THE MADD QUEEN:
CHARISMA AND THE FOUNDER OF
MOTHERS AGAINST DRUNK DRIVING

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By examining the development of Mother's Against Drunk Driving (MADD) under the leadership of its founder, Candy Lightner, we see the unfolding of a problem identified by Max Weber: charismatic leadership and rational forms of organization have incompatible elements. An undaunted, emotionally expressive leader driven by a moral mission was an important factor in, first, establishing the legitimacy and salience of the drunk-driving issue in the eyes of the American public, and second, in the formation of a well-funded national organization: MADD. Once organized, the institutional pressures on a non-profit organization to conform to rational administrative practices for its continued legitimacy drew people into MADD who were specialists and functionaries, not followers. The resulting conflict led to the eventual replacement of MADD's founding president.

The drunk-driving problem had been festering in America for years, with increasing arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol (D.U.I.) starting in 1970 (Wolfson, 1988, p. 147), and a prominent fear in the general public of being hit and seriously injured by a drunk driver (Warr & Stafford, 1983, p. 1036). In addition, before the founding of organizations like Remove Intoxicated Drivers (RID) in 1978 and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) in 1980, traffic safety experts and alcohol researchers had already created the public image of the "killer drunk," a socially irresponsible drunk driver who injures or kills innocent people (Gusfield, 1981). What seems to have kept this issue from becoming a part of America's open political discourse was the absence of a way for people to identify with the problem personally, to give a human face to the problem. This came eventually in the form of the angry, bereaved parent playing

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the role of victim-activist (Weed, 1990). The best known of these parent victim-activists was Candy Lightner, the founder of MADD, whose energetic crusade created a large, well-funded national organization and made drunk driving a national political issue. Yet, after five years as president of MADD, she found herself embroiled in a conflict with the Board of Directors that led to her replacement.

The study of the development of MADD under the leadership of Candy Lightner provides a case example of the conflict between the leadership qualities of a charismatic founder and the organizational demands placed on a nationally organized reform movement. This article first examines some of the theoretical issues surrounding charismatic leadership as it pertains to social reform movements. It will examines the image of the parent victim-activist as a source of moral legitimacy for a charismatic leader. This image was critical in focusing public attention on the drunk-driving problem and in the development of MADD as a national organization. The analysis then focuses on the organizational development of MADD and the increasing utilization of specialists, not followers, to solve organizational problems. It can be seen that through the addition and succession of personnel and Board members, the organization became dominated by specialists who held the expectation that MADD should be operated like any other complex organization and not function as an organization that was responsive to a single charismatic leader. These changes that led to the departure of MADD's founder from a leadership role are interpreted as part of the organizing processes of modern society which function to channel, control, or neutralize charismatic leadership.

CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP IN A REFORM MOVEMENT

The study of charismatic leadership begins with Max Weber's writing on valid forms of legitimate authority which, in the case of charismatic leadership, rests on "devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him" (Weber, 1964, p. 328). This definition emphasizes two interrelated aspects of the concept of charisma. First, to Weber, charisma represented a noninstitutionalized form of legitimate authority that could disrupt the established order by the challenge of a new "normative pattern or order revealed or ordained" by the leader (Weber, 1964). The charismatic leader, by force of personality and moral vision, becomes a leader with transformational powers that can result in social change (cf. Burns, 1978, pp. 41-46). This approach focuses on the issue of a leader's role in the legitimating process. The leader must validate, by moral claims, the need for a new order or changes in the existing order and, in the process, validate the need for an organizational base of power. Unlike other charismatic leaders who may use an established organization as their platform, the social movement leader often must start by simultaneously promoting the legitimacy of his/her moral cause and the need for an organization.

The second aspect that has received more attention recently is the leadership style or characteristics associated with charismatic leaders holding positions in formal organizations (House, 1977; Avolio & Bass, 1988; Avolio & Yammarino, 1990). Leaders with high commitment to goals, emotional appeal, and self-confidence are seen by followers as being unusually effective. Some of these characteristics are associated with
the individual leader; however, most of these characteristics are in the eyes of the beholder and are imputed to the leader to produce what House (1977) called the "charismatic effect." Weber elaborated the effects of these leadership characteristics in his discussion of the organization that is likely to emerge from a charismatic leader. Weber stated:

The corporate group which is subject to charismatic authority is based on an emotional form of communal relationship (Gemeinde). The administrative staff of a charismatic leader does not consist of "officials"; at least its members are not technically trained. ... It is rather chosen in terms of the charismatic qualities of its members. The prophet has his disciples; the war lord has selected henchmen; the leader, generally, has followers. There is no such thing as "appointment" or "dismissal," no career, no promotion. There is only a "call" at the instance of the leader on the basis of the charismatic qualification of those he summons (Weber, 1964, p. 360).

Thus, the charismatic effect is in the followers who see their relationship with the leader as a "calling" rather than an occupation.

