

PROTEST AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS



Edited by James M. Jasper and Jan Willem Duyvendak

# Players and Arenas

The Interactive Dynamics of Protest

Amsterdam  
University  
Press

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# Protest and Social Movements

Recent years have seen an explosion of protest movements around the world, and academic theories are racing to catch up with them. This series aims to further our understanding of the origins, dealings, decisions, and outcomes of social movements by fostering dialogue among many traditions of thought, across European nations and across continents. All theoretical perspectives are welcome. Books in the series typically combine theory with empirical research, dealing with various types of mobilization, from neighborhood groups to revolutions. We especially welcome work that synthesizes or compares different approaches to social movements, such as cultural and structural traditions, micro- and macro-social, economic and ideal, or qualitative and quantitative. Books in the series will be published in English. One goal is to encourage non-native speakers to introduce their work to Anglophone audiences. Another is to maximize accessibility: all books will be available in open access within a year after printed publication.

## *Series editors*

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# Players and Arenas

*The Interactive Dynamics of Protest*

*Edited by*

*James M. Jasper and Jan Willem Duyvendak*

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*In memory of Nelson Mandela*



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# Introduction

## Playing the Game

*James M. Jasper*

The last several years have been exciting for those who study protest, with a wave of activity ranging from revolutions in the Arab-speaking world to tent cities in Israel, Europe, and the United States, followed by Turkey, Brazil, and elsewhere. There have been right-wingers like the Tea Party sympathizers who shouted down their elected representatives in town hall meetings in the United States, and left-leaning projects in favor of the “99 percent.” But even as we congratulate ourselves for living through an important moment in history, we should not forget that protest occurs every day, all around the world, and probably always has – whether or not it is dramatic and sustained enough to attract media coverage. Protest is a fundamental part of human existence.

Despite a plethora of exciting cases to study, theories of protest movements have reached an impasse. On the one hand, theories of great structural shifts – modernization, markets, nation-building, urbanization – no longer have much to say about the practice of protest, commenting instead on the conditions of possibility for collective action in the grand sweep of history. On the other hand, cultural theories which focus on the perspectives of protestors, including their emotions and grievances and choices, have had difficulty building beyond them and connecting with the arenas from which outcomes eventually emerge.

A strategic perspective may be able to bridge this gap by giving equal and symmetric weight to protestors and to the other players whom they engage, and by focusing equally on players and the arenas in which they interact (Jasper, 2004).<sup>1</sup> Although beginning from the goals and means that each player controls, we can watch what happens when players interact creatively over short or long periods of time. The main constraints on what protestors can accomplish are not determined directly by economic and political structures so much as they are imposed by other players with different goals and interests. Although the strategic complexity of politics and protest is enormous, in this book we hope to make a beginning through a careful examination of players and arenas, accompanied by theorizing on the strategic interactions among them.

The big paradigms that linked social movements to History or to Society have fallen out of favor. If there has been a trend in recent theories of protest,

it has been toward the micro rather than the macro, and toward interpretive and cultural rather than materialist approaches (Jasper, 2010a; 2012a). Thus we see political-opportunity theorists renouncing their own structuralism in favor of local causal mechanisms (Kurzman, 2004; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001); Alain Touraine (1997) discussing individuals as subjects instead of the collective Subjects struggling to control the direction of History; rational choice theorists who are adding collective identities, frames, and even emotions to formal models formerly centered on material interests (Opp, 2009). How can we acknowledge the felt experience of participants without losing the insights of the structural school? How can we trace the effects of global capitalism or neoimperialist states at the level of individuals and their interactions?

## Players

Players are those who engage in strategic action with some goal in mind. Simple players consist of individuals, compound players are teams of individuals. Compound players range from loose, informal groups to formal organizations all the way up to nations tentatively or seemingly united behind some purpose. Simple and compound players face many of the same challenges and dilemmas, but they differ in an important way: the individuals who comprise teams may depart, defect, partly defect, or pursue their own goals at the same time that they pursue the group goals. Compound players, even when they have names and bylaws and payrolls, are never completely unified. They are “necessary fictions” that attract and inspire supporters through their promise of unity (Gamson, 1995; McGarry and Jasper, 2015).

Every player has multiple goals, which range from its official mission to other stated objectives to secret aspirations to murky motivations that may be obscure even to the players themselves. These goals take them into different arenas: a police department engages protestors in public battles for control of the streets, but also lobbies legislatures for more funding, is a member of a propolicing interest group, and engages in moral entrepreneurship in the media during a moral panic. It is difficult for a player to compare or rank-order its goals, in part because their salience shifts according to external circumstances and in part because there is always contention within a player over its priorities. The goals of compound players are especially unstable, because factions and individuals are forever competing to make their own goals into the official goals of the team. Goals

can be entirely altruistic as well as selfish, ideal interests as well as material interests. In addition, goals change: new ones surface, old ones disappear, new twists and interpretations emerge.

Players have a variety of capacities at their disposal in pursuing their goals. Adopting a general strategic language, we observe three basic families of strategic means: paying others to do what you want, persuading them to, and coercing them to. A fourth, derivative capacity is to hold positions (physical locations on a battlefield, bureaucratic posts in an organization) that help you pay, persuade, or coerce others. Money, reputation, technologies, even emotions of confidence are all helpful. Some capacities adhere to an organization, others are held primarily by individuals. By identifying capabilities like these, we hope to push beyond the vague and often circular language of “power” in order to specify more precisely how players try to attain their goals. Pierre Bourdieu similarly used various forms of capital to specify the mechanisms of power: cultural knowledge, social network ties, money, and reputation. I find the metaphor of capital – one makes an investment in order to reap a return – provocative, but it seems clearer and more concrete to speak about payments made, technologies of coercion, the media and messages of persuasion, and official positions governed by rules.

Players vary in how tight or porous their boundaries are. Some compound players are composed of paid staff positions; some have security guards at the door to keep outsiders away. Most organizations have rules about who can speak at meetings. At the other extreme, a group may be open to anyone who shows up at a meeting or a rally – raising problems of infiltrators whose intent is to discredit or disrupt the player's projects, but also of well-intentioned participants with widely different goals or tastes in tactics.

Players overlap with each other. A protest group is part of a movement coalition. An MP is also a member of her party, occasionally pursuing its goals (fundraising, for instance) alongside legislative ones, and she may also be a member of a protest group seeking social change or justice. Individuals are especially clear cases of one player moving among and being a part of various other players. Thanks to the individuals who compose them, protest movements can permeate a number of other players, even on occasion their targets and opponents.

Compound players are always shifting: appearing, merging, splitting, going through dormant periods, disappearing altogether, growing, shrinking, changing names and purposes. Although our analytic approach begins with players, we do not want to reify them as necessarily preexisting and permanent. After all, players redefine each other through their interactions and conflicts, as Fetner (2008) describes in the case of pro- and anti-gay

rights activists. Players are not set in stone, but change constantly, especially expanding and contracting. Charles Tilly famously linked the emergence of new players to the opening of political opportunities: create or empower a parliament, and political factions and parties will appear to pursue the stakes available within it. This structural insight was very fruitful, but such an emphasis on access to arenas meant that players were often taken for granted (Jasper, 2012b; Krinsky and Mische, 2013). From the structural perspective, it is sometimes difficult to see how players move among arenas, trying to enter those where their capabilities will yield the greatest advantages, or to see how new goals emerge and inspire players to form around them (Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008).

Groups and organizations that operate as players in various external arenas can, from a different point of view, be seen as arenas themselves when we look at their internal procedures. The individuals who compose them never agree entirely on either goals or means, so that considerable time is devoted to arriving at decisions through formal and informal processes (Maeckelbergh, 2009). In fact a compound player almost always devotes more time to internal interactions – making decisions, performing rituals of solidarity, eating or occupying together – than to external engagements. These internal activities are strategic and influential, and they prepare players to confront others. A player that looks unified from the outside is still going to be an arena for contestation within. Even players that have strict hierarchies, intended to reduce internal conflicts, have many ways that individuals maneuver. *Players are also arenas*. Ann Mische (Chapter 2 of this volume) calls this a fractal process, in which each player can be broken into subplayers, each of those can in turn be further subdivided, all the way down to individuals (or beyond, according to postmodern theorists, who insist that individuals are not unified actors either, but rather sites for internal conversation and conflict) (Archer, 2003; Wiley, 1995).<sup>2</sup> We need to do this kind of work if we wish to acknowledge the lived experience of human beings. For example, bureaucrats do not feel their way toward action as “the state,” but rather as accountants, department heads, litigators, and so on.

Its ability to incorporate individuals as players (and as symbols) seems an enormous advantage for a strategic perspective. Some decisions are made by a single individual, who either persuades others, disposes of financial or coercive resources, or has some positional authority provided by a set of rules. We can only understand these decisions if we come to grips with the biography and psychology of that single person; such factors must find a place in social-science models (Jasper, 1997: ch. 9). Even the most macro-level phenomena often reflect the influence of one or a few individuals. In

the chapters that follow, the reader will encounter a number of idiosyncratic, influential individuals. (I prefer to speak of individuals rather than of “leaders,” given the mystique that business and military observers have bestowed on “leadership,” and given that there can be influential individuals at any level of an organization, in any part of a network.)

Players are not always fully conscious of all their goals and projects, and they certainly do not always articulate them to others (whether to articulate them publicly is a dilemma [Jasper, 2006: 78]). Many of them are preconscious, part of what Anthony Giddens (1984) calls practical consciousness: we have not consciously thought about them but would probably recognize them if we were challenged or interrogated about them. In contrast I hesitate to include goals that are entirely unconscious to the player, on the Freudian model of repression, largely for methodological reasons.<sup>3</sup> Evidence is necessarily weaker for unconscious motives, and the observer is given enormous freedom to speculate. Structural approaches allow similar license to the researcher to assume that she already knows the goals of players, because she can read their “objective interests” directly from their structural positions. Strategic theories have the advantage of encouraging (or forcing) the researcher to acknowledge a range of goals through empirical investigation rather than deductive theory.

Appreciation of the meanings and emotions of players is crucial to explaining their actions. Emotions in particular permeate both goals and means, as well as the very definition of the players. We hope to take account of both the affective solidarities that define players, the reflex emotions they have when engaging others, and the moods and moral emotions that energize participants. Like other components of culture, emotions are now being studied from many angles, but they have yet to be integrated completely into a strategic approach (Archer, 2001; Collins, 2004; Gould, 2009; Jasper, 2011).

To understand how protest arises, unfolds, and affects (or does not affect) the world around it, research needs to begin with catalogs of the players involved on all sides. These lists often need to be quite extensive, and include the multiple goals and many capabilities a player has at its disposal. The goals and the means, furthermore, change over time, as do the players themselves. Because today we tend to see culture as contested, constructed, and ever-shifting, rather than unitary and static, we must admit that players and arenas are always emerging, changing, and recombining. But by developing better theories about who these players are, what they want, and how they operate, we hope to aid future political researchers in creating their own catalogs.

Talking about players allows us to avoid the term “social movements,” which many scholars think is simply too vague (although it is perhaps another necessary fiction, useful as a popular label or collective identity). Researchers have also given too much attention to explaining the rise and fall of movements, as opposed to the many other dynamics inside and outside of them (McAdam et al., 2001; McAdam and Tarrow, 2010). Once we break both the movement and its environment down into their component players and arenas, we can judge when there is enough coherence to these players to warrant the term “social movement.”

We originally asked our contributors to keep in mind the following questions about the players in their cases. How do these players typically operate: what do they want, what means do they have at their disposal, what constraints do they face? What were the origins of this player? How well defined or permanent are its boundaries? How stable is it? What goals do its components widely share? What goals receive less consensus? What means does it have: what financial resources, legal standing, rhetoric for persuading others, coercive capacities? What is its internal structure, when viewed as an arena rather than as a player? How does it make formal and informal decisions? How vertically is it structured? What role do its leaders play?

## Arenas

An arena is a bundle of rules and resources that allow or encourage certain kinds of interactions to proceed, with something at stake. Players within an arena monitor each others' actions, although that capacity is not always equally distributed. Players can play different roles in the same arena (such as active players, reserve players, referees, assistants and managers, audiences, backstage managers), governed by different rules and norms. Some strategic moves are made clearly within the rules of the game, others are meant to change, ignore, or twist those rules. Bend the rules far enough, and the player has moved into a different arena, as when a sports team bribes referees (although it is the same conflict between teams). Some rules are formally written down, providing procedural ammunition for any player who has a stake in seeing that they are enforced. Other rules are moral norms, and the cost of breaking these is usually a tarnished reputation among those who hold to the norms, but here again opponents must work to tarnish that reputation. There are many combinations in-between. Arenas are where politics occur, at least in Sheldon Wolin's (1960: 16) expansive

definition of politics as the place “where the plans, ambitions, and actions of individuals and groups incessantly jar against each other – colliding, blocking, coalescing, separating.”

Arenas vary along several dimensions. Like players, they vary in the degree to which they are institutionalized with bureaucratic rules and legal recognition as opposed to informal traditions and expectations; public opinion is an amorphous arena, whereas law courts have elaborate rules, including rules about who has standing in them. Second, they vary in the ratio of players to audience: some arenas are composed only of the players themselves, while at the other end of the spectrum a vast audience watches a tiny number of players. Third, different capacities are useful to different degrees and in different combinations in different arenas: in markets we expect money to matter most, but in politics and courts we expect persuasion to matter more than money – although corruption occurs all the time (Walzer, 1983).<sup>5</sup>

Arenas have a variety of formal and informal relationships with each other. In more formal cases there may be hierarchies of arenas, as with appeals courts. Most arenas can be further broken down into subarenas. Thus policy-making can be seen as one arena, or as a number of distinct arenas, ranging from informal persuasion to registered lobbying to legislative chambers and votes (and even votes can be formal tallies of names or less formal voice votes). An outcome in one arena can be the opening move in another, like a new law that is challenged in court. Players can force each other into some arenas, but must entice them in other cases. (They face the Bystander dilemma: you may wish to get outsiders involved in your strategic engagement, but you cannot always control what they do once they are involved [Jasper, 2006: 123].) One arena may affect another merely by changing morale, as players carry a good or bad mood with them from one setting to another.

Arenas are similar to that favorite concept of sociologists, the institution. Taylor and Zald (2010: 305) define this as “a complex of roles, norms, and practices that form around some object, some realm of behavior in a society.” In line with this structural-functional concept, they claim that within the “common cultural understandings” that define the institution, there can be conflict over how to “enact” the values and roles (Taylor and Zald, 2010: 307), which is more or less the argument of Smelser (1962). Taylor and Zald go further down this strategic path, fortunately, saying that “institutions may actually be seen as made up of several institutional arenas.” The potential circularity of seeing institutions as institutional suggests that we might be better off simply observing the arenas rather than some mysterious entity behind them.



Because of these variations in both players and arenas, players can have a variety of relationships to arenas, and they usually have several kinds at the same time. They can play in an arena through formal standing, or through the standing of individual members. They can try to influence other players in an arena through personal networks, by persuading third parties such as the media, or by creating their own versions of other players (establishing their own media or fielding their own candidates for office, say). Some arenas are defined by the players in them, as in games or in legislatures (which could not exist without legislators). Some prove to be “false arenas”: as soon as a new player is admitted, the arena loses its influence (whether to enter such arenas, which are often intentional traps, is another dilemma [Jasper, 2006: 169]).

One kind of strategic project is to change arenas themselves. Some players may try to stabilize an arena to their advantage, or to change an existing one so that it favors them. Some arenas are changing constantly, without much stabilization; others are established for long periods, punctuated by sudden changes that can be dramatic and which are often unexpected. But all arenas can be changed or abandoned. When they are stable for long periods, it is not mere inertia, but the result of active support from interested players.

