Political Sociology and Social Movements

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Abstract

Until the 1970s, the study of social movements was firmly within a diverse sociological tradition that explored the relationship between social structure and political behavior, and was preoccupied with explaining variation in the political orientation of movements: their ideologies, aims, motivations, or propensities for violence. Subsequently, a breakaway tradition redefined the central problem, radically narrowing the scope of interest to the process of mobilization—how social groups, whoever they are and whatever their aims, marshal resources, recruit adherents, and navigate political environments in order to grow and succeed. Critics would later insist that the construction of meaning, the formation of collective identities, and the stimulation and amplification of emotions play vital and neglected roles in mobilization, but these alternatives did not challenge the narrowed construction of the problem itself. The resulting subfield has largely abandoned the quest to explain variation in the political orientation of movements. Researchers in related fields—on revolution, unions, and ethnic mobilization—have retained an interest in explaining political orientation, although they often view it primarily as a by-product of mobilization. Reviving theories about the impact of social structure on movement political orientation will require integrating insights from research on related but widely scattered subjects.

INTRODUCTION

From its inception the field of political sociology was about the relationship between political phenomena and social structure. Social structure meant very different things in the hands of different theorists, and this served to define theoretical camps: economic organization, class and status, community organization and social ties, formal organization and bureaucracy, or small-group interaction. In their consideration of social movements, political sociologists were preoccupied with explaining their orientations by reference to the experiences of the subpopulations from which movements drew members. The core intellectual puzzles were why political movements were reformist or revolutionary, secular or religious, pragmatic or ideological, nationalist or communist, peaceful or violent. These were the central questions that motivated research on the subject through the 1970s. The process of mobilization, if acknowledged at all, was usually an afterthought.

This changed more than three decades ago when the core problem was restated: Given certain motives (or grievances) in a subpopulation, under what conditions and through what processes are these motives translated into effective group action? This was an important and neglected problem in influential theories that traced movements variously to frustrations born of relative deprivation, class conflict anchored in modes of production, or socially and psychologically marginalized subpopulations. The new agenda began with a focus on a subpopulation's organizational capacity and the resources it could command. It later expanded to incorporate macropolitical circumstances, or political opportunity structures, and then to claims about the perceptions of participants and the framing of appeals, the sources of collective identities, or the amplification of participants' emotions. The increasing variety of ideas about mobilization and the perennial controversies within the subfield has created a false sense of intellectual breadth, obscuring the enduring narrowness of the focus on mobilization.

THE ARCHEOLOGY OF A RUPTURE

Today the problem of mobilization is so central to the study of contentious politics and social movements that few appear able to conceive of a different question or ask why the field took the shape it did. Before the rise of current approaches, research on political movements was driven by three broad traditions, all of which were deeply curious about the relationship between social structure and politics. The oldest tradition was class analysis, ultimately Marxist in origin, and was committed to understanding the roots of radical politics in class conflicts inherent in different modes of production. A second tradition was based on the variety of role theory exemplified by Robert Merton and others, which usually took the form of explanations based on role strain, status inconsistency, and relative deprivation. A third tradition, ultimately Durkheimian in origin, was rooted in the structural-functionalism of Talcott Parsons and his students.

An early exemplar of class analysis is Seymour Martin Lipset's first book, *Agrarian Socialism* (1950), which sought to explain the anomalous rise of a rural political movement with ostensibly socialist aims in the Canadian wheat belt. The analysis looked closely at the characteristics of wheat agriculture on the North American prairie, the close-knit nature of rural communities, and the inherent conflict between producers and middlemen in commercialized smallholding agriculture. Lipset wanted to understand why radical politics was so rare in North America by studying this deviant case, and he closely analyzed the reasons why this radical, seemingly anticapitalist movement moderated its ideology and policies once it achieved regional political power and nationalized key commercial sectors.

A later exemplar in this tradition is Jeffery Paige's *Agrarian Revolution* (1975), which was ultimately motivated to explain the origins of the tenacious revolutionary movement in Vietnam that so preoccupied American politics at that time. Building on Stinchcombe's (1961)

typology of rural enterprise, Paige offered an elegant theory that linked variations in the ideologies and aims of rural political movements—whether they were reformist or radical, socialist or nationalist—to the varied features of agricultural enterprise in regions that exported products on world markets. Both Lipset and Paige had something to say about the organizational capacity of the groups involved, but their primary interest was in explaining not how these groups mobilized, but why these movements adopted varied aims and ideologies. Other examples of work in this tradition include Calhoun (1982), McNall (1988), Schwartz (1976), and Scott (1976), all of which traced degrees of political radicalism to features of economic organization and communities in historical context.

Davies (1962) and Gurr (1970) exemplified the relative deprivation tradition. The core idea is that it is not overall levels of hardship that drive groups to engage in rebellion, but their deprivation relative to socially conditioned expectations. Although rarely explicit, this tradition was ultimately rooted in conceptions derived from role theory, which viewed social structures as constellations of overlapping, socially constructed roles with assigned statuses, normative expectations, and varying degrees of socially structured role strain (Merton 1968a,b). One version of the theory is that individuals who experience status inconsistency or frustrated upward mobility are the most likely to become radicalized. Another version is that those groups who experience a decline in status relative to others—either because of another group's rise or their own decline—are the most likely to become radicalized. The key mechanism in these theories is psychological frustration, which breeds aggression and makes individuals likely recruits for extremist movements. For both Davies and Gurr, protest and radical politics were conceived as political violence, in contrast to more quiescent forms of routine politics. Other prominent examples are Kornhauser's (1959) analysis of mass society as the foundation of totalitarian movements, Gusfield's (1955, 1963) analysis of the temperance movement as a form of status politics, and Lipset's (1959a,b, 1960) later essays on right-wing extremism and working-class authoritarianism.