The founding leadership of many American reform movements has often taken the form of an individual with a dynamic personality and devoted followers organizing a moral crusade to redress grievances (Gamson, 1990, pp. 92-95). Reform movements generally make an appeal to "legitimate grievances." They operate within the institutional structure that regulates conflict and change in a society and do not represent major shifts in values or systems of authority associated with more radical social revolutions (Gusfield, 1970, p. 87). For these reasons, reform movement leaders are generally not seen as having supernatural, superhuman, or transcendent powers, but are more often seen as unusually dedicated and self-sacrificing individuals in pursuit of a righteous cause.

Charismatic leaders exhibit personal attributes of emotional expressiveness, self-confidence, and extraordinary determination that seem to go beyond those of ordinary people (Bass, 1988, pp. 46-48). For example, take the comments of Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, about a trip she took with her family in 1913 to Glasgow and Paris to collect information on contraception. She was often asked: "How was this trip financed?"

Such questions always annoy me. I cannot remember how trips were financed. I don't really know how most of my ventures in this work were ever financed. I am of no economical turn of mind. I do things first, and somehow or another they get paid for. If I had waited to finance my various battles for birth control, I do not suppose they ever would have become realities. I suppose here is the real difference between the idealist—or the "fanatic," as we are called—and the ordinary "normal" human being (Sanger, 1969, p. 62).

In describing herself as a "fanatic," Sanger presented the view of a person who focuses on ends and is unconcerned with the means to those ends (see Merton, 1968, pp. 194-203). By placing little importance on conventional means and being willing to use or invent other means, the reform movement leader seems unaffected by the conventional patterns of normative constraint and social control that make up the status quo. The "fanatic," in this way, is self-confident and determined in a way that is different from "ordinary 'normal' human beings" because the fanatic does not express doubts that goals can be reached.
These qualities also make a leader attractive to people who share the same moral vision of reform and become followers. Bystanders become activists partly because a leader shows confidence that barriers to change will eventually be overcome. This is one of the reasons that success plays a pivotal role in maintaining the dedication of followers to their charismatic leader (Trice & Beyer, 1986). Confidence must be validated in real or symbolic successes or it is just empty bluster.

Charismatic reform-movement leaders tend to present their message and mission with passion and zeal, emphasizing values and moral sentiments that are familiar legitimating rationale for action in the society. The leader may claim to represent the interests of the larger community in stating that something “isn’t right” (Page & Clelland, 1978), or the leader may represent the interests of a specific group that sees itself as being harmed, disadvantaged, or victimized (Gusfield, 1975). The leader will establish the right to represent these moral interests on the basis of “being chosen” by whatever means. In most cases, these elements of legitimation become part of the folklore of the new organization.

Weber’s proposition that there is an inherent conflict between charismatic leadership and rational forms of organization is based not simply on logical differences between concepts but on a prevailing social process. In his discussion of the meaning of discipline, Weber stated:

It is the fate of charisma, whenever it comes into the permanent institutions of a community, to give way to powers of tradition or of rational socialization. This waning of charisma generally indicates the diminishing importance of individual action. And of all those powers that lessen the importance of individual action, the most irresistible is rational discipline. (quoted in Gerth & Mills, 1958, p. 253)

As a reform movement gains increasing legitimacy among the institutions of a community and begins gaining support and influence, an expectation will be imposed on the reform movement to be rationally organized. This will often produce conflict with the charismatic leader who is unaccustomed to being limited by, what Weber calls, rational discipline.

The general operating patterns of formal organizations based on defined offices of limited responsibility, established procedures and policies, and the separation of personal and official financial resources can be treated with disdain by the charismatic leader (Weber, 1964). Charismatic leaders often fail to differentiate personal goals from organizational goals and may make a personal proprietary claim on all aspects of an organization (Conger, 1989, pp. 137-157). In terms of organizational action, the charismatic leader will tend to act in a particularistic fashion, and, like the undaunted fanatic, can ignore or override standardized organizational practices.

The standardized practices of rational organization are often imposed on reform movement organizations through various legal or normative devices. These represent what Meyer and Rowan (1977, p. 340) viewed as pressures to conform to institutional rules: “That is, organizations are driven to incorporate the practices and procedures defined by prevailing rationalized concepts of organizational work and institutionalized in society. Organizations that do so increase their legitimacy and their survival prospects.”
Specifically, the institutional pressures that influence social movements are represented by the policies of the United States Internal Revenue Code, sections 501(C)3 and 501(C)4, that set requirements for non-profit organizations that can receive tax-deductible donations. These policies serve as channeling mechanisms that define appropriate goals and acceptable means (limiting political activity) for non-profit organizations. These policies, along with the National Charities Information Bureau's (N.C.I.B.) guidelines, lead organizations in the direction of more rationalization of structure (i.e., boards of directors, statements of purposes and programs), and accountability in financial practices (McCarthy, Britt, & Wolfson, 1991). These guidelines are also used by Better Business Bureaus and other agencies to evaluate non-profit organizations. In effect, organizational patterns that are deemed “acceptable” are designed to limit the idiosyncratic practices of charismatic leaders by pushing organizations in the direction of greater routinization.