The positions they hold in arenas can help or hinder players, just as their resources and skills can. Like positions on a field of battle, positions in an arena such as a bureaucracy allow players to do certain things by providing them with a distinct bundle of rules and resources. They may still have to fight to enforce or bend those rules and to deploy those resources, despite the formalities of their positions. As Maarten Hajer (2009: 21) notes, highlighting the performance involved in politics, “In addition to this *de jure* authority, they have to create *de facto* authority by acting out their role in a sequence of concrete situations.” Some positions, like the high ground on a battlefield, are more advantageous than others, and a great deal of contestation centers around getting into good position. In some cases attaining standing in an arena is a key position, but then in addition there are different positions within that arena. Being elected to the US Congress is one thing, chairing an influential committee is another.

Arenas capture most of what has gone under the banner of structure. There are several levels of structures buried in the idea of an arena: literal structures are physical places that offer spaces to stand or sit, doors through which to enter and exit, recording devices for the media, possibly artificial lighting for nighttime uses, and of course constraints on how many people can fit comfortably or uncomfortably in the arena. Beyond these physical

characteristics, structure becomes more metaphorical: there are formal rules that some subplayer may be charged with enforcing; informal norms and traditions that can be broken but only at some cost in reputation; and other expectations that have to do with how the meeting was called and organized. It is easier to break an informal expectation than to walk through a wall.

Arenas embody past decisions, invested resources, and cultural meanings. A society's history as well as its patterns of inequality shape arenas, as well as shaping what happens in those arenas by affecting what players can bring to those arenas. These are indirect effects, compared to the direct effects of the interaction that unfolds in the arena itself. Randall Collins (2008: 20) contrasts background and situational factors in his micro-sociological account of violence. There are "factors outside the situation that lead up to and cause the observed violence. Some background conditions may be necessary or at least strongly predisposing, but they certainly are not sufficient; situational conditions are always necessary, and sometimes they are sufficient." He finds it useful to push as far as possible with the situational approach, in contrast to most explanations that rely on background conditions. Although I am sympathetic to this approach, there is far more work that goes into preparing players and arenas in advance than there is for most interpersonal violence.

There are arenas that a researcher must infer, but inferred arenas come in two forms. In one, we simply lack access: political leaders, corporate executives, and military commanders – the power elites – prefer to meet behind closed doors (cf. Allison and Zelikow, 1999). But we also infer arenas by aggregating large numbers of separate arenas. The paradigm here is the market, which sets a price out of many small transactions. Economists have made a discipline from such aggregations, as well as from pointing out the unintended (and often irrational) aggregate consequences of many uncoordinated (and in the eyes of economists, rational) choices. But these arenas are more metaphorical, living in summations of data rather than the lived experience of human beings. And as E.P. Thompson points out, "the market" in the abstract derives from real, physical marketplaces, where buyers and sellers used to meet every week or every month.<sup>6</sup>

The concept of an arena is similar in some ways to Pierre Bourdieu's popular idea of a field of conflict over clearly identifiable stakes. This was an advance over images of institutions as tightly integrated by norms and values, offering instead a strategic vision of them as sites for competition and conflict. Yet the idea of a field was never meant to do much institutional work; it is a "field of struggle" defined by the relations between players, some

dominant and others subordinate but all trying to improve their positions. It represents social structure, not institutional structure. Any formal rules are imposed by the “field of power,” namely the political system or the state, which structures the relations among arenas.<sup>7</sup>

A field’s form of competition is usually taken for granted, as though there were no choice of arenas or of major strategies within a field. Agreement is assumed to govern some parts of the field (cognitive understandings, goals, norms of behavior), while conflict governs others (competition for the stakes of the field), with a clear (perhaps unrealistically clear) boundary between them. The boundaries of fields are restricted, with little ability for players to open up new arenas or to innovate in their struggles. Fields also tend to be zero-sum, consisting of competition more than cooperation, even though most strategic action includes both. Fields are also extremely metaphorical. Fields are constructed by social scientists; arenas are built by the strategic players themselves. You can’t see a field, only imagine or draw it from data you collect. But you can sit in most arenas and watch the interactions. Even aggregate arenas such as the media consist of the summing up of lots of concrete arenas such as TV shows or websites.<sup>8</sup> Finally, fields homogenize players’ motives by building the stakes into the definition of the field: players cannot have multiple goals, only the goal offered by the field.

By distinguishing players, arenas, and players’ goals and capabilities (especially their resources and skills), we hope to better observe the interactions among them. Why do players choose the arenas they do, often switching from one to another? How do they adapt their capabilities to arenas, and choose arenas that best suit their capabilities? What positions do they hold in an arena, and what do these positions allow them to do? We can also observe when there are good matches and when there are mismatches between a player’s capacities and an arena. Players sometimes fail badly, or unexpectedly. By distinguishing arenas from players, we can also observe more dimensions of the arenas: formal rules versus informal traditions, status within the arena versus status outside it, soft and hard boundaries that define which players can participate. Players and arenas constantly adjust to each other, but they do not entirely define each other.

Conflicts among players often spill across arenas. They switch back and forth between battles over form and battles over content. They can even distort or change an arena. In what I call the Players or Prizes dilemma, for example, a player can pursue the standard stakes of an arena or instead devote its energy to defeating or harming its opponent (Jasper, 2006: 149). In bitter rivalries, there often end up being fewer rewards for everyone, as in nasty divorce proceedings from which only lawyers benefit (Jasper,

2010b). In civil wars, often, hatreds and vengeance threaten to crowd out all other goals.

The media are crucial players and arenas in politics. As players, reporters, editors, and others have their own perspectives on the issues, their own goals (usually audience size and profits), professional norms, and usual interventions. In arenas such as meetings, these insiders debate and decide what is news, what is the right tone for a fictional series, how to portray different characters. In doing their work they are influenced by the actions of external players. Political players fight hard to gain media coverage, even though they never entirely control that coverage, a dilemma that players always face when deciding whether to enter a new arena or not (Gitlin, 1980; Soberiaj, 2011). How they are portrayed in the media affects what they can do in other arenas. Because cultural understandings matter, Hajer (2009: 9) speaks of “the struggle to conduct politics at multiple sites, relating to a multiplicity of publics, and communicated through a multiplicity of media.”

We asked our contributors to consider the following questions about their players’ relationships to other players and to arenas. How does this player interact with protest groups: what conflicts, cooperations, tensions, dilemmas? Does it tend to follow one strategy or many? Does it have one arena to which it is restricted, or in which its capacities are especially useful? How and when does it choose to enter an arena or exit from one? What is at stake? How well are the player’s goals and means understood by outsiders, especially by protestors? What are protestors’ images and expectations about the other player? What expectations does it have about the protestors with which it interacts? What schemas, stories, and stereotypes does it deploy? What capacities does it have for bringing other players into the engagement? When does it try to do this? When does it succeed? What are its primary allies? What types of outcomes are there? Do they lead to new arenas or end here? How are new arenas created? Are there examples of “false arenas” that a player joins, only to find that the arena has been rendered ineffectual?

## Dynamic Interactions

Although the term “strategy” is often used – in business and the military – to refer to a plan drawn up in advance of interaction or battle, we use the adjective “strategic” to refer to efforts to get others to do what you want them to. I have suggested (Jasper, 2006: 5) that strategic approaches include not only the goals and means of players, but some possibility of resistance,

a focus on interaction, and projects oriented toward the future (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). A strategic theory need not assume resistance: some of the best strategies involve persuasion and the avoidance of conflict. Cooperation is a more common form of strategic interaction than conflict. And considerable strategic activity is internal to a group or organization, such as grappling with radical flanks. Only in the strategic back-and-forth of engagement can we ever achieve a fully dynamic picture of politics, in the plans, initiatives, reactions, countermeasures, mobilizations, rhetorical efforts, arena switches, and other moves that players make.

Our strategic approach highlights the trade-offs, choice points, and dilemmas that players face as they negotiate arenas. I have already mentioned Players or Prizes, the Articulation, the Bystander, and the False Arena dilemmas, but there are many more. Several appear in the pages that follow. For instance the Powerful Allies dilemma, when protest groups make some kind of connection with another player but often find that the other player twists them to its own ends rather than helping the protestors attain their own, arises with the news media and with intellectuals (Nicholls and Uitermark label this version of it the “Power of Representation dilemma”).

A great deal of sociology has been devoted to showing why people have fewer choices than they think. Social facts, structures, networks, institutional norms or logics all emphasize constraints. Various kinds of habits and routines are introduced to explain the stability of interactions, most recently in the guise of the habitus, an internalized set of dispositions for reacting in predictable ways even while improvising slightly within the set. Kathleen Blee (2012) has recently shown how protest groups establish decision-making routines in their first few months which they do not need to revisit. But all routines were originally choices, implicit or explicit. All changes to routines are also choices. And within certain routines, there are still choices to be made, especially in reaction to the actions of other players. The purpose of routines is to allow a group to focus its attention on new decisions. Decisions are still made, even when scholars avoid looking at them.

Some choices are tough ones, in which each option carries risks. For this reason, players often try hard to back their opponents into a position in which their options are limited and treacherous. Majken Sørensen and Brian Martin (2014) dub this “the dilemma action.” In many cases, they say, these actions force state agents to repress nonviolent protestors, leading to moral indignation in response. More generally, the point of these moves is to push an opponent to do something that conflicts with widely held or stated beliefs and values. In a way, protest itself is an effort to force authorities (or

other players) into actions they would prefer to avoid, whether concessions or repression or uncomfortable silence.

Scholars of protest and politics always think they are talking about strategy, but only game theorists are entirely explicit about what they mean.<sup>9</sup> Social-movement scholars have begun to pay more explicit attention to strategy lately. Holly McCammon (2012), for instance, emphasizes activists' agency in changing their strategies in response to emerging opportunities and contexts, although she still works with a linear model in which context and movement characteristics lead to strategic choices, which in turn lead to outcomes. The complex interactions between players are reduced to context: movements interact with contexts, rather than with other players. Two recent books examine the interplay between pairs of movements battling each other over time (Fetner, 2008; Bob, 2012), and an edited volume, based on a large 2007 conference, presents a dozen essays on various aspects of strategies of protest (Maney et al., 2012).

Sociology as a whole may be rediscovering strategy. In a powerful critique of neoinstitutionalists' tendency to focus on the constraints imposed by institutions, Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam (2012: 10-12) have extended Bourdieu's concept of fields, in which "[a]ctors make moves and other actors have to interpret them, consider their options, and act in response." Even in apparently stable fields, there is always "a good deal of jockeying for advantage." Strategic action fields are "socially constructed arenas within which actors with varying resource endowments vie for advantage." They retain some of the problems of the field, especially the conflation of players and arenas and its zero-sum competition. They give the example of the 2,500 colleges and universities in the United States, which normally compete with each other, but would "probably unite and oppose" proposed legislation against their collective interests. But instead of recognizing this unity as forming a new player (as I would), perhaps intended to lobby collectively in policy arenas, they see it as a new field. Finally, Fligstein and McAdam observe that a modern society contains millions of fields, making the concept less useful as a way of grappling with institutional constraints.

The great theories of arenas, namely political-opportunity-structure approaches to protest, have also gestured toward a more strategic vision. In his last formulation of political-opportunity structures, Charles Tilly (2008) insisted that each protest campaign reshapes the political landscape, which in turn offers different opportunities to the next campaign, and so on. To make this approach more fully dynamic, we only need to add the many expectations, choices, and reactions made by players *within* each round of contestation, or to drop the image of rounds altogether and recognize that

some sort of strategic maneuvering is always present. Arenas do not simply sit there statically waiting for the next round of challenge. Players work constantly to strengthen their positions, as Gramsci famously suggested.

Hanspeter Kriesi and his collaborators traced the complexities of the interaction between social movements and the state in greater detail than Tilly. But their language remained that of structural availability rather than strategic choices: “Overt facilitation of action campaigns of new social movements by a Social Democratic government is unlikely, because of the risk that such campaigns might get out of hand” (1995: 59). The risk seems objectively given, rather than something that government decision-makers might have to think about, might disagree about, and might try to manage in creative ways. The risks (known and unknown), the costs, and the benefits all add up to recurrent dilemmas. What is more, different segments of the state may face different dilemmas, or make different choices in the face of the same one. Kriesi and Donatella della Porta (1999) have described global protest as multilevel, international games. But all protest operates at different levels and across many arenas, whether those arenas are local, regional, national, global, or a combination of all of these. Arenas offer a kind of “mediation” between different players (Amenta, 2006).

When scholars reify arenas into static structures, they implicitly embrace a “lock and key” model of strategic engagement: protestors search for a weak spot that will allow them access to the polity. Their agency consists in trying a succession of keys. Cultural approaches sometimes fall into their own version of lock and key: activists try one frame after another until they hit upon one that resonates with audiences. Beneath such visions, it seems as though costs, benefits, and risks are already given rather than emerging and shifting constantly during engagements, due to all the players’ actions. In contrast, an interactive approach would see various players adapting to each other, anticipating moves, and trying actively to block opponents. Both sides are constantly moving targets.<sup>10</sup>

By looking at players in arenas, we highlight time, interaction, and process, all of which are obscured in more structural models. Pam Oliver (1989: 4) similarly talks about “these chains of action and reaction [that are] outside the control or direction of any person or organization.” According to two symbolic interactionists,

Process is not just a word. It’s shorthand for an insistence that social events don’t happen all at once, but rather happen in steps: first one thing, then another, with each succeeding step creating new conditions under which all the people and organizations involved must now negotiate the



next step. This is more than a theoretical nicety. It makes theoretical room for contingency. ... The interactionist emphasis on process stands ... as a corrective to any view that insists that culture or social structure determines what people do. (McCall and Becker, 1990: 6)

Tracing interactions over time will address the goals of the players, the rules of the arenas, the meanings players attach to those arenas, as well as the resources and skills that players bring with them or acquire in the arenas. We can also observe processes such as arena switching, alliance-building, and decision-making. We should also be able to see changes: the processes by which players emerge, change, and dissolve; the shifting boundaries and stakes of arenas. By analyzing interactions, and the choices various players make during them, we aim for a fully dynamic vision of how protest unfolds. Both structural and cultural approaches have rarely been able to move beyond static models, despite heroic efforts. Strategic models should do better.

## What Follows

We have brought together experts on the interactions between political protestors and the many other players with whom they interact, including components of the state, such as courts, police, legislators, armies, and unelected rulers (these contributions appear in Duyvendak and Jasper [2015]); related players such as unions and professions; cultural institutions such as universities, artists, mass media, and religious organizations; as well as other players in the social movement sector such as potential allies or competitors, recruits, or funders.

Each of the following chapters combines illustrative materials from case studies with theoretical formulations and hypotheses. More theoretical generalizations are possible for those players that have already been well studied, such as the media (just as protestors are obsessed with media coverage, so scholars sometimes seem obsessed with studying it). In other cases, authors stick closer to their case materials to tease out observations about interactions. In all cases, our aim is to advance explanations of how protest unfolds through complex interactions with other players.

Part 1 begins by taking the players usually known as social movements or movement organizations, and looking at them as arenas for internal conflict; it also looks at external players that are expected to be sympathetic and supportive to protestors. In Chapter 1, Francesca Polletta and Kelsy Kretschmer



address the scholarship that has tended to treat the causes of factionalism as internal to the organization, showing instead that groups' interactions with other players – government actors, funders, groups within this movement and others, and so on – have had divisive effects. Yet factional battles do not necessarily sound the death knell for the organization or even foreclose the possibility of future collaboration between breakaway organizations and their parents. Polletta and Kretschmer show how a strategic perspective can illuminate causes and consequences of factionalism, while also showing the compatibility of that perspective with a more cultural-structuralist one.

