the organizational survival of the organization by focusing on survival techniques employed by the WCTU during the 1950s. After Repeal, temperance issues were not palatable to the upper- and middle-class segment that had made up the prior organizational membership. However, instead of adjusting its abstinence goals to accommodate possible moderate members, the WCTU shifted its attention to a new audience. By transferring efforts in recruitment toward a more conservative-religious, working class and lower-middle class audience, the organization was able to shift over to a support group that was appreciative of the original organizational goals (Gusfield 1965). While Gusfield focuses on the decline in the socio-economic status of the leaders of the WCTU, he never points to a decline in sheer membership numbers, nor does his study take into consideration the age of the leaders when assessing their class statuses.

According to the 1999 WCTU national president, current membership maintenance and recruitment efforts are directed at "Christian women above [the age of] 45." While most women attend WCTU functions appear to be well into their 60's and 70's, there are some women who look to be in their early to mid-50's. At one national convention I was able to talk to one of the state presidents along with that state's recruitment chairperson who told me that, "We don't want to be an organization of young women... or mostly young women. We like it the way it is. Young women all have jobs and families and not many have time for WCTU. Plus, it's easier when we're all older. We all know what it's like to be old and working for God! [Laughter]." The desire for certain similarities among members is obviously strong, and could be seen as a commitment-producing element of the organization.

In McAdam's research into the civil rights movement (1986, 1989, 1992, 1993, and others), he notes the importance of similarity in membership characteristics, and asserts that

recruitment through relational ties generates the highest likelihood of new member involvement. In fact, in the volunteer Freedom Summer Project, the primary indicator of high-risk activist involvement was the existence of primary relational ties that motivated individual members to action. Not only were volunteers who knew other volunteers motivated to join and participate, but also movement activity could be predicted in volunteers who could identify with other members working on the Freedom Summer Project (McAdam 1993). This is to say that a prospective member's ability to relate to and identify with other participating members makes volunteer efforts in a social movement organization much more likely.

Membership similarities contribute to boundary maintenance in organizations, and the WCTU is no exception. In the method section of this paper, I identify a sample of 188 members with similar age, socioeconomic and cultural capital characteristics. The similarities of members within this sample speak to the comfort of working toward organizational goals with peers. If the members of the WCTU are all older ladies, born around the same time, having similar experiences with cultural "eras" (world wars, economic recessions, and other historical moods and incidents), most of whom are also of a similar socio-economic segment and religious mindset, it makes identifying those who need WCTU "education" much easier (Gusfield [1963] 1986). The ability to symbolize and distinguish the boundaries that maintain the cultural integrity of an organization is an important part of promoting group ideology and advancing group goals (Geertz 1973; Shils 1975; Erikson 1966; Ben-Yehuda 1990; and others).

The contemporary WCTU has seen a steady decline in its membership numbers. According to the National Treasurer, the national WCTU membership numbers have declined from 13,000 dues paying members in 1988 to about 8,000 members in 2000, and finally decreasing to 4,400 current members paying dues in 2004 (1998 and 2004 numbers from email

correspondence with the National WCTU Treasurer, March 2005; 2000 membership numbers from <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu>). National membership statistics are compiled by the WCTU based on the dues paid to the national organization, routed through and tallied by state and local unions.

Like the decline in adult membership, the youth arms of the WCTU have seen decreased participation as well. Email information from the National WCTU Treasurer renders the numbers in the table below (March 2005):

TABLE 2. Youth Membership

<b>Year</b>	<b>LTL Membership</b>	<b>YTC Membership</b>	<b>Total Youth Membership</b>
1999	595	212	807
2000	637	211	848
2001	595	242	837
2002	510	168	678
2003	229	166	395
2004*	127	81	208

\*Membership numbers in 2004 do not reflect participation by the youth groups in Illinois, a state with a relatively strong youth program. According to the National WCTU Treasurer, the state neglected to turn in membership numbers for that program year and therefore cannot be counted toward national participation numbers.

Reflecting on the dramatic loss of membership, one must question what is going on within an organization that is failing to maintain member affiliation. Could it be that members are leaving the WCTU? Are members dying at a heightened rate? Is the organization not effectively recruiting enough new members to sustain itself? Because the WCTU does not keep statistics on how many individuals leave the organization each year and why they do so, I can only speculate, based on the data, that recruitment efforts are not sufficient to sustain the aged and dying membership base currently in place. According to Putnam (2000), while there has been a proliferation in the possible number of beneficent organizations in which an individual can take part, contemporary society sees less and less of individual participation in

organizational activities outside the worlds of work and child-related activities (e.g., parents actively participate as leaders, sponsors, or chaperones for their children's activities). The WCTU is no exception, and members do note that they are active in a range of civic and religious organizations outside the WCTU. Putnam indicates that the amount of potential organizations for membership involvement oftentimes spreads too thin the energies of any one member, fostering segmental involvement in which a member pays dues almost as a donation but does not involve herself in the organization's activities. The WCTU has sought to combat this within its membership body, dedicating the program materials in the 1999-2000 season to reviving support and recruitment efforts for the WCTU. In the program manual, the introduction reads,

“The comment we often hear is – ‘I didn't know the WCTU was still in existence!’ Sometimes there is the question – ‘What is the WCTU?’

This year's program gives you the opportunity to say: ‘Here we are!’ ...

Think for a moment – if you were ever arrested for being a member of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Be a pledge card carrying member. Know your WCTU and be able to talk about the organization (September program). Be eager to talk about an organization that is ‘on-line;’ which develops and distributes literature giving factual information about alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs; which places literature in doctors' and dentists' waiting rooms; which has displays and exhibits at fairs and malls; and an organization which makes literature available to schools and other counselors (WCTU 1999-2000 Program Manual, Signal Press, emphasis in original).

In this season's program, members review the organization's history, brainstorm about recruitment efforts, look to understanding and utilizing the internet as a potential public relations tool, and reinforce the organization's charge, “Pray, educate, legislate, and agitate” by devoting one month to each action. All of these efforts seek to reinforce the organization and refill its

ranks with new recruits. In the next section, I will look to how and who the WCTU targets as potential members.

### Recruitment Efforts

Social movement organizations, such as the WCTU, are one vehicle for the public recognition through promotion of a social problem. In the case of the WCTU, the problem to be held up for public consumption is immoral behavior stemming from the use of alcohol, tobacco, other drugs. Blumer (1957) outlines a stage theory for social problem success that includes “mobilization” as the third stage for promotion, involving the collective efforts of social movements, interest groups, claimsmakers, etc., to enlist support from individual members of an "audience" or "the sidelines " in order to get more of the public willing to take a stand, get involved, see how the issue needs to be addressed. As an integral part of their make-up, social movement organizations are the promoters of a social problem, collectively proclaiming that something is desperately wrong with the current social climate and that something needs to be done, or that there is an insurgent reality that other people in that society should accept as true (Loftland 1996). This, in a broad sense, makes all SMOs active recruitment organizations that seek mobilization from outside audiences. *How* and *who* organizations recruit can tell a researcher much about the organization and its viability.

In reflecting on the full array of social movement organizations’ recruitment methods in terms of the “general outreach and engagement channels that movements can exploit,” Snow et al. suggest the following central and underlying dimensions: First, there are various social *settings*, both public and private, in which organizations can come into contact with potential participants; Secondly, there are a variety of *modes* through which organizations can spread their message, both personal and mediated (1980:795). These dimensions yield four generic types of

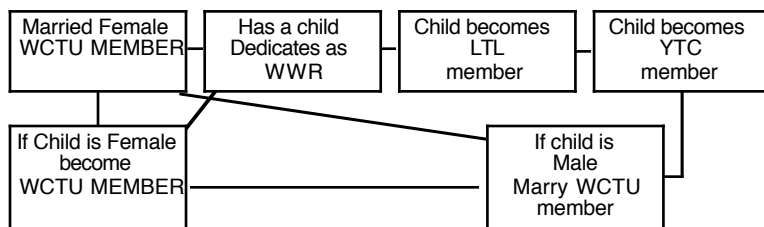


contact strategies. There are recruitment efforts among strangers in public places by face-to-face means, recruitment through institutionalized means of mass communication, private face-to-face recruitment among strangers (e.g., door-to-door canvassing), and recruitment through members' activities outside the organization (Snow et al. 1980).

When asked how members solicit new recruits for their local unions, it seems that most members feel comfortable relying on the informal face-to-face method of recruitment, "It gives us a chance to explain who we are and what we're about" (IA WCTU, age 53, questionnaire). A large majority of questionnaire, interview, and survey responses (80%) show members using informal ties of friendship or church membership in order to solicit new WCTU recruits, as members normally speak casually to potential members in their neighborhoods, community organizations, Sunday School classes or other church functions. *Who* members target (or who they believe should be targeted) in their recruitment efforts varies, with around 64% of members yielding responses such as, "the ideal age would be young women so they could devote a lifetime to the work. Especially young mothers as their children and teens are faced with temptations to try alcohol and drugs. Mothers need to be concerned with this" (INWCTU, age 77, questionnaire) and "The younger the better, especially young mothers that have small children. They need to be educated and get involved with destroying the drug industry" (OKWCTU, age 74, questionnaire). Many members who espouse recruiting young mothers rely on their own lifetime career success with the WCTU, knowing the benefits the organization gave to them and their families: "(We should recruit) young women so they can learn the work, become leaders, and continue active all through they years – just as I have." (INWCTU, age 75, questionnaire).

By trying to recruit young members, especially mothers with children, the WCTU could potentially see membership numbers increase in both tiers of the organization: the youth (LTL, YTC) and adult (WCTU and honorary male members) membership branches. Because the WCTU espouses a cradle-to-the-grave philosophy, it is set up organizationally to include a range of family members. Each member of the family could be an active WCTU participant, with mothers as WCTU members, fathers as honorary members, and children as LTL and YTC members. Structurally, the organization relies on entire family involvement. By this I mean, that the WCTU depends on propelling itself into the future on the basis of past membership or on reliance of generational membership transference. The organization is set up to be an indoctrination program, working most efficiently from the generational angle. For example, FIGURE 2 below represents a theoretical scenario for successful WCTU incorporation into a member's life and successive generational membership transference: A WCTU member has a baby, dedicates that child as a White Ribbon Recruit, enlists that child as a member of both the Loyal Temperance Legion and later the Youth Temperance Council. If that child is female, she becomes a WCTU member upon adulthood, later gets married, has a baby and the cycle begins anew. If the child is male, he will hopefully go through the same youth membership branches, marry within his peer group of temperance youths, and will father a baby who will restart the membership cycle at the White Ribbon Recruit level.

FIGURE 2. Traditional Recruitment Model



In the above scenario, there are two successful ways to sustain organizational vitality within the WCTU: Either young children are recruited into the youth branches and continue on as adult WCTU members who, now grown up, have children and indoctrinate them into the organizational schemes, or young, married women with plans for a family or already with young children are recruited, hopefully cycling them through the organizational membership phases. Theoretically, this cycle works, just as it does with generational alliances to church membership or nepotism in family or small town businesses. In practice, however, the contemporary WCTU does not see this model functioning effectively. While the youth branches are strong in some states (CA-S, WV, and IL), the LTLs and YTCs are scarce throughout the remainder of the country. (See membership numbers for LTL and YTC in the membership section above)<sup>33</sup>.

In addition to the lack of thriving youth branches, members indicate frustration when trying to recruit young women into their fold. “Young women all have families and no time for WCTU work” (ORWCTU, age 74, questionnaire). Members retell stories of their thwarted attempts to cultivate a younger population of temperance workers, citing problems stemming from young women being both mothers *and* employees who have difficulty finding time for an additional organizational commitment. Other members who know of the strains put on the modern day young mother feel guilty for even asking a young woman to join: “It would be wonderful to recruit young members but most of them work. I hate to recruit a working woman to come to meetings and take her away from [her] family in [the] evening or [on] Saturday

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<sup>33</sup> The scope of this paper does not include data gathering within youth arms of the WCTU, and in consequence, I am unable to explain the differing elements for youth program success or failure within certain states. To be sure, LTLs and YTCs are more successful in some states than others, and while I found the majority of members to care deeply about the wellbeing of children in general, it is unclear why some states do not actively pursue youth activities for their respective states. To speculate, programs with children involve a higher level of active participation than many WCTU members are willing or are able to be a part of.

(KSWCTU, age 67, questionnaire). Finally, members focus on the difference in the way younger women view alcohol, “Even those who don’t drink don’t think it’s *sinful*,” stressed one woman in a WV focus group, “They just don’t see what it’s (alcohol) doing to our communities and families” (WVWCTU, focus group member, 1999 Mid-Year Convention). The age aspect of recruitment is expanded upon in Chapter VII, but suffice it to say that contemporary members do not feel that the traditional method of lifetime membership or generational membership transmission through recruitment of younger members is fruitful. Herein lies the rub: The majority of members (64%) are in favor of recruiting younger women; however, they see these efforts failing and continue to put recruitment energies into enlisting elderly women for membership.

This continued lack of success with recruitment efforts among younger populations has led WCTU members to seek out new recruits from an older age category. Members now focus on retired and/or widowed women to fill new ranks, and indicate that these recruits are able to contribute in ways a younger age bracket of workers cannot. 28% of the respondents believe that there are greater benefits to confining recruitment efforts to an older age category, citing such reasons as “Older women have more time to dedicate to the work. We should get them at retirement age – give them something to fill their time” (INWCTU, age 70, focus group, INWCTU Mid-Year Convention, 2000). This sentiment was reinforced even among the relatively younger members, with one 39 year-old member from Kentucky feeling that the best age to recruit was “Probably in early retirement years. [They are] action driven and could take a project and go with it” (questionnaire).

Although the practice of recruiting older women for WCTU membership has had its place informally in local unions for some time, it was codified as a national directive in 1999. At

the historic 125 Anniversary National Convention in Amherst, NY the national president decreed that recruitment and membership maintenance efforts were to focus on “Christian women above [the age of] 45” (1999 Convention Fieldnotes, Amherst, NY). If it is true that young mothers with children have little time to devote to WCTU work, or are just not interested in membership at all, then there must be a new membership cycle in place that overlooks or acquiesces to a gap in the early years of womanhood. By targeting older women for membership, the WCTU supports an unconnected organization, with a separate youth force and an older female WCTU membership force. Split into two distinct groups, younger abstainers and older abstainers, this new cycle may be helpful in sustaining the adult arm of the organization, but it would seem, hypothetically, to have dire consequences for both the youth and family aspects of the organization. How can mothers be persuaded to carpool their children to another organizational obligation that they themselves do not believe or take part in? Why would families pay for dues to their child’s organization that does not cater to their beliefs? Lastly, how does the WCTU continue to claim adherence to a cradle-to-the-grave philosophy when shuts down its access for a large part of the lifecycle?

Recruitment of an older temperance force is successful in sustaining what I call a Permanently Dying Organization. This new membership focus is an organizational innovation and is assisting in changing the face of the WCTU, setting up, instead of lifelong membership expectations, a maximum tenure of 20-30 years. While this is a long and dedicated career by today’s standards, it is a flash in the pan for some of the temperance workers who are celebrated each year for their 50, 60, and 70 years of WCTU service at the annual National Convention. To sustain membership integrity within the organization, however, the WCTU is forced to make adjustments; cutting off access to lifelong membership is just one of them.

The most obvious consequence for recruiting older members is shortening the length of membership time; however, there are other drawbacks as well. Older WCTU members have no children to devote as White Ribbon Recruits, place in LTL or YTC. They have relatively little influence over their adult children's families and cannot force their grandchildren to participate in abstinence activities. Additionally, older temperance workers are in sync with the tastes of their peers, but do not understand those of their grandchildren's generation as readily. Therefore, the construction of eye-catching materials that might entice children and youth to join the temperance cause is lacking in modern day appeal. I have noted the proliferation of Signal Press literature that members can access for educational temperance means. These numerous pamphlets, leaflets and books are most definitely educational, instructional and full of information by which one could live a solidly drug-free, Christian life. They are not, however, on par with what children expect from their educational materials today. In the time of high-tech video games, the internet and MTV, where Coca-Cola sponsors television sets and high speed internet access in classrooms across the country, children expect flashy, catchy, hip packaging of whatever message they get, be it in textbooks, educational videos or organizational affiliations. The educational materials sponsored by the WCTU do not meet these standards.

An older population of temperance workers can relate to youth-targeted pamphlets such as "Coach Dan's Chalk Talk," where a fictitious Coach Dan talks to children about the decency of an abstinent lifestyle. They enjoy the wholesome messages sent by the "Tuppet Puppet" script, where each brown paper bag puppet is a different organ of the body affected by alcohol. WCTU members have been Sunday School teachers, ministers and educational leaders in an earlier era where children did not need eye-catching materials put to music videos in order to pay attention to the message. At a Mid Year Convention in West Virginia, I sat in on a

brainstorming session of a committee who was trying to put together an After-Prom alternative to the hotel partying and all-night drinking that normally accompanies high school prom nights across the country. Their suggestions were 1. a Bible study, (that while spiritually fulfilling and uplifting does not compete with the prospect of intoxicated youthful merriment one normally associates with high school Prom Night); and 2. an After Prom party to be held at a local Baptist church with Fruestas, cookies and crackers (the group decided against pizza as economically prohibitive). These are most definitely potential alternatives to the alcohol- and drug-induced dangers that teenagers encounter after their proms in high school, but one has to ask, "Are these means really going to attract enough support to be considered 'alternative'?" Secondly, can older members be aware of children's and youth's tastes enough to combat the notion of drugs and alcohol as fun and exciting as portrayed in the media and through their peers? I would argue that no, the older age group can not. With its reliance on tradition, history and steadfast rules of moral purity, the WCTU does not understand the youngest generation's TV mediated socialization process that is riddled with images of sex, drugs, fast cars, and violence. Even Christian television and radio networks use MTV styling with Christian rock music and videos; Christian youth groups distribute multi-colored T-shirts that display the wearer's membership or participation status; and large Christian organizations contract charismatic religious speakers for kids who spread their message with loud music and concert lighting. The failure of the WCTU to do these things decreases their competitiveness with both the immoral activities they seek to stamp out and among the other Christian youth organizations in the community. I see this as being a drawback to fostering a successful WCTU youth program.

Not focusing on young women and mothers while putting energy into a youth program that will not achieve community-wide appeal creates a space for older women to be recruited and

to “work” without accomplishing much organizational success. This is a key indicator of a permanently dying organization. The current recruitment efforts enable the organization to stay afloat and for members to keep busy, but they do not allow for successful generational transmission of membership or even organizational appeal to younger generations. In sum, recruitment of older members ensures the WCTU stays an organization of older members, and may even be the first step in eliminating the youth program from its ranks. This sets up a scenario where the WCTU may only be popular to one age group, an age group that is slowly decreasing in size through member deaths and incapacities with every year. In addition, an organization that is refueling itself with the same peer group insures that it will appeal to the same tastes and not have to incorporate new ones.

According to Blumer (1957),

The gaining of... members rarely occurs through a mere combination of a pre-established appeal and a re-established individual psychological bent on which it is brought to bear. Instead, the prospective... member has to be aroused, nurtured, and directed, and the so-called appeal has to be developed and adapted. This takes place through a process in which attention has to be gained, interests awakened, grievances exploited, ideal implanted, doubts dispelled, feelings aroused, new objects created, and new perspectives developed. To repeat, this comes not from mere contact of appeal and psychological disposition: it occurs from contact of person with person, in a structures social situation wherein people are interacting with one another. This so-called appeal has to compete with other appeals and further has to contend with the resistance and indifference set by the existing social structure (Blumer 1957:148).

The interests of youths and young mothers are not being catered to in the current WCTU recruitment efforts. Either the WCTU does not recognize this or does not feel that it will lose organizational ground if members do not recruit younger populations. It is my estimation that eschewing young members for an elderly temperance force are “acceptable casualties” that sustain the WCTU. Given that conservative attitudes are typically found in older versus younger



populations, it could be argued that a purposive mechanism is in place to insure organizational survival. A homogeneous population of older, more conservative women enables member identification within the WCTU, as well as fosters the temperance goals of the organization. This idea is discussed more thoroughly in a later section on age, conservative attitudes and temperance work; however, it is important to mention here that contemporary recruitment efforts do not sustain a vibrant, but a Permanently Dying Organization.

### Financial information

Economic support is a vital component of any organization's ability to transfer its mission to reality. Funding may come to organizations in the forms of dues, convention, rally, or special event fees, other contributions and donations, sales of organizational literature and paraphernalia, grants, and investments. Unlike many other nonprofit or professional organizations with high cost membership fees, the WCTU makes membership maintenance financially feasible for members by keeping dues low and educational and promotional materials inexpensive. According to Lofland, 1996, dues vary quite widely in their importance to the financing of a social movement organization. Certain SMOs, like labor organizations for example, are able to impose and collect dues that represent most or even all of SMO spending. Other SMOs have dues leverage based on member belief systems, such as religious organizations like the WCTU. In these organizations, dues are termed "tithing" or "offerings" and are thought of as the sacred duty of upstanding believers (Lofland, 1999:167).

### *Dues*

For the WCTU fiscal and program year that spanned September 1, 1999-August 1, 2000, members were expected to pay dues in average of \$7.22. These membership dues will vary from state to state depending on how much each state feels it needs to keep after sending \$3.00 on to

the national treasurer. Local and state unions may request additional “offerings” from members to sustain local union efforts; however, set state membership dues are determined by each state’s officer body based on the national yearly requirement. As one can see from the information below, a WCTU member could conceivably be an active participant with her own study packet and/or temperance materials for around \$10.00-\$12.00 per year.

	<b>Cost for members</b>
<b>Membership dues (required):</b>	\$7.22 (average 1999-2000 dues from GA, CA-S, PA, WV, VA, IN, IL)
	<b>Publications, per year (not required):</b>
The Union Signal	\$8.00
Promoter Packet or Literature	\$1.50
Legislative Update	\$5.00
NATIONAL HAPPENINGS	Free to members
LTL, Bulletin	\$2.00
World White Ribbon Bulletin	\$7.00
Program Manual 1999-200	\$0.65/ea
WCTU monthly devotions, 1999-2000	\$1.00/ea
Program Planner Kit	\$6.00 <sup>34</sup>

There are additional “special membership” levels at which one can contribute as a WCTU member. These are Life Members/Life Patrons, Continuing Members, and Memorial Members. These memberships exist on two levels, state and national, meaning that if one would like to be both a Life Member of the State and National organizations, she would have to pay for both designations. The cost of special memberships is the same for each level. These are defined in each state’s handbook as:

**Life Members/Life Patrons** – The payment of \$25 constitutes on a “Life Member/Patron.” This membership does not excuse one from paying the annual membership dues. A Life Member does not become a Memorial Member upon death. Continuing Membership may be conferred upon Life Members upon the

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<sup>34</sup> (Includes postage and handing, 2 Program Manuals, leaflets for each month, 2 study books, set of catalogs, Membership Plans and Awards, set of Contest Rules, quizzes, report forms, 1999-2000 reading course, WCTU monthly devotions)

payment of an additional \$25.00, and upon active and honorary members upon the payment of \$50.00 to the (state) treasurer. The names of all Continuing Members shall automatically be placed on the Memorial Roll at their death.

**Continuing Members** – The gift of \$50.00 constitutes one a “Continuing Member,” but does not excuse payment of annual membership dues. On death, these members automatically become Memorial Members.

**Memorial Members** – A gift of \$25.00 to perpetuate the memory of departed friends or relatives and to carry forward the work they loved will constitute her or him a Memorial Member (VAWCTU Constitution, Article V:49).

*Youth membership* is decidedly less expensive, with Loyal Temperance Legion members paying around \$3.00 - \$5.00 for membership, \$.050 of which each year is sent to the National WCTU and Youth Temperance Council members paying a similar amount, \$3.00-\$5.00 annually, with \$1.50 being sent to the national organization. *Honorary members*, usually male family members of WCTU members, are subject to the same dues as their female counterparts, and may become Life, Continuing, or Memorial members by the same standards as the women of the WCTU.

According to the National WCTU treasurer, dues receipts from 1988-2004 averaged about \$40,000 per year, but began declining steadily in 1997. In that year, the National WCTU received only \$14,000 in membership dues, a number that is on par with the dues income of today. With annual expenses averaging around \$300,000.00 per year for the first five years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the national organization currently relies on dues income for about 4.5% of its operating costs (information provided in email correspondence from the National WCTU Treasurer, March 2005). The decline in member financial support reflects the decline in the membership base as discussed above.

Declining membership and thus declining financial support indicates an organization that is failing to sustain itself by required member contributions alone. With the temperance

workforce numbers and their financial support decreasing, the WCTU must look to other means of financial support. Despite a drastic reduction in the national organization's operating costs that spiked in 1995 at \$525,494.00 and bottomed out in 2004 with \$273,492.00, the WCTU must sustain an income flow of around \$300,000.00 per year just to make ends meet (NWCTU email correspondence, March 2005). Without members supporting the organization's operating costs, the organization must look to other means of financial support. It does this through funds, gifts, bequests and investment incomes.

### ***Funds, Gifts, and Bequests***

The WCTU has several contributory funds that a member may donate money for various projects or organizational endowments. Members may contribute as much as they please to these funds, however a minimum donation of \$25.00 is suggested. These funds include the Beacon Fund, the Light Line Fund for the United State's international involvement in the World WCTU and its causes, Willard Fund for the restoration of the Frances Willard House and archives in Evanston, IL that was founding WCTU member, Frances Willard's childhood home, the Lillian Stevens Fund, and the Anna Gordon Fund for work with youth and young adults. In addition, members may also leave bequests to the WCTU in wills or trusts. According to the national WCTU Treasurer, monies from funds, gifts and bequests have ranged from a total high in 1995 with \$440,799 to a low of \$8,060 in 2003 (NWCTU email correspondence, March 2005). The nineteen-year average with respect to WCTU income was about 13%, with 2004 showing gifts, funds and bequests to comprise a slightly lower than average 12.4% of income (NWCTU correspondence, March 2005). As with membership numbers and their dues payments, the amount donated to the WCTU each year by members is decreasing as well.

### ***Investment Income***

Investment income makes up about 29% of the contemporary WCTU's income in 2004, according to the national WCTU Treasurer. The range of income from this source spanned from a high of \$144,641 in 1990 to a low of \$8,398 in 2001. The nineteen-year average is about 22% of total income for the organization (NWCTU email correspondence 2005). According to the national WCTU Treasurer, some erosion of the principal in WCTU holdings has occurred in the last few years, as values on WCTU properties (Frances Willard House and Reston Cottage) continue to generate \$4,400 in rental income per year, with annual depreciation figures being included in that figure at \$53,000 per year (NWCTU email correspondence, March 2005). In addition, stock market fluctuations create sometimes-extreme variances in this income amount from year to year. Stock market investments, despite their unpredictability, are, according to the National Treasurer, an essential part of the WCTU's financial make up (email correspondence, March 2005).