These organizational processes draw into the social movement people who have special technical training, professionals such as lawyers, accountants, and program specialists. Their relationship to the charismatic leader is one of functionary, not follower. These social movement professionals will support the movement as a “worthy cause.” However, they do see their work as a career, not a “calling,” and will expect the leader to respect their managerial skills (McCarthy & Zald, 1973). As the social movement organization becomes a self-supporting corporation, the charismatic leader can be surrounded by fewer and fewer followers and more and more specialists and professionals whose role is to run the organization in a rational fashion.

This can represent a leadership paradox over the history of a social movement. Social movements are by their nature a challenge to the conventional practices and institutional patterns in society. Frequently, it is an individual with the charismatic qualities of a strong sense of moral mission, emotional appeal, self-confidence, and a willingness to ignore social conventions who becomes the leader of a social movement. These qualities not only help establish the legitimacy and urgency of the grievance in an environment with many competing social problems, but they also create the genesis of an organization by attracting followers.

The leadership qualities so important in creating a demand for reform and establishing an organization are not the leadership qualities that are conducive to sustaining an established organization when its legitimacy begins to rest on conformity to the acceptable rational practices in society. In this case study, it is shown that the conflict between charismatic leadership and formal patterns of organization comes about when followers are replaced by functionaries whose specialties are supposed to solve organizational problems posed by the normative environment.

DATA COLLECTION

In this case study, I utilized a variety of qualitative methods and also relied on published and unpublished documents acquired over a three-year period. The study was not specifically designed to study Candy Lightner as a leader, but emerged from gathering general information on MADD’s central office. The data collection began during a study of local chapter leadership for MADD. A survey was conducted that consisted of telephone interviews with 336 chapter officers from 112 randomly selected chapters in
1984-1985 (Weed, 1987). As a part of this work, between August 1984 and October 1985 I attended over 14 meetings with staff members that dealt with various operational aspects of the organization at a time when Candy Lightner was President and Chief Executive Officer. I was also able to acquire some documents used by staff in the operation of the office. At the time of the study, there were eight major staff persons. Between 1985 and 1987, Barbara Chiarello and I conducted formal unstandardized interviews with four of them along with two secretaries. Although each respondent was reflecting back on his or her specific experiences with Candy Lightner, there were common themes that are reflected in the quotes presented in the text. Whenever possible, information was corroborated by other respondents or documents so as not to rely on a single source, but this was not always possible. In addition, some information and impressions were acquired in conversations with individuals where it would have been inappropriate to probe for details, thus limiting the information to the informant’s brief account.

The major limitation of the data used in this study is that they were not based on a systematic research design intended to study leadership at MADD. This study is an approximation of a systematic multi-methods approach. However, this multi-method approach seems appropriate for studying charismatic leadership because of the complex characteristics associated with studying the impact of a leader on an organization.

MADD'S FOUNDER-LEADER AND THE DRUNK-DRIVING ISSUE

The founding of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, like so many social movements, emerged from a critical incident. In this case, on the afternoon of May 3, 1980, 13-year-old Cari Lightner was killed while walking in a bicycle lane on her way to a church carnival near her home in Fair Oaks, California. The driver of the hit-and-run car, Clarence Busch, was arrested four days later. Just two days earlier, he had been released on bail from jail, where he had been held on charges pertaining to a hit-and-run drunk-driving crash. In addition, he had been involved in three other drunk-driving arrests, with two convictions.

Cari’s mother, Candy Lightner, believed that her daughter’s killer, because of his previous record, would be sentenced to jail, but she was told by investigating officers that he would probably not do any jail time because “that’s the way the system works.” In fact, he served only nine months at a work camp and a halfway house, and was released in September 1981 (Weed, 1987).

Candy Lightner learned that the treatment of this case was typical, and that drunk drivers often received light penalties and were allowed to continue driving. She and her friends decided to form an organization to lobby for stiffer penalties for drunk driving in California, and she called the new organization Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, or MADD. Candy Lightner quit her job selling real estate and, with some of her own money and volunteer help from friends, started MADD in August 1980 (Reinarman, 1988). Within the year, she chartered other local chapters in California. The following year, MADD became a national organization, with chapters in more than a half dozen states. In addition, by May 1981, MADD had been recognized as a tax-exempt organization (501-C-3) by the Internal Revenue Service. This allowed the organization to receive tax deductible contributions. The increased revenue allowed for
the creation of a larger administrative apparatus to serve a larger constituency and organization.

Candy Lightner presented the image of the angry bereaved parent who regarded herself as a victim. She developed a concept of victim that extends beyond the individual directly harmed, so that family members or friends of the person injured or killed in a drunk-driving auto crash can all claim that they are the victims of a crime (MADD, 1985). The drunk-driving victim in this sense deflects anxiety and anger onto the driver by asserting the common belief that the drunk driver caused the auto crash and deserves the blame. By identifying a potentially large number of persons as victims, this reform movement attempts to assign them a public status based on the perception that they have been harmed in a fashion requiring public action (Gusfield, 1975). MADD encouraged victims to become members by granting them free membership in MADD and putting them on the mailing list for the newsletter.