Ann Mische's Chapter 2 also looks inside movements, examining the communicative dilemmas generated by the fractal structuring of social movement arenas, in which major divisions among camps are mirrored in internal subdivisions at multiple levels, generating complex configurations of alliance and opposition. Mische shows how these internal subdivisions generate stylistic and strategic challenges for players, as they engage in symbolic and material battles over control of movement organizations and agendas. By analyzing the breakdown of a Brazilian student congress, she shows how commitments to styles of communication among movement leaders constrained them in dealing with moments of crisis, despite their own skilled efforts at mediation and alliance-building.

We then turn to external funders. Most research on the role of foundations in contentious claims-making has emphasized how patrons channel collective action in the direction of moderation and professionalization; this movement-centric view of foundations is illuminating in many ways but limiting in others. Ed Walker in Chapter 3 examines the factors that shape foundation giving in the health sector as well as how those funders provide resources to health advocacy organizations and social movement organizations (SMOs). Foundation giving is shaped more heavily by organizational and institutional pressures on foundations than by the mobilization of advocacy groups. In addition, foundations try to strategically align the interests of their donors with those of the advocacy groups they fund. The funding of SMOs serves as a covert marketing practice by the corporate parents of these foundations.

In Chapter 4 Christian Scholl looks at allies, in analyzing anti-summit protests as a chain of tactical interactions. Focusing on how different players create, shape, redefine, and reproduce political arenas, he examines five players, constituting, at the same time, arenas for dynamic interactions: counterglobalization movements, intergovernmental organizations, governments, police, and the media. Strategic interactions, especially through

tactical innovation and adaptation, neutralized the impact of anti-summit protests.

Part 2 turns to several types of formal organization that have strong identities and interests of their own, operating in markets: corporations, professions, and trade unions. These are sometimes allies of protestors, and sometimes – especially corporations – targets and opponents. Philip Balsiger's Chapter 5 looks at the interactions between movements and corporations using the case of the anti-sweatshop movement. He discusses the "influence chains" that movement players create outside of and within corporations to make firms change, and how firms comply with, confront, or sidestep movement demands. The interaction between movements and corporations may lead to the creation of new markets (arenas) by taking up some of the demands made by movement players.

In Chapter 6, Frank Dobbin and Jiwook Jung examine the growing power of corporations, through their control of resources, influence over the life chances of individuals, and role in protecting everything from the environment to the safety of individuals. Protest movements are increasingly addressed not to nation-states, but to corporations. Moreover, professional groups have increasingly taken on the role of social movements, both inside and outside the corporation. Thus the civil rights movement was taken up by personnel professionals, who promoted equal opportunity from their professional perches within the firm; the shareholder value movement was led by professional institutional investors who directed their activism at publicly held corporations.

Ruth Milkman looks at labor unions in Chapter 7. Beginning with the disconnect between the sociological literature on the labor movement and the larger literature on social movements, she explores the potential of the players-and-arenas perspective for analysis of unions and the labor movement. Milkman argues that unions and labor movements are different from the other players considered in this volume, in that they are both part of the "establishment" and at the same time agents of social protest. The US labor movement in particular plays both an "inside" and an "outside" game, although as its power and legitimacy have declined in recent decades, the balance has increasingly tipped toward the latter.

Part 3 examines players that generate or frame ideas and facts for broader audiences, as well as the general public that is often the target of these claims. In Chapter 8 Walter Nicholls and Justus Uitermark investigate the role of intellectuals within social movements, particularly the contradiction that intellectuals can be a force *for* movements but may also exercise power *over* others within movements. The chapter explores the resulting

Power of Representation dilemma – intellectuals have superior skills of representation but if they use them for the movement, they marginalize others within the movement – through a historical overview of how some activist intellectuals in the past have addressed and sought to resolve the dilemma. The chapter also examines the roles of intellectuals in the immigrant and LGBT rights movements in the United States.

In Chapter 9, Alissa Cordner, Phil Brown, and Margaret Mulcahy look at the strategic role of scientists and public health officials. Through a case study of state-level regulation of flame-retardant chemicals, situated in the larger context of anti-toxic legislation and environmental health controversies, they examine how various players interact in regulatory arenas and justify their positions through the language of science. Players identifying as scientists or activists often operate in overlapping arenas, make similar claims to scientific knowledge, and challenge conventional ideas about the separation of science from policy arenas.

In Chapter 10 Edwin Amenta, Neal Caren, and Amber Celina Tierney play out the image of arena as sports venue, in showing that although news coverage is crucial to the goals of social movements, the news media do not treat protestors as players analogous to institutional political actors. The media serve as a kind of referee for institutional political contenders, who are treated like star players, but act like stadium security guards or owners for protestors, who are treated like unruly fans or wannabe players and are usually barred from the discursive contests of the news. That said, protestors do often gain coverage, and sometimes favorable coverage, as the authors show through a review of the literature and recent research from the Political Organizations in the News project, which encompasses all articles published mentioning SMOs in several major US newspapers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Chapter 11, by Silke Heumann and Jan Willem Duyvendak, is about the interactions between religious organizations and protest movements. They ask when and why religious groups become political players, analyzing the involvement of Catholic and Evangelical churches in the Nicaraguan “pro-life” movement. These churches would seem to be a natural ally for the anti-abortion movement, but Heumann and Duyvendak demonstrate that alliances always require strategic work.

Hahrie Han and Dara Strolovitch, in Chapter 12, explore the relationships between bystander publics and social movements using the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street as case studies. Bystander publics that allied with the movement shaped each movement’s relationship to what scholars have come to call “intersectionally marginalized populations.” They also af-

fecting how each movement chose its targets and characterized economic problems and their victims. Rather than standing passively on the sidelines, many members of “bystander publics” are actively engaged in processes and institutions that build their democratic capacities (such as civic skills, motivations, and networks).

Finally, Jan Willem Duyvendak and Olivier Fillieule join forces in the conclusion to draw broader theoretical implications of the players-and-arenas approach for the study of social movements, linking the theory more to interactionist traditions. They also raise a number of useful questions about the differences between arenas and fields.

In addition to the chapters in this volume, a second volume is in production, called *Breaking Down the State*, which contains chapters on the players formerly known as the state: bureaucrats, legislators and parties, police and armies, infiltrators, and more. They apply the same players-and-arenas framework as the contributors to this volume, examining how these state agents interact with protestors.

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## Notes

1. I think that the players-and-arenas framework fits other relatively institutionalized strategic interactions as well, including markets, wars, diplomacy, electoral politics, sports, and more (Jasper, 2006).
2. Our ability to see a player as an arena and to see (some) arenas as players clarifies, I hope, a confusion in the concept of field: in some cases the field is defined more or less as a social movement, composed of individuals and organizations sharing goals, while in others it is broadened to include “the agencies, organizations, and countermovements that resist or aid the movement. ... In this usage, a field of contention is a structured arena of conflict

- that includes all relevant actors to whom a social movement might be connected in pursuing its claims” (Taylor and Zald, 2010: 308).
3. In Freud’s model of the Unconscious, materials are placed there because they are too dangerous to deal with consciously. In contemporary cognitive psychology, on the other hand, there are many processes with which we understand the world and use information that are unconscious only because they are so numerous that we can’t be aware of them all. I call them “feeling-thinking processes.” Some of them can be brought into awareness if we stop to think about them, others (such as biochemical signals) cannot be.
  4. I see this effort to talk about players and arenas rather than social movements and environments as parallel to Bruno Latour’s critique of “the social” as hopelessly vague and misleading, as when he says that “to explain is not a mysterious cognitive feat, but a very practical world-building enterprise that consists in connecting entities with other entities, that is, in tracing a network” (Latour, 2005: 103). For me, we explain politics when we assemble a long sequence of actions and reactions by players in arenas. (Although, unlike Latour, I prefer to restrict actors to humans, partly because emotions are central to action. Objects have causal impacts, but they do not have emotions.)
  5. In a similar effort, Christoph Haug (2013:710) defines a “meeting arena” as “a socio-political setting which evokes expectations regarding appropriate conduct, the existence of certain roles, the definition of the situation and other aspects of the interaction order that potential participants can expect to find during a meeting event in a particular arena.” Meeting arenas, he says, vary according to membership, rules, hierarchy, monitoring, and sanctions.
  6. Thompson (1993: 273) asks, “Is market a market or is market a metaphor? Of course it can be both, but too often discourse about ‘the market’ conveys the sense of something definite – a space or institution of exchange (perhaps London’s Corn Exchange at Mark Lane?) – when, in fact, sometimes unknown to the term’s user, it is being employed as a metaphor of economic process, or an idealization or abstraction from that process.” The same could be said of arenas, and we need to be clear about when we are speaking of a physical place and when we are speaking metaphorically.
  7. In *La Distinction* (1979), Bourdieu mapped social classes along two dimensions, those with more or less capital and their proportion (at any given level) of economic and cultural capital; for maps of the bourgeoisie alone, seniority in the bourgeoisie replaced the amount of capital. Although he assumed that classes and class fragments compare and compete with one another, these fields were simply maps of different groups or subcultures, grouped by variables of interest to the sociologist. They were means of describing potential players, not the arenas in which they compete.

His fields of cultural production are similar (Bourdieu, 1993). French literary figures of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century are spread across a two-dimensional

grid: more or less established (old or young), and more or less successful in the marketplace. The field is actually structured by the outcomes of artistic production, as a way of describing the players, not how they compete with each other. Arena characteristics disappear into the relative success of the players (“bohemia” versus “academy,” for instance). Players, arenas, and outcomes are fused in the field, and “the space of available positions” in a field seems to be determined outside each field, by other competitive fields such as universities, and not by the rules of the field itself.

Fields work better than arenas for Bourdieu because of his reluctance to acknowledge that individuals make conscious strategic choices, rather than being driven by the early socialization of habitus (Jenkins, 1992: 87). On the model of an electro-magnetic field, individuals are influenced by unseen forces emanating from the field itself rather than by self-conscious strategies arising from interactions with other players (Martin, 2003). Husu (2013) observes that fields have similar strengths and weaknesses as political opportunity structures.

8. An arena, which in Roman times could be used for spectacles as well as competitions, is usually well structured, but most conflicts cut across arenas. Strategic engagements are somewhat like Howard Becker’s “worlds,” which “contain people, all sorts of people, who are in the middle of doing something that requires them to pay attention to each other, to consciously take account of the existence of others and to shape what they do in the light of what others do. In such a world, people do not respond automatically to mysterious external forces surrounding them. Instead, they develop their lines of activity gradually, seeing how others respond to what they do and adjusting what they do next in a way that meshes with what others have done and will probably do next.” These activities move in and out of arenas. See Becker and Poussin (2006: 277). Lemieux (2011) finds historical limits to the concept of field, suggesting that Bourdieu’s more strategic concept of “*le jeu*,” a game or stakes, is a more general theoretical advance.
9. McCarthy and Zald (1977: 1217) commented, perspicaciously, “The concern with interaction between movements and authorities is accepted, but it is also noted that social movement organizations have a number of strategic tasks. These include mobilizing supporters, neutralizing and/or transforming mass and elite publics into sympathizers, achieving change in targets. Dilemmas occur in the choice of tactics, since what may achieve one aim may conflict with behavior aimed at achieving another. Moreover, tactics are influenced by interorganizational competition and cooperation.” Their otherwise useful hypotheses did not really highlight these dilemmas.
10. Interactionists have their own version of this structural trap, when the game itself is the center of attention and is allowed to define the players. It is then much like a field. I prefer to give players some (relative) autonomy from the games they play, which among other advantages allows them backstage (internal) preparation for external engagements.

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**Part 1**  
Insiders and supporters



# 1 Movement Factions

## Players and Processes

*Francesca Polletta and Kelsy Kretschmer*

In June 1966, leaders of the major civil rights organizations descended on Mississippi to continue a march across the state begun by activist James Meredith. Meredith had been rushed to the hospital when he was shot by a sniper. Despite the show of unity, tensions among the leaders of the march were near-boiling. Roy Wilkins withdrew the support of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) after the young activists of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) recruited an armed black group to provide protection for the marchers. SNCC activists had just deposed their longtime chair John Lewis in favor of the firebrand Stokely Carmichael, and Carmichael used the march to publicly challenge the movement's commitment to interracialism and nonviolence. After being arrested in Greenwood, he told a crowd after his release from jail, "This is the twenty-seventh time I have been arrested. I ain't going to jail no more. ... The only way we gonna stop them white men from whuppin' us is to take over. We been saying freedom for six years and we ain't got nothin'. What we gonna start saying now is Black Power" (quoted in Sellers, 1990: 166-167). The slogan created a national sensation, with commentators predicting black violence and reporters swarming into Mississippi to cover nightly rallies where chants of "Black Power" drowned out the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's chants of "Freedom Now." A beleaguered Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to hold the contending groups together and to continue to advocate for nonviolence. When marchers were attacked by local police wielding clubs and tear gas, King complained, "The government has got to give me some victories if I'm gonna keep people nonviolent" (quoted in Carson, 1981: 210).

Amid the tension on the march, there were moments of levity. SNCC activists said that Dr. King proved to be "easygoing, with a delightful sense of humor" (Sellers, 1990: 164). When two reporters jockeying for position to interview the leaders of the march broke into an argument, marchers watched with amusement. They began to chant, "Dissension in the ranks! Dissension in the ranks!" Reporters and cameramen got into the spirit of it too, chanting in return, "Press Power! Press Power!"

The episode points to the virtues of a strategic approach to factionalism. Where factional battles are often seen as an abdication of strategic good sense and as a sign of the organization or movement's disintegration, this episode reveals actors performing factional differences in strategic bids for support. Those bids were both competing and overlapping; note, in this respect, King's effort to play off Carmichael's militancy by suggesting that government concessions would help him to keep the movement nonviolent. The audiences for the bids were numerous and diverse. In addition to the government, both King and Carmichael (and Wilkins) were playing to local black Mississippians and Northern white supporters, to Northern urban blacks who had sat out the movement so far and to labor and liberal allies who were worried about new strains of separatism in the movement, to a national press and an international one. And they operated with a keen sense of the logics of the different arenas in which they were playing. They all knew that reporters wanted stories about movement infighting. That was the joke. (And the reporters' joke, in turn, centered on the performative aspect of Black Power. As Carmichael acknowledged privately, neither he nor anyone really knew what Black Power meant). The trick – the challenge – for activists was to capitalize on the logic of the arena while still playing on their own terms.

It was not, of course, that Carmichael and King and the others were only playing. Carmichael *was* angry and King surely *was* dispirited by the repudiation of nonviolence. And it was not that their strategies were fully worked out or necessarily effective. But the strategies were taken with an eye to the likely responses of other strategic players and with a sense of the goals that motivated them.

A strategic perspective departs from the literature on factionalism in at least two key respects. First, where the literature has tended to treat the causes of factionalism as internal to the organization, this perspective encourages us to see how actors outside the organization – police and state authorities, allies and opponents, funders, and the press – play key roles in the emergence of factions and in their trajectories. Certainly organizational structures affect the ways in which disputes take shape and are handled. But the research on the topic has yielded conflicting findings. Some scholars have argued that groups without a centralized structure are more likely to face factionalism because they lack a central authority to quell disputes (Gamson, 1990; Miller, 1983). Other scholars have argued that groups *with* a centralized structure are more likely to face organizational schisms because of their rigidity when it comes to embracing new issues (Valocchi, 2001). Small, exclusive organizations have been seen as more vulnerable

to factionalism because they require greater ideological and membership conformity (Zald and Ash, 1966). On the other hand, coalitions may be prone to dissolution because they drain resources from member organizations (Staggenborg, 1986).