### ***Circulation and Signal Press Sales***

Because the WCTU owns its own publishing house, it not only can draw income from printed literature such as pamphlets and brochures that are distributed by members, it also suggests readings for its members each year that can be purchased through the Signal Press publishing house for a profit to the organization. According to the national Treasurer, the source of income has varied from a high in 1991 of \$162,496 to a low of \$34,680 in 2003. The nineteen-year average was \$61,190, with the declining sales of publications and source materials reflecting the loss membership.

At the 1999 National Convention, the dedicated member who had been running Signal Press and living in the Willard House where the press is housed retired, freeing up some monies

that supported her salary and boarding expenses. She had been in that position for over 30 years, and with the financial crunch of the organization she was asked to move out and retire. While this did free up space for additional income through renovating and renting the space she formerly occupied, the National Treasurer indicates that the actual costs of running a printing press were realized with the woman's retirement.

To comment on the financial status of the WCTU, one must note an organization in trouble. With the dramatic decline in finances since the late 1980s, the WCTU appears to be on its deathbed. This is no news to many members I spoke to: "You're going to find that we're not a very rich organization. We don't need to be Midas to get out word across though. We've got God on our side and that's what is important" (informal conversation with WCTU National Vice President, 1999 National Convention, Amherst, NY). While religious belief and faith that God will provide for the organization *are* important, equally important are the monies that sustain the organization by funding its goal-directed efforts. Pamphlets cost money, advertising costs money, and recruitment efforts cost money. If there is little money, the WCTU may only be able to do a little for its cause. In this sense, it is important to examine what the WCTU actually does with the limited resources it has.

#### Member involvement: Culture and commitment

While monies are important to the stability of the organizational hierarchy, its mission accomplishment, and public relations, organizational persistence can be fostered through other means. Many organizations subsist on scant funds and low membership numbers. Those faithful who remain receive benefits of friendship, solidarity and affiliation. These benefits come to members through participation in the organizational culture of the WCTU.

Organizations support member commitment and membership maintenance through a promotion of organizational culture. According to Trice and Beyer (1986), organizational culture is fostered through the ceremonial behavior found in ritual events such as meetings, inaugurations, the retelling of organizational creation stories or triumphant narratives, songs, ceremonies of transition (e.g., a leader is replaced), the commemoration of past heroes, etc. Members need to locate their participation in the organization as part of a narrative with a definite timeline. By celebrating important days on the calendar, such as the organization's founding, the birth or death days of a charismatic leader, or important organizational occurrences, and instituting leadership change on some regular basis, the members of an organization can see how far they have come as a group, as well as how far there is to go.

Ritual and ceremony also play roles in building group solidarity and indoctrinating new members to the ideologies of the organization (Durkheim [1912] 1995; Trice and Beyer 1984). Like symbols, rituals are dramaturgic expressions of ideology within a culture. They involve relatively elaborate and planned sets of activities or movements, carried out through interactions with other ritual actors or with the organizational symbols, and are usually performed for an audience. Examples of these organizational rituals are apparent in the WCTU, including monthly local union meetings, flag ceremonies that take place during each monthly meeting, membership ceremonies, yearly conventions, and certain days each calendar year dedicated to prayer and fasting for the members of the organization. All are important elements of eliciting member commitment.

In the Cultural-Historical chapter of this paper (See Chapter VIII), I examine two particular WCTU rituals, The National Convention Flag Ceremony and the White Ribbon Recruit Ceremony. I show how ritualistic elements invoke member commitment and love for the

organization. In addition, these ceremonies highlight important priorities of the organization, such as patriotism, religion, abstinence, purity, family, and community. By emphasizing organizational tenets in a dramaturgical fashion, the WCTU enables members to act out their beliefs and publicize organizational values.

Another cultural form to be addressed in terms of its contribution to the cohesion of the organization is the legend or historical narrative. According to Geertz (1973) individuals depend on their ability to locate themselves within a group history. There is a need to “grasp history and biography and the relations between the two in society” (Mills 1959:6). Because the 1999 annual convention fell on a commemorative year, there was a lot of emphasis placed on the creation story of the WCTU. On one day the convention group took an outing to Chautauqua, New York to view the historical site where the founding crusaders of the Women’s Temperance Movement and the Women’s Suffrage Movement met to join forces just prior to the WCTU’s official inception. Later that day, we traveled as a group to the town of Fredonia to have a fellowship service in the church where the WCTU held its first meeting in 1873. The importance of place as it relates to the organization’s birth narrative is important. To make the mythic origins of the organization a tangible reality for its contemporary members enables them to have a relationship with their foremothers and to better understand the course of history as reflected upon and shaped by their organization. This understanding promotes dedication to organizational goals for members as well as provides inspiration toward action.

#### Culture as sustained through informal fellowship

Finally, Lofland (1996) asserts that members of social movement organizations need to have relationships with other members outside the organization. Times of “informal fellowship” are important for members to come together without the pretense of organizational goal



fulfillment. Members need time to get to know each other as people instead of mere “institutional symbols,” and to develop the common bonds that constitute solidarity (Lofland 1996). By interacting as friends who are able to relate to each other, and who, as an added dimension, have a cause in common, relational ties develop that foster dependence and friendship networks. In her research into breast cancer survivors/activists, Klawiter (1999) notes the potency of “outside commonalties,” indicating that although breast cancer work may be of great importance to them, activists can not sustain a high level of interest and action without informal relations with other members.

The WCTU has capitalized on this concept of relational informality and closeness. In my participant observation of the local union, each meeting was structured so that there was a formal meeting time, followed by an “informal fellowship” time where members usually sat around the host member’s kitchen table, eating snacks and talking about cultural and personal events. Conversational topics range from recipe swapping and health-related issues to grandchildren and great-grandchildren to current events and how they relate to moral decline. Regardless of the topic at hand, these informal times lead members to relate to each other on a level different from their organizational affiliation. They come to know each other as friends, where trust and dependence become relationally important, and members begin to understand their organizational participation as more than the specific activities and goals of the WCTU.

#### Projects: Organizational Promotion of Goal-Directed Behavior

In addition to the fostering of a culture within the organization, incentives to produce goal-directed behavior must be in place for members to act toward these goals. Keeping in mind that organizational perpetuation is the overarching goal of any organizational entity, three strategies are recognized that entice social movement organization members to strive toward

keeping the organization in tact. These are 1) “projects” that may not alleviate the grievance from society, but appear to members to be strides toward the specific purpose of the social movement organization (Lofland 1996); 2) succession of goals in which the organizational goal structure transforms or takes on more culturally relevant problems, or expands its reach to rationalize its continued existence (Sills 1957; Kunkel 1995); and 3) embedding organizational goals within a system of moral-religious legitimation (Glock and Stark 1965). The contemporary Woman’s Christian Temperance Union employs each of these means of organizational perpetuation and member involvement.

According to Lofland (1996), organizations do not need to meet their specific goals in order to sustain member involvement. In fact, it would seem rational for organizations to avoid specific goal attainment, for if they did, the organization would no longer be socially viable, as its presence would no longer be needed. Instead of defining success as accomplishing one single goal, Lofland proposes the idea of working on projects, or mini-successes within the organizational goal structure. “The succession of large and important projects should be ones for which a range of outcomes can be defined as success or victory even if they are failures in given respects” (1996:204). If a leader can keep the membership focused on tasks that appear as stepping-stones toward the overall organizational goal, s/he will sustain member interest and hope for goal attainment.

The WCTU utilizes these means of member involvement, as there are several specific “projects” going on the local, state, and national levels at all times. Although none of these projects has yet led to a second national prohibition of alcohol, they provide a way for members to feel that they are working toward the ultimate organizational goal of nation-wide abstinence. A quick glance through the 1999 issues of the organization’s official newsletter *Union Signals*,

reveals several ongoing projects toward abstinence promotion. Members took on letter writing campaigns to local and national government officials, they participated in national days of prayer for abstinence, they made group trips to local licensing hearings to dissuade local officials from granting liquor licenses to restaurants in their areas, and they rang church bells to promote awareness of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. These projects promoted a sense of organizational progress, although no major goals were accomplished.

In this section I have examined organizational elements that sustain a Permanently Dying Organization, the WCTU. The evidence reveals an organization that is failing to sustain membership and member incomes, that is losing the youth portions of its organization, and that is relying on repopulating its membership base with an elderly temperance workforce. While none of these factors points to a buoyant and thriving organization, they are not necessarily harbingers of complete organizational resignation either. The WCTU continues along, as the oldest continuously living woman's organization in the country. It continues to work, however inefficiently, toward its Christian goals of abstinence and family safety. Its organizational reach is limited and its structure looks weakened; however, there are other factors that currently sustain the WCTU. Religious belief, the alcohol and drug focus, member's ages and the organization's cultural dependence on history and ritual elements allow the WCTU to continue on with its mission today. Whether or not these elements will sustain the organization into the future appears questionable; however, the conundrum of a Permanently Dying Organization is that it does defy theoretical and anecdotal evidence, continuing on in the face of inadequacies that would quash other organizations.

## 5. ALCOHOL, THE WCTU, AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEPENDENCE

Alcohol, as a cultural component, has been influential throughout the history of American society. Symbolically, alcohol takes on a number of meanings. Historically, it reminds Americans of a tumultuous period when leaders and legislators outlawed it as disruptive and poisonous for society. In times of celebration, alcohol helps to mark birthdays, anniversaries, the advent of new years, occupational promotions, sales mergers, and other important events. As a marker for adulthood transition, drinkers of alcohol are symbolic of “adults.” It provides positive notions of refreshment, a marker for class or taste, as well as a sense of community togetherness. Negatively, alcohol can represent a loss of physical and emotional control, moral and bodily impurity, disease, and the breakdown of the family. It is these negative aspects of alcohol that the WCTU capitalizes on in order to make their claims. Remaining true to these continued claims (that alcohol is a “scourge,” “vile,” “poison for the soul”) for over 125 years is what has claimed the WCTU a niche within the population of temperance and anti-alcohol organizations both historically and presently.

Its primary focus on alcohol has made the WCTU stand out from other women’s social organizations of its time. At its organizational inception, the WCTU advocated that all women should be concerned with abstinence as alcohol was causing the breakdown of the family as well as contributing to the maltreatment of women and children everywhere. The organization’s continued battle against alcohol as a moral evil lasted even through Prohibition’s thirteen-year reign, as the organization attacked bootleggers and rumrunners. The contemporary WCTU continues to separate itself from other women’s social groups, and more importantly, other anti-

alcohol or neo-prohibitionist groups in that it espouses a cradle-to-the-grave philosophy about morality through abstinence. Instead of merely providing assistance to others with alcohol problems or promoting safe and responsible drinking practices, the WCTU links moral fortitude with teetotaling. Unlike other contemporary organizations such as Mothers (or Students) Against Drunk Driving that advocate moderate drinking, or groups that counsel the alcoholic individual or their families after alcohol has negatively impacted their lives like AA or Alanon, the WCTU uses a moralistic approach that pegs alcohol as a “folk devil” (Ben-Yehuda 1990), and insists that abstinence is “God’s way.” By first briefly examining the cultural history of alcohol in America and then comparing the WCTU's historical response to alcohol with other anti-alcohol groups of the past and present in the U.S., I hope to provide insight into the ideological niche the WCTU occupies in the larger temperance campaign, both historically and in contemporary society.

### A Brief History of the WCTU

The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union grew out of the already popular Temperance Movement that began in the United States in the 1820’s. In December of 1873 Dr. Dio Lewis, a Seventh Day Adventist traveling lecturer, spoke to a mostly female Baptist congregation in Fredonia, New York on “The Duty of Christian Women in the Cause of Temperance” (Ward 1999). His lecture included his personal story of an alcoholic father and a mother at her wits end. In his mother’s desperation to pull her husband out of the saloon and back into the family fold, she, along with several other women, appealed to the saloon owner to close his business by praying in front of the establishment on a daily basis. After several days, their plan worked; their prayers were answered and the saloon closed its doors. Lewis suggested that if his mother was capable of doing this several years ago, the women of Fredonia could certainly do it now that the

Temperance cause was more prominent. His lecture outlined for them a simple plan for the systematic halt of alcohol manufacture, sale, and trafficking that included formalized appeals to the town's liquor distributors and public prayer in front of saloons. Following his lecture, a committee of 50 Baptist women drew up an appeal to present to the saloon owners:

#### “APPEAL

In the name of God and humanity we make our appeal. Knowing, as we do, that the sale of intoxicating liquors is the parent of every misery, prolific of all woe in this life and the next, potent alone in evil, blighting every fair hope, desolating families, the chief incentive to crime, we the mothers, wives, and daughters, representing the moral and religious sentiment of our town, to save the loved members of our households from the temptation of strong drink, from acquiring an appetite for it, and to rescue, if possible, those who have already acquired it, earnestly request that you will pledge yourself to cease the traffic here in these drinks forthwith and forever. We will also add the hope that you will abolish your gaming tables” (Ward, 1999:2).

In the following days, over 100 women of Fredonia formalized their intentions with a pledge of abstinence and an official name, The Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Fredonia (Ward 1999).

Dr. Lewis's lectures inspired women all over New York, Ohio, and into the Midwest to take up a formalized female-driven temperance cause. He instructed the women on how to combine efforts of prayer and written appeals to bring an end to liquor distribution in their towns and cities. By early 1874, the first state union was ratified in Ohio. New York soon followed suit, and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union became a national entity later that year at the religious resort and meeting ground of Lake Chautauqua, NY (1999 National WCTU Convention Fieldnotes, Chautauqua, NY). In Lake Chautauqua, concerned women from the all over the country took up the cause. As a response, on November 18, 1874, the first national convention of the WCTU was held in Cleveland, OH, with 135 women representing 16 states in attendance (Bordin, 1990).

In determining the name of the organization, the first convention-goers would define:

**“Woman’s** – It was formed exclusively of women, because they felt that if men had an equal place in its councils their greater knowledge of Parliamentary usage, and their more aggressive nature would soon place women in the background, and deprive them of the power of learning experience.

**Temperance** – The word must come into the name as a matter of course. To them it meant the moderate use of all things good, and total abstinence from all things questionable or harmful.

**Union** – The word has acquired new meanings to the Crusaders who went outside denominational hedges... so that the crusade women extended their hands to grasp any that were held out to them in loyalty to the Gospel of peace and goodwill, no matter whether the woman thus coming to the rescue was Protestant, Catholic, or a member of no church whatever.

**Christian** – The only word about which there was a debate. Some said that if we incorporated it into our society “we should shut out the Jews.” But others argued that since there was no creed test, this result need not be feared. Others said if the word was used “we would not have so large a following.” But the great majority declared that we did not come together to seek a following but to lift up and ensign. There was practical unanimity when the vote was taken,” (Ward, 1999).

During the first 20 years of the organization, its popularity was unmatched.

Temperance crusader and WCTU’s second president, Frances Willard, was a driving force for not only the abolition of alcohol, but also for women’s suffrage, the protection of child laborers, female dress modification, vegetarianism, and the outlaw of gambling. Willard’s “Do Everything Policy” created an overall reformist nature of the organization, making its membership appealing to just about any social-minded Christian female of that day. By 1892 the WCTU had amassed nearly 150,000 dues-paying members, and including the auxiliary branches of the Young Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (known as the Y’s), membership numbered well over 200,000 (Bordin, 1990).

The “White Ribbon Ladies,” as they were called due to their visible symbols of purity pinned to their chests, carried out many programs in the name of “Home Protection.” In their educational targeting of children, the WCTU lobbied to mandate Scientific Temperance Education across the country. By 1901, every child in every public school was legally

guaranteed at least one week of education on the poisonous nature of alcohol (Zimmerman, 1999). In the interest of new mothers, the WCTU sponsored cooking and household management seminars. Members rallied against prostitution and set up boarding houses for “wayward girls” in order to get them off the streets “and right again with God” (Bordin, 1990).

Along with organizations such as the Anti-Saloon League and the Methodist Board of Morals, the WCTU aided in prohibitionist legislation being passed successfully in 41 states in the union. Between 1843 and 1893 15 states passed legislation banning the sale of intoxicants; from 1906 to 1912 seven additional states passed anti-alcohol legislation; and prior to the 18th Amendment’s passage in 1919, 15 more states took up the criminalization of alcohol sale (Gusfield, 1986). When the 18th Amendment was ratified on January 20, 1919, the WCTU’s 45-year old goal was complete. They had succeeded in criminalizing the distribution, sale, and trafficking of alcohol.

The organization’s coup was short lived, however, as America soon became disenchanted with the lack of alcohol available. The hip flask, filled with “bootleg” whiskey, was displayed openly and soon became a familiar symbol of the era. Every community of any size had its “speakeasies,” where both imported and homemade alcohol could be purchased. This gave the WCTU an enemy to battle through the 1920’s and into the early 1930’s. Armed with both God and the Constitution on their side, the organization’s numbers swelled in the early 1920’s, but began tapering off later on in the decade, falling to its lowest point in more than 30 years by 1933 (Gusfield 1986). In addition to the decrease in numbers, Gusfield (1986) outlines the decline in the status of the typical temperance worker, as the prestige of the movement waned during this period and the membership base transformed from an urban, middle class one to one of the rural, working class.



Even after Repeal's blow to the organization's collective ego and strength, the WCTU has had some small successes in the last two-thirds of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1936, the organization created its own "Teacher Training School" at the Chautauqua Institute in New York. The organization maintained its own publishing house, changing the name to Signal Press from The Woman's Christian Temperance Press in the 1960's to hide the company's obvious religious nature and to ensure temperance education remain in public schools (Ward 1999). In 1967 congress authorized President Lyndon Johnson to proclaim April 23, 1967 National Youth Temperance Week ([www.wctu.org](http://www.wctu.org)). In 1990, the WCTU began its printing of the quarterly newsletter *The National Happenings*, making it available to members for a nominal yearly subscription rate. The WCTU became part of the World Wide Web in 1997, promoting its website [www.wctu.org](http://www.wctu.org). In 1999, the organization canvassed restaurants in members' hometowns, appealing to owners to ban smoking in their establishments, honoring each participant with a certificate of appreciation. Finally, in 2000, the WCTU rang church bells across the country in mourning of children afflicted with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and to protest the consumption of alcohol by pregnant women.

### Why Focus on Alcohol?

The success of the WCTU during its first 55 years as an organization could not be due simply to a random choice of alcohol as its focus of extermination. There were plenty of other social ills of the day and a vibrantly reformist sentiment in which to focus on any number of problems. So I ask, Why alcohol? To contextualize the WCTU's historical fight against alcohol, it is necessary to look to the role alcohol has played in American society, both historically and contemporarily. In this sub-section, I break down alcohol as a cultural element, examining its place in society in pre-modern times, in modern times, during the onset of the temperance

crusade, and in contemporary America today. The relevance of time period parallels the rise and fall of the temperance crusade and the success and waning of its social movement organization, the WCTU.

### Alcohol in Pre-Modern Times

Alcohol was an integrated part of Colonial American society. According to Rorabaugh (1979), colonial Americans drank “heartily” during all times of the day and night. Drink and social events went hand in hand as “Americans drank at home and abroad, at work and at play, in fun and in earnest. They drank from the crack of dawn to the crack of dawn... Americans drank before meals, with meals, and after meals. They drank while working in the fields and while traveling across half a continent. They drank in their youth, and if they lived long enough, in their old age” (1979:20-21). Alcohol was a pervasive force that cut across gender, racial, class, and regional lines. In sum, alcohol was an important part of the colonial fabric, routinized into the lives of early Americans.

The social acceptance of alcohol in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century stemmed from the traditional belief that alcohol was nutritious and healthful. “Distilled spirits were viewed as foods that supplemented limited and monotonous diets, as medications that could cure colds, fevers, snakebites, frosted toes, and broken legs, and as relaxants that would relieve depression, reduce tension, and enable hard-working laborers to enjoy a moment of happy, frivolous camaraderie” (Rorabaugh 1979:25). Because of this view, colonial Americans drank on the average 3.7 gallons of liquor (45% alcohol or 90 proof) per person annually, increasing to over five gallons per person in 1830 (1979:6).

The lack of technology during this time period made intoxication a relatively harmless form of entertainment (Roman 1999). Without access to machinery or motorized means of

transportation, the early American drinker could conceivably drink to excess without the fear of harming himself or anyone else with an automobile or in a factory mishap. In addition, the rurally spatial nature of the colonial landscape as well as the large amounts of farmland between homesteads made it possible for an individual to become obnoxiously drunk without bothering neighbors or co-workers (Roman 1999). A drunken man on his horse in the countryside could conceivably only injure himself. And while a probably nuisance to his own family, he was hardly bothersome to the larger community.

#### Alcohol and modernity: the interrelatedness of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration

Changes in the social organization of America brought on changes in the way alcohol affected society. With the onset of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration, transformations in the social network of American society necessitated a more critical look at patterns of alcohol consumption (Gusfield 1986). As industrialization brought on new means of technology and machinery, alcohol was no longer the innocuous social lubricant of previous years. The transformation from an agrarian society to an industrial one gave alcohol more power to impair both the worker and the job at hand. Hangovers caused worker lateness, unreliability and lack of precision. Drinking before or on the job was seen as a hazard to personal and workplace health and safety that was necessary for a productive industrialized workforce (Rorabaugh 1979).

Alcohol, as a productive hindrance, was not the only problem, however. The enormous industrialized workforce that flocked to the cities to live in close quarters within small, poorly built tenement buildings was problematic when coupled with large amounts of alcohol consumption as well. (Roman 1999) No longer did people live in distanced proximity to each other with huge spaces of farmland as intoxicant buffers. Instead, workers lived in cramped

apartment houses and multi-family rentals where neighbors could be heard clearly through thin walls. Domestic troubles that may spring from drunken binges were now public business, and physical confrontations were more likely due to the fact that other drunken adversaries were now readily available. Whereas drunken comportment might have been tolerated in the previous agrarian society, its ability to negatively affect a large urban population made it a social problem for the new industrialized America (Rorabaugh 1979).

The influx of immigrant labor that came to the United States during the early part of the 1800's provided the third component of alcohol as a negative influence in the industrial period. The Irish and German immigrants that entered the unskilled labor market in large numbers during the 1840's and 1850's viewed beer and whiskey as dietary staples, and imbibed as frequently as the colonial Americans. Due to these immigrants' low status as outsiders and disposable workers, their drinking practices came under scrutiny by native capitalists who feared that white Protestant economic and cultural domination was waning (Gusfield 1986).

#### Primary efforts toward temperance

As a response to the capitalist fear of alcohol's negative influence on the worker, and as a reaction to the changing ethnic landscape and urban concentration, issues of personal control and self-containment became important to social control maintenance. According to Clark (1976), a "bourgeois interior" took precedent within the middle class, promoting social and personal responsibility that included self-containment, cleanliness, and composure as notions of morality. Resulting reform efforts in the mid to late 1800's advocated gender segregated family obligations where husbands and fathers were expected to be responsible breadwinners, and wives and mothers were to be responsible and attentive homemakers and domesticates (Zinn and Stanley 2002). In this split between the public and private realms of family life, part of a male's

responsibility to his family was maintaining employment in order to provide for them financially (Zinn 2001). The fear that alcohol produced an unreliable worker had an impact on the ‘good employee’ stereotype. Factory owners now wanted to hire the mild-mannered temperate individual who spent his wages on family necessities and not in the saloon.

Throughout the 1800’s this cultural expectation of sobriety and proper comportment took on greater popularity, and many forms of media promoted the drinking husband as an abusive, depraved louse who neglected his family, forcing them into poverty and malnutrition. During this same time period groups began to form to combat this negligent father, promoting social temperance and solid family obligations. As a popular cause during the 1800’s, temperance groups could be found in most areas of the country. The first of these temperance organizations, the Washingtonians, fostered a mostly-male membership base, although many of them were coed endeavors, and most of the male-only groups had female auxiliaries (Clark 1976).

By the time the WCTU came on the temperance scene in 1874, there had already been more than 50 years of temperance activity in the United States. The organization needed a way by which to distinguish itself from the other organizations already working toward temperance. It did this in three ways: First, the WCTU was the only all-female effort aimed at improving the status of women, children, and the family unit, and in being so, was one of the first feminist organizations in American history. Second, although the WCTU marched under the flag of *temperance*, the “White Ribbon Ladies” were actually advocates of *abstinence*, believing that any alcohol consumption was unhealthy to the family and to society. Finally, unlike other temperance organizations, the WCTU combined anti-alcohol sentiment with Christian morality, espousing the idea that alcohol was an impurity that prevented an individual from doing work for

God. This combination of religiosity, social advocacy, and the popularity of the temperance cause promoted what I believe to be a greater adherence in its initial membership.

### Alcohol in the US today

Because of its legality and easy access, alcohol is the most widely used drug in the United States. Current estimates of ever-usage for Americans aged 12 and over hovers around 81 percent (Weil 2001). The 1998 Household Survey on Drug Abuse found that over half (52%) of Americans surveyed in that same age category had had at least one drink in the last month. Of that number, 15% (33 million people) had had more than five drinks in one sitting (considered “binge drinking”) in the last month, and 12 million people were considered “heavy drinkers,” or had had five or more drinks during one sitting on at least five different days in the last month (National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 1998).

Modern day alcohol comes in a vast array of forms and flavors to please every drinker and to provide an appropriate libation for every possible occasion. *The Bartender’s Bible* (2000) hosts drinks with fruity juices and mixes for the sweet-toothed drinker, milkshake-like drinks for a hot day, “Drinks for Ladies,” “Themed Drinks for Parties,” “Drinks for Cold Nights,” “Drinks for Hot Days,” and drinks with fun-sounding names like “Purple Nurple” and “One-Eyed Sailor.” There is a drink for every occasion. As a multi-billion dollar industry, alcohol supports America’s sporting events, music venues, entertainment series, charitable organizations, radio and television stations, holiday celebrations, and almost every other aspect of contemporary social life. Anheuser-Busch’s Budweiser beer was a major supporter of the 2000 Winter Olympic games in Salt Lake City, and Budweiser’s parent company continually dumps more advertising dollars to secure select promotional spots during the Super Bowl than does any other sponsor each year (Nader 2005). Sporting arenas are now known by their alcohol-related

affiliation, tickets to musical concerts are stamped with national brewery logos. It is everywhere and almost every consumer of popular culture engages in it either through alcohol consumption or participation in social events.