The public role of victim-activist includes recounting the day of the auto crash and the actions of the police, medical personnel, family, and friends. In addition, the individual must publicly express anxiety, anger, bitterness, and frustration about the events of the crash and its aftermath (Wortman, 1983). The person is thus credited as having experiential knowledge about the “realities” of the drunk-driving problem and the suffering of family members. This claim to special understanding is a form of expertise. This experiential expertise, as Borkman has noted, “can serve as a basis for leadership, a higher status in the group, and a source of authority for decision making” (Borkman, 1976, p. 447). Thus, victim status became a basis of legitimate authority for Candy Lightner and other local MADD chapter leaders (Weed, 1990). This legitimacy was based on emotions associated with experiencing a personal loss. It gave an emotional force to the leaders’ message. In reflecting back on MADD accomplishments, Candy Lightner stated: “I didn’t think, ‘can I, or can’t I.’ I thought in terms of emotion. And that emotion was based on grief and anger and revenge and bitterness. The emotion is what carried me in the beginning. What kept me going was seeing that I could make a difference.”

Greater sympathy was gained by the fact that Cari Lightner could be seen as an “innocent victim” killed by a perpetually irresponsible “killer drunk” (Weed, 1990). This made her death seem all the more senseless and added moral weight to a call for public action.

In this way Candy Lightner had a legitimacy, expertise, and moral justification for her demands for reform. She could claim camaraderie with other parents who had had a child killed in a drunk-driving auto crash. She could also give her daughter’s death a larger political significance by claiming that her daughter had been sacrificed to a community problem that the community did not want to recognize.

Candy Lightner characterized her reaction to the death of her daughter as redirected anger:

In my case there was anger at the man, but more than that I was angry with his wife and the system because she had bailed him out of jail two days before and let him drive her car when he was drunk, and the system allowed him back out on the streets. The anger was then directed at the public for not having done anything about this problem and for being so apathetic. All of that was channeled into MADD (Perkins, 1986, p. 15).
The chain of blaming began with a search for a responsible party and led to the demand for public recognition of the fact that a serious crime had occurred and that the public should be aroused. Candy Lightner began to sit through court hearings and watch the way the judicial system handled drunk-driving cases:

"I'd watch judges let multiple repeat offenders off with probation. One judge said to me: "If you don't like the law little lady, go and change it," and I said "OK, I will" (Creamer, 1984).

She was undaunted by the magnitude of the task of changing California's drunk-driving laws in such a way that the drunk drivers could not avoid punishment. MADD's first project was to demand reform in California's law.

When Candy Lightner started MADD, she believed that she would be successful if she had 20 women marching at the State Capitol in Sacramento and the local organization lasted for at least one year (Lightner, 1984). With the assistance of Jean Moorehead, a state representative in California, a new tough drunk-driving bill (AB 541) was introduced and strongly supported by MADD.

This bill provided for a per se standard Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) = .10 for determining drunk driving, a schedule of stiffer mandatory minimum penalties for DUI included jail sentences for repeat offenders, and restrictions on plea bargaining (Hilton, 1984). To create an atmosphere of sufficient public concern over the issue of drunk driving, it was necessary that MADD effectively use the news media as well as other political pressure group tactics like letter-writing campaigns and lobbying which would make members of the California legislature feel that they had to vote for this new tougher drunk-driving bill. To create this interest, Candy Lightner held press conferences and, when the press would not come to her, she went to their offices reciting statistics and telling, as she says, the "victim's side of the story." When this failed, she threatened sit-ins, marches, and picketing to arouse interest in the issue of drunk driving.

Candy Lightner learned her new public activist role quickly. She learned legislative politics and developed a public persona and method of delivery for television that was appealing to people. As one staffer commented about Candy Lightner's emotional expressions of anger and grief: "They were catalysts for her to do anything, and I mean just about anything. That included being politic with anyone who would listen to her plea. I don't think she went into it with a plan at all. I think it evolved. Candy is a great example of the evolution of an activist." She was adaptable in learning how to influence people, which further developed her leadership role. She also learned that she had to adopt a strategy of attacking the problem on all levels of government. MADD called for the creation of task forces to look into the problem of drunk driving at the county, state, and federal levels (Weed, 1987). In October of 1980 and again in 1981, at two Washington press conferences, Candy Lightner asked the President of the United States to establish a commission on drunk and drug-induced driving, and reinforced her point by getting 100 people to picket the White House. She received enough news coverage from this event to influence the governor of California, who previously had been unwilling to meet with her, not only to meet but to establish a governor's task force on alcohol, drugs, and traffic safety. By 1982, the President of the United States had set up the National Commission Against Drunk Driving and had appointed her
to serve on the board of directors (see Taylor, 1983, pp. 43-56). Candy Lightner had become a nationally recognized voice of the victim.