Scholarship on the environmental conditions in which factions are likely to emerge is valuable in directing attention outside the organization (e.g., Balser, 1997; Staggenborg, 1986; Zald and McCarthy, 1980). But that scholarship does not go far enough, we argue, in capturing the interactional processes involved. It seems clear that movement actors interpret environmental changes (the passage of legislation, an offer of support by elites, and so on) through the lens of their previous interactions with the actor or agency in question. These suggest the value of thinking less in terms of environmental conditions than in terms of movement players' relationships with other players, and how the typical practices of each player may produce divisive pressures on movement groups.

The kind of strategic perspective developed in this volume departs from the literature, second, in treating factionalization as a process with multiple causes and uncertain outcomes. Social movement scholars have tended rather to see factional battles as sounding the death knell for the organization (McAdam, 1982; Piven and Cloward, 1977; Stern, Tarrow, and Williams, 1971). Certainly, factionalism has real and often lasting liabilities for the movement. Factional battles absorb activists' energies and undermine the group's esprit de corps (Benford, 1993). They communicate to supporters and the public that the organization is conflicted and fragile, and perhaps not worth supporting. They are easily played up by opponents as a way to discredit the movement as a serious political contender (Benford, 1993). Yet, scholars have also drawn attention to factionalism's upsides. Factional battles are absorbing, and the collective identity that develops within the contending groups can keep people in and involved in the organization long after they might ordinarily have drifted away (Benford, 1993; Hart and Van Vugt, 2006). Factional battles can help to clarify the group's agenda (Ghaziani, 2008) and to raise money from supporters concerned about extremists taking over (Haines, 1984). Organizational schisms can lead the expelled organization to reach out to new constituencies (Kretschmer, 2009; 2010) and give new momentum to the organization doing the expelling (Balser, 1997).

The point is not only that factionalism has benefits, but also that factional battles can unfold in different ways. We need to ask not only, when do factions emerge, but when do they become organizationally debilitating? Why are factional fights sometimes averted altogether or resolved once they have

begun? When factional battles do prove organizationally debilitating, do they necessarily foreclose the possibility of future collaboration? Again, to answer these questions requires examining not just the organizational conditions in which factions emerge, but also the interactions among diverse actors, within the organization and outside it, that trigger factional battles and shape their trajectories. Indeed, we will show that factions that have broken away in fury to found their own organizations have often ended up enjoying collaborative relationships with just those organizations. The conditions of the original schism matter less than interactions subsequent to the schism.

In line with a strategic perspective, then, we emphasize the influence of interactional processes rather than originating conditions. We see actors defining and pursuing their interests in interaction with diverse actors, who are themselves in interaction with other actors. We also want to press for an expansion of a strategic perspective, however, one that captures the fact that, to put it glibly, factional battles are so often about something else. Organizational members fight for a more democratic structure or more aggressive direct action and they do so, they say, for a combination of ideological and strategic reasons. But often, we argue, the battle is about other things: about newcomers' sense of being excluded from an inner core of longtime friends, about conflicts that are based on race or class rather than on tactical or ideological differences, or about old battles rather than new ones. It is not only that individuals and groups' goals are often multiple and sometimes unacknowledged. It is also that the choices that are on the table in a dispute – that is, the means with which to reach groups' goals – are viewed through the lens of preexisting frameworks of meaning. An option comes to be viewed as the “black” choice or the “strategic” option, not because of any logical connection to what is black or what is instrumental, but rather because of structures of symbolic associations that predate this particular battle. This necessarily complicates any account of factionalism's causes and of its effects. Of course, disputes within movements are also shaped by broad social conceptions of the political, the normative, and the strategic. But we believe it is worthwhile focusing on more recent, less deep-rooted cultural associations. Doing so, we argue, demonstrates the compatibility of a cultural structuralist perspective with a strategic one.

## Players

We begin by identifying some of the external actors who often play a role in factional battles. They do not act unilaterally; instead, we emphasize the

interactions between (incipient) factional movement groups and the media, government agencies and actors, and other movements.

*Government* actors and agencies' actions may create conflict both by creating new leverage for a group within an organization that has not had much power in the past and by confronting movement groups with difficult and divisive strategic choices. As an example of the first dynamic, when the American government passed the National Industry Recovery Act (1933) and the Wagner Act (1935), giving workers the right to organize, John Lewis of the United Mine Workers saw an opportunity to organize workers in the basic industries, who were largely unrepresented by the craft-based American Federation of Labor. The AFL refused to organize along industry lines and expelled the new Congress of Industrial Organizations, which became a rival federation (Balser, 1997; Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, 2003).

As an example of the first and second dynamics, in 1961, Attorney General Robert Kennedy offered SNCC activists Justice Department protection and foundation funding to launch a Southern voter registration campaign. The offer was appealing to some within SNCC who were already interested in voter registration work, but others were suspicious. SNCC was getting massive national publicity for the freedom rides, interracial bus rides that were provoking Southern white mob violence and, as a result, federal intervention. Kennedy was trying to buy the group off, some said, by pushing them into a form of activism that was simply less contentious. The battle within the group between proponents of direct action and voter registration was fierce and threatened to tear the organization apart. It was resolved first by creating direct action and voter registration wings of the organization, and then by joining the two forms of action (Carson, 1981).

*Police, FBI, and other repressive agencies* also confront movement groups with difficult and often conflict-producing strategic choices. When police come down hard on demonstrators, activists must decide whether to adopt less assertive strategies. Some within the group may see retreat as the better part of wisdom. Others may argue for provoking the police still further, with the hope that police overreaction will make for good media copy. And still others will be so angered by their experience that they cannot really conceive of retreat, whether they argue in strategic terms or not.

As Lipsky pointed out, "Police may be conceived as 'street-level bureaucrats' who 'represent' government to people" (1970: 1). This helps to explain why in new left groups in the United States, Germany, Italy, and Japan, some members radicalized, factionalized, and went underground after the death of a group member or someone close to the group at the hands of police (Zwerman, Steinhoff, and della Porta, 2000). Police actions



delegitimized the state for some members of the group and threw them into conflict with those who were unwilling to turn to illegal measures (della Porta and Fillieule, 2004). Police repression of Russian Bolsheviks in the 1890s contributed to a rift between intellectuals and working-class members of the party by inflating intellectuals' sense of bearing the costs of radicalism at a time when the working class were hunkering down to survive economically (Brym, 1988).

Police do not inevitably come down hard on protesters. To the contrary, police are strategic actors too, trying just as hard to read the likely consequences of their actions not only on protesters, but also on reporters and local elites. When Southern sheriffs began to back off from the violence of water hoses and attack dogs unleashed on civil rights protesters, they created conflict within the civil rights movement on what to do next. Direct action depended on violent overreaction for its effect. When it no longer achieved that, some of those who had been ideologically committed to nonviolent direct action began to question its utility (Von Eschen, Kirk, and Pinard, 1969). Activists try to anticipate authorities' next move, but what makes it more difficult is that police agencies operate on the basis of logics that are bureaucratic as much as oriented to objective criteria of threat or danger. The Federal Bureau of Investigation's COINTELPRO (COunter INTELligence PROgram) in the 1960s identified national left and black organizations as a threat, and then targeted local chapters of those organizations – whatever their size, level of militancy, or capacity to organize disruptive actions (Cunningham, 2003).

Police agencies may also play a direct role in producing movement conflict. When the FBI infiltrated the anti-Vietnam War organization Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) as part of COINTELPRO, infiltrators were instructed to play up the battle between the Progressive Labor and National Office factions within SDS (Marx, 1979). More generally, the suspected presence of infiltrators may undermine the relations of trust within the group. Betty Friedan apparently believed that lesbians in the National Organization for Women (NOW) were being controlled by the FBI, and this was why she did not take their concerns more seriously, she said later (Rosen, 2000). If the person you are disagreeing with may be a government spy, it is hardly worth the effort to try to work through your differences with them.

*Media* players are undeniably important to movement groups' chances for success. And media coverage poses all kinds of strategic choices for movement groups, choices that can create sharp conflict. If the press asks to speak to your "leader," do you insist that you have no leaders, even if the

reporter is likely to hang up and find someone who is willing to call herself a leader? Do you continue to speak to the press even if it keeps misrepresenting you? What makes it even more difficult and divisive, we believe, is that activists rarely know just what the effect of media coverage will be. They know that reporters are drawn to stories of movement infighting, but is such coverage good or bad for the movement? Some have argued that coverage of movement groups, whatever its tenor, publicizes the group as a legitimate political actor (Rohlinger, 2006). By contrast, in their survey of coverage of American protest groups, described in Chapter 10, Amenta and his colleagues found that when stories centered on group infighting, the group's main demands were less likely to be covered.

It is difficult to choose a strategic option if the likely consequences are unclear. Could SDS activists have known that media coverage of the group in 1965 would attract not only scores of new members, but also a new kind of member – less politically serious, more radical for radicalism's sake? The new members would not only strain the group's tight-knit community but also introduce a confrontational stance that figured as one side in factional battles that enveloped the group in 1965 and 1966 (Gitlin, 1980). SNCC workers deliberately sought out white Northern student volunteers to bring publicity to the Southern struggle, publicity they knew that a group of black activists would not get. Still, when the publicity was forthcoming, and centered almost exclusively and admiringly, on the white students, SNCC activists were frustrated. Factional battles that later took place over the place of whites in the movement had their roots in part in the media coverage that SNCC had sought.

Finally, arguments about the deleterious effects of media coverage may be fueled by sheer resentment on the part of people in the group: why is that person or that group or that tactic getting all the attention? Emotional arguments and strategic ones are not necessarily at odds; but, given the privileged place of strategy in movement deliberations, it may be easy to express (and even experience) one's resentment about one's treatment in the group as a strategic complaint.

*Supporters and allies* are important audiences for movement groups' actions, as well as players in their own right. Group members who are in close contact with funders, providers of legal support, and other allies are probably more sensitive to the dangers of alienating them than are members who are not. They may be firm defenders of a more moderate strategy (Bevington, 2009). On the other hand, some members' proximity to elites may become a bone of contention, whether or not those members counsel moderation. Battles may be prompted by groups seeking to appeal

to a different set of supporters and allies. In 1967 SNCC chairperson Stokely Carmichael refused to continue making speeches to white audiences. He said that he was coming under fire from black groups for the hypocrisy of calling for a black movement and taking speaking engagements only with white audiences. The dilemma, of course, was that white audiences could pay better (Carson, 1981).

Movement groups and subgroups interact with *other movements and movement groups*, and these external players can also contribute to factionalism. A group's ability to lure recruits away from other movement groups is a sign of success. But new members may bring with them values and perspectives that are foreign or unwelcome to the original group members. For example, relatively soon after its founding, the National Organization for Women began attracting the younger, more radical women associated with the women's liberation movement (Echols, 1989). New members pushed for new sets of priorities, in particular, more aggressive stands on issues like abortion. But veteran members worried that such a stand might alienate the more conservative women that the movement desperately needed. The influx of new members led eventually to the exit of conservative Midwestern women, who went on to form the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) (Kretschmer, 2010). The environmental direct action group Earth First! attracted activists from the peace, labor, and feminist movements, who eventually pressed for a social justice focus that was at odds with the founders' focus on biocentrism and led to an organizational schism (Balsler, 1997). The environmentalist Sierra Club was plunged into a factional battle over whether to propose a tighter immigration policy after anti-immigration activists flooded the organization in a deliberate attempt to take over the organization (King, 2008).

Other movements may also play a less direct role in internal movement battles. They may be less a recruiting ground or hijacker than a desired ally or competitor. For example, Students for a Democratic Society expelled the Progressive Labor faction within the group when they were directed to do so by the Black Panther Party. The Black Panthers had no formal authority over SDS, but the group was eager to prove its allegiance to a black nationalist agenda and the Panthers had decided that Progressive Labor was at odds with that agenda (Balsler, 1997). Similarly, in SNCC, those who forced the expulsion of whites from the organization in 1966 insisted that remaining interracial would cost the group alliances with black nationalists as well as recruiting opportunities among Northern urban black youth (Carson, 1981).

So far, we have emphasized the difficult choices presented to movement groups by external actors. Some people within the group may believe that

one option, say, responding aggressively to police repression, makes the most sense, and others may disagree. That may lead to difficult and sometimes debilitating battles. However, movement groups are rarely of one mind even before they are confronted with these difficult choices. There were SNCC activists who wanted to shift to voter registration well before the Justice Department proposed just that; in fact, those activists eagerly courted administration officials. In this respect, we need to think of incipient factional groups as strategic actors themselves, looking to impress their goals on sometimes reluctant organizational comrades. In other words, although external actors sometimes force divisive choices on groups, more often, those choices are taken up and promoted by players within the group. This is especially clear when it comes to outside movement groups. The SNCC activists who argued that expelling whites would increase their credibility with Northern urban black youths had already defined their goals as in line with those being promoted by black nationalist groups. Their identification with a black nationalist agenda preceded their recognition of the benefits of appealing to young black Northerners. Movement organizations are thus themselves arenas of contention. People within the group see and act on opportunities to press their goals and priorities by interpreting signals from outside the group.

Note also that groups within the organization or movement may be motivated less by their determination to press a particular tactic or agenda or to increase their own influence than by more fundamental identity concerns. Organizational schisms emerged in the Italian Communist Party, the Church of England, and a right-wing Italian party when some within the group came to believe that a planned change threatened the group's fundamental identity (Sani, 2008). Dissidents felt that the organization was not what it had been, that it had lost touch with its original purpose, and that they had no kinship with the future of the organization. In the Amsterdam squatters' movement, those who argued for escalating the struggle did so on the basis of a story about the movement's past victories that, despite its inaccuracy, captured their sense of who they were (Owens, 2009). Indeed, it is probably rare that contenders' goals are purely instrumental.

That said, we have argued that even groups that are unified around a common goal and means of achieving it are vulnerable to disputes. Activists struggle to predict the likely actions of other political players (both within and outside the organization) and to predict how those actions are likely to be interpreted by diverse audiences. Not only do movement players face hard choices, they do so with limited information. You may not know that the guy who is arguing so persuasively for

breaking with the group's commitment to nonviolence is an FBI agent. You may not be able to predict that the eager new members you have recruited to the group will bring in a sensibility that is at odds with that of veterans. You may not know that the people who are arguing vociferously against having anything to do with the press are mainly resentful that they have never been interviewed. You may not know that some of the people who are arguing just as vociferously to keep talking to the press brought the issue up because they wanted to force out members whom they saw as politically impractical. People's goals are multiple, ambiguous, and often opaque, even to themselves. That makes anticipating their actions difficult. In particular, we have argued that external actors like the police, press, and government agencies operate on the basis of institutional logics that may lead them to behave in ways that are difficult to anticipate. These sources of uncertainty undermine activists' ability to avoid potentially divisive internal conflicts. They suggest, however, that we pay attention to the conditions in which groups are able to defuse or resolve such conflicts.

### **Factional Battles Defused, Diverted, or Overcome**

When are factional battles defused or overcome? There is surprisingly little attention to this question in the social movement literature. In a study of church factionalism, Dyck and Starke (1999) found that churches that brought in external mediators were less able to overcome their conflicts and prevent the faction from leaving the church than those that relied on internal mediators. But the line between internal and external when it comes to mediating factional battles may be nuanced. Factional battles in a number of movements have been defused by the presence of movement mediators: people who are respected by members of the group, indeed, are seen as part of the group or close to the group, but are not seen as invested in the conflict. They are above the fray. For example, in 1961 the battle in SNCC over the merits of voter registration or direct action was defused when SNCC advisor Ella Baker suggested that group pursue both strategies simultaneously. Baker was older than SNCC members, had experience in a variety of movements, and took special pains not to be seen as directive, even though, former SNCC activists acknowledge now, she was tremendously influential (Polletta, 2002). Longtime pacifist A. J. Muste was famous in the peace movement for mediating among contending factions. Marguerite Rawalt, a highly respected lawyer and founding member of

NOW, served as a bridge among feminists and more conservative women's organizations in the 1970s, helping the otherwise antagonistic groups cooperate on gender discrimination lawsuits (Paterson, 1986). Leaders in the 1980s Brazilian student movement who were positioned at the intersection of multiple institutions (party politics, religion, professional associations, and popular protest) drew communicative resources from those institutions to bridge factional groups within the movement (Mische, 2008).