Women of today's WCTU know these statistics. They understand that alcohol is a cultural component, woven into the social and familial fabric for most of today's population. Members understand that their continued fight against alcohol is not a popular one, that "it's an uphill battle. We are not very popular. But we don't need popularity, we've got God on our side" (VA WCTU, age 73, Fieldnotes from focus group interview at VA WCTU State Convention, 2000). However much an uphill battle, today's members continue to hold strong to the anti-alcohol mission given to them by their WCTU fore-mothers in the 1800s. Inspired by their religious-moral motives, WCTU members continue to attack "alcohol... (as) a menace to the health and morality of our country" (CA-North WCTU, age 87, interview). Members have a three-pronged official charge to combat alcohol: "Educate, Legislate, Agitate" (1999 National Convention Fieldnotes, New York). One WCTU member explains: "Educate as many as you can on the harmful effects of alcohol, Legislate – get in touch with your legislators and tell them to put more alcohol and drug laws on the books, and Agitate the saloons, the beer companies and the drinkers by not buying alcohol or allowing it in your home" (IN WCTU, age 72, questionnaire, underlined emphasis in original.).

For over 125 years, the WCTU has separated itself from other anti-alcohol organizations by using the above triumvirate. I believe this separation has been an important component to the WCTU's organizational survival. Even today the WCTU differs from contemporary temperance or neo-prohibitionist organizations in a few specific ways. Primarily, the WCTU has continued to espouse a complete campaign of abstinence as opposed to the moderate or

“responsible” drinking philosophies from such organizations as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) who do not promote a non-drinking policy, but rather a non-drinking and driving policy. Contemporary members emphasize the difference in the organizations when speaking to me:

“Have you done any other studies on organizations?... Like MADD, have you done any research on them?... Well, they’re really different. You know that they only say that you shouldn’t drink and drive, and so I guess it’s okay to drink and *not* drive. It just seems silly that they don’t go all the way with their message” (GA WCTU, age 73, Fieldnotes of local union meeting 1999).

Since the 1980s “Alcohol Responsibility Campaigns” have popped up in marketing efforts on billboards around the country for beer and hard liquors, promoting the consumer to “Drink Responsibly,” “Make Your Move: Designate a Driver,” or “Think Before You Drink.” In addition, public education-oriented campaigns comprised of student-run organizations like Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD, a similar organization of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, although students who do drink have access to a list of sober driver students if they need a safe ride home) tell students that, “Friends don’t let friends drink and drive.” Public Health endeavors to place health educators in each school system to provide students with information about responsible drinking practices. Ideologically, the WCTU distances itself from these organizations and campaigns. “We don’t believe it’s ever safe to drink. That’s what makes us different” (WY WCTU, age 78, questionnaire. Underlined emphasis in original).

Like the WCTU, there are other anti-alcohol organizations, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, who do not believe it is ever safe for its members to drink. However, the WCTU differs from this organization in important ways as well. Whereas AA has been a support organization for the individual who needs escape from his alcoholic problems, the WCTU does not intend to be a system of support for those with drinking problems. In fact, several of the



WCTU ladies wanted to make it clear that there was a critical distinction between an anti-alcohol organization that expects abstinence from its members and their families and one that helps its members and their families regain an abstinent lifestyle once an alcohol-related trauma or breakdown had occurred. An often-quoted WCTU maxim states, “It’s better to put a guard rail at the top of a mountain than an ambulance at the bottom.” It seems likely that this sentiment indicates the way in which members place import and credibility on complete abstinence, which is, according to them, representative of the highest degree of commitment to the anti-alcohol cause. One woman from California told me in a somewhat hushed tone, “It’s not that we don’t care about the alcoholic [reformer]. We do. We don’t want anyone to drink. And we are glad for them when they quit. We are not an organization of reformed drunks though. That’s not what we’re about. We’re about a life of sobriety through God, not a support group” (CA-South WCTU, age 91, interview). From a number of comments like these, I assume that WCTU members believe anti-alcohol organizations who cater to those with drinking problems are like those who advocate “responsible” drinking or not driving while drinking, neither one having the same level of dedication to ridding the U.S. of its national alcohol problem as the WCTU.

Finally, as opposed to other contemporary organizations, whose primary reasoning for advocating an anti-alcohol stance has to do with physiological reasons of health or physical fitness, the WCTU remains true to its historical-religious ideology that the body is a temple in which to worship God. According to current educational material distributed by the WCTU's publisher, Signal Press, by drinking, smoking or taking drugs, an individual is harming his health, and thereby disgracing the vessel given to him by God. Without a healthy body and a clear mind, no individual is able to perform his duties in accordance with God’s plan. I feel that this religious aspect is a very important component in the WCTU's survival. By espousing the

notion that alcohol or drugs harms the body in such a way so that it is no longer pleasing to God, the religious women of the organization have an increased incentive to “save” themselves, their families, and loved ones from the possibly eternal consequences that displeasing God could bring. When members were asked why they personally abstained from alcohol and why they thought it important for others to abstain (Questionnaire II.4, Appendix A), they overwhelmingly responded with the idea that clean health through abstinence is important for religious reasons.

“(Alcohol and drugs) are harmful to the body which belongs to God. We are told in the scriptures not to defile it in any way. I dare not go against what God requires” (IN WCTU, age 69, interview).

Drugs used for medicinal purposes only. We should have high moral standards as Christians and not use alcohol and drugs (WV WCTU, age 75, questionnaire).

“I have never drank (*sic*) alcohol, never had the interest to do this. Praise the Lord!! Alcohol is a #1 problem, it is a drug, it effects all parts of your body and soul and is addictive. Lives are ruined by doing this. If we, as WCTU members can just get the dangers of this terrible thing about alcohol to the young people, teenagers and children and one live (*sic*) can be saved, we have accomplished our goal for the Lord” (VA WCTU, age 67, questionnaire).

“I don’t want to harm myself. Alcohol hurts. If it hurts our bodies I feel it’s wrong because our bodies are the temples of God” (CO WCTU, age 77, questionnaire).

It is apparent that WCTU members rely on God’s word as rationale for their personal abstinence from alcohol. Specifically, members look to certain biblical references for support. In 17 surveys and questionnaires members mentioned, most commonly, the following five biblical references that support their anti-alcohol stance (citations are given in both the New International Version (NIV) and the King James Version (King James) of the Bible:

#### **Romans 14:21**

**NIV**

21It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.

**King James**

21It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

**Matthew 18:7****NIV**

7“Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!

**King James**

7Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

**Proverbs 23:29-30****NIV**

9 Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? 30 Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine.

**King James**

29Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? 30They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

**Romans 13:13****NIV**

13Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

**King James**

13Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

**Galatians 5:19-21****NIV**

19The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

**King James Version**

19Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God

**2 Corinthians 6:16-17****NIV**

16What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the

living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.”[a] 17“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”[b] 18“I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”[c]

### **King James**

6And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

In each of these pieces of scripture, members see a commandment that prohibits the drinking of wine and/or losing bodily control through excessive drinking. For members, these are the sacred directives for moral living given by God through His text, the Bible. The dependence on the Bible for claims-making support has led the WCTU to promote other literature that links morality and alcohol for members, giving them religious battle armor to combat others’ skepticism or opposing views. In 2000, the WCTU and its publishing company, Signal Press, promoted many different publications about alcohol and religion, including 27 books, leaflets, or workbooks whose titles show a clear connection between alcohol and Christianity. Some selected examples are Van Loh’s *Alcohol in the Bible* (workbooks one, two and three), which “establish (a) Biblical basis for total abstinence;” “A Minister Looks at the Alcohol/Drug Problem;” *The Biblical Approach to Alcohol* by Reynolds; and Bacchiocchi’s *Wine in the Bible*. Members are directed to use these materials in local meetings during the lesson component.

Through others’ professional writing, members can take what they believe to be true about the immoral nature of alcohol, talk about it among themselves and in safe anti-alcohol company, and then and have access to printed ammunition for the times when they need to defend their beliefs.

While these secondary texts and their primary biblical references align with the WCTU’s conservative Christian position, members must contend with a very important part of the New Testament: Jesus drank wine. The Son of God blessed wine, he shared wine, and he distributed

wine to the many who came to hear his words. The savior of the Christian religion, time and again, goes against what the WCTU believes every good Christian should do. How do they reconcile this fact with the most important organizational charge of abstinence and bodily purity? Members do this by simply rejecting it. “Jesus didn’t drink wine. He drank grape juice” (1999 National Convention Fieldnotes, overheard conversation between two convention attendees). In questionnaires, members reject Jesus’ wine drinking as well, “I believe Jesus was too perfect to drink wine. He drank grape juice” (VA WCTU, age 77, questionnaire). “The Bible says Jesus drank wine. The real translation means a beverage that is not wine and is not grape juice but is more like grape juice because there is no alcohol” (IN WCTU, age 72, questionnaire). The power of the religious-moral belief system enables WCTU members to make sense of alcohol in both the modern day and biblical worlds. To them there is a clear distinction between the wine Jesus drank and the wine of today. I am no scholar or Hebrew or Greek, and the true translation of the Bible’s words about Jesus’s drinking is beyond the scope of this paper; however, what is important are the rationalization schemes that depend on the religious-moral symbolic universe for support. Members understand their world and in a religious context, and therefore must reject that their savior drank alcohol<sup>35</sup>.

I believe it is this adherence to a religious legitimating universe and to the notions of purity inherent these religious beliefs that enhances the WCTU's organizational viability even in the face of contrasting evidence (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Members understand their personal views and those of the organization as religiously influenced. Their call is given to them by the Lord, and “through Him we will combat (the) evil (that is) alcohol” (WV WCTU, age 65, questionnaire). However, because the charge is to “educate,” members must rely on

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<sup>35</sup> It is with this same means of legitimation that members are able to ignore compelling scientific information surrounding the link between moderate amounts of red wine and cardiovascular health. Instead, members look

alcohol-related statistical facts and anecdotal information about alcohol as a dysfunctional element of society to win over the less religious to their cause. In addition to a wealth of resources that enables them to further the moral arguments against alcohol use, members have access to numerous books, leaflets, fact sheets, and videos that promote abstinence from a statistical-scientific point of view.

Signal Press prints and provides leaflets for members to purchase at around \$0.03 each (in packets of 50 with prices ranging from \$1.15 to \$1.50). Examples of titles include “Alcohol: The #1 Drug Problem in the United States,” “Alcohol Problem Facts,” and “Alcohol and the Body.” These pieces include quoted information from such reliable sources as former U.S. Surgeon Generals, Drs. C. Everett Koop and Antonia C. Novello, the prestigious Hazelden Institute for drug and alcohol rehabilitation, the Department of Justice, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, and noted specialists in Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and alcoholism from articles written in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. In their “education” efforts, members are able to combine alcohol-related facts (such as this factoid from the National Highway Traffic Administration, 1995: “In the past decade, four times as many Americans died in drunk driving crashes as were killed in the Vietnam War) with their religious proselytizing. By attacking the alcohol problem both with facts and religion, the WCTU is able to reach a wider audience than by using religious arguments alone.

In addition to moral and statistical evidence, members rely on testimonies and anecdotal evidence to support their anti-alcohol cause. A large focus of the WCTU is placed on “Home Protection,” referring mainly to protecting the home from alcohol, but includes protection from other vices as well. Members recount stories they have heard from friends, family members, in church sermons, or in the media that reinforce their ideas of alcohol as harmful. “I will never

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again to grape juice as a morally- *and* heart-healthy substitute for wine.

drink alcohol. When I was a girl, my good friend's mother drank alcohol. I saw how it effected their family. The kids didn't have food, but mom had her alcohol. There were no clothes or new shoes, but there was always booze for the mother. Alcohol ruins families" (WV WCTU, age 77, questionnaire). Another woman from Indiana noted why she personally abstained from alcohol by writing, "Because I have never seen it do anything good for anyone. I have spent most of my life trying to help others overcome what damage alcohol had done to them and their family" (IN WCTU, age 69, questionnaire). In a popular WCTU pamphlet, "A Minister Looks at the Alcohol and Drug Problem," the first paragraph of the publication uses a young man's personal testimony for a case against alcohol use:

It was late in the night when my phone rang in the parsonage and upon answering it, I heard a little voice on the other end of the line saying, 'I need help! I'm drunk.' It was a young man named Paul, who had attended Sunday School faithfully for at least eight years. Now, because of the effects of alcohol, he was calling for help. Paul could have stayed in the church, but no doubt because of peer pressure, he had made a decision to go with the crowd and said, as many other young people have said, 'I'll handle it. I will do like my friends and keep on top of Mr. Alcohol.' But now he is in trouble and calling for help. (Signal Press catalog number 1607)

Other people's personal traumas become morality tales as members use them to fortify their belief in the call to abstinence. As the final part of the three-pronged combination, personal stories support statistics that bolster religious claims. Working together, these three points triangulate to secure the WCTU rationale structure and give members three distinct areas of validity by which to maintain their organizational goals.

In conclusion, the WCTU relies on several organizational survival tactics that relate to alcohol. First, the organization separates itself from other alcohol-oriented organizations like MADD, AA or Public Health alcohol responsibility campaigns through promoting religion and

zero tolerance as requirements for membership. Second, the WCTU demonizes alcohol and situates it within a religious-moral worldview that uses it as a catchall for societal problems. Finally, the WCTU supports its cause and sustains its organizational presence through reliance on religious, statistical and anecdotal references. Taken together, these elements help to sustain members' focus on alcohol and aid in perpetuating the WCTU as a Permanently Dying Organization.



## 6. THE SYMBIOTIC NATURE OF RELIGION, CONSERVATISM AND AGE IN THE WCTU

From its earliest beginnings, the Temperance Movement has been closely linked to morality and Protestantism, as women of the WCTU sang modified hymns that reflected their cause, read Bible verses pertaining to clean living, and prayed for moral reform on the steps of saloons around the nation. This research into the current WCTU reveals an organization that continues to view alcohol and drugs as moral problems of society, as well as continues to combine proselytizing efforts in member churches and in conservative Christian and private schools. Members are motivated by their religious convictions. They find positive social benefits in their religious involvements. To them, the moral fight against sin is not only honorable, but also enjoyable. In this section I examine religion as a motivating factor for participants and as a necessary part of the organization's continued existence. To do this, I rely on Geertz (1973), and look to elements of meaning and its connection to members' social and psychological interactions by probing a combination of members' attitudes and actions as motivational elements to sustain the WCTU as a Permanently Dying Organization.

### Religion and Society

In the light that the religious element of the WCTU plays a functional role in sustaining the organization's existence, a brief discussion concerning religion and its functions for larger society seems necessary. No new ground is being broken in asserting the societal functions religion provides, as sociologists have been examining religion under a functionalist lens for over 100 years. What is helpful, however, is contextualizing the WCTU within the realm of religion

in general.

Functionalists, when looking at any socially consumed object or socially created institution, endeavor to tease out the ways in which it either has an impact upon society or the ways in which it is expressed socially by believers. What does it do for society? What role does it play out in a community's day-to-day social interactions? How does it help social actors to integrate themselves into society? In this manner, religion is not simply a private experience and cannot solely exist within a solitary individual; rather, it exists in social contexts where there are multiple believers acting in concert. It is based on socially agreed upon needs. It serves a communal function for those who actively participate and for those who do not; else, according to the functionalist, social Darwinism would deem it useless and let it die out.

Cooley defined religion in terms of a microfunction: a need of human nature, centering in a craving to make life seem rational and good (1909:372). The functionalist element of Durkheim's definition—"beliefs and practices that unite into a single moral community called a Church all those who adhere to them" (1912)—was macrofunctional. Updated applications of Durkheim's macrofunctionalism in the "civil religion" literature (Berger 1966, Bellah 1985) give that aspect of his definition a continuing relevance. Religion serves to hold society together. It provides a communal space for a society to come together and reaffirm what it deems right and wrong, and reckon with those who came before them in a "community of memory" (Bellah 1985). Parsons, who thought religion central to "the integration of cognitive systems in their implications for action," defined religious ideas as answers to problems of meaning (1951:367 ff.).

Definitional functionalists would generally phrase religion's benefits in individualist terms in the manner of Cooley. For Luckmann (1967), religion would be the transcending of human

biological nature and the formation of a self—an inevitable occurrence that all societies affect in individuals. For Yinger (1970), religion is social but relativizes evils and desires for individuals; he defines religion as a system of beliefs and practices with which a group struggles with ultimate problems of human life. For Geertz (1973), religion is a system of symbols that establishes powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations giving the individual a cognitive map by which to navigate society. Geertz asserts that religion does not exist to explain our world but rather to help us survive in the world, whether by binding us together socially or by supporting us psychologically and emotionally. As humans, unable to rely on the forces of instinct like those found in animals, we depend on a system of symbols to interpret our social existence. These symbols create and maintain a cultural blueprint or roadmap for movement through social structures and human interaction. In the Geertzian sense, religion serves as a metaphoric model *for how society ought to be* as well as a reflective model *of how society actually is*. Rituals, for example, may exist to influence our world by promoting ideal images, to bring us all together as a unit, or to preserve our sanity in times of chaos.

Geertz (1973) and Berger (1966) see religion and religious rationalization schemes as two means for understanding the discrepancy between “what ought to be” and “what is.” Life is unfair and full of suffering, and religious symbols and belief systems enable us to make sense of why bad things happen to good people. According to Berger, under religious belief systems (which he defines as the “Religious Symbolic Universe”) all human experience can be made meaningful, even the “marginal,” misunderstood, or strange. The Religious Symbolic Universe makes sense of threatening situations, it explains odd occurrences and makes understandable personal events in such a way that the individual can locate himself and his experience in his society. The symbolic universe subsumes the meaning of all occurrences in individual life, and

in turn provides unity, security and a sense of well being for the members of a society. Even seemingly personal oddities such as dreams, fantasies and compulsions can be made socially meaningful by the symbolic universe.

According to Berger, a most important functional aspect of the symbolic universe is that it enables us to locate death — to make it understandable. It allows us to make our lives meaningful and to routinize death. It gives us a “sheltering canopy” that protects us from fear, grief and gives an explanation for why we should continue on in the face of our own inevitable demise. The symbolic universe’s function is to legitimate death and enable the individual to go on living, working, and performing other social functions after the death of important loved ones and despite fear of his own death. In this religious problem-solving view, life problems stem from an inadequate adherence to religious law or from a “disjunction with the divine.” For example, the women of the WCTU see sin and immorality as major causes of most problems facing individuals in contemporary society, like this woman from West Virginia,

“If you have religion in your life, your morals will be good, but if you do not -- your morals may leave something to be desired. Alcohol and drugs are very de-moralizing. Poverty, child molestation... things like this. They’re directly from demoralization.” (81 year old WV WCTU member).

According to Geertz, religion and religious contributions to society must be examined in a two part manner: First, a researcher must explore the system of meaning encoded in symbols that constitutes religion; Second, she must examine how these symbol structures relate to the social structural and psychological processes of the typical believer (1973:125). In this study, I rely on Geertz’s formula to guide my analysis, by first looking to the tangible symbols of icon and ritual that represent the meaning for participants, and then by teasing out the effect this meaning has on the social relations of individual actors. These two aspects, symbolism and meaning, are best examined first, by probing members’ religious attitudes and attitudes toward

the organization and its goals, and second, by looking into members' activities for the WCTU. Finally, I endeavor to tie a motivational knot between the two. There is a need to discern the extent to which contemporary members are motivated by their religious conviction, viewing alcohol and drugs as morally reprehensible and an affront to God. In addition, by gauging how the level of one's devotion to the WCTU's religious doctrine spawns activity, I am able to interpret the ways in which religion, as a defining characteristic of the WCTU, helps to sustain this Permanently Dying Organization.

### Religious Attitudes and Belief Systems

With the first of two important aspects of religiosity, religious attitudes and beliefs, I inquire into the religious nature of the organization and its members by addressing members' feelings about God, religion, their participation in a religious organization, and moral issues important to them. In questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups, I ask members if they attend church, and if yes, how often. I also inquire about members' involvement in church related activities such as Sunday School, choir, church sponsored women's organizations like Women's Circle or WMU (See Appendix A, questions I.15 and I.16). Finally, I ask two questions (I.27 and II.2) that specifically link the religious nature of the organization to its goals concerning alcohol and drugs, inquiring how members see morals relating to alcohol and drugs and why the religious nature of temperance work is important to them.

What I found amazing was that while there are only two specific questions relating alcohol and drugs to morality, members' attitudes about the connection could be found in every aspect of the questionnaire. For example, a woman from North Dakota, when answering the demographic question pertaining to the number of children she has, answered thusly: "I have 3 children. Two boys and a girl. They are all married with children. None of them drink. They

love the Lord and would never touch anything that would harm their souls.” (71 year old, ND WCTU questionnaire). Additionally, I ask certain questions about each member’s non-religious activities that surround their daily lives and routines. Even in questions of exercise and health routines I find members’ attitudes toward religious work. When asking participants what kinds of exercise they do on a regular basis, a member from Idaho answered, “The best form of exercise is that for the Lord!!! I pray, pray, pray!” (64 year old, IA WCTU questionnaire). In sum, religion pervaded the data, and religious dedication information is not limited to the few questions that directly link members’ religiosity and alcohol. I found religious references in the most unlikely places, making this organizational factor rich with information.

In assessing the themes that surrounded members’ religious beliefs and attitudes as they pertain to the WCTU, the data show four that stand out for analysis.

Religious Attitudinal Theme 1: Members possess conservative religious attitudes.

Religious Attitudinal Theme 2: Members associate conservative religious morality with WCTU work.

Religious Attitudinal Theme 3: Members believe a fight between good and evil will always exist. The WCTU is an important vehicle through which to fight for moral goodness.

Religious Attitudinal Theme 4: Members couch their religious beliefs and attitudes both in terms of generational cohort and age cohort.

How these themes play into the WCTU’s organizational persistence is outlined in the following sub-sections.

#### Members possess conservative religious attitudes

At the onset of this research, I noted that WCTU members seemed to be devoutly religious and conservative in their thinking. This theme, formally measured, came out in convention addresses, official WCTU literature, and responses to interview and questionnaire

questions concerning important political issues and political party identification/affiliation (Appendix A, questions I.28, I.30).

First, I address the responses to the interview and questionnaire questions. In the order of their importance as suggested by the frequency of their mention, the ten most important political issues to WCTU members (as identified in question I.28) are as follows: 1. abortion (65%, N=122); 2. alcohol (60%, N=113); 3. alcohol, smoking and drugs (57.5%, N=108); 4. Social Security (51%, N=96); 5. “moral issues” (44%, N=83); 6. homosexuality (40%, N=75); 7. “family issues” or “issues relating to the family” (28%, N=53); 8. lack of prayer in schools (20%, N=37); 9. internet pornography (12%, N=22); 10. the President of the United States (9%, N=17).” Overwhelmingly, WCTU members express their political affiliation as “Republican,” as 89% or 162 out of the 182 participants who responded indicated thusly.

Notice here that WCTU members are not merely concerned with the religious-moral consequences of alcohol and drugs, but are representative of conservative moralists across many topic areas. Over half of the respondents cite abortion as a political issue important to them, and many commented on their disdain for the decreased morality they see evidenced in the prevalence of pornography and homosexuality in contemporary society. Additionally, Signal Press promotes leaflets, informational videos, and stickers on gambling (11 publications total), premarital sex (6 publications total), abortion (2 leaflets, 1 sticker<sup>36</sup>), and two publications on AIDS/HIV. Logically speaking, these issues need not be linked to alcohol to be considered important to a conservative religious population, and it is unclear whether the contemporary WCTU successfully fingers alcohol and drug proliferation as major contributors to the other “immoral” acts like they were able to do during the founding of the organization. To be sure, the WCTU has always had its hands in other moral cookie jars, focusing, for example, on the

immoral nature of prostitution as early as the 1890s (Bordin 1990). What is important is that the organization relies now on alcohol, drugs as well as *other immoralities* to sustain member interests and promote itself as an organization as focused on global issues of sin and vice. In turn members' moral attitudes find an outlet for expression through the WCTU (Wuthnow 1987).

James Davison Hunter, in *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (1991), purports that there are two prevailing and opposing ideological perspectives that enter into public discourse. They are represented in political debates, behind pulpits in sermons, and in everyday conversation. The two perspectives identify polar ends on an ideological spectrum and are rarely embodied in the average American, but their tenets do find themselves into the public realm, and for that reason are important to identify. At the most conservative end of the ideological spectrum is the Orthodox viewpoint; its counterweight at the liberal end is the Progressivist vision (1991:105). Hunter (1991) lays out defining characteristics for each. Those with a more Orthodox vision of the world: 1. Believe in the “transcendence” of ideals, entities, and objects; 2. believe in “eternal truths;” 3. believe in the literal interpretation of sacred texts; 4. believe that moral truth is divine; 5. have fixed ideas of right and wrong; and 6. have absolute standards. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Progressivists believe 1. in moral relativity; 2. in the figurative interpretation of sacred texts; 3. that moral truth is a human construction; 4. that ideas of “right” and “wrong” change and must be redefined constantly; and 5. that standards are arbitrary and must be adjusted for each individual (Hunter 1991). Merleman (1984) would classify Orthodox individuals as “tightly bounded,” with their fixed or rigid sense of morality that is handed down to individuals by God and God’s laws. “Loosely bounded” moral communities are, according to Merleman, fluid and voluntary, where moral relativism reigns as each individual must decide for him/herself what virtue means (1984:30).

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<sup>36</sup> The sticker is to be placed on trashcans and reads, “Is this any place for your baby?”



WCTU members represent a tightly-bound, Orthodox vision of society. The above political issues they identify as important to them are couched in orthodox parlance. Many orthodox issues mentioned by WCTU members are of a sexual nature, citing sex out of wedlock, child molestation, government assistance to unwed mothers, homosexuality, birth control, and termination of pregnancy by abortion as political immoralities. “Abortion is wrong!!! ‘Suffer the little children that come unto me,’ sayeth the Lord. We must let the children have that chance!” wrote one Indiana member in response to the question of important political issues (IN WCTU, age 80, questionnaire). “Moral issues! No sex in the Oval Office!!!!” wrote a North Carolina woman who was focused on the then-recent scandal between President Clinton his presidential aide, Monica Lewinsky (NC WCTU, age 78, questionnaire). Many members focused on homosexuality as politically important and morally reprehensible. When interviewing two sisters in Pennsylvania, they lamented what they called the “ungodly” nature of homosexuals, saying,

PA1: “They are filthy people who have given AIDS a name in America. You know, it wouldn’t be here without the homosexuals.”

PA2: “I was listening to the 700 Club the other day while making a sandwich and I was thinking that we need to take back our country... to remember what morals are. (Addressing her sister). You know, we’ve talked about this... about moving all the homosexuals and gays to an island and then bombing it would at least give us a new start.”  
(Interview with two members in PA, ages 81 and 78).