MADD and its charismatic leader had become a highly successful grass-roots movement. In March 1983, NBC produced a television movie about Lightner’s life titled “Mothers Against Drunk Drivers: The Candy Lightner Story.” In the same year, she was named one of the top one hundred women in America by the Ladies Home Journal. The sheer volume of newspaper and periodical coverage given to drunk driving increased dramatically from 1980/1981 to its peak in 1983 and fueled the growth of local MADD chapters (McCarthy, Wolfson, Baker, & Mosakowski, 1988).

Between 1983 and 1984, Candy Lightner worked to promote federal legislation, attached to the distribution of federal highway safety funds, that would demand that states have a drinking age of 21 and mandatory minimum sentences for persons convicted of drunk driving. As MADD’s leader, she was one of the more outspoken members of a loose coalition of organizations that included the American Medical Association, National Parent-Teachers Association, National Council on Alcoholism, National Safety Council, and Allstate Insurance, as well as anti-drunk-driving organizations like RID (Remove Intoxicated Drivers—USA). The coalition of interest groups organized around the slogan “Save Our Students” (SOS). They put pressure on Congress by letter writing and telephone campaigns for passage of a bill with a mandatory 21-year-old drinking age (Tolchin, 1984, p. E5). By July 1984, they were successful when President Ronald Reagan signed the bill into law (MADD, 1984b).

An assistant to Candy Lightner at the time characterized her role as a “media darling” who knew how to generate publicity for this legislation:

It was like a campaign, Candy was like the candidate, stump[ing], going from office to office, confronting people, talking about the dead children. She was the pilot, MADD was the machine.

She couldn’t have done it without MADD. MADD put lots of money into 21 [the 21-year-old drinking age bill]. The Congressmen knew there were 400 [sic] MADD chapters out there. Twenty-one was someone else’s brainchild but Candy carried it.4

The passage of this bill established the political clout and skill of anti-drunk-driving organizations and Candy Lightner as a leader (Jacobs, 1989). In four years, Lightner had projected a national image as an emotionally expressive, self-confident leader with a moral mission to rid the nation of the drunk-driving problem. The power of this image was reflected in the grass roots support that led to the growth of MADD as an organization.

**THE MADD ORGANIZATION AND CONFLICT WITH ITS LEADER**

From the very beginning, the organization took the form of a federation. It had a central office and semi-autonomous local chapters free to appoint their own leaders, raise their own money, and promote their own programs along the lines of public awareness, legal advocacy, and victim assistance (Weed, 1989). This structure, under the circumstances, facilitated rapid growth. MADD started in California with a handful of chapters in 1980; it grew to over 90 chapters all across the country by 1982; and at the time Candy
Lightner left the organization in 1985, there were about 360 local chapters and 600,000 members and donors.

This growth in local chapters was mostly a result of a large number of victims, or their family members, hearing about MADD and asking: "What can we do?" The answer was, "Organize a local MADD chapter." MADD did not send out field organizers but simply sent organizing packets to interested persons. Almost from the outset, local chapter officers were required to engage in a program of self-study to learn the motor vehicle code, monitor court cases in their community, and interview members of law enforcement agencies, prosecuting attorneys, judges, and legislators. The self-study process was similar to the process Candy Lightner went through after the death of her daughter (Weed, 1987; Reinarman, 1988).

MADD's Board of Directors and Candy Lightner also had to face the problem of raising money. The organization got a small grant from the American Council on Alcohol Problems to create a brochure. Then MADD received a grant for $65,000 from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to organize more MADD chapters. This funding can be seen as a process called "clientele capture" where a government agency actively attempts to develop a grass-roots supportive constituency across the nation (Sabatier, 1975). MADD was also able to attract an unstipulated grant for $100,000 from the Leavey Foundation because one of the family heirs had lost a daughter in a drunk-driving auto crash (Reinarman, 1988). This success at raising money put Candy Lightner on the payroll in 1981. MADD's real success came in 1982 when it employed a direct-mail solicitation company with experience in mailing to Christian constituencies (Reinarman, 1988). This constituency proved ideal in terms of the drunk-driving issue and a sizable percentage responded to a direct-mail solicitation (Peek, Chalfant, & Milton, 1979). By fiscal year 1985, MADD's total budget was about $13 million, with about $2.6 million used for the annual operating budget of the central office (Montague, 1989). MADD was criticized almost from the outset for devoting over 70% of its income to further fundraising, in violation of N.C.I.B. guidelines. MADD contended that these were educational materials not specifically designed for direct-mail fund-raising purposes and, therefore, represented a service program.

In 1983, Candy Lightner became embroiled in a dispute with board members over the use of money and the operations of MADD. She survived this conflict only because chapter presidents came to her aid (Perkins, 1986). Local chapter presidents, more than anyone else, supported and identified with her and represented the closest thing to true followers. The 1985 survey showed that a sizable percentage of the chapter presidents, compared to other chapter officers, were first attracted to the organization when they heard about Candy Lightner (see Table 1). This was partly due to the fact that many chapter presidents had also lost a family member in a drunk-driving crash (Weed, 1990). Chapter presidents also appreciated the fact that when Candy Lightner appeared on a television show, their telephones started ringing with inquiries about joining a local MADD chapter.