Along with the availability of a mediator, taking actions designed to make a factional group feel that it has a voice in the organization seems to be important to avoiding schism. Sani's (2008) study of factionalism in the Church of England and in Italian political groups showed that when groups were convinced that they would continue to have a role and voice in the organization, in other words, that their dissent would not marginalize them, they were unlikely to secede from the organization.

Organizational and movement cultures variously supply incentives and resources for defusing infighting – or for stoking it. In SNCC in the early 1960s, it was perfectly appropriate in the middle of a fierce battle over strategy to pause and ask everyone to hold hands and sing “We Shall Overcome.” In SNCC after 1965, such a proposal would have met with derision. In progressive movements more generally during that period, sticking to a rigid ideological line that brooked no compromise was seen as a marker of one's commitment and radicalism. A propensity for interpersonal conflict and factional battle was a favored activist style. In Brazilian student politics of the 1990s, an embrace of “nonsectarianism” became the favored activist style. Activists who had come of age in the late 1980s were much more used to overtly partisan contention; in this new climate, factions seemed to one-up each other in their renunciation of factionalism (Mische, 2008).

In their study of radically democratic German movement groups, Rothschild and Leach (2007) found “conflict avoidant” cultures, where members strove to avoid battles, and ignored hierarchies of influence when they showed signs of emerging, and “fight” cultures, where members thrived on internal battles. The organizations attracted people with contentious or conflict-averse sensibilities, and then members perpetuated those styles. All the organizations were formally participatory democratic, but they practiced their commitments in very different ways, and behavior that might have caused an organizational crisis in the conflict-avoidant groups was seen as normative in the fight-oriented groups. This suggests, again, that a group's formal organizational structure may not predict its propensity to factionalism: its culture matters, too.

## After the Schism

If movement scholars have tended to treat factionalism as leading straightforwardly to organizational schism, they have tended even more to see organizational schisms as permanent. But they may not be. In her study of 14 organizations that broke away from the National Organization from Women between 1968 and 2009, Kretschmer (2009; 2010) found that the conditions in which the new organization was founded did not account for whether the group ended up later in a supportive or conflictual relationship with NOW.

What accounted for the different scenarios? Conflict between the breakaway group and NOW was often hardened when the new organization allied with a different movement. The new alliance often led the breakaway organization to accentuate its differences of priority with NOW. That dynamic was exacerbated by an influx of new members from the allied movement. For example, the October 17<sup>th</sup> organization, so named for the day it split from NOW (it later changed its name to The Feminists), was readily absorbed by the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM). Members of the WLM frequently accused NOW of mimicking oppressive male systems and criticized its hierarchical organizational structure and reform-oriented goals. Despite continuing friendships between The Feminists' founder Ti-Grace Atkinson and NOW leaders, The Feminists recruited WLM activists who would have nothing to do with NOW. The Feminists formally disavowed any connection to NOW, and refused to participate in any event run by NOW (Kretschmer, 2010). Similarly, Feminists for Life (FFL), a splinter group that disagreed with NOW's abortion stance, initially tried to collaborate with NOW on other issues. At the same time, however, the group was enthusiastically embraced by the religious pro-life movement, which invited FFL to its conferences and meetings. As more religious women joined FFL, its pro-life identity began to supersede its feminist identity. It began to cast NOW, along with other feminist organizations, as enemies to be fought (Kretschmer, 2010).

Allying with another movement drew breakaway organizations into permanent conflict with the parent because contrasting themselves to the parent helped in marketing the group to new audiences. However, the character of breakaway organizations' long-term goals mitigated these pressures. When breakaway organizations maintained the institutional reform goals held by the parent, the new group was likely to deemphasize the prior conflict between the organizations. For example, Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) formed when a faction of Midwestern women broke with NOW after a series of unpopular policy stances taken by leaders. Despite the contentious break and continued conflict with NOW president Betty



Friedan, founder Elizabeth Boyer insisted that WEAL present a united front with NOW to audiences outside the movement. The two organizations frequently met with congressional representatives together and provided opportunities for each other to testify before Congress about gender equality. WEAL leaders intentionally downplayed conflict with NOW to institutional elites, believing that a united feminist movement would produce greater pressure for legal reforms. Together, these cases suggest that where allying with other movements pulls organizations born of schism farther apart, the pressures of reform politics may pull them back toward each other.

### Structure and Strategy

So far, we have sketched some of the ways in which a strategic, processual approach that is focused on players operating in fields in which other players are also operating is useful in understanding the causes and consequences of factionalism. Activists are strategic when they fight as much as when they cooperate. They battle, break away, and refuse to collaborate down the road when it makes good sense. But this is not the good sense of game theory. As we have shown, activists are driven as much by identity as by interest, and as much by anger and resentment as by a cool calculation of costs and benefits. They are motivated by goals, but goals that are multiple, ambiguous and changing.

This is a complex picture. To gain analytic purchase on strategic choice in the swirl of multiple players, audiences, and arenas, complex goals, and ambivalent emotions, Jasper (2004) introduces the concept of strategic dilemmas, a concept that is developed in this volume. We, too, have referred to strategic dilemmas in accounting for activists' choices. But, as we discuss in these concluding pages, we also believe that the concept of strategic dilemmas makes only partial sense of what is often at stake in factional battles. Accordingly, we argue for integrating more of a cultural structuralist perspective into the strategic one developed in this volume.

Dilemmas are difficult choices, choices with trade-offs: for example, whether to try to speak to a broad constituency or mobilize the faithful (the Extension dilemma), whether to focus on one agenda item or multiple ones (the Basket dilemma), whether to use unsavory means for virtuous ends (the Dirty Hands dilemma). Not all movement groups face all the same dilemmas, nor do they experience or respond to them in the same way, but they do encounter these dilemmas with enough regularity that we can use their experiences to build a more sociological understanding of the



dynamics of strategic choice. Internal movement conflicts are especially revealing in this regard, as they usually involve people struggling with these dilemmas (Jasper, 2004: 10). Conflicts shed light on which groups typically encounter certain dilemmas, as well as which people in the group are likely to be invested in one solution rather than another, why certain dilemmas seem more dilemmatic than others, and what the trade-offs end up being. Practically, this also means that groups should be able to mitigate conflicts by drawing attention to the dilemmas that underpin them (Jasper, 2004).

Again, in our discussion, we have drawn attention to many of the strategic dilemmas that Jasper identifies. But here is the problem. Factional battles are often not what they seem to be about. They are often not even what activists think they are about. That means that a well-meaning activist who tried to convince the contenders to focus on the dilemma that was dividing them would not be especially successful. For example, when in 1964 and 1965, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was riven by a battle over the merits of participatory democratic organization, it seemed like a classic iteration of Jasper's Organization dilemma. Some SNCC activists, led by executive secretary James Forman, argued that the organization's new size and political stature demanded that it implement more hierarchical and centralized decision-making. Others, led by Mississippi organizer Bob Moses, protested that doing so would stifle the initiative that had been responsible for the group's greatest successes.

The problem with this characterization is that the battle was also, and over time, centrally, about race. Proponents of participatory democracy, "freedom highs," were cast as intellectual, self-indulgent, and white. "Hard-liner" proponents of centralized and top-down organization were, increasingly, black. By the end of the battle and the triumph of the hardliners, most whites had left the organization. So, perhaps one could say, in Jasper's terms, that the real dilemma was the racial one. It was about the place of whites in an organization that had always been both proudly interracial and a predominately black student movement (the Extension dilemma). But that rendering would miss, first, the way in which the two battles were connected. In an important sense, the battle over organizational structure allowed black activists to begin to articulate their complaints about whites. It did not so much reflect preexisting racial conflicts as it helped to forge them, along with the collective identities on which they were based. Second, it would miss the fact that once participatory democracy had come to be seen as white (and as ideological, self-indulgent, as antithetical to power and strategy), it became difficult to argue for participatory democracy, both in SNCC and in a variety of movements since then, *as strategic* (Polletta, 2005).

The larger point is that the very criteria for assessing options – as strategic or ideological, practical or naive – are shaped by cultural structures that predate this particular instance of decision-making.

We want to distinguish this point from a more familiar structuralist perspective. Such a perspective would claim to be able to predict contenders' goals in a factional battle from their social position. It would predict that veterans would have a stake in whatever options allowed them to keep the power that came with seniority while newcomers would be much more willing to rock the boat (Barakso, 2004; Staggenborg, 1991). Groups would often fragment along lines of race, gender, class, religion, and sexuality (Zald and Ash, 1966; Benford, 1989; Stark and Bainbridge, 1985). In this perspective, activists have agency, but the explanatory emphasis is on patterns of conflict that have their origins outside the group and have little to do with the actions of this group's members. Groups' structural position shapes how they understand what is at stake in a dispute and what they want from it.

We argue that what is structured is less people's goals than how the options for meeting those goals are viewed: as strategic or ideological, as bourgeois or radical. These views are structured in the sense that they are logically arbitrary and they are resistant (though not immune) to challenge. Unlike a structuralist approach, this one would expect that most contenders would view the options in the same way. Indeed, the surprise is that they would do so, even though, given their goals, they might be expected to evaluate an option quite differently. For example, when the anti-nuclear Clamshell Alliance was wracked by a battle between members who were committed to strict consensus and those who were willing to relax the requirement of strict consensus in the interests of political efficacy, most members interpreted it as a conflict between values of egalitarianism and instrumentalism. When, in a debate over whether to illegally occupy the Seabrook nuclear plant, some members argued that a plant occupation was not successful if it did not produce a "grassroots movement," their position was seen as privileging egalitarianism over instrumentalism (Downey, 1986: 370). But why was galvanizing local activism seen as the expression of an egalitarian commitment rather than an instrumental one – even by those who argued for it? In fact, initially it was not seen that way. The conflict between instrumentalists focused on stopping the construction of the Seabrook nuclear power plant and egalitarians committed first to eradicating domination within their own ranks developed over time. To understand the factional battle, we need to understand how some practices came to be associated with an egalitarian commitment and some came to be associated with an instrumental one.

What is striking here is the association of particular strategies, tactics, targets, organizational forms, or deliberative styles with particular groups of people. To argue for that strategy, tactic, target, form, or style then is taken as a sign of one's allegiance to that group. In similar fashion, to argue for a bureaucratic structure in the women's liberation movement was to align oneself with men and the political establishment. That association was not only more important than assessments of bureaucracy's effectiveness; it also structured assessments of bureaucracy's effectiveness. To argue for participation in government-sponsored public forums in the 1990s South African environmental movement was to define oneself against the disruptive protest tactics used during the apartheid era, and by association, against the radical commitments of that era (Barnett and Scott, 2007). To adopt a partisan style in the Brazilian student movement of the late 1980s was to identify oneself with opportunistic and corrupt party politics (Mische, 2008).

Elsewhere, Polletta (2006) has argued that one can get at the symbolic shaping of strategic choice by studying the metonymic associations between people, on the one hand, and strategies, tactics, and forms, on the other, that emerge in internal movement deliberations. When SNCC workers attacked a "freedom high" penchant for loose structure as white and as the cause of the group's organizational paralysis, they not only ignored the fact that many people arguing for loose structure, initially at least, were black; they also failed to explain how implementing top-down structure would supply the programmatic initiative that was desperately needed. When union officials in the 1960s farm workers' movement rejected boycotts and marches as "not the union way" (Ganz, 2000), the "union way" stood in for a variety of things: political secularism, an unwillingness to engage in moral and emotional appeals, and an approach that was not that of the civil rights movement or a religious campaign. The shorthand indicated the conventionality of the association; but it also prevented union representatives from considering tactics that might have served their unions' cause.

As the examples above suggest, the symbolic associations that structure strategic choice are not set once and for all time. Indeed, they sometimes shift within a single movement organization over the course of a few years. Participatory democracy was appealing in SNCC in the early 1960s because it was seen as "black"; only a few years before it became decisively, and debilitatingly, seen as "white." To say that marches were "not the union way" would have made little sense to labor activists for much of the movement's history. Activists can also deliberately try to change the symbolic associations of a given option, as some feminists did with respect to bureaucratic

organizational forms in the 1970s and 1980s. They are sometimes successful. In other words, the cultural constraints created by the prevailing structure of symbolic associations can be overcome, just as a deficit of funding or the demobilizing efforts of a repressive regime can be overcome. But often they are not overcome, with predictable consequences.

## Conclusion

Factional battles are absorbing and enervating. Contending groups often have a sense that *everything* is at stake in the battle; that what might seem to outsiders a trivial tactical difference is actually a dispute about what the organization most fundamentally is. We have argued that they are not wrong. There are often difficult strategic dilemmas involved in factional battles but there are also questions about whose organization or movement it is: whites or blacks, newcomers or veterans, radicals or moderates. What makes it complicated is that those identity questions are often expressed – and experienced – in terms of strategy. Veterans argue for the tactical superiority of an option because it is *their* tactic. What makes it even more complicated is that once a strategy, tactic, or form gets associated with one social group (with whites or radicals, newcomers or men), it becomes difficult to argue for or against the option without being heard as arguing for or against the group.

The latter is just one of the ways in which groups outside the movement organization shape the battles that take place within it, albeit, in this case, through symbolic association rather than direct action. In this chapter, we have argued against the standard treatment of factionalism in terms of the organizational conditions that facilitate or inhibit it. Instead, we have depicted activists interacting with a variety of actors, within the movement and outside it. When the police clamp down on protesters, some within the group may argue for pulling back and others for pressing ahead more assertively. Their arguments may be strategic; they may be strategic and emotional; they may be emotional posing as strategic. When another movement group that this movement group admires pushes it to take a particular line on membership or tactics or targets, some within the group may argue for the staying true to the group's original mission on ideological grounds; some within the group may argue for doing that on strategic grounds; and some may argue against doing that – either on strategic or ideological grounds. External actors such as the police, government agencies, other movement groups, and the media push movement groups into making choices and often those choices divide group members.

Rather than seeing organizational schism as the inevitable denouement of factional battle, we have pointed to several factors – some clearly within the control of activists, others less so – that may play a role in moderating or resolving factional disputes and preventing organizational schism. But even an organizational schism does not necessarily spell the demise of the relationship. In a second departure from the standard treatment of factionalism, we have rejected a view of factionalism leading inevitably to permanent organizational schism. A group that breaks away in fury from its parent organization may end up working collaboratively with it. The ferocity of the schism seems to matter less to the prospects for future collaboration than the group's assessment down the road of the benefits of working with their former antagonist. Again, however, it is difficult to separate strategy from identity: radical groups might be served well by collaborating with moderate groups, but they are unlikely to even consider that possibility.

In sum, activists are strategic actors as much when they battle one another as when they cooperate. They are not only strategic actors, however, and their ideas about what counts as strategic are shaped by cultural associations that they sometimes challenge but more often do not.

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## 2 Fractal Arenas

### Dilemmas of Style and Strategy in a Brazilian Student Congress<sup>1</sup>

*Ann Mische*

The dilemmas underlying all forms of social movement mobilization can be difficult to see from the standpoint of movement success. When things go well, it seems obvious that the choices and trade-offs made along the way were the right ones for the right times; any previously experienced tensions, ambivalences and uncertainties are easy to sweep under the carpet of memory. When things do not go as planned – despite the skilled, committed and strenuous efforts of organizers – such dilemmas can become more evident to the retrospective eye (although postmortem evaluation sessions can be painful and difficult). But when we observe a fraught episode of movement breakdown unfolding forward – watching the hopes, strategies, mobilization efforts, disappointments, and repair attempts of contending camps develop interactively over time – those dilemmas can leap into clear relief. In such episodes, the tensions generated by the internal complexity of movement arenas become particularly salient and visible, and the interaction of durable relations, individual choices, and situational contingency is particularly potent and fierce.