It should be noted that this was the only mention in the two years I was with the WCTU that I ever heard anyone mention harming a group of what they deemed to be morally reprehensible outsiders. To be sure, WCTU members are extremely conservative in their religious and political thinking. Members do not like homosexuality, or its prevalence in society, and do not

believe it should be mentioned in public school sexual education curricula. Members, however, do not espouse violence, and repeatedly speak of “hating the sin, not the sinner” in conventions, meetings and interviews. The sinner needs only to be “educated” to see how s/he is misguided. This is not to say that there is a lack of stereotypical fear among members for groups they do not understand. At the 1999 convention in New York, members were able to hear a lecturer on the presence of internet pornography in public libraries. The woman speaking was a WCTU member and minister from Kentucky. Small in stature and frail with years, she spoke with a trained minister’s voice:

“Ladies! We MUST stop the ALA (American Library Association). Libraries are supposed to be SAFE places! They are supposed to house KNOWLEDGE, not FILTH! Think, think about... How many of you have grandchildren?... Young grandchildren?... (Almost everyone in the lecture hall of 50 attendees raises her hand initially, then about half lower with the minister’s clarification of “young grandchildren”)... Think if your young grandson is looking up books in the library, which you HAVE to do by computer now, there ARE no card catalogs. Think about your grandson sitting next a homosexual man who says he’ll HELP him look up books and then shows him pornography. This is not so out-there, Ladies! It’s not so crazy! A woman in my church told me a story of her friend’s grandson who was molested by a homosexual gay in the bathroom of a public library. He showed him pictures and then asked him to the bathroom just like I said!... This was a few years ago... and the boy now thinks he’s gay! (At this, the room let out a collective gasp, followed by attendees lowly talking to each other and heads shaking in a disappointed way). (Transcription and fieldnotes of WCTU National Convention, New York, 1999).

The minister’s speech links homosexuality and child molestation, and while this stereotyping makes for a riveting oration for the lecture hall attendees, homosexuality as a contributing factor to child molestation is not supported in psychiatric literature. I witnessed stereotyping concerning other politically conservative issues at the local union in which I did the

majority of my participant observation as well, as issues of homosexuality (“...the gays won’t stop until everyone is just like them”), unwed mothers (“Welfare Queens”) and government assistance to “inner-city black girls” all generate negative comments among members<sup>37</sup>.

Finally, and most importantly to the official charge of the organization, the majority of responses concerning important political issues resonated with WCTU goals, as members indicated that alcohol and drugs were important political issues to them. Seventeen members noted the number of references to alcohol and sin in the Bible.<sup>38</sup> Ten members noted that they identified themselves as registered voting members of the Prohibition Party. At the proposal stage of this research, I recognized that WCTU members combine elements of religiosity and abstinence, believing that an individual’s body is a vehicle through which one is to do God’s work. Alcohol, drugs, and tobacco defile this temple, making the individual powerless and unfit to do God’s work. This theme was reinforced in almost every WCTU function or interview I attended. Over and over, questionnaires were filled with support for this claim:

I believe it is important for a Christian to abstain from all alcohol and drugs because even a small amount harms the body. Much of our moral dilemmas of today have a basis of alcohol and drug use. (CO WCTU, age 70, questionnaire).

“It is with the mind that we understand God and relate to Him. If we drink alcohol and use drugs, our minds are immediately affected so that we are not as alert to God’s voice. God told the priests of the Old Testament not to drink so that they would know right from wrong. Therefore it is a moral issue” (OR WCTU, age 75, questionnaire).

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<sup>37</sup> During two local union meetings in Northeast Georgia members commented on the moral decline of America, noting both times that government assistance to “inner-city black girls” was problematic in that it promoted a sense of national immorality that promoted premarital sex and unwed motherhood.

<sup>38</sup> Members could not agree on the exact number of biblical references concerning alcohol as sinful, citing numbers ranging from 130 and 627, and I can find no definitive count for moral directives dealing with alcohol in the Bible. The discrepancy between numbers is only worth including as a footnote; the import lies in members’ belief that there is large amount of Christian moral evidence denouncing alcohol as sinful.

“If we present our bodies as living sacrifices to the Lord, we will want to live a clean, pure life for Him – and He will help us – He has me!” (KS WCTU, age 70, questionnaire).

### Members associate conservative religious morality with WCTU work

Members of the WCTU see themselves as vehicles to do work for God. They abstain from alcohol, drugs, and tobacco in order to do what they believe God wants of them. In addition, they see themselves as models of morality for others who need to be “educated” in the ways of conservative religion. In almost every case, their preceding conservative values and beliefs inspired their membership. I met only two members who had come to the WCTU “the hard way,” by initially neglecting what they saw as God’s commandments of purity and abstinence and only later, after traumatic life events, realizing a life without alcohol and drugs was required of them. In one heart-felt testament by a woman in Virginia, I heard:

“I was low. I was high on alcohol and so was my husband. He beat me and the kids when he was drunk, and I thought that by buying him liquor I would keep him happy. I had to go through the beatings and the yellings in order to hear God’s voice. I had to suffer so that I could hear Him. His voice was one of a gentle father, stern, but loud. He said, ‘You need to stop. For your children, for yourself, you need to stop. Come to me and I will provide.’” (VA WCTU State Convention fieldnotes, 2000).

Another member from Kansas indicated on her questionnaire: “Daddy drank and the things he did to our family made me realize just how much of a sin alcohol and cigarettes are” (KS WCTU, age 72, questionnaire).

Members’ beliefs need some sort of vehicle for actualization. Each year the WCTU takes on one nation-wide project that is to be fulfilled on state, regional and local levels. In the two years I spent with the WCTU, the projects included Local Anti-Smoking Drives, in which members were to canvass their respective local restaurants and petition business owners to

implement a non-smoking policy for their establishment. In 2000, members were charged to promote community awareness of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) by publishing flyers to be put in church pamphlets and ringing church bells in remembrance of affected children and unborn casualties of the ailment. At this point in the paper, I do not intend to address the *actual efforts* members took to carry out these tasks. However, it is important to note how these nation-wide projects aligned with the attitudes of the WCTU nicely, incorporating religious allegiances (business owners from local congregations or who catered to local congregations mostly obliged with the anti-smoking request and FAS literature was singularly promoted within churches of WCTU members). In addition to national directives, WCTU members promoted their conservative-religious ideals on local levels through lecture series or union discussions. A sampling of topics includes homosexuality in school textbooks, “Gambling as a Social Menace,” alcohol and immorality, internet pornography in libraries, pro-life motivational speakers and/or tragic abortion case stories, marijuana as it effects the body, mind and soul, and “What can we do about immorality in the White House?” as it related to the dalliances of then-President Clinton.

Other indicators of conservative moral beliefs as they relate to WCTU membership come through the questionnaire and interview questions. I ask members if they feel called by God to work for temperance and the WCTU and to describe if/why they feel the religious element is important (Appendix A, question II.2, see also questions III.1 and III.2 pertaining to WCTU goals). Through these questions and probing of these issues in participant observational settings, the link between belief and membership to the WCTU became apparent. Again, this link says nothing about actual, in-the-trenches activities that promote the organization’s goal or social presence. At this stage, indicators speak to organizational alliance through belief or belief because of alliance, nothing more.

In terms of aligning of organizational belief structures with conservative-religious ones, members recognize how their beliefs have led them to WCTU membership. “I want to see a moral country! I want to see a prideful America, free of alcohol and drugs! I want to see every mother join WCTU! There is hope in WCTU. We should be the future...” (IN WCTU, age 78, questionnaire. Underlined emphasis in original). Her belief in WCTU membership as promotional of a national morality comes across in her emphasis of punctuation and underlining in her questionnaire: this member knows that WCTU membership promotes morality, and that her membership identifies her as a moral person. In a group interview in West Virginia, two ladies took up the same moral call, telling me,

“WV1: The WCTU stands for morals and moral education. We want to educate others on how to be moral.

WV2: We know the Lord wants us to keep it up. He got us here (to the WCTU), didn't He? We have a job to do! We have to show others how to do God's work, how to be free from sin, how to love the Lord!

WV1: We believe that the Lord God Almighty has a plan. He has a (inaudible) to make his people great and to show the world that we are loved by Him. This, he says to us, ‘WORK for abstinence! WORK for goodness! WORK for the children!’ And we do. We work through WCTU, show our support for WCTU, pledge ourselves to its cause.” (WV WCTU, fieldnotes, 2000)

The belief that membership promotes moral fortitude is strong. Members, through their participation, fulfill their need to express their morality (Wuthnow 1987). Through the WCTU, they feel they are doing their part:

“I am only one person but I believe I know what is right. Alcohol and drugs are against God's wishes. He tells us time and again that sins of the body make us ineffective for His cause... I show Him and I show my family and friends that I am for God's wishes by being a member of WCTU. I express myself and my beliefs by wearing my white ribbon... We are against evil and for good. We hate alcohol and sins of the flesh because God hates them. We hate homosexuality because God hates it. But we love the

homosexed (*sic*) person because God tells us to love each other”  
(CA-North WCTU, age 88, interview).

Members believe a fight between good and evil will always exist. The WCTU is an important vehicle through which to fight for moral goodness.

WCTU members have been fighting *for* abstinence and morality and *against* alcohol and drug proliferation in America for over 125 years. Their fight began in the 1800s, well before federal Prohibition legislation, and continues more than 70 years after the cause’s greatest legislative defeat, the 1933 Repeal of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment. One important belief that has propelled the organization through time is the heartfelt notion that a fight between good and evil exists and has existed through history. There will always be evil and thus, always a need for the morally virtuous warrior against it. I find this element particularly relevant both in inspiring commitment to the organization’s cause and in maintaining morale among WCTU members.

WCTU literature is ripe with images battles, war, soldiers, and fights that pertain to the forces of good (WCTU) battling the forces of evil (conservative Christian immoralities). In the official hymnal of the WCTU, there are 19 out of 46 hymns that refer to one or more of the following: “battle(s),” “victory(ies),” “vic-t’ry,” “bands of strong women,” “weapons,” “slay,” “fight(s)(ing),” “torch(es),” “soldiers,” “war,” “rally,” “march(es),” “defeat,” “foe(s),” and “banner.” In “Battle Hymn of the WCTU” by Lorena B. Galloway the lyrics read:

Verse 1

If we’re going to rid our nation of this evil bold,  
We must educate and legislate and agitate, we’re told;  
But to make the three effective a full hundred fold,  
We must pray, we must pray, we must pray.

CHORUS:

Pray and educate, pray and legislate, pray and agitate ‘til every heart is stirred,  
On His Word we’ll stand, Move at His command, Going forth to vict’ry with our  
mighty, living Lord.

Verse 2

Alcohol may have the money and the world's applause,  
But we have the God of heaven to support--- our--- cause  
Our weapons are not carnal, but are strong to slay  
If we pray, if we pray, if we pray,

CHORUS

Verse 3

Forward then into the battle, move at His command,  
For the hosts of Satan never can His power withstand,  
If we keep our trust in Jesus, let Him lead the way  
As we pray, as we pray, as we pray.

CHORUS

Similar images of war, battles and fights against King Alcohol and his servant, "John Barley Corn" can be found in "Marching on to Victory:"

"Marching on to Victory" by Norma L Coulter

Hear the Savior calling you to do His work today;  
Rally 'round the temp'rance flag and join His glad array;  
In the field the harvest waits but laborers are few,  
Come in faith to do His will with your time and talents too!

CHORUS:

We are marching on to victory, With the Lord our faithful Guide.  
Underneath His tender, loving care, We constantly abide.  
Marching with His Word against the foe, True to God we'll ever be;  
With the help of Christ our King We will gain the victory.

Verse 2

Help us, Lord, to count the cost and to your name be true;  
Reach, Lord to trust You more for there is must to do;  
Not by might and not by pow'r but by your Spirit strong,  
You will give the strength we need and a joyful vict'ry song!

CHORUS

Verse 3

Forward in to the battle now to make this country dry,  
We will rout John Barley Corn, on that you can rely;  
Open up your hearts to see the challenge that appears  
In the savior's temp'rance work for today and future years!

CHORUS

While these hymns are not contemporary members' poems about their personal feelings surrounding the WCTU and the temperance cause, they are, however, representative of a



collective and unified sentiment that gets expressed during group singing. The contemporary WCTU continues to believe there is a moral war to wage against such “folk devils” (Ben-Yehuda 1990) as alcohol, personified as “King Alcohol” and his servant “John Barley Corn.”

Since the birth of the Temperance Movement alcohol has been demonized as a symbol of all that is wrong with society. Temperance advocates promoted the notion of “King Alcohol,” indicating the substance’s potency and the dangers involved in flirtations with it (Gordon 1924; Bordin 1990). The contemporary WCTU continues to hold the same disdain for the substance, as Signal Press (the publishing company of the WCTU) publications continue to label alcohol as “toxic,” “poison,” “vile,” “a scourge,” etc. in their educational material. Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) consider this ideological labeling to be the creation of a “folk devil.” By stigmatizing alcohol as something poisonous and evil, the organization is relying on metaphor to carry its message. Not a mirrored reflection of reality, but a blueprint for the way society should be, ideologies are best understood when presented in a metaphorical and exaggerated manner such as this (Geertz 1973).

In addition to examining WCTU hymns and literature, I ask members two questions that get at members’ beliefs surrounding the realistic nature of a temperance crusade in modern society as well as their conceptions of WCTU work as part of a longitudinal battle against immorality. First, I assess the level of realism members embed in their crusade against alcohol, asking if they think that the United States will ever return to an anti-alcohol policy similar to that during Prohibition and in what time frame that would happen. Second, I ask if there will always be a need for the WCTU in the United States (Appendix A, questions III.21 and III.23). I ask these questions in hopes of getting a response to one of the initial research hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1:           The element of religiosity within the WCTU mitigates culturally unrealistic goals, as members liken themselves to “Christian soldiers” who

will continue to “wage war” against moral impurities such as alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. As moral impurities are limitless, WCTU women should always have a foe to work against.

I find WCTU members answering with resounding support to this hypothesis.

Overwhelmingly, members answered the question concerning a constitutional return to Prohibition negatively, with 87% of those responding that they did not believe the U.S. would return to a nation that prohibits alcohol. Many members lamented this, commenting similarly to this Southern California member, “Sadly, alcohol is too much a part of our society and economy for me to see another Prohibition in my lifetime. We continue to fight though and to stand up for God and our cause” (age 81, questionnaire). Responses to the second question concerning a continued need for a WCTU were almost unanimous, with 90% of respondents confirming that there is a limitless need for the WCTU’s presence in America. Many answered that the need for a WCTU presence will always exist solely in reference to alcohol, as did this Indiana member, “Yes, there will always be the need because of the drinking habits of the people. Alcohol is now accepted as ‘the norm,’ too many who call themselves Christian participate and accept it all as O.K.” (IN WCTU, age 78, questionnaire). Other members couched the need for a sustained WCTU presence as that of a moral beacon in a dark and immoral world. In her questionnaire response, a 78 year old Wyoming member summed up the larger need for the WCTU by responding, “Even if alcohol was eliminated, we would be needed because our work involves much more. As our motto says, ‘For God and Home In Every Land.’ We are dedicated to eliminate, with God’s help, so many things that cause trouble and harm, especially [eliminating trouble and harm for] children.”

Those 10% of responding members who answered negatively the question of a WCTU needed presence did so in two ways: First members indicated that the WCTU, with God helping

them, would win the battle against alcohol some day when society finally caught up to their organizational beliefs and accepted the idea that alcohol should be re-criminalized. “I love the WCTU, but I hope and pray every day that people will see the light, and one day, maybe not while I’m alive, but one day, I *know* they will” (OR WCTU, 2000 National Convention Fieldnotes, Colorado Springs, CO, impromptu conversation). The second negative rationale for members had little to do with a foreseen victory of the WCTU in particular, but rather a victory of faithful Christians, in general. These members believed that there would be no future need for the WCTU because the second coming of Christ or the “end times” were near, making any action by anyone after that unnecessary. Participants, like this member from Indiana, commented thusly: “We do what we can [for temperance] while we’re here. But I don’t think He’s going to leave us here much longer. We’re bound for glory, and when Jesus comes to take his children away, those who haven’t given up the sins of the flesh will be sent to Satan’s fires while those who believe in Him will go to His Kingdom” (INWCTU, age 84, interview). While only 3% of the responses to this question (N=5) depended on a second coming rationale, the importance should not be overlooked. For these members, participation in activities like the WCTU not only serves their moral needs, but is the key to their salvation, keeping them out of “Satan’s fires” and guaranteeing them a place in heaven. To be sure, this is a potentially powerful motivating force for believers in the WCTU, as it legitimates membership, work, and proselytizing efforts as protective endeavors against damnation.

When the legitimating order of the organization resides in the religious/moral symbolic universe as it does in the case of the WCTU, commitment to the organization and the work toward abstinence become imbued with profound significance (Berger and Luckmann 1966). In the same way that religion locates death and enables the believer to make sense of his life as a

means to an afterlife (Durkheim [1919] 1995), religious goals enable the WCTU member to mitigate the distinct possibility that nation-wide abstinence will probably never take place again in the United States, replacing the need for goal actualization with a means to salvation or a prophylactic against damnation.

There is a sense of martyrdom in the adherence to a cause whose goals will probably not be realized. However, this martyrdom *is* the payoff for a member of a Permanently Dying Organization. As a religious soldier in a never-ending battle, the glorious victor is the one who never puts down her sword. The coupling of religion with the WCTU's goal and payoff structures is a potent combination for organizational allegiance among members. By instituting a perpetual moral crusade whose primary efforts focus on a cultural mainstay such as alcohol, as well as implementing fallback foci on the unlimited supply of evil in the world, I believe that the WCTU has insured its persistence among elderly conservative-religious populations.

#### Members' beliefs: a function of age, generational cohort and impending death

Since the membership roster reveals an aged and aging population within the WCTU, it would make sense that the continued "plugging along" toward a goal that will possibly never be realized provides more in the way of belief and activity than it does in realization of goals. Merton's Ritualists embody this ideal in that members acquiesce to the idea that their goals may not be achieved, but are still motivated to work by the organization's means and ideals (1957). By recruiting a population that can continue to work toward a goal embedded with religious goodness at the end of one's life may not achieve official organizational goals, but instead may fulfill a latent function for members, enabling them to "give back to the community" while "making things right with God" before death.

In questionnaires, interviews and participant observation, I discover that WCTU members underscore their personal religious affiliation and that of the organization in terms of their age. Generational difference has been reflected in church membership studies for some time, and is increasingly supported by studies of religious belief. A Mori poll (Jacobs and Worcester 1990) illustrates this point clearly, revealing that 67% of those aged between 15 and 34 years believe in God as opposed to 87% those aged over 55 years. Similarly only 55% of the younger age group believe in heaven in contrast to 65% of the older. It seems that belief in God, and specifically belief in a personal God, declines with every step down the age scale, as indeed do practice, prayer and moral conservatism. (Davie and Vincent 1998:102)

The interpretation of the age factor, is however difficult: is this a feature of age or cohort? In other words, is this finding related to people becoming more conservative in their views as they get older – the suggestion being that there is a natural concern with matters of mortality the closer one comes to death (Davie and Vincent 1988:102); or is it a question of societal rather than individual change – those growing up in a more secular world have persistently different beliefs from those who were born in an earlier, more religious environment? (Fukuyama 1999, Schumann and Scott 1989)

Pre-war generations, to a greater extent than is often realized, grew up under the influence of the churches, or at least under the influence of a wide network of para-church organizations such as the WCTU. Since the war, this pattern has altered radically, for it is the generation born immediately after the war that has, very largely, broken the formal link with the churches; hence the marked drop in both membership and attendance figures in the 1960s (Fukuyama 1999; Bellah 1985; Davie and Vincent 1998).

This research indicates that members of the WCTU perceive themselves as more religious than both younger generations and younger age cohorts. There is little doubt that the membership of the WCTU is aged. With a mean age of 73 and over two-thirds of this sample self defining as aged 70 or above, the WCTU is, for the most part, an organization of old women. National convention halls each year are full of white heads, orthopedic walkers, and Rascal® power wheelchairs and scooters. In my participation in local monthly meetings, matronly retired schoolteachers, missionaries, and homemakers passed around pictures of grandchildren and great-grandchildren who appeared old enough to be in the WCTU themselves. Members in Pennsylvania spoke to me of writing to their sweethearts in WWII, of what it was like to make the clothes you wore and the food you ate, and of what riding in a mule-drawn buggy felt like. These women recollected nostalgically the days when “virtue,” “decency,” and “godliness” were important and when Demon Rum was considered vile and sinful by everyone they knew.

From interviews and questionnaire responses, members tell me how an aged population of temperance workers benefits the organization from a superior religious standpoint. To them, they are closer to God than younger women. Primarily, members see their generational status as the key to their superior religiosity. “[We] come from a time where God was important... All we had growing up was Church and WCTU. There wasn’t much else to do in the town. Now there’s all kinds of distractions that push out Church or [relegate church activities] to Sundays only. Mothers have soccer practice and football practice and are running around all over with their children. They don’t see us as important, because I don’t think they see God as that important.” (CA-South WCTU, age 79, interview).

According to members, generational differences produce varying degrees of religious commitment, are important to consider when choosing leadership positions in the organization.

As an organization of both religion and tradition, it makes sense that those chosen to lead at any level should possess a high amount of dedication to religion, God, and the traditional order.

When I spoke to one member at the 1999 National Convention about the aged nature of WCTU national officers, a woman from Pennsylvania remarked, “[Y]oung women just don’t understand. They have a very different notion of God than we do. There is one woman who comes to my Sunday School class who calls God “She.” She really thinks God is a woman. Now that’s what I’m talking about. They just don’t have the respect for God that we do” (PA WCTU, 1999 National Convention fieldnotes of impromptu conversation)<sup>39</sup>.

### Closeness to God at the End of Life

While generational superiority in terms of religiosity was apparent in this analysis, almost as important is the idea that advanced age brings one closer to God and therefore to advanced spirituality. The theme appears time and again in fieldnotes, interviews, and questionnaire comments: As one ages, she confronts her mortality, she realizes that she is coming closer and closer to “meeting her Maker” as the end of her life approaches. A ritualistic example can be found in that WCTU memorial services for members who have recently deceased are also called “Coming Home Services.” The older one is, the closer she is to God in both a metaphor for physical death and an increasing dependence on religion.

Due to the major accomplishments in modern medicine, old age and death become much more closely associated in modern societies, as opposed to premodern societies where infant mortality rates were high and lifespans were comparably abbreviated. As a result of

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<sup>39</sup> I must also remark that this woman was very skeptical about me and my project. Out of the 200(+) women and men I spoke to, formally and informally, she was the only one who asked me about my religious convictions prior to answering any questions. Only when directed by the National President would she grant me an interview. Her skepticism of younger women, it would seem, has as much to do with verifying the traditional religious belief of officers as it does with maintaining a secure boundary of religiosity around every part of the organization, even its analysis.

demographic change, the need to confront one's own mortality can be safely deferred until old age. We can expect to live long lives; we do not necessarily need to depend on our religious symbolic universe to reach an elderly age. As bodily functions begin to decline, however, we begin to look to our religion for comfort and reconciliation. "The fact is, we old people need God...[as] husbands die, children have families...[we] get sick. I am failing, but God is there" (IN WCTU, age 83, interview). In sum, religion is serves vital functions in old age — companionship, strength, meaning.

"We don't want to be an organization of young women... or mostly young women... Plus, it's easier when we're all older. We all know what it's like to be old and working for God! [laughter]" (KS WCTU, 1999 National Convention Fieldnotes). This conversation happened in the convention hall of the 1999 National Convention with two elderly ladies from Kansas, one only mobile with the use of a walker, the other on a motorized Rascal® wheelchair. They laughed as I took their comments to refer, in part, to their restrictions in terms of movement and, in part, their ability to relate to each other and to joke about those shared restrictions. This shared aspect of their religiosity cannot be conveyed accurately with younger women like me. While members' responses lead me to believe that religion and WCTU commitment are compensating devices that make up for lack of motion; that they are helpful places for peace-giving at the end of a long life; that religious temperance work provides a stable framework for understanding global and personal problems, there is the discrepancy in ages that keeps me, as a young woman, from totally understanding what it is like "to be old and working for God!"

#### Religious Activities: Combining the elements of Age and Religion

At the onset of this research, I hypothesized that: "The religious element of the WCTU provides an outlet for members' "moral needs" in that they are able to fulfill a sense of moral



obligation through their work toward abstinence (Wuthnow 1987).” There is support for this hypothesis, as members couch whatever level of activity they are able to perform as “work for the Lord.” According to Wuthnow (1987:84), “[w]e need ways to demonstrate that we are morally responsible in order to maintain our sense of self-worth. Activities that give us these opportunities are likely to evoke commitment and sentiments of legitimacy because they give us this sense of well-being.” The WCTU is one such outlet for moral expression and self-worth maintenance. Because WCTU members indicate time and time again that the moral aspect and the Christian affiliation of the organization are most important to their participation, I assert that all activity done by members is religious-moral in nature. Although such organizational functions as bookkeeping, attendance-taking at meetings, snack preparation for meetings, and the like must be done to organize members and maintain organizational parameters, participants in this study are expressing their “moral needs” in these acts of organizational ritual. By each of these mundane acts, members feel closer to God *and* like they are contributing to the fight against alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and other tangible forms of immorality. In doing so, they are able to feel morally worthy.

In an aging population, the ideas of “work” or “effort” may take on different definitional elements than they might for younger, more active populations. Because of this, I look to Glock and Stark’s (1965) influential work that recognizes the multidimensional nature of people’s religious involvements. Glock and Stark identify five separate dimensions: experiential, ideological, ritualistic, intellectual, and consequential. Although these different dimensions may be highly correlated with one another, they are analytically distinct. For example, a person may subscribe to traditional religious beliefs (the ideological dimension) but not attend church regularly (the ritualistic dimension). These dimensions, in turn, are distinct from one’s subjective

religious feeling (the experiential dimension), one's religious knowledge (the intellectual dimension), or the applications of one's religious faith in everyday life (the consequential dimension) (Johnson and Mullins, 1989).