This conflict led to the formulation of a new Board of Directors, with a stipulation that nine of the 17 members come from local chapters and that an executive director be hired to oversee operations. The new executive director, Philip Roos, moved MADD's headquarters from California to Hurst, Texas, thereby cutting off the
Charisma and the Founder of Mothers Against Drunk Driving

Table 1
Local Activists Discovery of MADD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How the respondent first heard about MADD</th>
<th>Chapter Presidents ( (N = 99) )</th>
<th>Other Chapter Officers* ( (N = 237) )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heard about Candy Lightner</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heard about MADD as a National Organization</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heard about the local MADD Chapter</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Chi Square = 15.2; df = 3; p < .002.

*Consisting of First Vice President, Second Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

Source: Data from 112 chapters Surveyed in 1985 (see Weed, 1987).

The operation of the central office from the small circle of followers that had been part of the founding of the organization. He set up a departmentalized structure with the President-Founder being one of the departments. He also filled the departments with people who had backgrounds in public relations, law, social services, and non-profit advocacy organizations. The executive director resigned 17 months later, amidst Board members’ concerns about financial and management problems in the organization. The “Chapter Bulletin” reported the executive director’s departure as a job completed:

The mission for which MADD Executive Director, Philip Roos, was recruited April 1, 1983, has been completed, and the position has been eliminated by mutual agreement between MADD’s Board of Directors and Dr. Roos. Candy Lightner will now serve as the organization’s chief executive officer as well as president and chair of the Board.

Candy stated: “Dr. Roos has recruited and developed an excellent professional staff, and he has established sound management practices which will help us to further improve and expand our Central Office operations” (MADD 1984a).

Candy Lightner then held the titles of President, Founder, Chairperson of the Board, and Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Her staff began to refer to her as “The MADD Queen.”

Lightner identified with MADD to such an extent that the organization became an extension of herself. As she put it:

MADD is almost synonymous with my family name. It was founded on the death of my daughter.
In many ways it has replaced her (Pryzant, 1985, p. 40).

This personal identification was also reflected in her administration of the organization. She needed to feel she was in charge, which led to an autocratic style that was complicated by her inconsistency in assigning work. Lightner’s secretary described the problems as follows:

She’s very unstable, and she’s very demanding and there’s no sense of continuity with Candy. She’ll tell you, “black” one minute and thirty seconds later swear to you she said, “white,” and Candy’s never wrong, about anything. Everybody else is wrong, but Candy’s not.
Her insensitivity to other people’s problems in the office and a failure to realize how much work she generated for other people is represented by a comment from one of her assistants:

Candy would say that I was a very disorganized person. I would tell you that I was a very organized person, that the amount of work was impossible to keep organized. It was just too much. It was way too much. The amount she dished out was inordinate. I would be inundated again and again. I felt overwhelmed the entire time I was with MADD.8

The personalized leadership style also suffered from a lack of consistency in policies and operations. The director of administrative services at MADD, when asked to sum up the problem with Lightner’s administration, said:

Well, yeah. No focus and then uh, leadership that was, uh … I’m trying to think of the right word … uh, unpredictable. Really, what was policy one day was not policy the next. Policies were developed based upon the perceived need for the leader.9

The centralized leadership created by Candy Lightner and the egocentric nature of her operation took its toll on the staff, creating a problem of staff turnover. One staff member, who eventually left MADD, reflected on her comparative longevity in relation to other employees.

Candy seemed to like me because I wasn’t afraid of Candy and didn’t mind telling her when I thought she was wrong, and then we went at it head-to-head a lot of times but she seemed to respect the fact that I didn’t just say, “Yes ma’am.”

Interviewer: How many people said, “yes ma’am,” and then quit?

A lot. And a lot of them just quit because they just didn’t want the confrontations that it took to deal with Candy.10

If staff employees did not quit, then they generally rationalized that conflicts were part of what a person had to put up with when they worked for a charismatic leader. To stay and continue to work at MADD’s central office required some rationalization about Candy Lightner’s personality. One of her department heads described the problem this way:

Part of what makes them leaders is that they focus on their goals to the exclusion of being terribly sensitive to other people’s goals. This creates antagonisms. Candy is one of those leaders who can’t take criticisms easily. Everything is internally directed. Anything considered in opposition to what she wanted would probably at first glance be assumed to be a personal attack. These strong leaders have a hard time evaluating issues objectively, will defend wrong issues, and will not back off in power struggles.11

These people found a way to do their jobs and be loyal to her so that MADD continued to be the most successful anti-drunk-driving organization in the nation. Part of this success was in the strange loyalty she was able to engender in some people. As one staffer put it:

Candy has people who hate her, but are loyal to her. There are some people who can tell you how vacuous she is, but they follow her.12
Staff members around Candy Lightner had ambivalent feelings about her. They admired her ability to focus people’s attention on the drunk-driving issue and to get support for MADD on the one hand, yet suffered under her single-minded erratic rule on the other hand. As experienced and trained staff members, their commitment to rational administration was reflected in their complaints about her inconsistency and personalization of what were to them just policy issues.