In this chapter, I analyze a case of the breakdown of an internally fractious movement arena, looking at the interaction of leadership styles and strategies in the dispute over power in a flagship student organization. I focus on the often contentious political arenas that are internal to social movements, in which different camps, factions, and leaders dispute organizational power, access to resources, ideological platforms, action plans, and coalitional tactics. Beyond these explicit stakes, there is often a deeper symbolic contest as well. Actors are disputing the meaning and practice of core political values – democracy, justice, revolution – as differentially interpreted and performed by movement actors. While these symbolic battles are conditioned by – and aim to direct and control – the movement’s positioning in broader political fields, they are also directed internally, toward the local “rules of the game” and the formal procedures and informal practices by which the movement itself is organized.

I discuss how these dynamics unfolded in the 1997 annual congress of Brazil’s historic National Student Union (UNE), held at the Federal



University of Minas Gerais. This congress marked UNE's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a cause for ritual celebration of UNE's historic role in the country's debates and struggles. Thousands of student delegates gathered in Belo Horizonte, representing department-based student organizations from universities around the country. Most students were also associated with national and local political factions linked to an array of left-of-center political parties. The congress began with high hopes from the contending camps. UNE's governing faction (associated with the Communist Party of Brazil [PCdoB]) hoped to build bridges with rival factions and perhaps create a united mega-slate. An emergent alliance of left-wing parties and factions hoped to create a "unified front" of the left to contest control of UNE. And the moderate center-left factions hoped to expand their visibility and share of the leadership pie.

However most of these efforts fell through as the congress imploded, leaving all of the political forces except the communists split into pieces. Nearly a third of the registered delegates withdrew from the congress altogether in a dramaturgic display of public repudiation. Badges and banners were burned, T-shirts turned backwards, and angry drums resounded through the final plenary as furious delegates marched out of the stadium. Not only did the congress not end in unity (which no one had really expected), but it also resulted in the internal splintering of most of the forces and the rejection of the legitimacy of the congress altogether by a large proportion of the participants. While UNE was certainly not destroyed by this episode – it had too strong a position of symbolic and material value in the Brazilian political field – the near collapse of the congress intensified media critiques of UNE, left its scars on the contending factions, and contributed to a realignment of forces within the student movement.

Why did this political arena break down so dramatically? Why were the leaders unable to articulate the strong alliances that they had predicted so optimistically at the outset? And why did the tumultuous congress lead not simply to ideological and electoral polarization, but to the internal splitting of camps and mutual accusations of anti-democratic, morally unethical, and politically hypocritical behavior? In many of the postcongress internal discussions, this was chalked up to failures of "political skill" (*habilidade política*) on the part of leaders, who were not able to do the necessary "articulations" to stitch the expected alliances together. Social movement analysts might also note the importance of conjunctural factors having to do with the opportunities and constraints offered by the current political situation in Brazil. In particular, the liberalizing reforms of the social democratic president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, created both polarizing

pressures and internal tensions for certain sectors of the left, contributing to the dilemmas and trade-offs at the congress.

While there are elements of truth to both leadership and conjunctural accounts, they miss key elements of the story. The near breakdown of the UNE congress in 1997 was not predetermined by the political conjuncture or a direct result of leadership failures; rather, the congress seemed to spin out of the hands of skilled, hard-working mediators at the last minute, leaving most of the participants stunned and chagrined. In contrast to these accounts, I argue that the unraveling of the congress was set in motion by the dilemmas generated by particular *styles* of leadership and communication in volatile, fractally structured arenas. The emerging dispute over styles of political practice was, I suggest, even more symbolically potent than the dispute over ideology or agenda. These styles were shaped by the positioning of groups and factions in multi-organizational fields, as well as by the trajectories of leaders through overlapping institutional sectors. Leaders who were highly skilled in particular modes of communication – oriented toward cooperation or confrontation, ideas or actions – that had served them well in certain contexts had trouble adapting their skills to a rapidly changing political situation.

### **The Fractal Structuring of Political Arenas**

Social movements – especially ones that transcend the local scale and begin heading toward various degrees of institutionalization – are internally complex and often fractious entities. As many scholars have noted, it can be difficult to delimit the boundaries of social movements, composed of participants with varying backgrounds, commitments, and organizational trajectories. Participants often flow in and out of movements over time as they juggle multiple commitments in activism and personal lives. The smaller, more homogenous and more intimate the movement (or movement group), the greater the chance it will generate a cohesive and solidaristic collective identity, as a number of recent scholars have shown (Friedman and McAdam, 1992; Polletta, 2002; Blee, 2012). As a movement expands, diversifies and institutionalizes its procedures, it also increases the possibility for ideological and stylistic contention and heightens the material and symbolic stakes involved in organizational leadership and control. Jasper (2004; 2006) calls this the “extension dilemma”; expansion brings many benefits but also some trade-offs in relation to unity and coherence.

While many scholars have noted that movements have internal divisions, less attention has been paid to the fact that movement factions themselves

are often internally divided. Parties and factions often have formal and informal subfactions, sometimes gravitating along fined-grained ideological distinctions, but just as often swirling out of more subtle commitments to particular leaders, friendship groups, local organizational histories, or styles of political practice (and at times, several of these interwoven together). Participant accounts of these subgroupings – often in terms of ideological and stylistic affinities – become the basis for the articulation of larger coalitions, caucuses, or institutionalized camps within a movement. These more visible alignments can take on symbolic, dramaturgic and regulatory lives of their own as a form of political discipline and mobilization, particularly when organizational control is at stake. But they often appear more stable and cohesive than they in fact are when you zoom the lens in more closely.

These divisions often have a *fractal* character: lower-level groupings and split mirror higher-level configurations, reflecting core organizing tensions and dilemmas that reverberate up and down a political arena. Abbott (2001) argues that such fractal divisions provide both change and stability; groups are always breaking down, but the concerns of the losing side are often appropriated by (or remapped onto) the dominant side. Dissident or hybrid groups reemerge, leading to further tension, generating cycles of split, conflict, and ingestion. Old ideas receive new formulations in successive cycles of debates, as core divisions are reconfigured in new alliance systems.

In political arenas such as those addressed in this book, such tensions become part of the strategic landscape. They provide opportunities for coalition-building and expansion (often via the appropriation of rival tactics and discourses), as well as the danger that one's own coalition will dissolve or followers be attracted by a competing camp. Moreover, these tensions are only provisionally resolvable – and all resolutions involve trade-offs and sacrifices – which means that any reconfiguration generates new conflicts and dilemmas. In many social movement arenas, divisions between “moderates” and “radicals” (or between institutionalists and agitators, or between consensus-builders and *combativos*) cause tensions between and within camps, frequently generating further internal splits, hybridizations, or bridging efforts.

In the Brazilian case, the student arena was structured by the association of most of the delegates with political parties and organized factions, although these weren't the only affiliations the students brought with them into the arena. Many of them participated in other kinds of activism (either concurrently or in the past), ranging from church-based popular movements in poor communities to labor unions, NGOs, anti-discrimination or-

ganizations, and professional associations. All voting delegates represented independent student associations (*centros acadêmicos*) based in university departments; the fact that they were elected “at the base” – rather than at lower-level regional congresses – became an important item of contention in the 1997 congress.

At stake in the congress was control of the directorate of the National Student Union (UNE), Brazil’s traditional student organization, which had a long and celebrated history going back to the 1930s. Many of Brazil’s politicians, judges, and other public leaders had wet their political feet in the historic organization, which prided itself on being present at the major moments in contemporary Brazilian history. After decades of repression by Brazil’s military dictatorship, UNE felt itself to be back on its feet, resuming its historic role in defining Brazil’s education policy and intervening in other civic questions of the day. At the same time, it had also been subjected to a barrage of recent criticisms in the media as well as from some student groups, which objected to what they saw as an overly partisan, adversarial climate, lack of attention to issues of racial and gender discrimination, and lack of internal democracy. Despite these criticisms, most student factions were heavily invested in competition for control of (or failing that, a seat in) UNE’s directorate. Leadership in UNE gave student activists a voice in higher education debates, along with a national media platform, access to infrastructure and resources, and a symbolic position from which to launch careers in a variety of political and professional arenas.

Partisan divisions within the student movement reflected alignments and oppositions in the larger political arena, including local and national governments as well as specialized sectors such as the labor movement. The 1997 UNE congress took place amid a deepening split in the left over how to respond to the liberalizing reforms of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the sociologist turned politician who had been elected in 1994. Cardoso’s social democratic government made symbolic overtures toward civic organizations at the same time as it pursued policies of global economic integration, privatization, and institutional reform. This infuriated the radical left while moderates struggled over whether to participate in government-sponsored forums on education and other issues. These recurring conflicts reflect what Jasper (2006) calls the “radicalism” and “naughty or nice” dilemmas, with tendencies for radicalization and moderation each turned into symbolic virtues and deployed as means of distinction from opposing groups. This tension generated some of the mutual accusations of “appeasement” and “rigidity” that opposing camps of the student movement hurled at each other.

The major partisan alignments going into the 1997 congress are listed in Table 1. For most of the period since UNE's postdictatorship reconstruction in 1979, UNE had been controlled by the youth of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), with a short interval of control by the Workers' Party (PT) from 1987 to 1991. The PT itself was divided by a complex system of formally recognized internal "tendencies"; in 1997 these could be grouped into alliances on the left and right of the party, themselves composed of several internal groups, each with their own leadership and base. On the far left side of the ideological spectrum were several radical Trotskyist factions, some organized as semi-autonomous tendencies within the PT (e.g., O Trabalho), while others constituted their own political parties (such as the PSTU [Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado]). On the other end were a number of socialist, popular democratic and democratic labor parties, with their own loose alignments and internal tensions (PDT [Partido Democrático Trabalhista], PPS [Partido Popular Socialista], PCB [Partido Comunista Brasileiro]).

All of these "forces" (as they referred to themselves) considered themselves to be in opposition to Cardoso's social democratic (PSDB) government. These partisan groupings in turn launched "theses" – often with colorful, stylistically resonant names – stating their initial platforms on issues related to national politics, educational policy, and the internal structure and procedures of the student movement. These "theses" were the starting point for the negotiation of electoral slates for UNE's proportionally elected

**Table 1 Major partisan alignments in the 1997 Congress of UNE**

Political parties/factions	Congressional "theses" and affiliation profiles
<b>Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB).</b> Controlled UNE from 1980-87 (after reconstruction) and since 1991	<b>"One Step In Front":</b> Deeply invested top and mid-level leadership involved in partisan, student and socialist organizations; looser but disciplined base.
<b>Workers' Party (PT)</b> Controlled UNE from 1987-91; divided by complex system of internal "tendencies"	<b>RIGHT: "Pleasure in Transforming":</b> Highly partisan top leadership; mid-level involvement in specialized/professional student movement; less deeply invested "festive" base. <b>LEFT: "I Won't AdaPT":</b> Politically "dense" leadership with strong and deep overlap with student, labor, popular and professional movements.
<b>Radical Trotskyist parties (PSTU, O Trabalho)</b>	<b>"Full Reverse" and "Not One More Day for FHC":</b> Deeply embedded militancy often involved in popular and labor movements in addition to student movement.
<b>Socialist/Populist/Popular Democratic (PDT, PPS, PCB)</b>	<b>"Turning the Tables," "Constructing the Future," "I'm Crazy":</b> Student and partisan involvement with less cross-sectoral investment of base; some tendency toward clientelism.

directorate. Most forces had a stronger chance of winning leadership slots through coalitions rather than running alone, although those coalitions were only settled through intensive negotiations over the course of the congress.

## Modes of Communication and Stylistic Tensions

As Table 1 indicates, the political forces varied in internal composition, including in their members' trajectories through and affiliations with other kinds of activism. As I have discussed in more detail elsewhere (Mische, 2008), these varying affiliation profiles contributed to important differences in their styles of political communication, with fractal tensions visible between and within camps. By styles, I refer to the performative dimension of political practice, that is, how participants communicate their identities, purposes, and relations in interaction settings (see Goffman, 1974; Goffman, 1981; Eliasoph, 1996; Eliasoph and Lichterman, 2003; Lichterman, 2012; Mische, 2008). Styles do not necessarily involve one singular, all-encompassing set of practices, but rather are composed of the ways in which people switch between what I call *modes of communication* – similar to what Goffman calls “footings” – in particular relational contexts.

Four important modes of communication in democratic politics are summarized in Table 2, organized along two dimensions (collaborative versus competitive and oriented toward ideas versus actions). I refer to these as *exploratory dialogue*, *discursive positioning*, *reflective problem-solving*, and *tactical maneuver*. We can see these four modes as finding justification in the ideas of Habermas, Gramsci, Dewey, and Machiavelli, respectively, at least as they have entered into practical political philosophy as it circulates within these (and other) movements. What I am calling a “style” refers to the patterned ways in which actors in particular institutional contexts emphasize, combine, avoid, and switch between these different communicative modes.

Each of these four modes represents a typified form of talk in group settings, as well as a valued model of political practice more generally. In addition, each has characteristic strengths and weaknesses, which can translate into dilemmas in political practice.<sup>2</sup> The choice to engage in any of these modes of communication involves trade-offs: more focus on open-ended dialogue may entail less ideological clarity or practical resolution; a fixation on resolving practical problems may entail less tactical flexibility or long-range transformative vision; strong assertion of identity and boundaries can

Table 2 Discursive practices in four modes of communication

	Collaboration	Competition
Ideas	<p><b>EXPLORATORY DIALOGUE (Habermas)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>open-ended discussion, moving toward consensus</li> <li>tentative, exploratory or experimental exchanges</li> <li>attempts to draw the other out, understand what they mean</li> <li>careful listening and subsequent rethinking of positions</li> </ul> <p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>allows oxygenation of ideas, considering other points of view</li> </ul> <p>WEAKNESS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tendency toward <b>idealism</b>: detached from practical and political consequences</li> </ul>	<p><b>DISCURSIVE POSITIONING (Gramsci)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>construction of boundaries: similarity and difference</li> <li>articulation of subject position: as whom you are arguing</li> <li>adversarial self-righteousness; moral-ethical critique</li> <li>attempt to build camps and expand hegemony in field of ideas</li> </ul> <p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognizes incommensurability and power in projects of social reform</li> </ul> <p>WEAKNESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tendency toward <b>purism</b>: lock-in to rigid, pre-established positions</li> </ul>
Actions	<p><b>REFLECTIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING (Dewey)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evaluation of strengths and weakness of historical experience</li> <li>imaginative projection of possible future actions</li> <li>weighing of group priorities; moral/practical consequences</li> <li>consideration of values underlying both ends and means</li> </ul> <p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contributes to institutional learning and collective adaptation to change</li> </ul> <p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tendency toward <b>appeasement</b>: avoidance of conflict or dispute</li> </ul>	<p><b>TACTICAL MANEUVER (Machiavelli)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>control and manipulation of information, symbols, and rhetoric</li> <li>cost-benefit analysis of tactics and strategies</li> <li>backstage bargaining over alliances, rules, and resources</li> <li>frontstage displays of prestige and support</li> <li>tactical adaptation and flexibility, valuing ends over means</li> </ul> <p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>facilitates institutional alliances, projects of command and control</li> </ul> <p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tendency toward <b>cynicism</b>: second-guessing and breakdown of trust</li> </ul>

block possibilities for mutual learning and coalition-building; adeptness in negotiation and bargaining can lead to a loss of idealism and a cynical perception of one's activism by oneself and others.