WCTU members perform highest on the ideological, experiential, intellectual and consequential dimensions of religious involvement. We have seen in the section above how traditional religious beliefs, or what Hunter (1991) would name the "Orthodox Vision" are present in the ideological dimension of members' religiosity. In terms of the intellectual dimension of WCTU members, while I ask no specific questions pertaining to the level of religious knowledge among members, the high number of graduates from religious institutions, the large presence of preachers, ministers and Sunday School teachers, and the prevailing use of biblical citations to support questionnaire responses leads me to believe members would score highly on this dimension as well. Participating in meetings, organizational rites, and assembling at conventions combine to make up part, but not necessarily all, of a member's ritualistic characteristics. These elements are examined in depth in the chapter below on the Cultural Historical nature of the WCTU. The subjective religious feelings and the applications of religious faith in daily activities, those qualities found in the experiential and consequential dimensions of religiosity, need further examination here with respect to an aging membership base.

Religious belief and religious-oriented action may be expected to be relevant to both the social and emotional aspects of wellbeing in elderly populations. Socially, attendance at religious services or participation in church activities provides opportunities for older persons to be involved in social interaction with others. As stated in the previous subsection, the content of religious beliefs may be expected to provide a meaning system that offers assurances of comfort,

meaning and value to the lives of older persons. For the highly religious, nourishing a personal relationship with God through prayer may even help compensate for the lack of human companionship that could come through the death of a spouse and friends or lack of nearby family members.

The idea that one's religious orientation or involvements can help compensate for deficits in social relations and resulting feeling of loneliness is consistent with the "deprivation" theory of religiosity. Following Marx's theory of the role of religion in compensating for economic deprivation, the notion of deprivation has been implicit in social scientists' explanations of religious involvement. However as Glock and Stark (1965) point out, there are many forms of deprivation other than economic, including social deprivation and organismic deprivation (physical ailments). Both of these forms of deprivation should be particularly relevant to the situation of many older persons, and get expressed in responses from WCTU members. Many of the WCTU have experienced losses in their social relations and are consequently alone for much of their lives. Many members also experience physical problems such as chronic illness, declining energy level and reduced mobility. Perhaps the ultimate deprivation faced by older persons is the loss of life itself – an anticipated deprivation that seems clearly related to the increased importance of the belief in life after death for many older persons. (Johnson and Mullins 1989:113).

What needs to be examined, in terms of organizational vitality and goal-focused efforts, is the ritualistic dimension of members' religiosity. What do members actually do for the organization? How do they spend their time and what do they consider "work" toward organizational goals? The WCTU needs religious workers who perform ritualistic tasks to further the organization's goals and presence in society. However, WCTU members and leaders

both recognize the limitations of an elderly population of members and adjust their expectations for membership accordingly. Zald and Gardner (1994; 1987) refer to the level of involvement displayed in the contemporary WCTU member as “inclusive” or “segmental,” which is limited in expectations and consecrated efforts and can be contrasted to the “exclusive” involvement of “total absorption” expected from all-encompassing or deeply demanding social movement organizations.

At the 1999 WCTU National Convention the National Christian Outreach Director addressed the audience of about 85 elderly individuals:

“I’m old, and I don’t know how much longer I’ll be able to keep going with all I do. But I’ve had a good life, and I just feel that if there’s something I can do for these little children to let them know that Jesus loves them, then that’s what I’m called to do... We need to do it before we get too old, ladies! We need to use our energy for the Father while we still can!” (1999 National Convention Fieldnotes, New York)

This sentiment suggests that women of the WCTU sense that they are nearing the end of their lives or the end of their usefulness to the organization. Their time and energy are expiring and therefore limited. It is important to “use [their] energy while [they] still can,” as well as an import to the religious nature of those energies. When I ask members about their actual involvement in WCTU activities, their answers resonate a sense of guilt,

“I know I should do more. I am just so tired all the time and after my operation... and I can’t get around much. I needed a driver to go to meeting and last month, she couldn’t take me... I do speak to my WCTU sisters on the phone at least once a week and I pray every day. I pray for this organization, and I pray I’ll be able to do more soon” (PA WCTU, age 87, interview).

This woman had broken her hip and dislocated her shoulder 14 months before and was still not feeling comfortable with her mobility. She had been a member of the WCTU for more than 60

years, had been involved at all levels of leadership (local, regional, state, national), and had even done overseas missionary work with the WCTU's cause in mind (although not in an official WCTU capacity). She had seen what the WCTU was like in the 1940s and 1950s, when younger women were in leadership positions and the organization was teeming with productive women of all ages. She had a clear remembrance of what a successful and active WCTU was like and her guilt was based on the discrepancy between that vision of yesteryear and the limited social success embodied in the reality of organization today. She is not alone in her limitations. In other questionnaires, 45 members noted things like:

“I would do more if I could. I am very ill” (WI WCTU, age 73, questionnaire).

“I attend meetings when I can. I am unable to drive” (NE WCTU, age 84, questionnaire).

“I had my hip replaced last March and I still don't get around so well. I help out how I can” (ND WCTU, age 80, questionnaire).

“I pray for my sisters in WCTU!!! That's about all I can do for them right now. I am homebound and my local union doesn't meet anymore” (SD WCTU, age 86, questionnaire).

The limited abilities of members noted, one must question, “How do members spend their time and what do they consider ‘work’?” When members were asked, a series of questions pertaining to the organizational activities (see questions II.6-II.14 in the Questionnaire, Appendix A), I received responses that placed actual WCTU “work” into several categories, clerical-organizational, spiritual-ritualistic, activism through correspondence, and mobility-oriented activism.

Clerical-organizational acts included such things as filling out and submitting National WCTU questionnaires (like mine), reporting local activities to the National Office, keeping attendance or keeping the accounting books for local and state unions, receiving and distributing

information from the National Office to state and local members, scheduling meetings for local and state unions, organizing meeting locations for local and state meetings, and presenting information to local and state members on the clerical-organizational nature of the local and/or state union meetings. Spiritual-ritualistic endeavors included prayer- or meditation-related activities, specifically labeled as: personal prayer time; Noontide prayer<sup>40</sup>; prayer partner prayer time; community, national, familial, or other-related prayer; personal reading of WCTU literature; and personal Bible reading. Activism through correspondence incorporated such work as letters to newspaper editors, letters or phone calls to elected representatives, letters to missionaries and other religious organizations, and prayer trees.<sup>41</sup> Finally, mobility-oriented work broke down into two subcategories: WCTU and outreach mobility-related work. Falling under these subcategories are: WCTU – local meeting attendance, special meeting attendance (Annual Member Christmas luncheons, etc.) state convention attendance, national convention attendance, and special meetings for members (such as those that would be a planning session for a nearing member Prayer Breakfast); Outreach – any canvassing of or outreaching to community members with WCTU goals in mind (specific examples include planning a Temperance Sunday at a member’s church, promoted Alcohol Awareness Month within the community, distributing packets of material to local teachers or to Sunday Schools, organizing a local essay or poster contest, and many more). Mobility-oriented activities require that members move out of their

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<sup>40</sup> The Noontide Prayer is supposed to be prayed at noon by each WCTU member. As there are international unions around the globe, the goal is that someone, somewhere, at every hour of the day, is praying for a world of abstinence, moral goodness, and the blessings of the WCTU. The prayer is actually a song:

*Beautiful Hour Of Noontide* (sung to the tune, “Beautiful Isle of Somewhere”)  
Somewhere the hands are lifted,/ Somewhere the faith is strong,  
Somewhere the haze is lifted,/ God hears and sees the wrong.  
CHORUS: Noontide, noontide/ Beautiful hour of noontide,  
On land, or sea, we bow the knee,/ Beautiful hour of noontide

<sup>41</sup> Prayer trees are much like the phone trees organized by concerned parents of school-age children in which they call one another if there is a problem with things like misbehavior or alcohol/drug use among their kids. Prayer trees are like relay races for prayer. They are set-aside as times in which members pray for a certain allotted period and

homes or local union meetings and interact with others in the community to further the WCTU cause.

WCTU members are adept at accounting for their organizational activities. Each quarter, the president of each local union is “required”<sup>42</sup> to send in a report of her union’s accomplishments to the president of the state, using a standardized form that was created at the national level. Hence, for WCTU members, accounting for their activities within my questionnaire presented very little problem.

Member activities broke down in the following fashion: 91% of members noted some sort of spiritual-ritualistic aspect of work when answering the question, “How do you spend most of your time doing WCTU work?” Members pray and meditate on an almost-daily basis, centering a large part of their time and energies in this arena. Second, members are involved in one level of mobility-oriented work, as 70% indicate that they attend meetings “always,” “almost always” or “when they can.” This is a confounding factor for me as a researcher, and I am not sure the 70% response is reliable. The question of steady attendance varies from state to state and by individual unions for each state. Some local unions meet monthly, some meet only one or two times a year. For a member to answer that she “always attends” means, in terms of actual mobility, different things to different people. In addition, it is clear that some respondents mark “always attend,” and indicate next to it “when I can,” which speaks to intention or to past history: ‘I *intend* to be present at every meeting,’ or ‘I have *always* attended in the past,’ but not

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then call a member who is waiting for her turn to pray. Once finished, she then calls the next person on the list, and so on until all the members have prayed.

<sup>42</sup> I put this in quotation marks because while it *is* a formal quarterly requirement of all local unions to tabulate their accomplishments, distribute the report to their members, and then forward the finalized report on to the state unions for state-wide consolidation, tabulation, and distribution to the national level, this very rarely occurs. Normally, local and state unions tabulate their activities once a year, send it in late or never send it in at all. Many members in positions of responsibility for this accounting told me that, “We just don’t do enough. We meet maybe 3 or 4 times a year and don’t have anything to report. I just don’t see the point... And it’s so time consuming” (SC WCTU, age 74, telephone interview).

to actual, present day attendance records. Therefore, I must note that while mobility-related activism that is WCTU-oriented ranked second in overall religious involvement, I believe there is actually less face-to-face contact going on than this data suggests.

Third, 62% of respondents indicate that they are involved in a lot of clerical-organizational work for the organization. According to one member, “There is a lot of paperwork to do on lots of levels. As the secretary-treasurer for my local union and the Recording Secretary for the state, I spend most of my time typing up minutes and accounting statements and mimeographing them for members and the state and national leaders” (PA WCTU, age 78, interview)<sup>43</sup>. Because it is the case that members often fill numerous positions at different levels of the organization at once, reporting does become time consuming.

Fourth, members participate in activism through correspondence, as 39% of members responding tell of writing letters to newspaper editors (or included clippings from local newspaper articles they penned themselves) and corresponding with elected representatives about moral-religious issues such as abortion, homosexuality in public school curricula, marijuana legalization, and alcohol issues. Finally, members are engaged in very little actual mobility-related community efforts. Members do very few activities in their communities or for larger audiences. 26% of responding members indicated that they were involved in WCTU-related endeavors such as Prayer Walks or WCTU-sponsored alcohol and drug awareness campaigns that got them out of their houses and interfacing with other community members.

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<sup>43</sup> It is noticeable that WCTU members fill many different slots in the organizational hierarchy on many different levels at once. For example, one member from Georgia is the President of her local union, the President of her state union, and the Home Protection Director at the national level. This is not rare in the WCTU. Members fill numerous organizational positions at once, oftentimes shifting them back and forth between the same four to six people because there are not enough willing or able bodies to vie for them yearly. In fact, in the local union I studied, the state president, who, because there was no one else to do it, made me the state’s acting Recording Secretary for an entire year.



To sum up member participation in what Glock and Stark (1986) call the “ritualistic” element of religious involvement, WCTU members fall behind what one would normally expect of those in a successful religious movement. They pray, they sometimes meet, and they write. Their commitment could never be called to question. Members love the WCTU and dream about its goals realized in daily prayer and meditation. It seems there is a lack of action on the part of members, however. I believe this perpetual stagnation to be a large part of why this organization is permanently dying. I argue that the WCTU's lack of success serves to endear and commit members to “working,” at whatever level they deem appropriate, toward the organizational goals. A religiously oriented Permanently Dying Organization does this in ways that an obviously successful organization cannot. If members fear that the WCTU and its moral crusade may not succeed into the future, they see themselves as necessary parts of the organization, and continue to dedicate themselves to religious temperance in a way that they might not if they thought the WCTU did not need their efforts.

It appears to be a symbiotic relationship: The WCTU needs them and they need the WCTU. Neither the organization nor the membership base necessarily needs to have the goals fulfilled however. Where would the organization be if goals were accomplished? It would become unnecessary. Where would WCTU members be if they got out into the community and realized their goals? Members might either be displaced by younger temperance workers or find themselves without a cause and thus without the ability to express themselves morally. As a moral outlet, a means to salvation, and a large part of members’ religious self-concept, the WCTU needs to stay in place. Through its religious-moral orientation and its dedicated but inactive membership base, it seems it shall.

## 7. AGE AS A STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTIC OF THE WCTU

In any social movement organization there are structural features of membership, recruitment, and goal attainment are inseparable as the characterizing aspects of the organization's viability. In addition, there are membership characteristics that can categorize an organization as one that appeals to a particular type of group or is comprised of a certain type of people. This research and that done by a Chattanooga, Tennessee marketing research firm that was contracted by the WCTU to survey its members in 1998, reveals the organization's current membership to be an aged one. Surveys, focus groups and individual in depth interviews from this study show the average participant age to be 74.3 years (N=188), with ages ranging from 37 to 98, and almost 70% of the sample self defining as age 70 or older. This structural characteristic appears to be intentional as the current WCTU national president has indicated that recruitment and membership maintenance efforts are currently being directed at "Christian women above [the age of] 45"(Presidential Address, 1999 WCTU National Convention, Amherst, New York). At the 1999 national convention, I was able to talk to one of the state presidents along with that state's recruitment chairperson who told me that,

"We don't want to be an organization of young women... or mostly young women. We like it the way it is. Young women all have jobs and families and not many have time for WCTU. Plus, it's easier when we're all older. We all know what it's like to be old and working for God! [laughter]."

This sentiment and the national directive show evidence that the WCTU intends to create an organization of elderly members. This strong desire for age-specific similarities among members contributes to a unique structural characteristic of the WCTU. Much in the same way

that the organization's alcohol focus and the moral-religious component of the WCTU create a sense of "permanent failure" in terms of goal achievement (Meyer and Zucker 1989), their particular recruitment and membership-maintaining efforts create an organization that is "permanently aging." Members obviously prefer to keep the company of and work toward abstinence within their own age group.

This age component would seem to have dire consequences for the organizational survival of the WCTU. How can members further the abstinence cause if they are ill or immobile or grieving the loss of a partner or friend? How can they get to meetings and conventions if they can no longer drive? It would seem that these factors associated with aging would hinder WCTU work. However, I contend that these efforts to maintain an elderly population within the organization are not only intentional but also rational, for they do not detract from, but actually they insure the survival of the WCTU as a Permanently Dying Organization.<sup>44</sup>

In this study, I find four reasons as to why the leadership within the WCTU and the members themselves would prefer a homogeneously aged membership base. These rationales, outlined in the following subsections, work together to maintain the age characteristics of the WCTU. Rationales include boundary maintenance, the organization's need for conservative-religious ideals which are more likely found in elderly populations, the elderly individual member's need for a continued sense of power and viability late in life, and the aged member's ability to relate healthwise to a failing organization.

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<sup>44</sup> Other organizations such as the AARP, created with the intended purpose of promoting culture, economic interests, and fellowship among elderly individuals, differ from the more latent function of an elderly culture produced by the WCTU. This point is developed further in the subsection on The Elderly Member and Power, and becomes important when one relates members' age characteristics to member obligation and organizational maintenance within the WCTU.

## Boundary Maintenance

Membership similarities contribute to boundary maintenance in organizations (Erikson 1966). In terms of age characteristics, the ladies of the WCTU are able to create an atmosphere filled with peers, surrounding themselves with women of their same age, time experience, and physical knowledge. Members of the WCTU are mostly older ladies, born around the same time, having similar experiences with cultural “eras,” marked by world wars, economic recessions, and other historical moods and incidents (Schumann and Scott, 1989). In addition, most of them are also of a similar socio-economic segment and religious mindset. With such similar age characteristics and belief structures, the “we” versus “they” dichotomization becomes much easier to promote (Gusfield [1963] 1986). On a simple visual level, elderly women look very much alike. At two national and five state conventions I stood out as the outsider, obviously generations apart in physical appearance from the rest of the convention attendees. On an emotional-historical level, elderly WCTUers are able to relate to other members’ stories of husbands being overseas in World War II; they remember what it was like for their family to get their first television set or watch the moon landing; they recall when America was a slower, “more moral, Christian place, where booze and sex weren’t in fashion” (WV WCTU, age 78, WVVWCTU State Convention focus group, 2000). Finally on a physiological level, members can relate to each other’s declining health and decreased mobility.

Members separate themselves as different from others outside the organization. They dichotomize between drinkers and non-drinkers, WCTU members versus non-members, and make meaning from their commitment to the organization and to abstinence through these distinctions. Members also distinguish themselves from others within the organization, setting up hierarchies that use age groups as proxy measures for life experience and piety. Younger

women, according to elderly WCTUers, not only have too little time for WCTU, they also do not have the personal understanding for the cause. According to older members, younger women grew up in a different time, inundated by cultural influences that have promoted alcohol and neutralized the evils alcohol possesses. One woman from Nebraska lamented the her local union's inability to recruit younger women by writing, "Younger women just won't sign the pledge. They like their alcohol!" (NE WCTU, age 77, questionnaire). Another woman from Indiana commented on the problems with younger women as temperance workers: "Younger women just don't get it. They tolerate drinking and smoking in their households. Their children are smoking the marijuana and having sex. They need to be educated... brought into WCTU...so that they can learn the work. But they are too inexperienced to hold office" (IN WCTU, age 72, INWCTU State Convention focus group, 2000).

The above quote from an Indiana WCTU member suggests that the elderly ladies in the WCTU have an obligation to educate mothers with children, but not to bring them fully into the organization's fold. I found the sentiment over and over again in questionnaire and interview responses: Members say they want to recruit younger women, but they want them to "learn the work" before they can actively participate.

"We need young people who have children, can learn the work and raise their family in abstinence" (IL WCTU, age 54, questionnaire).

"Young mothers are the best ones to recruit. While their children are young and they don't have much time, they can learn the work. Then, as they get older, they can take over for us old ladies!!" (VA WCTU, age 78, questionnaire).

"The best age to recruit is when women are young, in their 20s and 30s, but the best age for leadership is after a lifetime in WCTU (like me)" (OR WCTU, age 77, questionnaire).

This sets up a membership hierarchy, with elderly members as moral guardians with the best understanding of the organization's ideals and moral structure. In addition, it maintains an elderly power base, where younger generations must be "educated" in order to understand abstinence work and the WCTU "work" fully. This cannot be done by any of their younger peer group, but must be entrusted to those WCTU members from a different generation, one where morality and ideas of home protection were key.

I asked participants two questions concerning the age of WCTU members: First, I asked members what age they believed the best to recruit new members and why. Secondly, I asked for members to comment on the agedness of their membership base, identifying benefits and drawbacks to an older population of temperance workers (see Appendix A, questions III.13 and III.14). From these questions, I got a number of different responses, most of which acknowledged the liabilities of an older population, but refused to believe the work of an older population was detrimental to the organization.

"There is a benefit because others respect (older members') views and because they are dedicated and usually are members until they die. The drawbacks are illness sometimes so they can not attend. But their prayers are fervent and God still answers prayers" (IN WCTU, age 73, questionnaire)

It would be much better to have younger members but most are working outside the home and do not feel they have the time to get involved and sad to say there are far too many who do not share our views on alcohol. Older women usually have more time to devote to the cause but unfortunately are also limited in what they can do because of the aging process on their bodies. (PA WCTU, age 70, questionnaire).

On the whole, the WCTU does not feel that it will lose organizational ground if members do not recruit younger women. In fact, younger women are seen as having too many other obligations to be effective members of the WCTU. According to one state representative who

has been a member for over 50 years, “It’s hard to raise a family and give a lot to any one activity. I did bring my children to the [local WCTU] meetings with me, but some people just can’t do it. They don’t have the support or the time or things like that” (PA WCTU, age 80, interview). This perspective like the comments given by the ladies above suggest that older, retired members believe they have more surplus time to offer the organization. They see their lack of child-rearing and occupational obligations as giving them additional time and energy to devote to the WCTU.

While the attitude that older members have superior leadership skills is the prevailing one, the degree to which members entrust the organization’s survival to an elderly population is split into age categories. Members in their 80s and 90s, the “old-old” demographic, comprise 27.6% of the sample (N=52) and see an aging population as a greater drawback, want to recruit the youngest members possible, and fear for the organization’s survival if the age characteristics stay at their current status (Quadagno, 1999). The “young-old” members are those aged 60 to 79 and represent 60.6% of this study (Quadagno, 1999). Members in this age group are much less negative about the aged membership base; they see more benefits in an elderly organization; they take more offense to questions about members’ ages. For example, when asked about the benefits and drawbacks of the age of the ladies at the state convention in VA, one 67-year-old member retorted, “Why, I don’t even know why you’d ask me that question. Look at all the good we’re doing here. Plus, what you can’t do with your body, you can do with your pocketbook (VA WCTUer, age 67, VAWCTU State Convention, 2000). Another member from CO responded similarly,

“Well... that’s a hard one to answer because... look around you. We’re doing just fine. We’re doing better than fine. We’re doing wonderful things for God. We may be old, but we know the value of abstinence. We know what liquor will do to the body and the mind... and to the soul... Our union may have older

ladies in it, but we pray daily for abstinence. We know God hears us. We know our prayers will be answered” (CO WCTU, age 70, WCTU National Convention, Colorado Springs, CO, 2000).

In surveys, interviews, and focus groups the “young-old” / “old-old” split was apparent, with 69% (N=79) of the young-old members “see(ing) no problem whatsoever in the age of the ladies in WCTU” (GA WCTU, age 60, survey response).

Members in their 80s and 90s took on a very different attitude. Ladies in this “old-old” age category were, for the most part, in poorer health and expressed guilt over the lack of physical contribution they could make to the organization. They attended meetings less frequently or were resigned to the fact that they could no longer get out of their homes in order to attend. They continued to feel a part of “the work” through sporadic phone conversations with other members; however, they felt removed from the organization’s activities, tended to focus on campaigns from the past that they were involved in, and expressed a sense of sadness over the current WCTU presence in their communities.

“I can’t get out anymore. It’s just too much of an ordeal after the fall (that broke my hip). I read my Bible every day and once in a while one of the ladies will call me and tell me that we are having a day of prayer and what my time (to pray) is.<sup>45</sup> I used to write to my Congressman and letters to the newspaper, but my arthritis is too painful to write much anymore... I pay my dues every year and wear my (WCTU blue ribbon) pin when I go to church, but I don’t feel like I can do much more than ask the good Lord to help us in this battle... I know He’s listening and our prayers will be answered. I just wish there were more I could do...” (PA WCTUer, age 89, interview, 1999).

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<sup>45</sup> Members divide up days of fasting and prayer for abstinence a few times a year, developing “prayer trees,” like phone trees in which members have their allotted time (normally an hour) to fast and pray, then call the next name on the list to let her know it’s her turn, and so on. While prayer trees do not actively or publicly further the WCTU mission as would a public demonstration, phone calls to elected representatives, placing anti-alcohol signs in yards, etc., actions like these keep members in touch with each other, especially members who cannot get out of their homes,



92% (N=48) of the ladies in the eldest category wished for a stronger WCTU, one with young, vibrant members. They expressed frustration that the young-old ladies, who could still do something for the organization, were not doing enough. They wanted to see young ladies joining, ladies with young children, whose families could benefit from WCTU membership. They did not agree with the “recruit women over (the age) of 45” directive that came down from the national level. “We need young women, women with babies, who will dedicate their children to the cause, who will bring their children up in LTL and YTC. These women have energy to do the work. They’re the ones we should be recruiting, not older ladies” (WV WCTU, age 82, WVVCTU state convention focus group, 2000).

The ability to symbolize and distinguish the boundaries that maintain the cultural integrity of an organization is an important part of promoting group ideology and advancing group goals (Geertz 1973; Shils 1981; Erikson 1966; Ben-Yehuda 1990; and others). Despite the attitude split between members in the young-old and the old-old categories, the relatively homogeneous age characteristics of the WCTU enable the members to identify with each other’s life events such as retirement, loss of a partner, or the birth of grandchildren, as well as the particular conditions and infirmities that occur with old age. They are able to incorporate this knowledge into the way they do WCTU work.

#### Conservative Attitudes Present in Aging Populations

A second possible reason that WCTU members prefer to be an organization of older women is that conservative attitudes are necessary for maintaining the integrity of the WCTU’s organizational goals. Given that conservative attitudes are typically found in older versus younger populations, it seems that a purposive mechanism is in place to insure organizational

survival. An older, more conservative population fits in better with the temperance goals of the organization.

“Mothers today aren’t raising their children to stay away from alcohol. They drink in front of their kids and let their husbands drink beer and watch baseball on the TV. My granddaughter’s husband drinks beer when I come over... and he knows how I feel about alcohol. I just do my best to be an example... I just don’t know if they’ll ever come around” (PAWCTU, age 76, local union focus group, 1999).

Offended by the younger population’s lack of fear toward alcohol and lack of respect toward the attitudes of the older generations, members expressed thankfulness that their organization is manned by older ladies who “understand,” and who do not need to “be educated” about the dangers alcohol possesses.

According to the AARP’s study of *Political Behavior and Values Across Generations* (AARP, 2004), there are 26 million people aged 70 or older in the United States. In an AARP study of 1,800 respondents in this over 70 age group, 59% responded conservatively to questions concerning economic issues, 49% responded conservatively to questions on social issues, and about one-third of them report they have become more conservative on economic, social, foreign policy, moral, and legal issues as they have aged. Over 9 in 10 (91%) of this age group are registered to vote and 90% voted in the 2000 presidential election.

In my study on the WCTU, I found one of the ways members sought to express their conservative ideas was through voting practices. 94% of participants were registered to vote, with 67% saying they “almost always” or “always” vote in state and local elections. Broken down by age categories, 62% of WCTU participants under 60 “always” or “almost always” vote and 77% of those over 60 fall into those two categories. Many of those who were registered but did not vote in their previous local elections wrote in on their surveys reasons for not doing so:

“I always vote, but during the last election I had just broken my hip and was on bedrest for another month. I couldn’t get out of the house to vote!” (NY WCTU, age 83, questionnaire). From a woman in Virginia, I read, “My youngest granddaughter went into labor right before the lady from my church was to pick me up (to go to the polling location), and so I had her take me to the hospital instead” (VA WCTU, age 88, questionnaire). Several respondents wrote in of their work with their local polling places, indicating that they volunteered to help in the running of the polls in their areas. This level of voter participation or need to explain for non-participation is astounding when taken in context with the voting practices of rest of the U.S., and reinforces the claim of the elderly as political force in the United States. According to Quadagno (1999), the percentage of people reporting they had registered to vote declined for all age groups between 1972 and 1992 *except* for people aged 65 and older.