The core idea of the Parsonian tradition was the familiar Durkheimian notion that a well-integrated and stable society is ultimately based on a moral order in which normative expectations, based on widely held values, are in a state of equilibrium with the existing division of labor. As societies grow and change, social structures become more differentiated and specialized, necessitating adaptive changes in norms and laws that regulate the inevitable conflict that change brings. Rapidly changing societies are singularly prone to disruption, and the individuals who are most affected by rapid change experience forms of social and psychological strain that make them more likely to join radical movements, whether secular or religious. One emblematic contribution to this tradition was Smelser's (1959) study of working-class radicalism in the English industrial revolution, which attributed it (contra Marx) to the disruption of working-class families. His later theory of collective behavior (Smelser 1962) traced qualitative variations in the aims and ideologies of social movements to the extent to which a society's moral order was disrupted by change. The idea spread widely in the form of modernization theory into the field of comparative politics, where it became central to explanations of revolution in developing countries (Huntington 1968, Johnson 1966).

These traditions shared three essential features. First, they all sought to relate variations in features of social structure to the character of social movements. Second, they all were ultimately interested in explaining variations in political orientations—why movements are liberal or radical, reformist or revolutionary, peaceful or violent—not the capacity of groups to mobilize. Third, they all offered fairly specific predictions about the structural circumstances under which different forms of politics would emerge.

These traditions differed in equally fundamental ways. Their conceptions of social

structure were very different, as were the mechanisms thought to link social position to political behavior. Class analysis and subsequent analyses of economic enterprise and community structure offered a concrete conception of social structure in which a rational awareness of economic and political interest—sometimes reinforced by moral ideas embedded in community traditions—played a central role. Relative deprivation and collective behavior theories offered more abstract conceptions of social structure indicated by aggregate social trends in which social marginality, psychological disorientation, and frustration played a central role, but they shared a common goal of relating features of social contexts to the qualitative character of political movements.

Whereas all three of these traditions have been largely relegated to the prehistory of research on social movements and contentious politics, they all spawned theories that had the now-rare virtue of yielding reasonably clear empirical implications. The observation that each of these traditions repeatedly failed to predict the outbreak of the kinds of movements they were designed to explain contributed heavily to their eclipse.

Class analysis, especially in its original Marxist form, had long been dogged by its overprediction of radical working-class movements and the remarkable rarity of the revolutions in the circumstances that Marx and the early Marxists had expected. This had already bred forms of neo-Marxism that emphasized the functions of the capitalist state (Miliband 1969), the production of consciousness in the labor process (Burawoy 1979, 1984), or the extension of elite ideological hegemony over subordinate classes (Thompson 1966). The history of radical movements also made many observers keenly aware of the role of organized repression and violence employed by the forces of order. The reputation of such figures as Lenin, Trotsky, and Mao as innovative strategists who could turn unfavorable circumstances into revolutionary situations suggested that the analysis of organization, strategy, and the balance of forces in political environments were the ultimate determinants of the strength and success of radical movements.

Theories of relative deprivation and Parsonian theories of collective behavior suffered from a similar problem. The evidence adduced to confirm them was often impressionistic, yet the clarity with which they were stated invited quantitative tests of their predictions. Efforts by skeptics to test their underlying propositions often failed to confirm their predictions (e.g., Paige 1971).

The most ambitious early study to undermine the reigning theories was Tilly's (1964) dogged empirical pursuit of the social origins of the Vendée counterrevolution in western France in the 1790s. To test explanations derived from two competing sociological traditions, Tilly looked intensively at the transformation of western France's social structure on the eve of the revolution. Class analysis, represented by the French historians who interpreted their revolution in classic Marxist terms, portrayed the counterrevolution as the reaction of social classes rooted in precapitalist modes of production: nobility and peasants in noncommercialized agriculture. Modernization theory, in contrast, predicted that the counterrevolution would have occurred in those communities most disrupted by the penetration of capitalist economic relations.

Tilly found that neither theory fit the evidence he collected from archival sources about the region's economic development and community organization. The counterrevolution did not emerge in the regions most transformed by capitalism, as predicted by modernization theory, nor did it originate in the regions least transformed, as predicted by Marxist class analysis. More importantly, the groups that led the insurgency and participated most actively in it were not those that either theory would predict. There was, in fact, no consistent group pattern to the conflict at all: Each of the major social groups in the region, including the merchants and urban bourgeoisie who were thought to be most favorable to the bourgeois French revolution, were divided against one another and found themselves on both sides of a new

political cleavage. The driving wedge was the requirement that the Catholic clergy take a loyalty oath to the new revolutionary government and repudiate papal authority. The local clergy were split by this demand, and those who refused were driven into opposition, taking many of their parishioners with them—splitting the social structure along what Tilly called "vertical lines" that did not obey the logic of either class analysis or modernization theory.