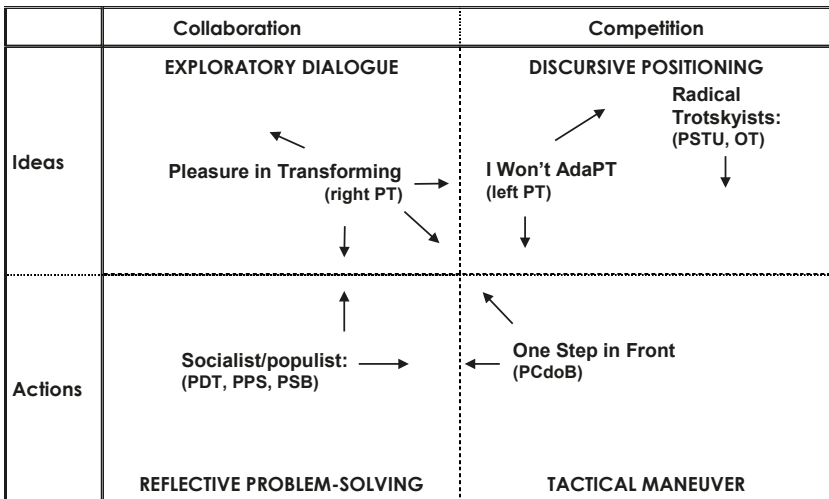
However, we should note that such performances are more than just freely exercised "choices"; they are also *skills* and *routinized practices* learned through previous trajectories through particular political and institutional contexts. Skills that serve people well in one context may fall flat in others, or leave them ill-equipped to deal with changing or emergent situations. Leaders may become locked into accustomed ways of responding to problems and challenges, finding it hard to see alternative forms of communication that might get them through an impasse.

Moreover, actors may become morally, emotionally and politically invested in a given stylistic orientation, so that any departure from it is seen as betrayal, hypocrisy, or lack of ethics. Jasper (2006) calls such commitments “tastes in tactics.” In fact, disputes that appear, on the surface, as disagreements over programs and alliances may more accurately revolve around questions of style, that is, the models of thought and action that actors think are (or should be) in play. The weaknesses that are inherent in a given style become grounds for ethical condemnation, with little acknowledgement of the strengths of the communicative practices involved.

### Contending Styles among Partisan Forces

During the 1997 UNE congress, the contending forces had recognizably different stylistic orientations. While these styles were routinized and institutionalized in various ways, they were not static and fixed. Rather, many of the groups were undergoing a process of internal reevaluation of the practices that they considered to be ethically, politically, and institutionally desirable, generating fractal stylistic divisions within the groups. Figure 1 maps the major political forces onto the four communicative modes. The main locations of the forces in Figure 1 are based on history and reputation, while the arrows note their internal stylistic complexity, that is, the extent to which their members were engaging, or considering engaging, in modes

Figure 1 Fractal stylistic orientations among partisan forces





other than what was generally considered (by themselves and others) to be their dominant mode.

All the political forces had at least some fractal tendency toward the Machiavellian mode of tactical maneuver, concerned with seeking and maintaining institutional control. This was primarily represented through their top-level leaders, who were most invested in the contest for control of the national student organizations, but students at all levels who engaged in local leadership contests had a taste of this. The institutional structure of the UNE congresses supported (and even demanded) this mode, since leaders had to dedicate a good part of their energies to tactical alliance-building, backstage bargaining, and frontstage displays of symbolic power in the battle for control of the organization. Not all of the mid-level or “base” activists were as invested in the struggle for institutional control; some were downright scornful of the strongly adversarial, sectarian orientation of the student movement. At times they were even suspicious of their own leaders, whom they suspected of “selling out” the ideological and/or stylistic orientation of the group in the interest of political “opportunism” or projects of political self-promotion.

In their primary positioning, the right and left camps of the PT tended to gravitate toward the upper two quadrants (focused on ideas), while the socialists and communists gravitated toward the lower half (focused on actions). While all factions created their platforms with care, the debate over ideas among PT activists had an organic vigor that I did not see in most other camps. Within the PT (as well as in some Trotskyist groups, many of which were or had been associated with the PT), any individual or group could develop and circulate their “texts” without the top-down centralism of the more traditional left. However, PT activists differed in their emphasis on the consensual or adversarial character of ideas. In the left wing of the PT and the Trotskyist groups in particular, ideological positioning was taken very seriously (often with left-flank pressure toward even more ideological clarity and consistency). The right wing of the PT had more of a tendency toward ideological looseness, with a stronger commitment to open-ended dialogue and consensus-building (and had right-flank pressure toward even more of a dialogic orientation in order to attract less ideological recruits at the base).

In contrast, the socialists and communists focused more on the pragmatic and tactical modes. For the socialist and populist groups in the lower left quadrant, this meant a stronger emphasis on civic participation and institution-building. While all parties were critical of the Cardoso government, for example, most of the socialist/populist camp advocated participat-

ing in the education councils initiated by federal and local governments as a pragmatic means of influencing change from within the system (a position vigorously opposed by the left-wing groupings as co-optation and/or selling out). The right wing of the PT was ambivalent about these kinds of state-sponsored forums but had more civic-institutionalist leanings, while the PCdoB saw such institutional participation as tactically important in order to establish a foothold in the apparatus of power. While the communists were seen by most of the other groups as oriented toward Machiavellian scheming (“they’ll do anything to win”), they had recently begun to make overtures in more dialogic and institution-building directions. They were concerned with what they called the “governability” of UNE, and were trying to engage the other factions in a constructive and integrative manner so as to reduce the adversarial climate within the organization. However this was a recent development and not well trusted by the other forces, which still saw the PCdoB as focused on achieving institutional control at any cost.

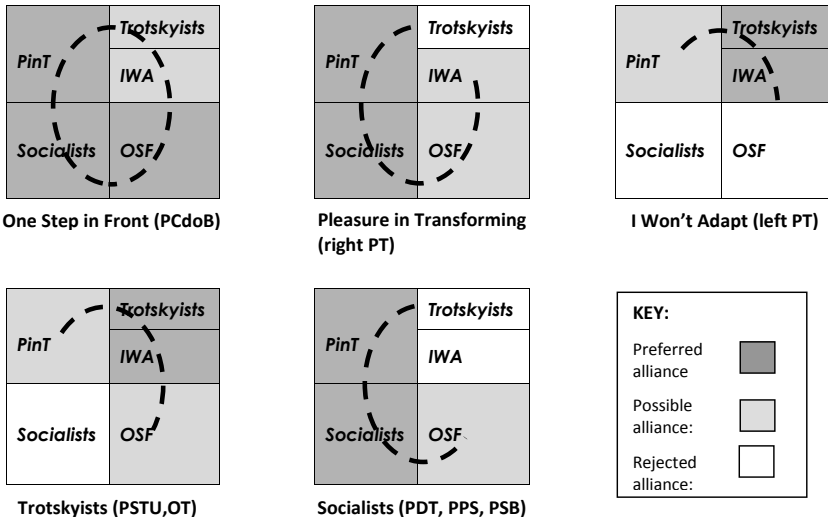
### Dilemmas of Alliance-Building

Styles are often important for relations-building, providing reasons for and against forming collaborations or alliances with other groups. Perceived weaknesses in communicative styles can be used as ethical and political weapons to discredit opponents. For example, the left PT activists associated with *I Won't AdaPT* condemned the PCdoB as cynical, manipulative and authoritarian (i.e., Machiavellian), as well as willing to appease the forces of the right through its pragmatic stress on civic institutionalism. While they were not quite as harshly critical of *Pleasure in Transforming*, they were openly scornful of what they saw as their copartisans' stylistic weakness; in their eyes, the right of the PT was ideologically mushy, overly idealistic, and lacking in combativity, as a result of its anti-dogmatic embrace of exploratory dialogue.

In contrast, the leaders of *Pleasure in Transforming* saw these same practices as demonstrating the stylistic virtues of their own group: a concern with open dialogue and practical institution-building (as opposed to rigid ideological critique) as well as stronger attention to the personal learning and reflective experiences of their members. In these cases, styles become the metonymic stand-in for groups, in the symbolic shorthand that constitutes players within arenas (see Polletta, 2006).

These mutual stylistic evaluations played an important role in the strategic dilemmas of alliance-building that emerged at the congress. Figure 2

Figure 2 Possible “arcs of alliances” among UNE forces



depicts each camp’s opening position in the form of a proposed “arc of alliances.” The preferred alliance of each force is darkly shaded, and those that it considered possible (but unlikely) have lighter shading.

The PCdoB officially wanted to encompass everyone in a “unified slate,” although this was generally considered to be impossible. *Pleasure in Transforming* seemed happy to include the socialists, uneasy in relation to the PCdoB, dubious about the left of the PT, and opposed to the radical Trotskyists. The left of the PT (*I Won't Adapt*) was hoping to construct a “united front of the left” in alliance with the Trotskyist groups; they categorically excluded the socialists and the PCdoB (on ideological and ethical grounds, respectively) and were conditionally open to the right of the PT (“if they decide that they are of the left”). The Trotskyists were willing to include all of the PT and the PCdoB, but under no terms would they ally with the socialists (the “parties of the right”). The socialists, in turn, rejected an alliance with the ideological left, openly courted the right wing of the PT, and were open but uneasy in relation to the PCdoB.

Given these opening tactical predispositions, there were a number of different ways the forces could have settled into electoral slates, depending on interforce negotiations. Note, however, how this configuration generates particular dilemmas and cross-pressures for *Pleasure in Transforming*. All of the forces, in effect, declared themselves willing to include the right of the PT in their coalitions; yet all of their potential allies (except for the PCdoB) had restrictions against its other potential partners (i.e., the left of

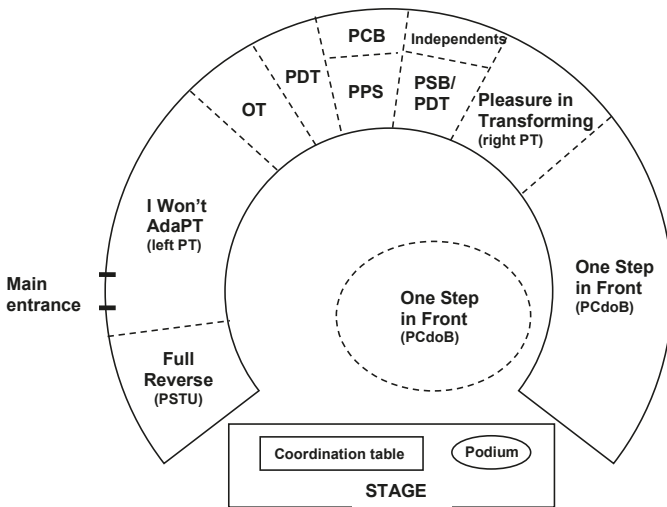
the PT rejected the socialists, the socialists rejected the left of the PT and the Trotskyists, and everyone else was uneasy, if not downright hostile, toward the PCdoB).

Moreover, any of the alliances could be perceived by the activists within *Pleasure in Transforming* as an ideological, organizational, or ethical self-betrayal. If they allied with the left of the PT, they would betray many of their own proposals, which tended to place more stock in institutional change – and less on class confrontation – than their copartisans. If they allied with the socialists, they risked accusations of partisan betrayal for siding with the “parties of the right.” And if they allied with the communists, they risked ethical self-betrayal, given their historic condemnation of the style and method of the PCdoB. While the camp leaders enjoyed being courted in the early phase of the congress, these dilemmas intensified over the next few days as the negotiations developed.

### Positioning and Negotiation

Some of these tensions were visible in the physical positioning of the forces in the collective space of the congress. All the major plenaries took place in a large sports arena near the university, with the contending forces arrayed in the bleachers in a semi-circle facing the platform with speakers

Figure 3 The positioning of forces in the major plenary sessions



and presiding student leaders at the front. For the most part, the seating arrangements were traditional, with the more left-wing forces on the left side of the stadium, the socialists and independents in the middle, and the reigning PCdoB on the right side.

This year, however, an important difference in the seating arrangement at the opening plenary signaled the potential realignments in play. The youth in *Pleasure in Transforming* were seated around the right curve, between the socialists and the PCdoB, a departure from this group's usual position further left, next to their copartisans in the left of the PT. The physical separation of *Pleasure in Transforming* from the rest of the PT, along with the proximity to the PCdoB, signaled the heightened climate of factional dispute within the PT as well as the new spirit of collaboration with the PCdoB, at least among top leaders. However, the grassroots delegates associated with *Pleasure in Transforming* had a marked tendency (infuriating to the leadership) to disperse around the stadium, perhaps reflecting their weaker ideological commitment as well as their discomfort at this unusual location next to the PCdoB.

This stadium was the location of the major deliberative plenary sessions, in which the congress voted on proposals in three main areas: the National and International Conjunction, the University, and the Student Movement. The proposals were gathered through discussion groups, organized by a "systematization committee," and boiled down to consensual vs. nonconsensual resolutions. Most resolutions were consensual, requiring simply a blanket mass approval. However, in the controversial areas, contending proposals were hotly defended in speeches by top leaders, accompanied by dramaturgical displays of support and repudiation.

The 1997 congress witnessed an especially heated debate about UNE's position on national alliances, that is, on whether to advocate a broad "democratic and popular" front in opposition to neoliberalism and the Cardoso government, or whether to support a class-based alliance for a "government of the workers," which would "unify students and workers, of the country and city." The "broad front" proposal was supported by the PCdoB, the right of the PT and the socialist bloc, while the "classist front" proposal was supported by the left of the PT and the radical Trotskyists. Votes on these platform issues, in turn, were used to measure the relative strength of the forces in the final dispute of leadership slates and thus to determine coalitional strategies. In the opening plenary, the "broad front" proposal won by a surprisingly small margin, intensifying the left-wing camps' perception that they were within reach of a historic consolidation of the "class-based" left.

Over the five days of the congress, the negotiations within and between the camps were intense. Sometimes these took the form of small leadership meetings in back rooms, while at other times they consisted of internal plenaries in which delegates could debate and vote on their groups' proposals and alliances. Top-level leaders were constantly shuttling between these internal discussions and their negotiations with leaders of other forces. Some of these internal plenaries did little more than approve the leadership accords worked out behind the scenes, while others (particularly those of the PT) had lively, contentious debates.

Within the *Pleasure in Transforming* camp the debates were particularly anguished, as participants considered which among their contending "suits" they should ally with in the final slate (or alternatively, whether they were strong enough to go it alone and still gain a leadership slot in UNE's directorate). Tensions between state delegations as well as between top and mid-level leaders were beginning to appear, particularly in relation to the possibility of forming an alliance with the communists. Those in favor of allying with the PCdoB – mostly national and São Paulo leaders – argued that the alliance was important to combat sectarianism, dogmatism and ideological rigidity in the student movement. Those opposed – particularly mid-level leaders engaged in state and local disputes with the PCdoB – said it would be a betrayal of their historical critique of what they saw as the manipulative and cynical political practice of the communists.

Note the critique of style as a justification for (or against) particular alliance strategies, and in defense of a particular group self-conception: "we" should choose partners who are neither dogmatic nor cynical. Allying with the socialists was one solution to this dilemma, although it meant splitting further with their copartisans in the left of the PT, painful to many at the base. And some of the top leaders (as good Machiavellians) worried that joining with the socialists would give them a less powerful position in UNE's directorate than an alliance with the PCdoB.