The AARP study reports that about 4 in 10 (44%) of those over 70 name the 1940s, 50s, and 60s as the decades which made the most lasting impression on their views. Majorities of those in this age group consider the Great Depression (51%), World War II (79%), the Vietnam War (52%), and the September 11 terrorist attack (84%) to be major influences on their views of government and politics. Franklin Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, and John F. Kennedy are the national leaders this age group most admires for making contributions to the United States (AARP 2004).

In both the WCTU and AARP studies, the 70(+) age group’s conservatism extends across many social, moral, and economic issues. Aside from their support for more welfare programs for those with low incomes, and more environmental regulation, those aged 70 and over reliably support those issues emblematic of conservatives, and typically reject liberal agendas. In the larger AARP study, researchers found that large majorities of people aged 70+ support prayer in

school, the death penalty, stricter prison sentences, and curbing civil liberties to deter terrorism. They oppose gay marriage and legal abortions (AARP 2004).

WCTUers are not atypical of their voting peers. When asked members what kinds of political issues were important to them, the majority of participants supported “social welfare programs,” “good government” or “moral government,” “increased Medicare coverage” and “religious education in schools.” They opposed “abortion,” “indecent in the White House,<sup>46</sup>” “pornography” and access to pornography via the Internet in public libraries, privatizing Social Security, “legalization of drugs,” “minors’ access to cigarettes and alcohol” and the inflation of prescription drug prices.

The conservative nature of the membership and of the age group to which most members belong provides a nice fit with the goals of the WCTU. The fear of younger members or the rationalization that younger members need to be “educated” in order to take hold of organizational positions of power within the WCTU appears to have much to do with the perceived ideological disconnect that older generations see between age groups. The conservative attitudes contribute to boundary maintenance and the attractiveness of the WCTU to elderly Christian women.

#### Elderly Power: Organizational Requirements and the Elderly Population of the WCTU

An aging membership population fits well with the organizational requirements of the WCTU. In the organizational literature, Killian (1987) introduces a continuum of control over and involvement required from members of any social movement organization, which ranges from mere “segmental involvement” to “total absorption.” Today’s WCTU members are expected to do little in the way of active advances toward organizational goals, and are definitely

characterized by their “segmental involvement” within the organization. Considering that organizational commitments are minimal in that they may require a paltry dues payment, the occasional “hour of prayer” for national abstinence<sup>47</sup>, and maybe one letter written to a state or local official on behalf of the abstinence cause, the elderly member can realistically obtain a sense of usefulness as a vital member of the organization.

There is a tension though in the sense that the WCTU relies upon and even expects commitments from its members, despite their ailments and troubles with aging. Although physical obligations are limited, psychological commitments are successful in creating a feeling of obligation within members. “I may be old, but my heart is God’s. I can’t get to meetings all the time, but I pray every day and I know our prayers will one day be answered. God will provide!!” (FL WCTU, age 76, questionnaire). Prayer plays a large role in members’ definitions of WCTU “work.” When I asked participants how most of their time was spent doing WCTU work, 88% of members mention that they pray for abstinence regularly. “I can’t get out anymore. I used to go to meetings every month. Now I spend an hour a day, the hour of Noontide, praying for the WCTU and my sisters in the work” (IN WCTU, age 87, questionnaire). This Indiana member continues to do her part and fulfill her “moral needs” through prayer (Wuthnow 1987). She continues on as a soldier in the battle against alcohol and sin through the only weapon she has left to her – her relationship to and daily correspondence with God.

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<sup>46</sup> Surveys and focus groups for this study took place during the 12 months surrounding the Clinton-Lewinsky White House scandal, leaving many elderly ladies with negative attitudes about “liberal politicians” in general, and the president in particular.

<sup>47</sup> Each year the WCTU asks that its members participate in a “National Day of Prayer” for abstinence. Members form “prayer chains” each year on November 18, Frances Willard’s birthday, in which each person is obligated to pray for the organization for about an hour, after which she calls the next person on the list so that that person may take over the prayer duties for the next hour. This is an important and highly publicized organization-wide activity. It is also an activity that involves relatively little physical exertion and therefore a is realistic endeavor for an aged membership.

I sensed that women who spent the majority of their time praying on the WCTU's behalf believed they were doing as much as or more for the organization than the members who were taking part in physically-oriented projects. The belief that a member has a direct connection to God and can alert His attention to the evils of alcohol in modern day society can be a powerful source of aid to the WCTU as it reinforces an emotional connection with the organization for members and gives them the functional task of keeping the organization afloat through their dedication.<sup>48</sup> Through prayer and meditation, members who cannot do the physical activities associated with abstinence work can be among the spiritually supportive ranks, as they endeavor to invoke God's power for their cause.

Be it through prayer or through physical activity, to feel needed and depended on as a useful and capable member of a group is probably not an everyday occurrence for many elderly people. At the 1999 National Convention in Amherst, I asked a woman sitting next to me what kind of benefits she received from being in the WCTU. She told me,

“When my husband died, I was lost. We did everything together... I did everything for him – made his breakfast, washed his clothes. I didn't know how to spend my days without Walt. And then a lady from my Women's Circle at church told me about the WCTU. I haven't been a member that long and next year I will be Vice President of our local union!” (NE WCTU, age 82, informal conversation at the 1999 National Convention, Amherst, NY).

This woman's sense of productiveness and social grounding was returned to her with her newfound WCTU membership. She was able to somewhat replace the void she felt after her husband's death with work for the organization. Not only was she going to be in a leadership

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<sup>48</sup> The power of prayer should not be underestimated in its effect on adherents or their object of focus. In an study funded by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, an arm of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Elizabeth Harg found that prayed-for patients suffering from cancer and AIDS experienced “distance healing” more than their control group, showing fewer and less severe new illnesses, needing fewer doctor's visits or hospitalizations, and were in a generally better mood than not-prayed-for patients (Jaroff 2002). In addition, prayer, as a mechanism of organizational strength, has been known to support religious adherents in times of religious-

position soon, she had also made new friends and traveled several states away from her home by train to attend a national convention. Because of the low attendance numbers at local meetings and the limited amount of actual physical work involved with membership, elderly members, even new ones, can find a sense of empowerment through participation and leadership in the WCTU.

Empowerment through membership ties seems to promote an enhanced sense of commitment within WCTU members. The WCTU's particular brand of empowerment produces an organization with limited goal-oriented success, but profound organizational tenacity. This characteristic of the WCTU's aged membership base insures its persistence as a Permanently Dying Organization.

#### Health Issues: Failing Members, Failing Organization

There are parallels between a "permanently dying organization" and a "permanently aging organization" that provide an additional source of commitment for elderly members, enabling the ladies of the WCTU to relate to their organization's fate in very personal terms. As old members of an old organization, it seems rational to assume that WCTU members feel a sense of physiological kinship with their organization. One Pennsylvania woman I spoke to had been in the WCTU since her teens. Now at 87, she summed up this sentiment by telling me, "I've been with the WCTU for a long time. I remember when it was great... when I was young. Now, everybody seems old and sick and the WCTU (inaudible) like that too. What is going to happen when we die if we don't get younger members?" (PA WCTU, age 87, interview).

Another member, in her questionnaire responses, wrote, "The WCTU needs a transfusion of new blood! Younger women!" (CA-South WCTU, age 78, questionnaire). These two quotations

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military conflict, such as with Orthodox Jews in Israel who believe their prayers are most important in achieving military success (I am thankful to Dr. Schwartz for this comment).

reveal the relatedness of failing members and a failing organization. They see a need for “a transfusion of new blood” to cure the “old and sick” organization. To these elderly ladies, younger members would be the motivational shot in the arm the WCTU so desperately needs.

Here lies the organization’s biggest dilemma: Members intentionally create, for reasons of security, boundary maintenance and empowerment, an elderly population of temperance workers. This membership base in turn supports an ailing organization that needs new blood to survive. Old-old members see this conundrum, young-old members do not. As a researcher, what I see is a group of dedicated ladies who are not ready to die yet. Their lives are sustained by the work that they feel obliged to contribute to the anti-alcohol cause. As members move from the young-old to the old-old stages of age and health, they begin to relate issues of failing personal health with the failing organizational health and cultural weakness of the WCTU and its cause. They can identify with the struggles of an outdated organization as well as draw strength from the WCTU’s organizational and their own personal persistence. They see the recruitment of younger women and the use of new technologies<sup>49</sup> as enhancing for the WCTU, and can liken those to the medical and pharmacological breakthroughs that are keeping them alive and active. But as with personal health, very rarely do individuals preemptively take medication; only when acutely aware of the illness will people *or* organizations seek out that “shot in the arm” that sustains vitality.

In terms of viewing the WCTU as a Permanently Dying Organization, the age component is one of the most important aspects of this study. As an organization with an intentionally prescribed elderly membership base, the WCTU limits itself in terms of potential members as

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<sup>49</sup> While most members know little about the World Wide Web, there was much member excitement when the WCTU unleashed its website [www.WCTU.org](http://www.WCTU.org) in 1997 with the promise of spreading abstinence information all over the world through a simple internet connection. At two National Conventions, members heavily attended workshops on how to access the website and how to start doing temperance work online through email.



well as the potential energy and increased physical endurance that a younger population would undoubtedly possess. It seems rational to assume that an organization of this elderly nature would not have the capacity for goal attainment, but would have the increased surplus time and desire to perpetuate the organization and the work toward abstinence. As such, the WCTU maintains itself with minimal accomplishment, but as a stable, while Permanently Dying Organization.

### Conclusion

Scholarly research is not necessary to identify the most obvious quality of the WCTU's current members. With a mean age of over 74, the WCTU is, for the most part, an organization of old women. Despite the conflict between the old-old and the new-old members in terms of optimum recruitment age for new members, the aged nature of the organization serves four important functions. As a mechanism of boundary maintenance, elderly WCTUers are able to relate to each other and do not face the difficulties of dealing with a generation gap from younger members. As a method of preserving the conservative nature of the organization, members are not forced to deal with new ideas and belief systems that may conflict with current members' traditional ideologies. As a means of promoting leadership and power to an aged population, members of the WCTU are able to retain a psychological sense of contribution and viability. Finally, as a necessary relational device, members identify with the struggling organization; they see that it is dying and they feel an intense sense of obligation to keep it afloat. Taken together, the age characteristics of the WCTU maintain its distinct character as well as promote organizational inertia.

## 8. CULTURAL-HISTORICAL ELEMENTS

As an organization that has been in existence for 125 years, the WCTU relies greatly on its historical presence as a major source of inspiration and solidarity for members, committing members to continued work against alcohol and drugs, and reaffirming the collective conscience of the organization (Durkheim [1912] 1995). As such, the WCTU's historical elements combine to create an important source of organizational perpetuation, providing members an anchor of a glorious past with which to buttress their contemporary efforts. Given its age and rich cultural history, today's members are able to locate themselves as participants in a traditional crusade of anti-alcohol and pro-family sentiment by periodically recalling the dedication and commitment of important temperance figures of the past, retelling organizational creation stories, and commemorating important WCTU events and temperance movement triumphs. The use of historical symbol and ritual in these activities reaffirms the consensus of the membership as well as revitalizes the organization as a whole (Durkheim [1912] 1995; Shils 1981). In essence, ritualistic activities that recall the grandeur of the past, serve to counter the deteriorating elements and reinforce the persistence of a Permanently Dying Organization.

### Ritual

Kertzer (1988) defines ritual simply as "any standard human activity," setting up an analytical category that "helps us deal with the chaos of human experience and put it into a coherent framework" (1988:8). According to Durkheim ([1912] 1995), every religious organization<sup>50</sup>, from the most basic to the most advanced, depends on these standardized human

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<sup>50</sup> Durkheim defines his most basic religious organizational unit as a "cult," but should not be limited to the modern-day negative connotations of cults we associate with alternative religious groups such as Heaven's Gate or The

activities of its members. Durkheim asserts that beliefs are expressed through the group's ritual actions, and that these actions are oftentimes the sole manifestation of otherwise imperceptible ideas and beliefs. Ritual activities are, then, ideological metaphors and mechanisms for reaffirming the group goals and for promoting a sense of belonging and community to WCTU members (Geertz 1973, Bellah 1985). As with the elements of religiosity, alcohol, and age, WCTU members sustain their Permanently Dying Organization through the organizational momentum that hinges on their 125-year battle against alcohol and sin, conveying to members the group's importance through the ritualistic elements that constitute it.

“Durkheim offered the most influential early social scientific view of ritual, relating it to religious practice, which, he believed divide the world into two classes: the sacred and the profane” (Kertzer 1988:9). Sacred things are those pieces of culture that are rather dramatically separated from their everyday, profane counterparts through a series of rules and prohibitions (Durkheim 1912[1995]:38). A large group of totemic rites is dedicated to realizing this essential state of separation. Rites, he asserted, are the “rules of conduct which prescribe how a man should comport himself in the presence of the sacred objects ([1912] 1995:34,38). Insofar as the rites merely prohibit certain actions or impose certain abstentions, they consist entirely or interdictions or “prohibitions,” and Durkheim deems the system comprised by the rites a “negative cult” ([1912] 1995:314-321). These negative rites, when “considered one by one, their positive influence is usually too little marked to be easily perceptible; but their effects cumulate, and become more apparent, when a full system of prohibitions is focused on a single purpose” (1912[1995]:314).

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People's Temple of Jonestown. Instead, Durkheim's terminology defines a more general religious organization. A cults, for Durkheim, is merely a group consisting of a faithful collectivity that employs “a system of rites, feasts, and various ceremonies *all having in common that they recur periodically*” ([1912] 1995:60, emphasis in original).

The WCTU employs a litany of negative rites. Through abstinence pledges, a continued focus on the tireless work of the historic temperance crusaders, ceremonies dedicating babies to alcohol- and drug-free lives, marking important days with prayer and fasting, and others, the WCTU sets up ascetic expectations for its members, and conveys the notions of sacrifice and hard work as the accepted means to membership and toward achieving organizational goals. In this section, I use Durkheim's ideas of ritual and rites to frame the WCTU's important beliefs of self-sacrificing asceticism, denial of inebriants, historic victories over the sins of alcohol and drugs, and Christian dedication to reveal a final method by which the organization propels itself into the future and continues on its path as a Permanently Dying Organization.

### Abstinence Pledges

There are but three qualifications to being a WCTU member. In addition to being a part of any denomination within the Christian religion and paying the paltry dues requirement, a WCTU member must take the official pledge of abstinence in order to be considered for membership. This pledge, adopted by the organization in 1887, is the same one members recite today. It states: "I hereby solemnly promise, God helping me, to abstain from all distilled, fermented, and malt liquors, including wine, beer and hard cider, and to employ all proper means to discourage the use of, and the traffic in the same" (Ward 1999:15). Notice here that members do not swear allegiance to the organization, nor do they even mention the WCTU in their pledge; instead members make but one promise on one level, the personal and hopefully contagious denial of alcohol.

Members resolve never to drink alcoholic beverages while in service to the WCTU. They not only willingly give up alcohol, but their official statement as an organizational member hinges on what is denied to them. Pledges are said in unison by members at the beginning of

each local, regional, state, and national meeting, following the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. flag, the Pledge of Allegiance to the Christian Flag and the Pledge to the Temperance Flag.<sup>51</sup> To recite a pledge of denial and asceticism in public reveals one, but most importantly *the identifying*, element of membership into a negative cult that is expressed through its negative pledge rite.

If recurring elements of ritual and symbolism are the primary means by which members express their beliefs and their organizational affiliation, the WCTU pledge reveals an organization dedicated to denying what some analysts of inebriation claim to be a basic human desire. Theories on inebriation rationales cite the cross-cultural actions of very young children as they spin around, over and over again, to achieve an altered state of reality, and the fact that there is no culture on record without some inebriating form that gets consumed by at least part of its members at certain times (Weil 2001). It has been claimed that even animals as large as elephants and as precise as migratory birds will, from time to time, eat fermented berries to the extent that they run into trees or fly off course in a state of inebriation. These claimants are hoping to describe a basic need, not just human, but also animalistic, to alter consciousness to some extent. If this is so, the members of the WCTU hold up their abstinence requirements as a means of conveying their global superiority over humans *and* animals, as they deny themselves this basic need for reality alteration and present themselves as pure and holy vessels, fit to receive the word of God.

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<sup>51</sup> While the pledge to the American flag is widely know, those of the Christian and Temperance flags and the WCTU member pledge are not. For reference:

Christian: I pledge allegiance to the Christian Flag, and to the Savior for whose kingdom it stands, one brotherhood, uniting all mankind in service and love.

Temperance: I pledge allegiance to the Temperance Flag, emblem of total abstinence, self-control, pure thoughts, clean habits, the white flag that surrenders to nothing but purity of truth, and to none but God whose temples we are. For WCTU pledge, see preceding page.

This element of organizational affiliation shows the amazing restraint members possess, and identifies members as dedicated to what they believe to be the proscriptive word of God. Notice that unlike other alcohol-related organizations that allow for moderate use of alcohol or promote safe consumption practices by members, the WCTU stands alone in its pledge of denial, allowing members to carry a metaphoric organizational badge, proving themselves as ones who eschew innate desires for the protection of the family and holy ways. Ritualistic acts like the organizational pledge and the pledge to the temperance flag that cite the meaning of affiliation as “self-control, pure thoughts, clean habits,...and (dedication to) purity of truth... and... (to) God” show WCTU members to be immersed in what Durkheim calls a “negative cult,” one that relays organizational beliefs through member participation in “negative rites” (WCTU Favorite Songs, Signal Press; Durkheim 1912[1995]). The beliefs of the WCTU are those of asceticism, self-restraint, and denial as indicative of moral purity and dedication to the organization and its conservative Christian belief structure.

Members rely on important temperance figures to convey work ethic and organizational potential

WCTU members rely on temperance crusaders of the past to locate central moments in the lasting crusade against alcohol and for moral purity. These important temperance workers not only remind today’s members of a successful time in the organization, but also serve to preserve hope for modern day temperance workers in our contemporary alcohol-friendly climate. Important women of the WCTU like Frances Willard, Annie Wittenmeyer, and Anna Gordon are all familiar names to contemporary members, and represent what kind of organizational progress a strong commitment to the WCTU can accomplish. These women serve as ideological markers that provide members of today with a *model for* the ideal WCTU crusader (Geertz 1973)<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Carrie Nation, a widely known temperance crusader who was famous for carrying an axe into saloons and smashing whiskey barrels, is not considered one of the WCTU's heroic figures. Modern-day historians have

These three ladies, Frances Willard, Annie Wittenmeyer, and Anna Gordon, are the organization's most widely promoted figures, with more leaflets, books, pamphlets, and meeting topics devoted to these three than any other temperance figures. The WCTU's publishing company, Signal Press, has published six books, eight booklets, and seven leaflets pertaining to the organization's history or its key figures. Selected examples of titles include, *The White Ribbon Story: 125 Years* by current WCTU National President, Sarah Ward, *God's Angel – Annie Whittenmeyer*, Signal Press booklet, *Anna Adams Gordon*, Signal Press Booklet, *Frances Willard and Her Bible*, Signal Press leaflet, and many others. Through Signal Press, members have access to condensed information packets about each temperance worker that summarize each woman's involvement in the WCTU's history and in the larger temperance crusade. Small booklets and leaflets on each of these historical members can be purchased for as little as \$1.15 for 50 copies. Each gives a summary of accomplishments as well as a biographical history that ties the reader into the personal story of each former WCTU sister. Informational pamphlets such as these are used during certain historically dedicated union meetings and by members who have a personal curiosity about their foremothers.

Each of these crusaders was extremely important in promoting the organization during the WCTU's most culturally popular timeframe, the late 1800s through the mid-1920s. They represent the model temperance worker and serve to remind current members not only of the courage and dedication it takes to forge a crusade against alcohol, but also that diligence and faith in God that produced an incredibly successful organization once. The WCTU focuses on

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suggested that Nation was insane and the WCTU does not want to have any part in claiming the accomplishments of a madwoman for their organization. At the national convention in 1999, one of the national officers dressed up as Nation, donning a black bonnet and carrying a black cardboard axe. There was talk among some in attendance who tried to clarify the organizational position for me, "I don't know why she's dressed like that. She knows we don't agree with Carrie Nation's ways. Prayer and real work are more miraculous than smashing things to bits" (1999 National Convention Attendee, Fieldnotes, Amherst, NY). As it turned out, the national officer was part of a

these past leaders in a recurring, stylized fashion and sets them up as the focus of ritual events (Kertzer 1988, Durkheim [1912] 1995).

As the first president of the WCTU, Annie Turner Wittenmeyer was the figurehead for the organization first actualized. The place she holds as the initial WCTU leader combines powerful elements of the organization's birth narrative with the retelling of the national electricity for the cause at that time. Wittenmeyer came on to the temperance scene when the nation literally exuded reformist sentiment, and while her legacy tells of her tireless work for the WCTU, the country was poised and ready to accept such an organization. The tale of Frances Willard, who wanted the WCTU to "do everything" from promoting diet reform to housing and reforming prostitutes, also inspires today's members because they are able to see what kind of organizational explosion *could* happen if the cultural climate were not so alcohol-friendly and more like that of the 1870s. Anna Gordon is another hard-working temperance crusader of the past that today's members call on for encouragement. Gordon served as the fourth president of the WCTU, serving from 1914-1925, but is often also heralded for her companionship and support to Willard as her personal secretary (Bordin 1990). It was Gordon who spearheaded efforts toward incorporating children into facets of the organization. While Willard spoke to mothers, she sang songs and had temperance lessons with their children. She created and popularized the Loyal Temperance Legion, an arm of the WCTU for children, and managed to get 350,000 children to sign temperance pledges during her career (Ward 1999).

Leaders such as these are inspirational metaphoric figures for today's members. Their efforts and leadership took the organization from conception to actualization, and in no small way. The WCTU was one of the most popular organizations for women at that period in time,

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historic skit that revealed the WCTU's methods as more effective than Nation's in that they contributed to a lasting organization.



boasting an excess of 200,000 dues paying members in both the WCTU and its younger auxiliary branch the Young Woman's Christian Temperance Union (now called the YTC) in 1892 (Bordin 1990). Theirs are inspiring stories to retell to an organization that is barely maintaining its membership base and directives.

Durkheim's work on religious ritual applies even here, when examining the importance of historical figures to the WCTU. According to Durkheim, religious rituals, (and I assert that the remembrances of past temperance figures that recur in a stylized fashion can be considered a ritual in the strictest Durkheimian sense), are observed not for the physical effects they might produce, but to remain faithful to the organization's past and to maintain the group's character ([1912] 1995). When the WCTU dedicates entire meeting programs to the remembrance of a particular temperance leader, or promotes literature on temperance figures through suggested reading lists and reading quizzes for members, or produces skits at state and national conventions that detail the lives of important past WCTU leaders, members are commemorating their ancestors, recalling the past and bringing it to the present through dramatic representation. Through these actions, both individual members and the WCTU are "remade morally," as they are holding up their origins and original leaders as sacred, with these ritual actions in turn sustaining the vitality of the mythic beliefs common to the group ([1912] 1995:379).

In addition to observing the importance of historic figures in reading lists and union meetings, members express their kinship and reverence for specific temperance leaders of the past in a few other ways. For instance, the current WCTU national president shares a personal connection with initial temperance crusader Frances Willard, indicating in the autobiographical section of her book on the WCTU that she was born on "February 17, (Willard's heavenly birthday)" (Ward 1999:102). Other members attach themselves to important founding members

through less personal and more public recognitions. At their 2000 State Convention, members in Indiana informed me of their efforts to maintain the WCTU's presence in the Frances Willard Elementary School in Evanston, IN. Devoted members made 200 cupcakes with toothpicked pictures of Frances Willard placed in them for the Frances Willard Elementary School's Day of appreciation for their namesake. Members recalled their rationale: "We thought it was important for the children to remember (Willard) as well" (Focus Group Interview, IN WCTU State Convention 2000). Commemorations like these are important first, for the organization to recognize itself through its past and second, to get outside recognition for the historic accomplishments that were so vital to American history that such institutions as public schools were named after their forebears.

Identifying with and celebrating important figures are essential acts in sustaining the vitality of the organization. By offering up the characteristics of dedication to temperance work and Christian service, the WCTU relies on its heroic figures of the past to revivify the most fundamental elements of the group's collective consciousness (Durkheim [1912] 1995). "Through... (these rites) the group periodically revitalizes the sense it has of itself and its unity; the nature of individuals as social beings is strengthened at the same time. The glorious memories... are made to live again... and with which they feel in accord, bring about a feeling of strength and confidence" (Durkheim [1912] 1995:379). Through the ritualistic remembrance of past champions, WCTU members regain a sense of pride that they themselves, because they are a small part of such a laudable organization, are as heroic as the temperance figures who took up the initial torch that they now bear. They feel good about the WCTU and their part in it when focusing on their founding mothers, and they are morally replenished with a desire to see the

WCTU continue into the future. To be sure, a focus on historic figures is an important means in sustaining the Permanently Dying WCTU.

### Organizational Creation Stories

If the heralding of original temperance leaders allows for individual and organizational moral remaking and reaffirming ideals of hard work and dedication, these stories are contextualized when recounting the WCTU's birth narrative. The retelling of organizational creation stories fulfills that individual need to “grasp history and biography and the relations between the two in society” (Mills 1959:6). Tales of the past endear founding members to contemporary ones while focusing on those laudable traits still relevant to the organization at present. According to Geertz (1973) individuals depend on their ability to locate themselves within a group history.

In August 1999 the WCTU's 125<sup>th</sup> annual conference convened in Amherst, New York, locating the convention group within convenient proximity to many of the historical sites important to the organization's beginnings. Because that year's annual convention fell on a commemorative year, there was a lot of emphasis placed on the creation story of the WCTU. On one day the group took a special day-long outing, visiting the towns of Chautauqua, and Fredonia, New York. At Chautauqua, we visited the Chautauqua Institution, the historical site where the founding crusaders of the Women's Temperance Movement and the Women's Suffrage Movement met to join forces just prior to the WCTU's official inception. The site is still a religious-educational resort and convention grounds as well as a fine and performing arts school. The Institute today caters to vacationing religious individuals through lecture series, book clubs, a research library, continuing education classes, fine arts presentations, and recreational and fitness programs (Chautauqua Institute Brochure).