This research convinced Tilly that it was ultimately more short-term processes of mobilization that shaped the formation of political movements. In subsequent empirical work, which pioneered the application of quantitative techniques to historical data on collective action, he and several collaborators tested propositions derived from relative deprivation theory and collective behavior-modernization theory, finding that these theories failed to predict rates of collective violence or collective protest, and that rates of collective protest failed to covary with other measures of social disruption (Lodhi & Tilly 1973, Snyder & Tilly 1972, Tilly 1973). Other work (Shorter & Tilly 1974) examined the evolution of the size, duration, and frequency of strikes in France that showed them to be highly influenced by the scale of economic enterprise, the rates of unionization, and the timing of national political events. All of these pointed to a more political focus on the organizations and processes that influence group mobilization.

MOBILIZATION STUDIES

Others who were dissatisfied with the portrayal of political protest as an expression of emotional frustration and violent impulses had already offered a different view. For them, protest was a political activity that was as rational and goal-directed as routine politics. Gamson (1968) characterized the relative deprivation and collective behavior traditions as one-sidedly concerned with problems of social control from the perspective of authorities, and neglectful of problems of authority, influence, and conflict from the perspective of those in subordinate positions. He drew on long-standing political science traditions in the analysis of influence, interest groups, and political parties (Easton 1953, Key 1952, Lipsky 1968, Truman 1951) and on sociological conflict theory and elite theory (Dahrendorf 1959, Mills 1956) to argue a different proposition: "Discontent is viewed as an opportunity or a danger for particular subgroups, not as a problem of social control. It is important because of its consequences for mobilization of political influence" (Gamson 1968, p. 10). Gamson (1975) followed with an empirical study of American protest groups that focused on their strategies and organizational forms, relating them to their levels of success. One important departure was his treatment of unruliness (including violence) as a strategy designed to further a group's goals, not as an emotional reaction to frustration.

Tilly (1978) later contributed to this emerging resource mobilization perspective by defining a new focus on how discontented groups mobilized for political action. Tilly introduced ideas about repression and facilitation by the state and other powerful actors that were extended further by McAdam (1982) in his study of the American civil rights movement. McAdam placed even greater emphasis on the broader political environment within which insurgent groups mobilized, and labeled his approach the political process perspective. Another important contribution that paralleled McAdam's was Skocpol's (1979) state-centered analysis of revolution, which shifted attention even more into the political environment. Skocpol argued that mass mobilizing revolutionary movements achieve their aims only when they occur in conjunction with a state that has alienated the ruling class and that is pressured to the point of crisis by the international system. These works were all decisive departures from earlier traditions and defined a new field that focused on the mobilization of groups—their ability to organize, recruit adherents, deploy strategy, gain strength, and

achieve their aims—within the limits of existing political opportunities.[1]

One concise and influential early statement of this perspective was by McCarthy & Zald (1977), who articulated what they called the new "extreme" assumption, quoting Turner & Killian (1972, p. 251): "There is always enough discontent in any society to supply the grass-roots support for a movement if the movement is effectively organized and has at its disposal the power and resources of some established elite group." They added, "For some purposes we go even further: grievances and discontent may be defined, created, and manipulated by issue entrepreneurs and associations." McCarthy & Zald emphasized that this was a partial theory; it ignored the social conditions that generated political motivations.

These contributions initiated a pronounced paradigm shift in political sociology in which the study of social movements and contentious politics diverged from the field's foundations into the subfield that exists today (Jenkins 1983). In a way that very few appear to have recognized, the emerging resource mobilization tradition did not simply offer a different perspective on social movements; it changed the question that was being asked, radically narrowing the intellectual horizons of the field. The puzzle that had long preoccupied political sociology rapidly receded from view—how to explain the political orientation of mobilized groups and the aims and contents of movements.

Along with the decline of interest in this question was a parallel decline in curiosity about the relationship between social structure and politics, something that defined the sociological tradition. Social structure, if invoked, was important only to the extent that it promoted or impeded the capacity of groups to mobilize. Questions about the political character of group aims were implicitly set aside as a separate matter—preconditions (viewed narrowly as unspecified grievances) that provided the raw material for mobilization, but were outside the scope of the theoretical problem. Analytically speaking, the action was in the process of mobilization, not in the formation of political orientations. The leading exponents of this perspective excelled at describing the changes in social structure and political institutions that were the backdrop for major episodes of political contention (McAdam 1982; Tilly 1986, 1995). These accounts, however, simply provided a historical backdrop for the main event: an analysis of the means through which groups mobilized and movements grew. The theory focused on processes of mobilization, not the formation of political orientations. The puzzle was not why a mobilized group adopted the political orientation it did—that, presumably, was given by historical circumstances—but how it was able successfully to mobilize and emerge. We have ended up with a subfield that aims to explain the conditions under which a movement—of any type—can grow and succeed, but we no longer have explanations to offer about variation in the substantive content of a movement—the type of politics that it represents.