During 1984, Candy Lightner and some of the Board members decided to try to attract new Board members not associated with the drunk-driving issue but who had important contacts in business and government. As more business executives and people with backgrounds in corporate law and finance were placed on the Board, the bylaws were amended to reduce the number of chapter representatives to four. In 1984 and January 1985, a total of five Board members whose terms had expired were replaced with professionals.

At about the same time, coincidentally, MADD was criticized in September 1984 by the Better Business Bureau’s Philanthropic Advisory Service for spending too high a percentage of its income on administration and fundraising expenses (McCarthy et al., 1991). This was followed in January by the California Attorney General announcing an audit of MADD’s finances for the 1983-1984 fiscal year (Madigan, 1985). Although MADD was cleared of any wrong-doing, some of the new Board members no doubt feared that they might become embroiled in a public scandal.

These new Board members eventually found Lightener’s “unusual leadership style” at odds with what they felt were “sound management” practices for a national organization. The issue of money would become one of the focal issues in her conflict with the Board; first, because in fiscal 1984 MADD had ended the year with a net deficit of over one hundred thousand dollars (Sant’Anna & Weiss, 1986), and second because of her personal use of money. Candy Lightner periodically charged personal items to MADD at her convenience for which she later reimbursed MADD.13 This practice is contrary to the notion that in a “rational type” organization, there is a strict separation between personal and official property including money and its use (Weber, 1964, p. 331). A report by MADD’s accounting firm in 1985 showed the progressive increase in Candy Lightner’s salary package over a five-year period which paralleled MADD’s fundraising success (see Table 2). The 1985 salary package was in dispute, and reflected the conflict between Candy Lightner and the new Board of Directors. However, the 1983 and 1984 salary packages reflected the Board’s support for their charismatic leader.

Candy Lightner’s salary package reflected the growth of MADD’s organizational sophistication. During the first two years, she received no benefits in her salary package. After 1982, her salary package included benefits and perquisites to go along with her base salary and bonus. The firm noted in their report that the total salary package in 1984 was within a competitive pay range for a national non-profit organization. The accounting firm also noted that it is unusual for a non-profit organization to give executives a salary bonus, particularly when it is not preset to some performance criteria. However, the item that created the greatest criticism was the category of “other cash compensation,” which included items Candy Lightner charged to MADD. This included child care in the home—“babysitting,”—clothing, carpet and drapery cleaning services, and limousine service. The objections made by Board members to these practices led to the trimming down of the 1985 salary package.
Table 2
Elements of Candy Lightner's Compensation
(in dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base Salary</td>
<td>14,400</td>
<td>21,875</td>
<td>27,500</td>
<td>57,493</td>
<td>64,784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Cash Compensation</td>
<td>5,834*</td>
<td></td>
<td>14,084*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2,026</td>
<td>21,503</td>
<td>15,366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perquisites</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>9,720</td>
<td>10,994</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Compensation</td>
<td>$14,400</td>
<td>$21,875</td>
<td>$45,360</td>
<td>$116,800</td>
<td>$91,144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All figures are approximate and may not accurately reflect compensation received (e.g., such items as first-class travel expense are not reflected).


In 1985, a new controller and central office manager were hired by Candy Lightner to address some of the organizational problems. The office manager, with previous career experience in the military and in organizational development and fundraising, had worked on projects with two of the new Board members. Faced with problems, some of the new Board members began to take control of the organization. This process was enhanced by the fact that Candy Lightner worked under a contract with MADD that lapsed on June 30, 1985. In July, once her contract had lapsed and her position in the organization was uncertain, the Board appointed an executive committee that did not include Candy Lightner but did include some of the new Board members, and extended the authority of the new office manager to take charge of the Central Office in Hurst. By using the six-member executive committee of the Board, new Board members were able to put forth the idea that MADD needed to be restructured and that the founder's role needed to be limited.

The conflict over control of the organization was seen by some of MADD's Board members as an attempt to accommodate Candy Lightner. A report by Sant'Anna and Weiss presented the leadership dilemma: “It is the memory of many of those on the Board that they made extraordinary efforts to find an appropriate role for Mrs. Lightner within a rationalized organizational structure. They believe that in good faith they made many suggestions for such a role” (Sant'Anna and Weiss, 1986, p. 5). Charismatic leaders may not adapt to just “playing a role” within a “rationalized organizational structure.” Candy Lightner saw MADD as an extension of herself. She considered the efforts of Board members to control her actions by making her just the spokesperson for MADD as an attack on what she had personally accomplished. As she stated to the press, on October 8, 1985, “I won't accept it. I'm nobody's puppet” (English, 1985). The conflicts continued, focusing on her role and her compensation package, until a Board meeting on October 11, 1985, when Norma Phillips, also a parent-victim, was appointed as the new President, and Candy Lightner was relegated to a position as a consultant under a two-year contract with a reduced salary. Numerous chapter officers and former officers protested, asking that she remain as president and demanding more representation on the Board and a return to the 1983 bylaws, but to no avail; MADD would continue without the leadership of its charismatic founder.
It is not possible to reconstruct the thinking of the individual Board members in the fall of 1985, but one thing seems apparent: some of the new Board members were concerned with MADD's public image in the eyes of monitoring agencies. In a memorandum from the executive committee of the Board to chapter representatives on September 12, 1985 these concerns were expressed:

MADD is a multiple person/multi-chapter organization, a National Organization which is being judged not in any one local jurisdiction but on a national scale with other well established and prominent tax exempt organizations. Because of this, MADD must conform to the guidelines and structures which are dictated by the general public. These standards are promulgated by the Better Business Bureau and other organizations who actively and on a full-time basis review the activities and financial position of public charities. Over the past two (2) years your National Board has moved towards implementing policies and procedures in order to comply with these review organizations (Frank, 1985, p. 2).

A concern that “MADD must conform” to the institutionalized patterns dictated by outside agencies became an important factor in the struggle for control between the charismatic founder and those who envisaged MADD as a professionally managed organization. These institutionalized norms of rational organization become a justification for the Board’s action in trying to limit the role of Candy Lightner and, eventually, taking control away from her.

CONCLUSION

A charismatic reform leader must be undaunted by the American dictum that “you can't fight city hall.” The leader must have the characteristics of the fanatic (i.e., determination, self-confidence, concentration on goals), and not worry about what it will take to change something. Candy Lightner became a symbol dramatically representing angry bereaved parents whose children were killed by irresponsible “killer drunks.” This image provides moral justification for the demand for reform. However, the individual qualities that can make the charismatic leader a creative exploiter of opportunities can cause havoc in their own organization when consistent routine and policy becomes the managerial expectation. The change in policy that dealt with reducing the number of local chapter representatives on the board became a critical change. This change meant that her base of loyal supporters was cut off from having any effective control over MADD's board, and that Candy Lightner, the activist, would fall under the control of managers.

In many ways, Candy Lightner, as a charismatic leader, spearheaded the legislative successes and attracted the resources that built MADD into a well-supported national organization with about 360 local chapters. Organizational growth and fundraising success increasingly brought MADD under the influence of monitoring agencies that pressed for more conventional operating practices. This pressure led to the hiring of more professionally trained functionaries to replace followers who were principally devoted to the moral cause of fighting drunk driving. The uncompromising personality that made her a force to be reckoned with was in the end unable to accommodate to an organization that would simply assign her a role within a structured management plan. In this way, the history of MADD's charismatic founder followed nearly exactly
Max Weber's prediction that "in its pure form charismatic authority has a character specifically foreign to everyday routine structure" (Weber, 1964, p. 363). And, we might add, to the people who uphold that structure.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to thank Gene Patterson, Barbara Chiarello, and Dana Dunn for their assistance.

NOTES

1. Interview conducted by Barbara Chiarello, 1985.
2. Since the definition of the crime of drunk driving is technical (i.e., driving with a BAC about 0.10), individuals are expected to make a judgement about their drinking behavior. Of course, a judgment can be impaired by drinking alcohol. MADD's approach to the problem requires that individuals hold themselves to a high standard of responsibility in terms of their drinking, or suffer harsh penalties when caught driving drunk. Only about 15% of adult Americans have drinking habits that would make them likely candidates for drunk driving, and on any given Friday or Saturday night between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m. only about 3 to 4 percent of the drivers on the road are legally drunk. Most of these drivers will get home safely, but for those who do not make it home, there is a high probability that they will only injure or kill themselves (Jacobs, 1989). Finally, it should be noted that there is no consistent evidence that heightened awareness about the drunk-driving problem or increased severity of punishment has had any lasting effect on arrest rates or fatalities related to drunk driving (Ross & Voas 1990; Hilton 1984; Wolfson 1989).
3. Interview conducted by Barbara Chiarello, 1985.
4. Interview conducted by Barbara Chiarello, 1985.
5. Conversation between Philip Roos and Frank J. Weed, 1987, as well as conversations with a MADD staff member and a 1985 Board member.
6. Observation conducted by Frank J. Weed, 1984.
8. Interview conducted by Barbara Chiarello, 1985.
10. Interview conducted by Frank J. Weed, 1987. During this period it was the impression of a number of people at MADD that employee turnover was high.
11. Interview conducted by Barbara Chiarello, 1985.
12. Interview conducted by Barbara Chiarello, 1985.
15. Letters to the Board signed by ex-board members, September 18, 1984.

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Mothers Against Drunk Driving. (1984a). Executive director goals completed (Chapter bulletin). Hurst, TX: MADD Central Office.