During our day trip to Chautauqua, WCTU President Sarah Ward addressed the crowd at an outdoor amphitheater as one of the Institute's guest lecturers of the day. She spoke of the historical relationship between the WCTU, the Woman's Suffrage Movement, and the Chautauqua Institute, outlining the successful history each has had in the United States because of their collaborative efforts. The amphitheater was mostly filled with the 70-75 ladies who had all traveled by bus from the National Convention for that day's outing, but there were also 15-20 outsiders present. All in attendance got to feel a sense of connective history while listening to the president retell the organization's creation story in such a historical location. I sat next to a woman who was the WCTU's state president of Tennessee at that time. Every few minutes she would poke me in the shoulder and tell me that she had "chills." "It's so inspiring!" she said once the speech concluded, "To think we're here with all this history!" (TN WCTU, 1999 National Convention Fieldnotes).

Later that day, we traveled as a group in three chartered buses to the town of Fredonia, NY to have a fellowship service in the church where the WCTU, before it was even called the WCTU, held its first meeting in 1873. The importance of place as it relates to birth narrative is important. The tangible aspect of place, its feel and sight, made the stories relatable and real for members. Many of the elements of the WCTU's inception were present, providing an important tie for members to their forebears. We were able to sit in the same Baptist sanctuary where the first temperance crusaders were inspired by the words of health and home protection spoken by Dr. Dio Lewis. A bronze plaque on the front of the church read, "In this church on Dec. 15 1873 208 crusaders met organized and became the first Woman's Christian Temperance Union of the world. Erected by the Crusade Union of Fredonia Dec. 15, 1921" (1999 National Convention Fieldnotes, Fredonia, NY). As a group, we heard a sermon about faith and dedication from the

church's contemporary minister that reverberated against the same walls, initiating from the same pulpit.

In the same town and directly across the street from the church, members were able to drink from the water fountain that was placed there by the dedicated temperance workers of the 1870s. In front of what used to be a tavern, the WCTU of Fredonia financed the construction of a public water fountain in 1912, giving their community an alternative beverage to those found inside the saloon. A plaque on the front dedicates the fountain to former temperance crusader, Esther McNeill, and many of the women lined up to have their picture taken while taking a drink from the fountain. Visiting historic sites like these provided a concreteness of realism for members. To see these sites in person made the mythic origins of the organization a tangible reality for its contemporary members, while enabling them to have a profound relationship with their foremothers and to better understand the course of history as reflected upon and shaped by their organization (Geertz 1973). This tangible reality was shrouded in sacredness, providing a relative few the opportunity to experience "the places where... the ancestors themselves sojourned, where they vanished into the ground..." where they began the important mission that endears the membership and solidifies collective conscience of the WCTU today (Durkheim [1912] 1995: 378).

This trip was an important recounting event, dependent on setting and the surrounding historic props (historic church, pews, walls, plaques, water fountain, etc.) from the WCTU's past. We were, in essence, reenacting important organizational inception events during that day's outing. Durkheim asserts that as members taking part in an historic ritual, such as sitting in the same church pews and hearing a speaker like the temperance-driven women of Fredonia in 1873, we were not just passively viewing a representative reenactment of the past heroes; instead, our

participation in the reenactment *made* us those very heroes members sought to uphold. “In a sense, it is still the hero who is on the stage. To accentuate the representative character of that rite, all it takes is to accentuate the duality of the ancestor and the celebrant” (Durkheim [1912] 1995). Despite our appearance as mere religious attendees, those members who traveled to Chautauqua and Fredonia were taking part in a ritualistic dialogue with the past. By representing the first audiences of the temperance crusades, members were playing an important role in the historical narrative the WCTU is founded upon.

The day’s events lasted 14 hours as we were shuttled around from place to place on chartered buses, giving our group the look of a tourists who desired nothing more than squeezing in every possible sight and purchasing souvenirs to indicate we had been there. Our group was special, however. Although maybe imperceptible to an outside observer, we were pilgrims, making our way to the original place where all of the WCTU's hard work began. The emotional experience contained in a pilgrimage as opposed to mere tourist activities presents an important distinction in its meaning for participants:

Travel and pilgrimage share particular characteristics and certainly coexist, now as well as in the past, however, pilgrimage is differentiated from tourism by its destination producing feelings of awe and reverence. Tourism is a more banal activity. This is not to deny its own sacredness or to support those that view it as confirming the disenchantment of the world thesis (Boorstin 1964; Turner and Ash 1975). Tourism may be temporally and spatially out of the ordinary, but it is typically to places of interest or fascination in other cultures rather than a sacred journey to sites of one’s own culture. As such it is not the activity of travel that defines pilgrimage but the emotional relationship between the actor, society and place (West 2003)

The power of experience, to connect and commune with past heroes, should not be underestimated. When I returned after the 1999 National Convention to my participant observation in the local and state union meetings at home, I was asked to tell the group about my

experiences in New York. My stories were met with what I perceived to be envious acceptance, as members said things like, “I’ve been in this organization 25 years and I’ve never wanted to go to a National Convention. This one I’d’ve really like to have gone to though. To see all that history!” (GA WCTU, age 78, local union Fieldnotes). The state Vice President also commented, “It sure was an expensive trip this year. I wish I could have gone too. Do you think you could get me in with your research budget for next year?! (Turning to the state president) Or could I get some money from the state? It might make me work harder [laughter]” (GA WCTU, State Convention Fieldnotes, 1999). I glean from this that there is a tangible understanding that comes from first-hand experience with pieces of organizational history. This personal experience promotes member dedication to the organization and possibly even increased efforts toward organizational goals. “Being there” is a source of inspiration for members as it allows them to symbolically take the place of crusaders of the past, to identify with them, and to revitalize their cause.

#### Historic Ritual and Symbol as Motivational Factors

The dramatic natures of ritual and ceremony play roles in building group solidarity and indoctrinating new members to the ideologies of the organization (Trice and Beyer 1984). Like symbols, rituals are expressions of ideology within a culture that contain a dramaturgic element. They involve relatively elaborate and planned sets of activities or movements, carried out through interactions with other ritual actors or with the organizational symbols, and are usually performed for an audience (Turner 1969). By providing an outlet for the expression of collective moral sentiments, rituals unify and give personality to groups, allowing group members to represent the important elements of group identity to each other, and to locate themselves as participants in a cultural and organizational narrative (Durkheim [1912] 1995; Kertzer 1988;

Geertz 1973; Shils 1975). As a 125-year old organization, the WCTU has collected a number of dramaturgical ceremonies that occur at special times. Selected examples include monthly local union meetings, flag ceremonies that take place during each monthly meeting, membership ceremonies, yearly conventions, and certain days dedicated to prayer and fasting for the members of the organization. As with the function of rituals in general, these activities inspire member commitment and are imbedded in what it means to be a WCTU member by combining elements of historical importance with moral religious sentiments.

For illustrative purposes, I detail two examples of ritualistic events within the WCTU. The first is a National Convention Flag Ceremony that I have witnessed during two National Conventions (1999, 2000). The second, a White Ribbon Recruit Ceremony, I have not been a part of, but instead rely on organizational literature and member recounts to base the example. Both ritual instances play out ideologies of unity, moral purity and allegiance to the WCTU and its cause.

### **The National Convention Flag Ceremony**

The National Convention Flag Ceremony occurs each year during the National Convention where members from all over the United States convene to rekindle old friendships, represent their state unions, and regain their motivational energy for the temperance cause. Members who attend these conventions are, for the most part, older ladies who have the disposable income to vacation with their WCTU sisters each year for what feels like a week of Vacation Bible School for elderly women<sup>53</sup>. Conventions take place at hotels or resort facilities with meeting rooms that house educational seminars on particular aspects of WCTU work, such as Home Protection, Member Recruitment, Legislation/Citizenship, National Projects, etc. (1999



and 2000 Fieldnotes based on convention schedules), and also include Daily Morning Prayer and Praise sessions, Meetings of the National Officers and national Board of Directors, member banquets, and couple of fun outings for attendees (Fieldnotes, 1999 and 2000 National Conventions).

On the second night of each National Convention, representative members from each state (usually that state's president, but a designated representative may fill in for state presidents who are not able to attend), dress in an all-white dress, white wrist- or elbow-length gloves and white shoes that symbolize the endeavoring to make "ourselves and our (representative) states pure of alcohol, drugs and sin" (informal conversation, VA WCTU state president, Fieldnotes, 1999 National Convention). Each member wears a blue banner across her chest stitched in white with the name of the particular state she is representing, and most are wearing their WCTU organizational pins over their hearts<sup>54</sup>. As the audience sits in convention chairs that are divided by an aisle down the center of the conference room, the white-clad participating members wait in the hotel's hallway, each holding her state's flag at the end of a long flagpole. Piano music starts and audience members rise as the National Anthem is played and one male military representative from some branch of the national armed forces (in 1999 it was the Marines, in 2000 it was the Army), dressed in his accompanying attire, carries the American flag down the center aisle. He makes his way toward a small hotel stage, where he positions the flag in a flag holder at center stage, salutes it, and exits. The music changes to the WCTU national anthem, audience members continue standing, and enter three dedicated members who are not currently

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<sup>53</sup> While the National WCTU pays for the some of the transportation (up to a certain amount, dependant on that year's fiduciary allowance) and all of the lodging for one member from each state each year, the majority of convention attendees must pay their own ways.

<sup>54</sup> The WCTU sells small lapel pins in many different styles and price ranges, from a simple cloisonné with faux gold or brass finishing to pins with precious gems such as diamonds and sapphires. Each pin is the WCTU white or blue ribbon, tied in a bow, the organization's symbol of unity and purity.

representing any other states but dressed in the same manner as other WCTU participants. Filing down the aisle, in a line, one member carries the all-white temperance flag, one the Christian flag, and the WCTU blue and white banner. The National Officers, all dressed in white, but wearing blue sashes that indicate their national positions, follow the flag bearers and take a seat on the stage. The long march of state representatives comes next, each woman making her way down the aisle with her flag in front of her. The flags are standard size, and must be relatively heavy on their large flagpoles, as some members require assistance, and are accompanied by another member (presumably from her state) during the procession. Once at the front of the conference hall, members position flags in flag holders to the left and the right of the stage before they take their seats in the first three rows at the auditorium's front.

This portion of the ceremony does not yet reveal the WCTU as a solely religious organization. Members are not carrying Bibles or singing hymns. Instead, the military presence and the formality of the flag bearers identifies the WCTU as a patriotic organization of women who are dedicated to nation-wide purity and the sacredness of the United States. While the WCTU *is* an organization dedicated to protection of the homeland, this element sometimes gets obscured for me, as the primary foci and majority of official rhetoric seems to surround individualistic elements of religion, alcohol and sin. During the national flag ceremony, however, it is obvious that members are endeavoring to uphold the sacredness of the U.S., as a nation in which hard work and persistence make even the most difficult tasks, such as eliminating alcohol and fostering a successful crusade, possible. Participants are not merely representing a niche in which alcohol and immorality are unacceptable, but promoting the idea that, as a great nation, these things should be eliminated in order for the U.S. achieve the power of national morality.

The second part of the ceremony begins with pledges to the American, Christian, and Temperance flags, followed by the WCTU membership pledge.<sup>55</sup> A member who is also a charismatic minister from Indiana delivers the opening prayer. She is an elderly lady in her 70s, with a portly stature and a glowing face who uses the tenor of her voice to open the service with feelings of reverence as well as excitement. As she punches certain words in her prayer, she elicits emotion from the members in attendance, as they call back to her with “Amen!” and “Praise be the Lord!” The combination of the pomp and circumstance and the emotional acceleration during the opening prayer makes the room feel almost electrified. On the faces of the delegates and those in the audience are smiles of anticipation and what I suppose to be pride. Even though I am not a member, I feel caught up by “...feelings of belonging and participation, that I have been invited into a special place for a special occasion, and that this opening ceremony, full of the momentum of possibility, will certainly translate to a successful convention” (Journal Notes, 1999 Convention, Amherst, NY).

The momentum of the ceremony continued to crest as the National WCTU president took the stage, delivering a welcoming and inspirational speech in which she recapped some of her formal address she gave the night before. She spoke of the historic ties of the WCTU, its mission and purpose, and the strength it takes to be a member.

“Today’s world does not see God as popular. It does not see us as popular. It does not see the WCTU as popular, but if God is not popular, we don’t want to be either. (applause) If abstinence is popular we do not want to be either. (applause)... We come from a long line of strong women, women who persevered in the face of society’s contempt, women who bowed to God on the disgusting floors of saloons and praised his name! (“Amens” are heard from the attendees). Our organization is here tonight to celebrate its perseverance. We are here tonight to celebrate the work we have done for temperance and for God for

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<sup>55</sup> See page 150 for pledges to the Christian and Temperance Flags.

As a reminder, the membership pledge states, I hereby solemnly promise, God helping me, to abstain from all distilled, fermented, and malt liquors, including wine, beer, and hard cider, and to employ all proper means to discourage the use of and traffic in the same (pledges taken from *WCTU Favorite Songs*, Signal Press).

over 125 years! And we are here this week to keep that good work alive!  
(applause) (1999 National Convention Fieldnotes, Amherst, NY).

As her voice ebbed and crescendoed at appropriate points, I saw members begin to squirm in their seats, whisper to each other, wave handkerchiefs in the air, and nod their heads in approval. They were moved by her words, inspired by them. Agreeing with the president that their cause was not popular, members recognize their own steadfast dedication that accompanies participating in a cause that is not accepted by wider society but deemed by God a righteous one.

The ceremony follows the President's address with singing of two WCTU hymns about God and abstinence. Next there is a time of organizational recognition in which national and state leaders give inspirational mini-speeches about the accomplishments of their organization over the last year and through the last 100 years that connects the present with the past in terms of activity for the WCTU. These accountings are followed by more singing and a couple of lengthy prayers delivered from various WCTU ministers and members. Finally, the audience is asked to stand and sing "The White Ribbon Rally Song" to the tune of "Battle Hymn of the Republic" as members process, leaving their flags, out of the conference room.

This ceremony embodies elements of patriotism, religious dedication, and commitment to the temperance cause and to the organization itself. Even the time it takes place, on the second day of the convention, at time when late arrivals are certain to be present, is important in terms of the tone it sets for the entire convention. During this ceremony, even those state representatives who need assistance from walkers or faithful aids in walking down the aisle, proudly place their flag in the appropriate flag holder and take their assigned seat in their white dress and gloves.

This ceremony embodies commitment to tradition and allegiance to flags and the organizations and ideologies for which they stand. These "collective ideas and feelings are possible only through the overt movements that symbolize them" (Durkheim [1912] 1995:421).

The annual flag ceremony is important in rousing support for the organization, recognizing that the organization is made up of numerous states and delegates that complete a national membership force, and focusing on the convention work at hand. Without it, or without some ritual like it, these feelings would be impossible. In its sacred form, separated from the profane workings of the rest of the convention, the ceremony expresses members' devotion to the state and nation in which they live and to the union they belong, as well as their personal dedication to the moral purity of its inhabitants. "Once we have fulfilled our ritual duties, we return to profane life with more energy and enthusiasm, not only because we have placed ourselves in contact with a higher source of energy but also because our capacities have been replenished..." (Durkheim [1912] 1995:386). Because of its time and place, the National Convention Flag Ceremony is an inspirational springboard, allowing members to reaffirm the ideals of their crusade, and motivating them to coordinate among themselves and to get work done for the organization during the remainder of the convention.

### **The White Ribbon Recruit Ceremony**

In a second example of WCTU ritual events, the White Ribbon Ceremony is intended to inspire members in another fashion. In essence, any rite or ritualistic activity will bind the collectivity together to revalidate core ideals, inspire and motivate those present, and revivify the collective conscience of the group, and to be sure, the White Ribbon Recruit Ceremony does this. In addition, however, this ceremony focuses members' efforts on the sanctity of the traditional family and the hope for generational transmission of abstinence goals and group alliance. This ceremony highlights these objectives in two ways: First, by turning the ritual's focus toward an infant, WCTU members remember the innocence of children and the dangers of sin and impurity that lie before them as they get older. Secondly, members are able to concentrate on the

traditional model of recruitment for organizational maintenance, beginning with the White Ribbon Recruit, then indoctrinating the child with the moral principles of the LTL and YDC, and later recruiting the adult child for WCTU membership.

The White Ribbon Recruit Ceremony, as a rite of passage, has been a WCTU mainstay since the early 1900s. The ceremony is similar to an initiation rite of the newborn into the clan and is a lot like a baptism in that it involves an infant, a sponsor(s), an organizational representative (WCTU member), an audience of believers, and the placement of the clan's emblem on the initiate. The sponsor, normally the child's parent(s), guardian(s), grandparent(s) or any combination of these, promises always to do her best to keep the baby away from alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. This is a dedication service with a two-fold purpose: First, as White Ribbon Recruits, initiants are ceremonially accepted as new members of the temperance crusade with the promise from the group that those present will support his/her indoctrination and growth within the abstinence community; Second, through the ritual itself, the WCTU revalidates its mission and revitalizes itself as an organization devoted to promoting purity among its community members.

An explanation of the White Ribbon Recruit Service is found on the WCTU's website [www.wctu.org](http://www.wctu.org). Accordingly, "The Woman's Christian Temperance Union is a family organization. Children from birth to age 6 may be enrolled as White Ribbon Recruits when their parents, grandparents, or guardians pledge to teach the children the values of total abstinence" ([www.wctu.org/join.html](http://www.wctu.org/join.html)). A more detailed description of the ceremony's rationale is offered in the WCTU 1999-2000 Program Planner Manual which states that a White Ribbon Recruit Dedication

"is a declaration before God, and others, that as parents you desire not only for your child to be **His** but also that you desire him/her to

possess the virtues of abstinence for your child's sake. A White Ribbon Recruit Dedication is a testimony and an encouragement to others to teach total abstinence as a way of life and give hope for a better society. It is a practical tool to open a door of discussion with your child from the time he/she is very small; thus allowing him/her to discover the **depth** of your love, concern and commitment. Pictures taken at the time of dedication are very helpful. Lovingly, continue to equip your child with the "tools of Knowledge" before the "tools of Satan" are encountered" (WCTU Program Planner Manual, 1999-2000. Emphasis in original).

The White Ribbon Recruit Ceremony, then, is an important means by which to "confer upon the neophytes the qualities it takes to become full members of the society..." (Durkheim [1912] 1995:388-389). It is to be used in the future of the child's life to show him the value of abstinence and the care his parents have for him by protecting him through entrance into the abstinence community. It is meant to surround him with elements of love, family, community and commitment. Finally, it is meant to introduce a new member into the community of abstinence, marking him with the group's emblem and promising to him that he will know and share the elements of group membership.

The White Ribbon Recruit Ceremony takes place a public and formal manner. Usually in a church, signifying the sacredness of the occasion, the child is presented by her sponsor (This can be a parent, guardian or grandparent, but members indicate to me that this is normally the child's mother, and therefore I will simply refer to the sponsor as "mother" or "her" from now on.). The mother or group of mothers repeats an oath read to her by a WCTU member, where the repeater promises to dedicate herself to keeping her child protected from alcohol and other drugs. The mother then lights a promise candle as the WCTU member reads a Bible verse<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> Suggested verses are based on the idea that the body is a temple of God, as promoted in I Corinthians 3:16 – "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?"; I Timothy 5:22 "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure"; and Romans 14:13 "Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way" (NIV Version).

Finally, the clan's emblem, a white ribbon, is tied around the baby's wrist to signify the binding promise the mother has made concerning her child. The white of the ribbon signifies the sacredness of the promise as well as the purity and innocence of the child that will remain with him or her as long as the child never takes a drink or uses drugs.

Like the sacrament of Baptism for Christians and the bris circumcision ceremony for Jewish boys, the White Ribbon Recruit Ceremony provides the child with a signifier of membership in the covenant community. As with the contemporary infant baptism, the purpose of the White Ribbon Ceremony is to shield the child from dangers he or she will certainly encounter later on in life and to bring him or her closer to God through sacramental dedication. Many Christian churches (namely Baptist and charismatic churches) make baptism optional or encourage participants to request their own baptismal time when they feel spiritually ready to accept the meaning of the ceremony. In these cases, baptism often takes place when the baptized is in his/her teens or older, with no age limit on when a person can devote him/herself to Christ and be "reborn" into the Christian fold through this action. To dedicate an infant implies a need for protection and that the adults of that community are willing to stand up and act on the child's behalf. The White Ribbon Recruit Ceremony is no different in that the child is to be protected from alcohol, drugs, and sin, and that those in attendance will serve to foster these means of protection, promoting a life without the dangers of inebriation, until the child is old enough to face these moral pitfalls on his/her own.

The White Ribbon Recruit Ceremony highlights important priorities of the organization: religion, abstinence, purity, family, and community. By emphasizing organizational tenets in a dramaturgical fashion, the WCTU enables members to act out their beliefs and publicize organizational values. That the WCTU endeavors to include infants in its mission reveals its



efforts to promote its work through future generations. There is a hope that generational transmission will occur if the mother and child espouse the same views and work together toward being models for other community members. In the same hope that infants will remain pure into adulthood, the WCTU sponsor hopes for future generations of members with the tying of the white ribbon.

### Conclusion

Durkheim maintains that ritual actions express the beliefs that tie an organization together ([1912] 1995). In the case of the WCTU, ritual actions reveal an ascetic quality of the organization, with the reciting of abstinence pledges, the heralding of the historical denial of alcohol through important temperance personalities and pilgrimages to organizational birthplace sites, the focusing on the lengthy collaboration and persistence of state and national unions through flag ceremonies, and the work to protect children through organizational rites of passage. This asceticism must not be underestimated, as it combines with religious dedication elements within the WCTU to foster a perpetual work ethic for members. In a large part, this continual ascetic work focus serves to sustain the WCTU's organizational presence in the U.S. today.

These thematic elements that promote an ascetic work ethic for WCTU members stem from the power of the rites themselves. The sampling of ritual activities I have noted covers only a small portion of the array of ritual practices employed by WCTU. Members set aside sacred time for many more rituals than can be examined here; however, I assert that it is not necessary, nor really even possible, to detail all of the WCTU's ritualistic activities. What is important is that members have a ritual system that periodically brings them together to celebrate themselves and their organization. According to Durkheim, "several rites can be used interchangeably to

bring about the same end. To ensure the reproduction of the totemic species, sacrifices, mimetic practices or commemorative performances can be used equally well” ([1912] 1995:390). In other words, it is the rites themselves that confer permanence on an organization. “What matters most is that individuals are assembled and that feelings in common are expressed through actions in common... To become conscious of itself, the group need not perform some acts rather than others. Although it must commune in the same thought and the same action, the visible forms in which this communion occurs hardly matter” ([1912] 1995:390). It is certain that abstinence pledges convey different meanings through different stylized movements than do flag ceremonies, but all in all, it is simply the gathering of the faithful for the purposes of ritual that provides a sacred space for the organization to realize and appreciate itself. It is through this periodic gathering together to reinforce the group’s mission, the group’s collective conscience, and the interdependence among the members that the WCTU revitalizes itself and sustains its organizational presence.

In analyzing example elements of history and ritual at work within the WCTU, one gets a glimpse of how these processes work to endear members to the organization and to promote the temperance cause. Since group cohesion is dependent upon the successful implementation of these elements of culture, teasing these elements out of their organizational setting helps the reader to understand their affect on the membership and organizational stability. From this section, I am able to link organizational history and ritual to member involvement and commitment. I do this in two ways: First, members rely on the heroic stories of the early WCTU and the temperance crusades, as well as iconography of initial crusaders as important organizational forces that promote community and inspiration in members; secondly, members are motivated to sustain the organization through participating in and making meaning from

organizational rituals. While organizational characteristics of age, alcohol and religion combine to sustain the WCTU, the history-based ritualistic pieces of organizational culture are the crux of inspiration and mission expression that endear members to the WCTU. It is through ritual practices that members act out the organization's most essential beliefs, and through ritual assembly that members reinforce the organization.

## 9. CONCLUSION

This paper represents a two-year examination into the current workings of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in the United States. This organization is the longest consecutively living women's organization in the U.S., having sustained its existence and survived the peaks and pitfalls of cultural climatological change for 131 years in 2005. Owing its initial success to the reformist sentiment that pervaded American society in the mid-1870s, and riding high the tide of the popular temperance movement until the 1930s, the WCTU has experienced both a loss of prestige in membership and a loss in sheer member numbers and their corresponding financial contributions throughout the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Gusfield 1963).

When initially thinking about the WCTU as a dissertation topic, I sincerely thought that I would be working with archival data only, as I was under the impression that the organization no longer existed in society today. To find it still active was more than merely intriguing. The fact that the WCTU is currently active with state and local unions in over 30 states, and has a national presence with conventions, projects, and historical commemorations, would make it an interesting organization to study simply for its historical longevity. The WCTU provided so much more than a study in organizational tenure, however. The minimally sustained presence of the WCTU it made organizationally fascinating through several important aspects: its ability to persist through reliance on religious belief systems, its goal displacement and ritualistic adaptations, its purposive aged membership base, and its relentless focus on alcohol and sin, two global elements with enormous amounts of institutional retention and financial backing (Merton 1957; Schudson 1989). For a small, financially crippled religious organization of elderly

women claiming to take on such cultural giants and to persist with only baby-step accomplishments kept me eager to find out how this is so and whether or not the organization could possibly continue on into the future.

I found theoretical assistance through Meyer and Zucker's (1989) work on Permanently Failing Organizations, an organizational type that relies on the organizational staying power acquired through sheer persistence despite significant goal attainment. Meyer and Zucker contend that our world is full of organizations that never meet their goals, serving as unproductive anomalies among other successful organizations. Their concept was helpful to a certain extent, but because the WCTU has special characteristics of historic and religious ties to the temperance crusade and a dogged focus on the unmatched foes of inebriants and sin, their perspective could only take this paper so far. To contend with these elements, I needed a concept that focused on both the failure to attain goals and the lack of societal plausibility characterizing the goals themselves. It seemed rational and necessary to formulate an organizational sub-type of Meyer and Zucker's classification, and thus the term Permanently Dying Organization was born.

In a previous chapter on the WCTU as a Permanently Dying Organization (see Chapter II, p.15), I differentiate this new organizational type from its predecessor as kind of organization that rests on a system of goals and motivations inconsistent with the rest of the cultural climate. A Permanently Dying Organization seems to be an anachronistic survival, revealing itself through "processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has evolved" (Tylor, as cited in Applebaum 1987). Organizations of this type make little sense

when taken into context with the rest of the world around them, and it appears that they will eventually be forced into nonexistence unless a sweeping cultural backlash that drastically changes belief systems takes place. To be “dying” is to be marching toward extinction, surrounded by a world that no longer needs the proscribed organizational values that continue to support the organization.