The shift in the definition of the problem was heavily influenced by other disciplines—borrowings from political science and reactions to challenges from economics. The unacknowledged intellectual foundation of the resource mobilization perspective is the American political science tradition of interest group theory that viewed politics as a continual contest for influence by groups with different levels of power. This tradition offered a more palatable view of political conflict and protest as part of the normal influence processes of a pluralistic society. However, unlike the sociological tradition, it had never shown interest in the formation of

[1]Skocpol was inspired by Moore (1966), and her work was generally received as a contribution to his variety of comparative-historical scholarship. Note, however, that Moore's puzzle was rooted in the earlier tradition of political sociology. He deployed class analysis to explain the substantive character of national politics: democracy, fascism, and communism. He was not interested in explaining levels of mobilization or the success or failure of movements, but their political orientations. In this sense, Paige's (1997) analysis of the different political trajectories of Central American regimes is more firmly within Moore's tradition of macrosociology.

political orientations or why they might vary. In the distinctive American political science tradition that traced its ancestry to Arthur Bentley's (1908) treatise on politics as a constant struggle by interest groups, the emphasis was on how groups pursued their interests and used existing political opportunities to achieve their aims (Easton 1953, Key 1952, Truman 1951). The existence of groups with conflicting interests was assumed as a given starting point of these theories; the central problematic was how political institutions channeled the clash of interests to produce political outcomes. This focus on political process and lack of curiosity about the formation of political orientations is the enduring and largely unrecognized contribution of American political science to the resource mobilization and political process perspectives in sociology.

This tendency was strongly reinforced by the field of economics: Olson's (1965) powerful critique of the group political theories that inspired resource mobilization theory. From a rational choice perspective, Olson revealed a serious logical flaw in group theory—the conflation of individual with group interest. He pointed out that logically it would not be in individuals' interests to contribute to collective action if they could benefit from group gains without personally bearing the costs of collective action. For Olson, this free rider problem was at the core of the puzzle of collective action. Therefore the central challenge of any theory of collective action was to specify the selective incentives for individuals to contribute to group goals.

Olson's solutions to the collective action problem—and those of the intellectual traditions in economics and political science that his ideas spawned—were limited primarily to the rational calculation of individual benefits and costs. This was viewed as a direct challenge to the discipline of sociology, and resource mobilization theorists responded with a wide range of alternative solutions to the collective action problem (another term for the problem of mobilization). In many ways the field of social movements and contentious politics has been a prolonged effort to establish a sociological alternative to the more parsimonious theories of economics. The increasing insistence on the subjective dimensions of mobilization—collective action frames, the formation of collective identities, the role of emotions—is essentially motivated by a feeling that the initial emphases on organization, networks, and political opportunity structures were not sufficiently different from rational choice models to offer a fully sociological alternative (Goodwin & Jasper 1999, 2004; Klandermans 1984, 1992; Mueller 1992; Ferree 1992).

Another shaping influence was methodological: The outcomes of mobilization are observable and readily quantifiable. Counts of events, rates of protest, the formation and membership of unions, political parties, movement newspapers, and the scale of protests were all readily measurable and analyzable with increasingly sophisticated multivariate techniques. The shift of attention to mobilization coincided with the rise of systematic quantitative research in political sociology. Those who were interested in testing theoretical propositions and demonstrating the utility of their theories of mobilization had strong incentives to focus on this set of outcomes.

For more than two decades debates in this subfield have been about the role of organization, political opportunity, resources, strategy, collective identity, cognitive frames, and emotions, all of them defined as complementary or competing approaches to understanding group mobilization. Since the mid-1990s one of the primary intellectual activities in the field has been to negotiate competing claims and formulate integrative syntheses among the different perspectives (Aminzade & McAdam 2001, Gamson & Meyer 1996, Goodwin & Jasper 2004, Goodwin et al. 2001, McAdam 1996, Meyer & Minkoff 2004, Meyer et al. 2002, Polletta & Jasper 2001). The extraordinary variety of answers to questions about recruitment and commitment to social movements and to their broader societal reception gives the appearance of intellectual breadth and vitality. All of this breadth and vitality, however, has

remained within the narrowed boundaries of the defining question—how groups mobilize, or why social movements emerge.

ALTERNATIVE DIRECTIONS

While the puzzle of political orientation has largely dropped out of theoretical discourse in the subfield of social movements, it is still pursued by students of political sociology in related fields: ethnicity and nationalism, revolution, and labor unions, and in a range of historical and comparative case studies. For obvious reasons it is a central concern in the recently revived interest in political violence and terrorism. Although these studies often address subjects that can be conceived of as social movements, they have been largely ignored in that subfield because they address a question that is no longer part of its central focus. As we shall see, however, the emphasis on mobilization has influenced many of these studies as well, and political orientation is often treated as a by-product of successful group mobilization.

Mobilization is a centrally important process in movement emergence and growth, but this is not the same thing as explaining why a movement adopts a certain kind of political orientation. To take an extreme example, suicide bombing may be a tactic suited to certain kinds of political opportunity structures, but this begs the question of how populations of potential suicide bombers are formed and how, once recruited, they are molded into agents of destruction. Is there a systematic relationship between the political orientation of movements and the characteristics of their adherents, their social experiences prior to joining a movement, or their experiences afterwards as members of a social movement organization?

These questions inevitably lead us back to a sustained examination of the relationship between social structure and politics, by reviving the field's former curiosity about the social lives of movement participants and nonparticipants alike. The range of possible conceptions of social structure is very broad. The older generation of structural analyses did not come close to exhausting the range of potentially useful ones. Social structure can be conceived concretely or abstractly, as an empirical description of a historically situated setting, or as an aggregate measure of some dimension of social life. It can be conceived in terms of categories such as status, class, gender, or occupation, or as relationships such as kinship, authority, social networks, community, or small-group interaction. It can be considered at the macro level of national polities, at the meso level of organizations or communities, or at the micro level of small groups. There are few prior constraints on those who want to understand the social sources of political orientation.

Moreover, social structures need not be conceived as static. Most of the early studies of political movements were premised on gradual or abrupt changes in social structure. The collective behavior tradition identified individuals who were most affected by disruptive social change as likely recruits for protest movements, but the idea was not limited to them. Arguments about the moral economy of traditional communities—for example, peasant villages in subsistence economies (Scott 1976) or craft organization in early industrial economies (Calhoun 1982)—traced the origins of radical movements to the decline of communities and the violation of their moral codes. These studies balanced a concern to explain political orientation (anticapitalist radicalism) and organizational capacity (densely networked community ties). They also balanced recognition of the ways that compelling economic interests interacted with, and were reinforced by, outrage at the violation of culturally rooted moral codes—a defense of tradition that ironically was transmuted into anticapitalist radicalism.

To examine possible links between social structure and politics does not mean that one will find them. One of the primary reasons for examining social structural sources of political orientations is to uncover circumstances where the expected relationships fail to appear. Cases in which the posited social structures fail to explain are just as useful as the reverse, and provide new intellectual puzzles. The only

convincing way to develop alternatives to structural explanations is to show how they can account for outcomes where a structural explanation falters.

Several studies have already addressed these issues, although they fit uneasily with the dominant focus on mobilization. Perhaps the most familiar is Gould's research on social networks and political mobilization. Networks in social movement research are primarily understood as mechanisms of micromobilization through which individuals are recruited into movement organizations or episodes of collective action (McAdam 1986, McAdam & Paulsen 1993). Gould's work focuses on mobilization, but his careful reconstruction of the role of networks in the revolutionary insurgencies of nineteenth century Paris and the 1794 Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania were not motivated to explain how insurgents mobilized. Gould's actual problem—similar to Tilly's in *The Vendée* (1964)—was to accurately identify the interests and collective identities of the participants by delineating the social networks through which they mobilized. His core finding, which contradicted the assumptions of generations of historical scholarship, was that the revolutionary mobilization behind the Paris Commune of 1871 was based on neighborhood networks and community solidarities, not the working-class identities that had defined insurgent mobilization in 1848. Gould's conclusions were as much about the identities and motives of the participants as they were about their capacity to mobilize (Gould 1991, 1993, 1995). Similarly, his network analysis of the Whiskey Rebellion was motivated to understand its actual social basis, which he identified as a cross-class insurgency led by local elites who were cut out of federal patronage networks that were expanding westward beyond the Appalachian Mountains (Gould 1996). Gould's aim in both these studies was to show how the interests and identities of participants in revolutionary mobilizations were defined by evolving social networks.

A second set of examples looked closely at the social foundations of well-known political movements and found that prevailing structural explanations failed to accurately identify the interests and identities of the participants. Tilly's analysis of the Vendée counterrevolution—discussed above—is an outstanding early example. He described a process in which Catholic clergy were forced to renounce loyalty to the pope or lose their parishes, a demand that split the priests and in turn divided all the major social groups in the community (Tilly 1964, pp. 227–304). This was a short-term process of identity formation touched off by rapid changes in political institutions—and deep splits in the community that were not predicted by the preexisting social structure or by its long-term changes as capitalism advanced. Tilly's findings had profound implications for theories about the relationship between social structure and politics—implications, we have already seen, that he did not subsequently pursue.

Remarkably similar processes are described in Walder's (2006, 2009) analysis of the formation of student Red Guard factions during China's Cultural Revolution of 1966–1968. He found that none of the interest group or network explanations long employed to account for Red Guard factionalism withstood close examination, and found instead a pattern in which university political networks were split and their occupants turned against one another by forced choices similar to those in revolutionary France described by Tilly.

Another example is Traugott's (1980, 1985) analysis of the class origins of the Parisian working-class insurgents of 1848 and of the militia that suppressed them. Contrary to Marx's analysis of these events and subsequent Marxist historiography, Traugott found that the actors on both sides of the barricades came from virtually identical working-class backgrounds, and both initially had revolutionary orientations. The political orientations of the two sides diverged over a year during which they participated in differently organized militias, only one of which was able to build cohesion and solidarity among its members. Similarly, Markoff and Shapiro have shown empirically that levels of conflict in the aims of different social classes varied by context in revolutionary France, and

that outcomes were the process of repeated political interactions through time that fully represented the original aims of none of the participants (Markoff 1985, 1988, 1997; Markoff & Shapiro 1985; Shapiro & Markoff 1998). The common thread in these studies is a curiosity about the relationship between social structure and politics and unexpected findings that pointed the authors to short-term processes that altered the political orientations and outcomes that were otherwise presumed to come from social structure.

A third group of examples are from studies of ethnic mobilization, a field that has led a largely separate existence from social movement research, overlapping with it only occasionally. A central problem in this field is to explain why ethnic identity becomes salient as a cause of conflict—instead of class, occupation, or some other collective identity. This makes it difficult to limit the question narrowly to that of mobilization or to ignore the social structural sources of identity and conflict. One strand of theory explains ethnic antagonism as a product of competition in labor markets (Bonacich 1972, 1976; Olzak 1992). Another attributes persistent ethnic identity to a cultural division of labor in which immigrant, language, or religious groups are concentrated in occupational niches (Hechter 1974, 1975, 1978). Research in this area tests the implications of competing theories in explaining ethnic political mobilization (Bélanger & Pinard 1991, Medrano 1994, Okamoto 2003). It is more common in this subfield to balance a concern with identity formation with that of group mobilization. Olzak, for example, has examined competing theories about the labor market and other social origins of ethnic antagonism, and she has examined the problem of mobilization as conceived in social movements research (Olzak 1989, 1992; Olzak & Shanahan 1994).