As I define it, the most notable difference rests in the exchange of the term “failing” for the term “dying.” Permanent *Failure* includes the idea that certain organizations continue to be unsuccessful in meeting otherwise attainable goals that are consistently accomplished by other organizations with better support systems. Permanent *Death*, on the other hand, encompasses both the inability to attain goals and the outmoded nature of the goals themselves. Other rational organizations have long since abandoned the ideals that define Permanently Dying Organizations, staying alive by altering rationales or aligning with more culturally palatable forces. Permanently Dying Organizations cling to an old rationalization scheme and justify themselves through means born in a previous era, relying on belief systems not readily supported in contemporary society.

To an enormous extent, the WCTU is alive today because members do little in the actual fight against the Goliath that is today’s alcohol industry. They are, for the most part, elderly ladies whose stamina has left them long ago. They appreciate the organization for the associative or “solidary” benefits provided to them through the ritual elements of the WCTU, and while they continue to have meetings, sing songs, recite pledges, and attend conventions, these actions are more ritualistic than they are purposive (Etzioni 1961; Zald and Ash 1994 [1966]). In fact, the day-to-day actions of the WCTU would lead Zald and Ash to deem them a “movement becalmed” instead of an actual Social Movement Organization (1994 [1966]), since

they have maintained their historical presence, but make miniscule or no strides toward their historical call of alcohol elimination. It is not even that bold to assert that there is no longer a movement in which the WCTU can take part, and while the organization and its members claim God-willed forcefulness in their endeavors, they have maintained their organization not through actual activities but instead through reliance on ritual and historical momentum. Take, for a contrasting example, a Social Movement Organization like the grassroots political PAC [moveon.org](http://moveon.org), in which “members” receive email alerts of upcoming political issues important to the cause. Specific instructions outline for members what they should do, who they should call, what they should say, and how much money is needed for the next political battle. They rely *not* on hymns or pledges or a historical crusade to inspire members; rather, they inspire by tallying the actual work done by the thousands of active participants across the country who took up the email call. Moveon.org members are motivated through action, not ritual, as opposed to WCTU members who are motivated to keep the organization alive through its ritualistic elements and its affiliative benefits.

It is also true that the leadership of the WCTU has sought to maintain the organization by quieting the extreme Orthodox mood of its membership by displaying a more moderate official tone in its documents, projects, and speeches. In his work on the two distinct and opposing ideologies (Orthodox and Progressivist) present in America, James Davidson Hunter explains that because the “culture wars” have to do with basic principles of social organization, the warring views draw support from different social groups. The conservative (Orthodox) viewpoint gets support from those whose way of life is rooted in the institutions that central bureaucratic rule supplants. Hunter provides examples that include family men not associated with national elites; married women, especially those with children; religious people whose faith

stresses either tradition or local congregations and personal conversion; small businessmen; and people in small towns and rural areas. The religious, rural, female membership of the WCTU represent this conservative Orthodox standpoint, and extreme examples in this project show some members considering the elimination of homosexuals by violent means, deeming welfare recipients “Welfare Queens,” and promoting the unfounded fear that homosexuals are trolling libraries to show pornography to and then molest young children.

On the flipside, the progressive view appeals to those who gain power and influence from central bureaucratic rule. Hunter’s examples include the academically credentialed; social scientists and other “experts”; lawyers, especially judges, legal scholars and leaders of the elite bar; elite journalists, whose importance increases as more things are treated as national public policy issues; and religious leaders who identify with national elites and want to be respectable, comfortable, and also prophetic. The leadership of the WCTU, in contrast to its Orthodox membership, represents something more akin to Hunter’s Progressivist standpoint, and has scaled down national projects and tempered the organization’s official tone so that its 125-Year Anniversary Proclamation reads almost like a liberal agenda. However, as the leadership’s continued power depends on the organization’s ability to maintain its presence in today’s middle-of-the-road society, leaders of the organization necessarily scale down the WCTU’s initial calling and present the organization as somewhat more milk toast than it actually is within the hearts and minds of members. In doing so, the leadership of the WCTU endeavors to sustain the organization and the power they receive through its Permanently Dying existence.

It is true that the Permanently Dying organizational type was developed with the WCTU in mind; however, there are plenty of other organizations that could be applied to this concept. In the hypothetical business sector, imagine a manufacturer of chairs who refuses to update his



methods because he believes hand-crafted furniture is superior, but continually gets squeezed by bigger companies who can build chairs faster and cheaper. He has just enough support from niche market clients to keep in business, but his business efforts suffer, and he is constantly without a positive cash flow. In the political sector, the Prohibition Party of today relies on outdated ideals of alcohol re-criminalization, and while it continues to be a minimally funded organization, it appears to be pulling out of the political arena at any moment due to lack of goal attainment and support. In the arena of culture, there many churches across the country in which ministers preach to all but empty sanctuaries each week, as their conservative or orthodox message has little meaning for the modern-day churchgoer. Church investments or deceased member bequests continue, year after year, to sustain them, but they are in no way thriving with support. In sum, such belief systems and their representative organizations stick out as anomalies in today's culture, and because of this do not receive the cultural support to deem them successful in their goals or underlying rationales.

When examining Permanently Dying Organizations, a researcher will find that there are characteristics particular to each that sustain the organization and enable it to resist death. In the case of the WCTU, I find four such interlacing elements: 1. a continued focus on and demonization of alcohol; 2. members' conservative religiosity and sense that the battle against alcohol and sin is a righteous one; 3. the age characteristics of the WCTU's membership; and 4. the ritualistic practices of the organization that provide consensus, cohesion, and affiliative benefits for members. I reiterate each briefly below.

#### Alcohol as a sustaining factor

For over 125 years the WCTU has battled against alcohol, finding its initial strength in the popular temperance crusades of the late 1800s and its triumphant apex in the Eighteenth

Amendment to the Constitution in 1919. While it may seem rational that the WCTU give up hope with the Amendment's Repeal in 1933, I contend that the legal presence of alcohol in American society is an important factor to the organization's staying power. Had the U.S. government permanently disposed of the WCTU's major foe, the organization would have had to change its focus, perhaps even its name, and in doing so might not have the rationalizations of "righteous struggle" and "continued historic crusade" to keep it afloat.

It is because alcohol is so prevalent in the U.S. today that the WCTU has a consistent and obvious target for its mission. As the organization's scapegoat for a litany of other social ills, alcohol provides members with a folk devil and an organizational purpose (Ben Yehudah 1990). Because of the many facets of alcohol in society today, members can choose their rationale angle, arguing one or more of the following: that alcohol is corruptive to their personal body-temple, alcohol is corruptive to the traditional family unit, alcohol is corruptive to one's personal relationship with God, or alcohol is corruptive to the public health of a nation as it causes disease, traffic accidents, and deformities in unborn children. Because the WCTU has had a continuous nemesis, it has had a continuous existence.

#### Religiosity as a sustaining factor

The women of the WCTU see sin and immorality as major causes in the problems facing individuals in contemporary society. Motivated by their religious conviction, members specifically view alcohol and drugs as morally reprehensible and an affront to God. In addition to the sins of inebriation, they mention other orthodox views representative of a tightly-bound vision of society, such as sex out of wedlock, child molestation, government assistance to unwed mothers, homosexuality, birth control, and termination of pregnancy by abortion as political immoralities (Hunter 1991; Merleman 1984).

Members of the WCTU see themselves as vehicles to do work for God. They abstain from alcohol, drugs, and tobacco in order to do what they believe God wants of them. In addition, they see themselves as models of morality for others who need to be “educated” in the ways of conservative religion. In almost every case, their preceding conservative religiosity and beliefs inspired their membership and motivated them to see the WCTU continue.

On a more fundamental level, members believe that a fight between good and evil exists, has always existed and continues to exist. There will always be evil and thus, always a need for the morally virtuous warrior against it. Membership in and work for the WCTU allows members to be on the just side of the battle and is an important factor in the WCTU's persistence. While members could work on their own to persuade their families and peers to be morally righteous, the WCTU provides members with an organized outlet for their efforts. Members need the WCTU to prove themselves morally, and because of this they endeavor to see the organization survive.

#### Organizational Age Characteristics as Sustaining Factors

The age component of the WCTU membership is a striking factor in this study. In my sample of 188 members from 26 states, the mean age is 74 with almost 90% of the sample self-defining as aged 60 or older. At the onset of this research, I thought the agedness of the WCTU a detrimental factor to the organization's viability. It seemed to me that the organization could not possibly propel itself into the future without the vision and vigor of a younger group of temperance workers. I still contend that a younger membership population would jumpstart the WCTU to a new level, allowing it to adjust its focus, to better cater to temperance efforts within the entire family, and to fulfill the traditional recruitment schemes it has employed since the

1800s. Despite these arguments, the elderly nature of WCTU members does seem to foster the organization's minimal existence while enabling it to resist death.

Organizationally, an older temperance population serves to sustain the WCTU in a few important ways. First, boundary maintenance is made easier within organizations if members possess important similarities. In the case of the WCTU, most members are of a similar age and peer group, enabling them to relate to each other in the areas of health, culture, conservatism, marital status, etc. Secondly, older members are able to find a place of importance within the WCTU, as there are few members and many positions of esteem to be filled. Each union has the potential to have eleven leadership positions, including officer and departmental spaces. With sparse membership in most unions, a new member could conceivably become an officer during her first meeting if she desired. Psychologically, the personal need for continued viability as an elderly individual is strong, as there are fewer and fewer places for aged women to express their capabilities in today's society. Finally, the kinship that an older individual feels with a dying organization motivates members to work to keep the WCTU alive. Many members in this study have been affiliated with the WCTU since they themselves were thriving in health. As they have gotten older and experienced age-related problems of health and mobility, so has the WCTU. Members maintain their allegiance while being able to relate to the failing organization of today, and in the same sense that they are not ready to give up on their individual viability, neither are they ready to give up on the WCTU.

#### Cultural-Historical Elements as Sustaining Factors

As an organization that has been in place for over 125 years, the WCTU has a rich history and a wealth of ritualistic practices that serve to promote cohesion among members and sustain the organization. I highlight the ways that abstinence pledges, historical figures, birth narratives,

and expressive rites are essential means by which WCTU members respect and glorify the organization. Most obviously, these rituals are a form of communication – members are able to communicate important aspects of who they are and what they believe to themselves, to each other, and to outsiders (such as myself). Additionally, rituals provide a sacred space that lionizes the organization, its forebears, and its inception, as well as reminds members of the WCTU's import to them and their dependence on it. Finally, rituals communicate to members why they should work to keep the organization alive, as the vehicle through which they can express their moral worth to the larger society.

According to Durkheim ([1912] 1995), the form the ritual takes is not important. In fact, the WCTU need not focus more on conventions over flag ceremonies or White Ribbon Recruit Dedications. Instead, it is the mere fact that a group gathers together during certain times for special purposes that provides the fundamental means for group persistence. These ritual actions are the primary way for organizations to revivify themselves, and while National Convention Ceremonies, White Ribbon Recruit Dedications, and pilgrimages to organizational birth sites do not happen every day, they do occur at important intervals to provide the collective effervescence necessary for keeping the WCTU alive. In sustaining the presence of the WCTU, ritualistic activities are of the utmost importance, as they are the vehicles that communicate the essential nature of the organization to its members.

### The Permanence of the WCTU

In this paper, I have endeavored to understand the means by which the WCTU sustains itself. In addition to those four important characteristics mentioned above, it seems rational that mere organizational diligence surrounding WCTU would be a factor in its persistence. Taking into consideration elements of institutional theory, an organization that is able to perpetuate itself

for over 125 years imbeds itself in the social fabric of a certain population's culture, normalizing its existence and increasing its chances for survival (Granovetter 1985). Although the WCTU's religious fight against alcohol may not have wide popularity, it must resonate strongly within a certain population in order for the organization to have succeeded for well over a century. Along with the above mentioned elements of alcohol, religiosity, age, and ritual, the continued existence of the WCTU, put simply, is largely enabled through its ability to last this long.

The fundamental question, when it comes to the WCTU or other Permanently Dying Organizations, is, *just how permanent are they?* Permanently Dying Organizations do not start out with outmoded goals and minimal successes. They are survivals from another era, and as such have waned in support and goal attainment over a long period of time (Tylor 1987). This is obvious in the case of the WCTU, which boasted a membership of over 200,000 at its career height in the early 1900s (Bordin 1990). One is only able to recognize a Permanently Dying Organization in the midst of its anachronistic floundering. At this point, while we must respect it for having lasted so long, and while we must look to sustaining characteristics to understand its longevity, we must also wonder when it will cease to exist. What cultural conditions will finally make it meet its demise, and, given the contemporary cultural climate, how much longer can it actually survive?

Trying to speculate about the future of a Permanently Dying Organization presents a conundrum for a researcher. While one can be impressed with the organization's persistence and say to herself, "They should have died out a long time ago, and yet have not! They should have declared bankruptcy a long time ago, and yet they have not! They should have given up their quest a long time ago, and yet they have not!" that researcher cannot trivialize what appears to be the looming death of that organization. How many quarters or years or decades must an

organization survive with minimal accomplishments and in the face of cultural rejection before it is *permanently* Permanently Dying? I am unable to offer a standard, and that is a question that cannot be answered by this research alone. So while it is at best appropriate, and at worst convenient to present a term called Permanently Dying Organizations that includes amazingly persistent organizations like the WCTU, other research must be done in order to clarify it for generalization. At this stage, however, there is still the question of future assessment.

Rationally, there are three analytic models to explain the WCTU's future, representing two extremes and one mid-point. The reader should note that these are merely models, tropes that define clear-cut concepts that are rarely, if ever, found in reality. They represent metaphorically analytic possibilities, and as such provide placeholders by which to mark the WCTU's organizational future on a theoretical continuum. On the positive end of the extreme, the WCTU may experience a *resurgence*, characterized by a revitalization in membership and public acceptance. At this positive extreme, the WCTU is again recognized by society as an important vehicle through which alcohol and sin should be combated. Were this extreme to take place, the nation would need to acknowledge alcohol's harmful and sinful nature, align itself with the WCTU tenets, and use the organization as a vehicle through which to curb alcohol sales, distribution and consumption in America. At the other extreme is *organizational death*, in which the WCTU loses enough members and/or financial backing that it necessarily declares itself defunct. In this extreme, the WCTU continues to decline to the point where it can no longer function as a national entity, can no longer pay national officer salaries or have conventions, can no longer afford to run a printing press, and can no longer find members to support its cause. At this point, the organization finally gives up and disbands. The mid-point has been outlined through much of this paper, and is represented by the analytic concept of the Permanently Dying

Organization. At this midpoint, the WCTU continues to maintain a minimal membership base, continues to struggle with finances, and continues to maintain itself through ritualistic adaptation strategies (Merton 1957).

Figures in this study show that since 1988, the WCTU has had to grapple with a drastically decreased financial base, and has cut paid organizational positions, scaled down national projects, and converted historic properties into rental structures to acquire more and spend less monies. At least since the late 1980s, the organization has had to face an equally significant decrease in membership numbers that forces members into maintaining multiple leadership positions at once, taking on additional work, meeting fewer times during the year or driving farther to participate in a consolidated regional union. These attempts show, on the one hand, an organization that is about to die out, and on the other hand, an organization that has maintained its presence where others might not.

When considering the future fate of the WCTU, I like to think that one should look to the sentiments of contemporary members to gauge viability. The devotion that members share for their organization is unmatched, and their desire to see the WCTU outlive them is strong. “I not only believe the WCTU will be needed in the future, I will use my very last breath to make sure it is successful and strong! The world may not know it, but it needs WCTU!!!” (PA WCTU, age 74, questionnaire. Emphasis in original). Humbly, I must leave the conclusion to this work open-ended, as this research represents merely a contemporary snapshot of this historical organization, and I cannot be certain where on the continuum of success, Permanent Death, or failure the WCTU will fall WCTU. What is true, however, is that there are currently in place several organizational characteristics that allow the WCTU to continue with its work on local, state, and national levels in the United States. Each of these characteristics is bolstered by



member dedication and spirit, coming together to produce today's Woman's Christian  
Temperance Union.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### Questions for members of the WCTU:

*First, I would like to ask some questions about you and your family. These questions get at demographic issues that will help me understand you as a WCTU member. Remember that you are not required to answer any question that you do not wish to.*

I.1. How long have you been a member of the WCTU?

I.2. What age were you when you first joined the WCTU? What age are you now?

I.3. When you joined the WCTU, were you...

- Married?
- Single?
- Divorced/Separated?
- Widowed
- A mother?

I.4. What about now, are you...

- Married?
- Single?
- Divorced/Separated?
- Widowed
- A mother? If a mother, how many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_ children

I.5. How much schooling did you have when you first joined the WCTU?

\_\_\_\_\_ years

I.6. How much schooling do you have now?

\_\_\_\_\_ years

I.7. Economically, how did you consider your family when you joined the WCTU?

- Lower class
- Working class
- Middle class
- Upper-middle class
- Upper class

I.8. What about now? How do you consider your family's socio-economic status?

- Lower class
- Working class

- Middle class
- Upper-middle class
- Upper class

I.9. Were you employed when you joined the WCTU?  yes  no

I.10. Are you employed now?  yes  no

I.11. If yes, what is/was your occupation?

I.12. If married/widowed, what is/was your husband's occupation?

I.13. Can you tell me a little about the town you grew up in?

I.14. What about the family you grew up in: Can you tell me about them?

What did your father do?

What did your mother do?

Do you have brothers or sisters?

Were any of your brothers or sisters in LTL or YTC?

I.15. What kinds of organizations or clubs have you been involved in since you joined with WCTU? What about before you joined the WCTU, were you ever a member of any other organizations?

I.16. How do you spend your free time? What kinds of things do you do for fun?

I.17. Are you a member of any other organizations or clubs? Which ones?

I.18. Are you a member of any other anti-alcohol or anti-drug groups like MADD?

I.19. Are you a member of a church?

If yes, how often do you attend church?

Are you involved in organizations within your church like choir, Sunday School, Women's Circle or WMU? Which ones?

I.20. Are there any forms of exercise you do on a regular basis? What kinds?

I.21. What kinds of health issues are important to you?

I.22. Did you ever drink alcohol before you joined the WCTU?  yes  no  
 Ever a period when you thought alcohol was not that harmful?

I.23. Did/Does anyone in your family have a problem with...

Alcohol?  yes  no

Drugs?  yes  no

Gambling?  yes  no

Smoking?  yes  no

Eating Addiction?     yes     no

Explain:

I.24. Does anyone in your family drink alcohol, but does not have a problem?  
 yes             no

I.25. Do you feel that it is ever okay to consume alcohol (religious ceremonies, special celebrations?)

I.26. Tell me how do you see religion relating to alcohol and drugs? Do you think it is morally wrong to drink, smoke or do drugs?

***SECTION II: These next questions deal more with your participation in the WCTU and how you spend your time with your WCTU work.***

II.27. Why did you join WCTU?

II.28. Do you feel called by God to work for temperance and the WCTU? Is the religious element important to your participation in the WCTU?

II.29. What do you like most about your affiliation with the WCTU?

II.30. Could you tell me why you abstain from alcohol? Why do you think it is important for others to abstain?

II.31. What is your favorite WCTU memory? Do you have any scrapbooks, pictures, or momentos that I could see of your WCTU experience?

II.32. What kinds of projects have you helped with since you joined the WCTU?

II.33. Have you held any offices in your local union? State Union? National Offices?

II.34. What projects did your local union work on in the last year?

II.35. Did you work on any national projects in the last year? Last five years? Ever work on national projects?

II.36. Do you work through your church to help the WCTU? How?

II.37. Have you ever been to a state or national convention before? How many times?

II.38. How often are WCTU meetings held in your area?

II.39. How often do you attend these meetings?

- All of the time
- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Never

II.40. Would you describe a typical local union meeting for me?

II.41. How is most of your time spent doing WCTU work?

II.42. Would you say that the WCTU is one of the most important activities you participate in?

II.43. Is anyone else in your family in the WCTU?

II.44. As a youth, did you participate in LTL or YTC?

II.45. If you had children, did they participate in LTL or YTC?

***SECTION III: These next questions deal with a larger picture of the WCTU, its goals, its history, and its work.***

III.46. What do you think is the one main goal of the WCTU?

III.47. What do you think are some other goals of the WCTU?

III.48. How do you think the WCTU should go about meeting these goals? Should the organization continue on its present path OR is there something you would do differently to achieve these goals?

III.49. Tell me about some of the rituals and ceremonies of the WCTU. Have you ever participated in any of these rituals or ceremonies? Do you think that they are important?

III.50. How do you think the WCTU as an organization is similar to the organization Frances Willard helped popularize?

III.51. How do you think it's different? Does the WCTU face more difficult obstacles today than it did at the beginning of the century?

III.52. Do you think that the WCTU is an important historical organization? What does it mean to you to be a part of a 125-year-old organization?

III.53. What do you think has been the greatest triumph of the WCTU? Has there been a greatest failure?

III.54. How would you have dealt with the repealing of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment (Prohibition Amendment ) if you had been in the WCTU in 1933?

III.55. How do you see the WCTU as different from groups like MADD of Alcoholics Anonymous?

III.56. Describe to me what you think the average WCTU member is like in terms of age, years in the organization, marital status, education, work experience, offices held, interests, or anything else you think is relevant.

III.57. How are new members recruited in your area?

III.58. About how many new members have joined your local union in the past 5 years? Past 10 years?

III.59. What do you think is the best age to recruit members for the WCTU? Why?

III.60. From what I have seen, the WCTU seems to be made up of many older members. Can you tell me what you think about the age characteristics of the WCTU? What benefits are there to an older population of temperance workers? Are there any drawbacks?

III.61. Do you think that men should be allowed to join the WCTU as full members?

III.62. What kinds of work would you like to see the WCTU do in the next 1-5 years?

III.63. Are there any projects you would like to see promoted more enthusiastically?

III.64. Are there any projects you would like to see discontinued?

III.65. Would you say that your WCTU chapter is an active chapter?

III.66. What do you see for the future of the WCTU?

III.67. Do you think that the WCTU will ever return to an anti-alcohol policy similar to that during Prohibition?

If yes, do you believe that it is a long road to regaining a national anti-alcohol policy, or do you think that another prohibition is right around the corner?

III.68. How do you see the WCTU helping to achieve this goal of eliminating alcohol from American society?

III.69. Given that there are so many social problems today, do you ever feel like your work with the WCTU will get done? Will there always be a project for Christian women in the WCTU to work on?

III.70. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the WCTU or your participation in the organization or about yourself?

## APPENDIX B: NATIONAL HAPPENINGS LETTER

My Dear WCTU Friends,

I want to thank all of you for the wonderful time I had in New York at this year's annual convention. What a special and commemorative event for me to attend as my first experience with WCTU! I was overwhelmed by the collective strength you created through your spiritual faith, your devotion to abstinence, and your love for each other. I believe that it is this combination of devotion, love, and faith that has kept the WCTU alive for over 125 years. You are all wonderfully endearing women and I thank you for your hospitality and kindness in New York.

Because I did not get to meet as many people as I wanted while at Convention, I appreciate this opportunity to be able to introduce myself in this quarter's *Happenings*. I am Cristin Rollins, a graduate student in Sociology at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia. My research interests include alcohol and drug issues and social history. Currently I have a training fellowship funded by the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, a subsidiary of the National Institutes of Health. I have studied many aspects of alcohol and alcohol treatment, including adolescent rituals of alcohol consumption, the drinking culture on college campuses, methods of alcohol and drug treatment, and the staffing patterns particular to the substance abuse treatment environment in the United States.

I am now moving on to a new and exciting topic. I would like to investigate a social support system that promotes a cradle-to-the-grave temperate lifestyle as the key to alleviating many of today's social problems. There are almost no groups that do this. Temperance, as a virtue with a rich cultural heritage, attracts minimal attention in today's society. Although many Americans give the WCTU credit for its impact on the history of our nation, there are only a handful that know of the continuous commitment to abstinence "The White Ribbon Ladies" have demonstrated since Prohibition's Repeal.

There is a resilience that ties the members of today to the courageous women of the Temperance Crusades, and I believe that an archival study alone would miss many of the particular aspects of the WCTU that I would like to capture. Because alcohol and drugs have been such pervasive and destructive forces since Repeal, it is important to document the strength and dedication of the individuals who are part of the WCTU. With your permission and assistance, I hope to trace the special work the WCTU has done from Repeal to the present. To do this I would like to interview as many members as possible, asking questions concerning your history with the WCTU, the importance the WCTU has for you, and what you think you bring to others by your membership in the WCTU.

Meeting so many of you at Convention was a wonderful experience, and I would love to include as many Convention friends and new acquaintances as possible in this historical effort. This is an

important endeavor, and I hope you will be able to contribute to the rich heritage the WCTU has worked so hard to keep alive for the past 125 years. If you would please fill out the form below and send it to: Cristin Rollins / 101 Barrow Hall / The University of Georgia / Athens, GA 30602-2401 or call me at (706) 542-6780, I would be glad to include you in the project.

Thank you,

Cristin Rollins

**WCTU Historic Interview Project**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Local Union \_\_\_\_\_

What is the best way to contact you? (Circle one)   Letter                  Phone                  Email

Please send this form to:      Cristin Rollins  
   101 Barrow Hall  
   The University of Georgia  
   Athens, GA 30602-2401



## APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the research titled “*Do You Hear the Tramping of the New Crusade? Organizational Survival and the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union*” which is being conducted by Cristin Eleanor Rollins, Institute for Behavioral Research, (706) 542-6090 under the direction of Dr. Barry Schwartz, Department of Sociology, (706) 542-2421.

I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary. I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that they can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of the research is to document the social history of the WCTU during the last part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century using testimonials from contemporary members to tell the story of the WCTU from Repeal to the present.

Through my participation in this research, I may expect to gain knowledge about my organization, its history, its goals, and its contemporary membership.

My participation consists of an interview that should last anywhere from one to two hours, and will contain questions about my demographic characteristics, my participation in the WCTU, and my views concerning the WCTU as an organization (its goals, its future plans, etc.).

There are no discomforts or stresses that are foreseen.

There are no risks that are foreseen.

Any information the researcher obtains about me as a participant in this study, including my identity, will be held confidential. My identity will be coded, and all data will be kept in a secured, limited access location. My identity will not be revealed in any in any identifiable form in any subsequent publication of the results of this research without my prior consent. If audio tapes are used in my interview, they will be kept in a secured and locked location, accessible only to the interviewer. Unless I otherwise request their destruction prior to this date, all audio tapes will remain in locked storage until 10/01/2005, at which time they will be destroyed.

The results of this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent unless otherwise required by law.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at: 706-542-6090.

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one and return the other to the investigator.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Research at the University of Georgia that involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to Julia

D. Alexander, M.A., Institutional Review Board, Office of the Vice President for Research, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-6514; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.