A fourth example is studies of labor unions—a field that has often sought to explain levels of labor militancy or the prevalence of radical or reformist ideologies in trade unions (Conell & Voss 1990, Stepan-Norris & Zeitlin 1989, Voss & Sherman 2000). Perhaps the clearest example is Kimeldorf's (1989) comparison of longshoremen's unions on the East and West coasts of the United States. In the West they were dominated by communists, whereas in the New York region they were dominated by labor rackets and organized crime. Kimeldorf's explanation was a rare melding of social structural and political process explanations. It included both a careful analysis of the varied structure and organization of the industries on the two coasts and differences in the origins and composition of their labor forces and of the varied political opportunity structures of New York and San Francisco at the time the unions formed.

Finally, some have sought to explain political orientation by reference to the structure of the national polity—but not through the familiar concept of political opportunity structure. Swanson (1960) argued that the dominant religious ideas in a society varied with the extent to which it had a unitary authority structure. He applied this classification scheme (Swanson 1971) to the outcomes of the rebellions that accompanied the Protestant Reformation in Europe, and claimed a close correspondence between prior regime type and Protestant versus Catholic outcomes (Swanson 1967). Subsequent authors tried to identify theoretical mechanisms behind some of these associations (Paige 1974) or challenged Swanson's findings (Wuthnow 1985). Bergesen (1977) applied these ideas to the explanation of political witch hunts. In a different vein, Hechter drew a distinction between indirect and direct rule by the center of a national polity to explain the paradoxical eruption of nationalist movements in modern nation-states. Nationalist movements emerge as a reaction to central government attempts to shift from indirect to direct rule over ethnically distinct regions (Hechter 2000). Similarly, the shift from class politics to cultural politics in capitalist democracies is a reaction to the intrusion of welfare state legislation and direct administration into areas of social life formerly left to families and local communities (Hechter 2004).

All of these studies explore the social structural sources of political orientations, and all

of them consider phenomena that can readily be translated into generic questions about social movements. Their lessons have been largely lost on theories about social movements because these theories have been concerned with a separate question—mobilization. There nonetheless exists a foundation for a more systematic effort to understand the social roots of movement political orientations, should this once again become a major intellectual concern.

POLITICAL ORIENTATION AS BY-PRODUCT

One obvious approach to the question of movement political orientation falls completely within the field's current intellectual limits: that it is explained by relative organizational capacity, strategic advantage, or the structure of political opportunities. This approach sees political orientation as a by-product of successful mobilization within a given political environment. The kind of movement that emerges depends on which groups have organizational capacity, and which movements grow depends on the structure of political opportunities in relation to other groups' political preferences.

Political process models imply that opportunity structures shape the orientations of movements by selectively repressing groups with certain political orientations and facilitating the actions of others. A familiar example is the U.S. civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. McAdam (1982) emphasized the broad appeal of nonviolent, church-based activism in building national support for the movement outside the South and the weakening of support for the movement after the rise of more threatening expressions of activism such as the Black Panthers and urban rioting. Militant organizations and tactics led to police repression and white backlash, whereas moderate and nonviolent strategies generated sympathy and external support. McAdam was primarily interested in the effects of strategies on the overall fate of the struggle for civil rights; he was not attempting to explain the specific political orientations of the various submovements that were working toward civil rights for African Americans. However, the overall impact of these circumstances can be conceived as a kind of environmental selection that shaped the orientations of a movement by permitting some kinds of movement organizations to grow and suppressing others.

Similar observations have been offered about repressive and violent regimes and otherwise treacherous political environments. In such circumstances secretive movements that work underground and exercise strong internal discipline have a competitive advantage over organizations that are open, loosely organized, and less hierarchical. To operate successfully in such circumstances a movement often adopts a radical ideology, uses violence as a strategy, and deals harshly with internal dissent. Movements that do not are more easily suppressed, clearing the field for organizations with a more radical and authoritarian cast. A corollary of this idea is that the more disciplined and violent movement organizations have a competitive advantage over rival movement organizations that are less disciplined, more open, and democratic.

This is the agenda implied by McAdam (1996) when he called for explaining "movement form" by reference to political opportunity structures, especially those outside of liberal democratic settings. Boudreau (1996) argued that political opportunity structures have steered democratic movements onto a revolutionary course in a variety of authoritarian regimes. Almeida (2008), analyzing waves of protest over eight decades in El Salvador, argued that a shift to state-sponsored repression pushes democratic movements into revolutionary and violent forms of resistance. White (1989) argued that the turn to violence of the Irish Republican Army was more a response to government repression than an expression of the intensity of group grievances. This approach to explaining the features of political movements views political orientation as a by-product of group mobilization or a response to the structure of political opportunities.

Recent attempts to address the neglected question of collective violence have followed a similar path. Tilly (2003) offered an

explanation that remains firmly within the intellectual tradition that he helped establish, in effect an elaboration of the "polity model" sketched in his early work (Tilly 1978). Violence here is seen as a product of the organization of the regime and the strategies and organizational capacities of the two sides. The explanation featured a new emphasis on the social mechanisms that are activated as part of these contextualized conflicts—a theme elaborated in separate work (McAdam et al. 2001). The mechanisms invoked represent a more careful elaboration of elements of familiar mobilization processes.

Goodwin's (2006) theory of insurgent movement terrorism against noncombatant populations differs from Tilly's approach primarily by reintroducing social structural elements into the perceptions and calculations of movement leaders. He views terror as a product of movement strategy, in particular judgments by movement leaders about the support that these populations offer either to the targeted states or to the movement itself. Elements of social structure are introduced in the form of barriers to interaction and cooperation between movements and populations that might be presented by language, religious differences, and territorial segregation. They are not introduced to explain the motivations and perceptions of those leading or participating in the movement itself; motives and organization are a given starting point of the analysis.

Whereas much of the recent literature on revolutions resonates strongly with the main themes of the political process perspective, the study of that subject has moved steadily away from its former preoccupation with political movements. Essentially, the study of revolution declared its independence from the study of social movements several decades ago. In the Marxist, relative deprivation, and Parsonian traditions, revolution was conceived as a straightforward outcome of the strength of the social forces fueling the movements that toppled regimes. Skocpol's (1979) state-centered analysis liberated the study of revolution from these earlier voluntarist perspectives and, extending the logic of political process models, shifted attention to the capacity of states to respond to challenges from below. The central insight is that revolution is not a straightforward outcome of the political orientation of mobilized populations, but a contingent outcome of a state's organizational capacity, its relationship to other powerful social groups, and influences that operate in the international political system. Therefore, whether a democratic, nationalist, or revolutionary socialist movement thrives and achieves success depends on a configuration of political circumstances and historical legacies that are beyond the control of mobilized populations (Goodwin 2001; Parsa 1989, 2000; Wickham-Crowley 1992). In this tradition the study of revolution can readily be translated into a question of state capacity and regime survival (Goldstone 1991). The study of revolution, then, is inherently concerned with explaining how certain political orientations triumph as macrohistorical events, but it has shifted its attention away from the formation of movement political orientations and even more toward political process and political opportunity than many studies of social movements.

These by-product explanations of political orientation are already familiar, although they have received much less explicit and systematic attention than the process of mobilization. It remains to be seen whether they will be intellectually satisfying except in the context of questions about the strategic choices of movements that are a given starting point in an analysis. Not all social circumstances, and not all mobilized groups, have an equal capacity to generate any given political orientation. The limits of by-product explanations will become evident only when laid against alternatives that investigate the social structural sources of movements—and vice versa.

MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Social movement organizations are a familiar subject in the political process perspective because they are the key actor in mobilization processes. They vary in ways that contribute to or impede a movement's success, as past research

has emphasized. They also embody and enforce political orientations, and they differ in ways that affect their ability to alter and shape the political beliefs of their adherents. Some are easy to join, and others make it very difficult. Some are easy to leave, and others make it very difficult. Some movement organizations are able to command only a portion of a member's time and effort; others are able to command very large portions. Some are geographically or socially isolated and provide for most of their members' needs (guerilla bands, underground revolutionary organizations, sect-like groups); others are little more than clubs in an open and liberal environment. It follows that the potential impact of social movement organizations and their leaders on the views and level of commitment of their members varies considerably. The more effective the mechanisms that enforce group solidarity, the greater will be the group's impact on its members (Hechter 1987).

The evolution of the political orientation of social movements and their impact on their members was once a major preoccupation of political sociology. The famous early example was Michels's (1915) analysis of how the growth and success of radical labor parties turned them into oligarchies that adopted more moderate and reformist political aims. Lipset et al. (1956) showed how the generation of what would later be called social capital in the organization of the typesetting trade created a strong social basis for union democracy rather than oligarchy. Others examined the powerful pull that small sect-like ideological groups have on the mentalities and discipline of their members (Nahirny 1962, Schurmann 1966, Selznick 1960), ideas that strongly paralleled processes in religious sects (Lofland 1966). This older interest has been revived in recent studies of new religious movements and sect-like socialist parties (Lalich 2004).

It has been widely noted in recent publications that participation in a social movement has a powerful effect on an individual's subsequent life course (McAdam 1989, Yang 2000). This implies that one should look more closely at the point at which these changes take place, during the movement itself. What actual impact do social movement organizations have on the political orientations of members, how is this impact achieved, and through what mechanisms? The more fundamental question this approach raises is to what extent social movement organizations collect like-minded individuals, mobilizing them for objectives that they all understand and about which they all essentially agree beforehand. Alternatively, to what extent do they attract individuals with vague and unformed ideas and commitments and shape and transform their political outlooks and into something very different from where they began? These questions may revive interest in one of the most important and enduring questions in political sociology: why organizations designed to liberate populations from oppression sometimes create new and more intensive forms of oppression.

TURNING ANSWERS INTO QUESTIONS

We have seen that one can address questions about political orientation with familiar concepts from mobilization studies—political opportunity structure and social movement organizations. Other familiar ideas (in particular, the interpretive framing of movement appeals, the formation of collective identities, and the emotional dimensions of participation and commitment) cannot be adapted in quite the same way. This is because each of these concepts can be viewed as part of what defines a movement's political orientation—how it frames appeals to potential followers, the identities it mobilizes, and the kinds of emotions that sustain it. These notions might help explain mobilization, but to employ them to explain political orientation leads readily into tautological arguments.

If we explore these notions to explain movement political orientations, these answers turn into questions. What social circumstances determine the resonance of an interpretive frame or the subjective salience of one collective identity over another? What social circumstances

make one collective identity more salient than an alternative? What social circumstances incite or amplify what kinds of politically relevant emotions, and how are they sustained? A further interesting implication of pursuing these subjective dimensions of mobilization is that they inevitably lead us back to the question of the social structural circumstances that make certain interpretive frames, collective identities, or emotions salient to potential participants in a movement. In a somewhat paradoxical fashion, interest in the subjective dimensions of political mobilization leads one inexorably back to the relationship between social structure and politics.

This is clear if we consider the potential contributions of the framing literature. This approach, rooted in the symbolic interactionism of Goffmann (1974), was originally proposed to fill subjective gaps in political process accounts of mobilization. Individuals must interpret the world around them, and social movement organizations offer interpretive frames that connect with the self-conceptions, values, or moral and cultural sensibilities of potential adherents. The idea was designed primarily to account for processes of recruitment to movement organizations or episodes of collective action (Benford & Snow 2000, Snow et al. 1986). It was later expanded into the idea of a master frame that presented the movement to a broader public and conditioned the response of other groups, altering the political opportunity structure (Snow & Benford 1992, Tarrow 1992).

The core idea is frame resonance—the credibility and salience of the rhetorical or cognitive frame, based on the observation or experience of those who are exposed to it. Movement organizers have to frame their appeals to emphasize ideas or themes that resonate with individuals' observations and experiences. If they fail to do so, individuals fail to respond, recruitment fails, and commitment declines. One very important implication of this idea is that the resonance of a frame depends on social experiences. This suggests that a core task of the framing perspective should be to explore how variation in individuals' social circumstances or experiences affects their responses to differently framed political appeals.

It is remarkable how rarely this important implication has been pursued in the large literature generated by this perspective. The framing literature has been criticized, sometimes by its originators, for simply describing and classifying rhetorical themes articulated by movement organizations, classifying them by different types, and asserting their subjective impact (Benford 1997). It has also been criticized for offering a more narrow and depoliticized version of the long familiar concept of ideology (Oliver & Johnson 2000). In response, proponents of frame analysis have argued that the older notion of ideology is broader and more rigid than the notion of frame (Snow 2004).

The essential core of the classic concept of ideology, however, is that it serves as a mask for other kinds of interests, in particular, material or economic interests. The old Marxist idea that all political, moral, and religious conceptions are essentially representations of the material interests of social classes no longer has much appeal. However, the idea that individuals' social experience (including but by no means limited to economic interests) affects their receptivity to different ideas, or frames, through which they understand their world is inherent in the very idea of framing. This is the core question that ideas about framing raise in pursuing the question of a movement's political orientation: What social circumstances determine the receptivity to one frame over another? What kinds of people respond to what kinds of interpretative representations? Do beliefs serve interests either consciously or unconsciously? Do people have incentives to adopt one or another interpretive frame, and if so, what are they? Do they freely choose, or do they conform to social pressures?

It is odd that research about framing in social movements has shown so little curiosity about the people who are the targets of frames, in particular, their social structural circumstances,

which according to the core tenets of the idea shape resonance. In this sense the notion of framing offers many unexploited opportunities, and it immediately suggests research designs that compare individuals in different groups or social settings in their receptivity to specific frames. What social circumstances make what frames more or less appealing? What is the relationship between the specific appeals framed by social movements and the broader ideologies that define the orientations and aims of movements? Can a frame of resentment against wealthy plutocrats successfully recruit workers into socialist movements or anti-Semitic fascist movements equally well, or is the oft-noted shift of working-class allegiance from left-wing parties to fascism in interwar Europe, as Brustein (1988, 1991, 1996) argues, due to the incorporation of appeals to working-class economic interests in fascist party platforms?

The same kinds of questions are raised by arguments about emotions and social movements. This represents a circling back to ideas about the emotional roots of social movement participation that were largely rejected during the original shift toward mobilization studies (Aminzade & McAdam 2001; Goodwin & Jasper 2006; Goodwin et al. 2000, 2001). It may be undeniably true that there are emotional dimensions to recruitment and commitment, and that emotional responses are important mechanisms in explaining political mobilization. This then raises the older question: Under what social structural circumstances, and what social situations, are the relevant emotions stimulated and sustained? What are the relationships between these emotional states and the political orientations of individuals and the movements they join? Far more so than proponents of the cognitive framing perspective, students of emotions in social movements have recognized the social structural sources of these subjective processes and have already begun to investigate the subject (Kemper 2001, Lalich 2004, Nepstad & Smith 2001).

CONCLUSION

As they became increasingly preoccupied with the process of mobilization, students of social movements strayed far from their intellectual roots in the sociological tradition. The challenge for those seeking to revive interest in the political orientation of movements is not to revive theories prominent in the 1950s, but to construct alternatives that look afresh at questions that have been neglected for decades. It is possible to fashion certain kinds of explanations from now familiar ideas about opportunity structures and the interactions between insurgents and authorities, but it is hard to believe these will be intellectually satisfying as long as the field continues to display its characteristic lack of curiosity about the social structural roots of protest.

The number of alternative sociological explanations for group mobilization has proliferated almost beyond description. This review has suggested that the range of answers to questions about mobilization is not the problem; the question itself is too narrow. How and why a movement is able to mobilize is important, but it is not the only important question. In many cases the question of what kind of movement is mobilized is far more urgent. For too long, students of social movements have neglected this classic question of political sociology. The field needs new questions more urgently than it needs new answers, and the first of these questions is the most fundamental: What is the relationship between social structure, however conceived, and the political orientations of social movements?

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The author is not aware of any biases that might be perceived as affecting the objectivity of this review.

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