## Confrontation and Crisis

By the second major plenary session, on the afternoon of the fourth day, it looked like alliances were coming into focus. The forces of the left – *I Won't AdaPT, Full Reverse, Not One More Day* – were on the verge of settling an accord for a unified slate of the "classist" left, with a few thorny details on the distribution of leadership positions still to be worked out. Meanwhile, *Pleasure in Transforming* was engaged in heavy flirtation with the social-

ists and independents, dramatized by wearing each other's stickers and intermingling in the bleachers to a joyful dance beat. Leaders reported that a tentative agreement between these forces had been reached, which was a relief to many *Pleasure* activists who had been wary of an alliance with the PCdoB. Meanwhile the PCdoB, confident of its own numerical dominance, continued negotiations for a unified slate even as it won every vote, joined on nearly all of them by the right of the PT. Before the day was through, however, this nearly settled configuration of forces erupted into confrontation and crisis, as the contingencies of the evening triggered the fractures between and within nearly all of the opposition forces.

What brought the crisis to a head was a controversial proposal by the youth of the PCdoB to change the rules of the game. They proposed changing the election of delegates to UNE's national congress to a "funnel" procedure, in which UNE delegates would be elected in prior regional congresses, rather than elected directly in "base" student organizations in university departments. The PCdoB claimed that it was adopting a historic proposal of the PT for the democratization of the student movement, a claim hotly contested by the left of the PT. The left saw the proposal as an attack on the democracy of the student movement and an attempt to "distance UNE even more from the students" through smaller, more manipulable regional congresses. The PCdoB argued that smaller regional congresses would allow for a higher quality of political discussion and problem-solving than was possible in the current huge and sprawling national congress.

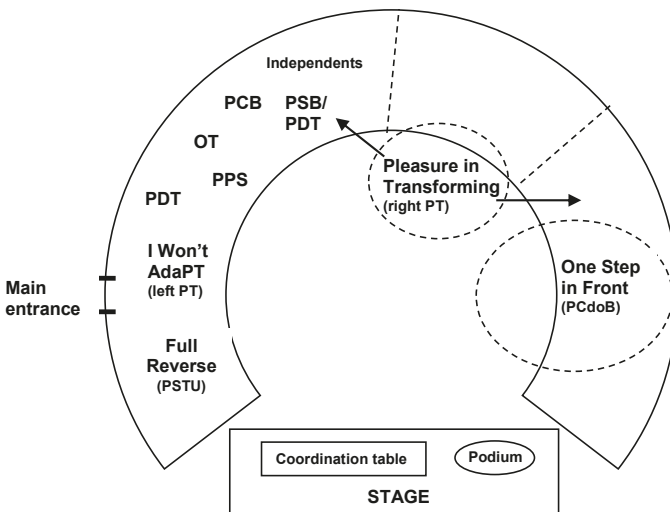
Note the dispute over style: the left argued that the proposal smacked of Machiavellian manipulation, while the PCdoB declared that it would turn UNE toward Deweyian deliberation. Here we see a vivid reflection of the "rules" dilemma (Jasper, 2006), in which efforts to change an arena end up embroiled in the rules of that same arena. The student opposition from the PT had been trying for over a decade to change the electoral process within UNE, through proposals for direct elections, regional congresses, and more inclusion of "course-based" organizations (a PT stronghold). While these proposals were defended in the name of "democracy," PT activists clearly thought these reforms would provide an advantage for their own (more mass-based) approach to politics. The PCdoB successfully resisted these proposals, and the PT was forced to play by existing rules in order to enjoy the material and symbolic benefits of UNE directorship. However, at the 1997 congress, the PCdoB itself attempted to change the rules by claiming that it was appropriating the ideas of the opposition. (In fact, the PCdoB's "funnel" proposal was quite different from original PT plan for regional congresses, which would have maintained direct elections at the

base.) In the ambiguity and surprise at the stealthily launched proposal, the motives of the PCdoB were called into question, exemplifying the “sincerity” dilemma, in which appearances, reputation and motives may clash. As a result, the proposal for rule change was denounced as an anti-democratic coup rather than as a genuinely democratizing move.

The vote was called, following heated denunciations from the podium by most of the opposition leaders (with the exception of *Pleasure in Transforming*, which was oddly silent, despite the fact that it was the only force that had a proposal for regional congresses as part of its pre-congress platform). As UNE officials began counting badges raised for and against the measure, drums began rolling, chants were pounding, and the whole plenary underwent a shift. The socialist and independent delegates began to migrate toward the left of the stadium in order to join the left-wing forces and display a stronger density of votes against the measure. Meanwhile, the PCdoB delegates were shepherded into a more concentrated position on the right side to show votes in favor. The call “True delegates, elected by the base!” resounded from the left side of the stadium from the PSTU all the way over to the PPS, with the two percussion sections of these usually opposing groups exuberantly joining forces. The new configuration in the arena is depicted in Figure 4.

At this point *Pleasure in Transforming* entered into crisis. Their delegates had in fact approved the proposal for regional congresses in their internal

Figure 4 Shifts in the plenary: vote on regional congresses





plenary earlier in the day, as part of an accord with the PCdoB. However at this dramatic moment, the vote took on other proportions, which superseded the merits of the proposal itself. This was the principal polarizing moment of the congress, the one slight chance that the unified opposition might have to defeat the PCdoB. Even if they lost, it was a dramaturgic chance to deliver a general repudiation of the politics of the PCdoB in the student movement. As such, some of the orange-shirted *Pleasure in Transforming* activists began to move left toward the rest of the opposition.

This evoked a storm of protest among the *Pleasure* leaders, who tried to discipline their base to move right toward the PCdoB. An anguished and angry discussion ensued in the bleachers, while the left side of the stadium joined in chanting “Come over here, *Pleasure in Transforming!*” The left of the PT further escalated the pressure by pushing the party loyalty button with the classic PT chant, “Party, party, is of the workers!” PCdoB leaders swooped over to see what the problem was, as the right of the PT huddled in furious debate, strongly worded in terms of loyalty and betrayal. With many of the delegates nearly in tears, the top *Pleasure* leaders finally agreed to release their group members to vote their conscience and discuss it afterwards. At this point the huddle erupted and split into two parts, as half went to join the opposition and half entered the bleachers occupied by the PCdoB.

The proposal for regional congresses was approved by a very small margin. As the vote was announced, another sea change began in the stadium. The delegates of *I Won't AdaPT* started filing out of the arena in protest, as the stadium echoed with their ominous chant, “True delegates, elected at the base!” The radical Trotskyists in *Full Reverse* were furious at their allies' departure from the plenary, as they needed their support on a couple of critical votes ahead. “Stay to fight!” they chanted to their own furious drumroll.<sup>3</sup>

What followed was a long night of tense negotiations within and between the various opposition forces. The internal PT tendencies that composed *I Won't AdaPT* were strongly divided about whether or not to exit the congress altogether and thus give up their chance at positions in UNE's directorate. While all factions denounced the “authoritarian coup” of the funnel proposal, there was passionate disagreement about whether to break definitively with the practices of the PCdoB and rebuild the student movement at the grassroots level, or stay within the historic student organization to try to build the “front of the left” from within. Here we see echoes of the “engagement” dilemma, and its flip side, what we might call the “exit” dilemma, as cogently described by Hirschman (1970). Jasper (2006) discusses

these dilemmas in terms of the trade-offs involved in “switching arenas.” Actors may move to a new arena when blocked, or in order to “signal the seriousness of the interaction or conflict,” but this removes them from the local strategic advantages that come from “being there” in the original arena of conflict.

Within *Pleasure in Transforming*, emotions ran equally high about whether or not the group should enter into alliance with the communists, especially now that the socialist factions had angrily withdrawn from the near-settled alliance as a result of *Pleasure’s* “accord” with the PCdoB. They didn’t have the numbers to make it into UNE’s executive by going out alone, and the top leaders were determined to secure the vice presidency or another top position. However, the mid-level *Pleasure* leaders felt betrayed by the top-level negotiations and argued that they could not possibly defend an alliance with the PCdoB back in their home states and universities.

There were several other twists and turns in this drama over the course of that night and the next morning, but the upshot was further fragmentation and splintering. *Pleasure in Transforming* held an anguished late-night vote that narrowly tipped against the alliance with the PCdoB, causing angry protests against sectarianism by its right-flank leaders. However this vote was overturned the next morning in an internal plenary that approved the alliance with the communists, sparking a fistfight and furious withdrawal by a group of mid-level leaders. In the final plenary of the congress, this dissident *Pleasure* group entered the stadium with their orange shirts turned backwards (painted with the slogans “For ethics in UNE” and “I won’t sell myself”) and burned a group flag in repudiation of their own leadership.

After several equally tense internal plenaries, *I Won’t AdaPT* voted by a very close margin to exit the congress, which they did with dramaturgical flourish that included parading back into the stadium with chanted denunciations and the burning of badges by some delegates. However, the losing factions within *I Won’t AdaPT* continued to have deep misgivings about the withdrawal; soon after the congress they split with the rest of the camp and ended up entering UNE’s directorate through backstage negotiations.

The withdrawal from the congress was furiously repudiated by *Full Reverse*, which shouted, “UNE in struggle, opposition, down with division!” as their near-allies made their final exit from the stadium. The Trotskyists launched their own slate and were strong enough to win an opposition slot in the executive. Several of the socialist parties also withdrew from the congress in protest, while small splinter groups from each of these joined what remained of *Pleasure in Transforming* in a broad but shallow alliance with the PCdoB. To no one’s surprise, the communist-led slate won once

again, and the PCdoB continued in firm control of UNE, with *Pleasure in Transforming* gaining the vice presidency as a condition of the alliance.

### Dilemmas of Style in Fractal Arenas

How can we account for the tumultuous ending and near breakdown of the 1997 congress? Why did almost every force at the congress end up fractured (with the exception of the PCdoB)? To understand this breakdown, I argue that it is not enough to examine only environmental or conjunctural factors. While the larger political situation generated some initial divisions and cross-pressures, we further our understanding of the crisis by looking at communicative processes among players within the (literal and figurative) arena of the congress.

These processes were driven in turn by fractal divisions and subdivisions along both ideological and stylistic lines. While most factions were associated with a “dominant” mode of communication (oriented toward exploratory dialogue, discursive positioning, reflective problem-solving or tactical maneuver), in fact most of them had several different modes in the mix, generated in part by the multiple affiliations and leadership positions of their members. These stylistic orientations, in turn, constrained the mediating skills of particular leaders as they attempted to respond strategically to the emerging crisis, generating painful dilemmas and trade-offs. Notably, the leaders of *Pleasure in Transforming* and *I Won't AdaPT* were both criticized for lack of “*habilidade política*,” that is, political ability, or what I call skill. In both cases their well-honed skills in mediation, while effective in other venues, were limited both by their habitualized practices and by their political and ethical commitments to particular modes of communication.

The most stylistically divided of the forces at the conferences was *Pleasure in Transforming*. As we have seen, there were stylistic tensions between top-, mid-, and low-level leaders, as well as between the different internal PT tendencies within the group, some of which veered in either more pragmatic-institutionalist or more dialogic-exploratory directions. They united in condemning what they saw as the narrow sectarianism and ideological rigidity of the traditional left (i.e., its reliance on Gramscian positioning) as well as the Machiavellian maneuver that they associated with the PCdoB. Nevertheless, while politically and ethically condemning these two competitive modes, they were drawn into them as well. The institutional structure of UNE demanded skill in tactical maneuver to

win space in the directorate, especially among the higher level leaders. Moreover, many mid-level *Pleasure* activists were concerned to show that they weren't just naïve idealists or pragmatic accommodators, but could be combative and dispute hegemony as well (the "naughty or nice" dilemma). This contributed to their angry, principled break with their own top leadership.

However, *Pleasure's* leaders were less skilled in discursive positioning and tactical maneuver than their counterparts in *I Won't AdaPT* and the PCdoB, and these stylistic weaknesses undermined their ability to respond to the crisis. While exploratory dialogue allows for exchange of ideas and consideration of other points of view, it can be difficult to reach closure on political projects (and when such closure is required, it tends to be vague, idealistic, and ambiguous). This can contribute to the dispersion of ideas and people, as well as to a lack of commitment to positions. In this case, the base *Pleasure* delegates were so uncommitted to their own proposal for regional congresses that they abandoned it in a flash when cross-cutting partisan pressures besieged the group. Moreover, the group's nonhierarchical, pleasure-oriented ethic also undermined collective discipline in "marshalling the troops," a key component of the PCdoB's repeated electoral success. As a result of these weaknesses in positioning and maneuver, dispersion was a chronic problem for *Pleasure in Transforming*, perhaps more than for any other force.

Within *I Won't AdaPT*, the stylistic tension was different. The camp as a whole took its discursive positioning extremely seriously, debating ideological proposals thoroughly in order to build cohesion and commitment throughout the camp. They spent most of the congress repudiating the Deweyian idea of bringing all of the forces of UNE into one big institutional tent, but rather worked hard to consolidate a clear boundary between the "classist" left (themselves and the radical Trotskyists) and the "forces of the right" (the communists, socialists, and social democrats). As a result of this intense effort in ideological and stylistic boundary work, the base of *I Won't AdaPT* entered the congress with more commitment (and hence, less ideological or interpersonal dispersion) than *Pleasure in Transforming*.

However, this highly ideological mode also involved trade-offs that played a role in the congressional crisis. *I Won't AdaPT's* strongly adversarial positioning helped to generate intra-camp cohesion, but it contributed to inflexible and absolutist evaluations of the other forces (a variation on the "Janus" dilemma, in which internal radicalism makes external communication difficult). They dismissed the proposal for regional "funnel"

congresses as anti-democratic, completely rejecting the PCdoB's contention that this would allow for a higher quality of discussion. Rather, they saw the proposal as a cynical attempt at manipulation that needed to be ethically and politically repudiated. While there was probably some grounds for this skepticism, it meant that they were not willing to admit or engage the PCdoB's new (admittedly partial and tentative) receptivity to dialogue and problem-solving in relation to the structural problems of the student movement. Instead, they decided to radicalize their critique of the anti-democratic tendencies of UNE and exit the arena altogether, much to the chagrin of some of their own members and allies.

In these ways, the trade-offs built in to the dominant styles of *Pleasure in Transforming* and *I Won't AdaPT* helped to undermine their projects and alliances. While *Pleasure* leaders stressed exploratory dialogue, these conversations were often idealized, ambiguous, and open-ended, and their pragmatic tendencies left them vulnerable to accusations of appeasement. In contrast, *I Won't AdaPT* leaders were more adept at discursive positioning, but this reduced their tactical flexibility in a moment of crisis.

These kinds of stylistic tensions and limitations were also evident in the PCdoB. The PCdoB was experimenting with a new, hybrid repertoire that maintained the party's well-honed skills in tactical maneuver and hard-nosed institutional control, while cultivating more pragmatic and dialogic relations with other groups. They understood this as a response to their critics and as an appropriation of some of the stylistic qualities of other groups. The lack of trust from other forces toward their new approach shows the inherent weakness of the Machiavellian mode, which tends to engender cynicism about motive and method. At the same time, the PCdoB contributed to the breakdown in communication through its own weak skills in cross-partisan articulation. The communist leaders' forays into dialogue and problem-solving were still so tentative that they did not adequately discuss their reform proposals with the other forces. Afterwards, the leaders seemed bewildered and exasperated at the accusation that this was a last-minute coup. Clearly, the PCdoB did not exercise the mediating skills that might have allowed the contentious vote to go forward without blowing the congress apart.

In all of these cases, it was not simply lack of skills that was the problem; all of the leading players were highly skilled, committed activists. Rather the skills themselves contained the seeds of their own undoing. Stylistic proclivities and tensions generated strategic dilemmas for factional leaders, at the same time as they channeled the leaders' responses to the emerging crisis. The leaders' adeptness in (and political-ethical commitment to) particular styles of communication – as well as internal stylistic tension within the camps – con-

tributed to the breakdown in communication and the fracturing of alliances and subgroups, along with the disruption of the UNE congress as a whole.

## Lessons and Cycles

As Abbott (2001) has noted, fractal divisions contribute to both stability and change, via the mechanisms of appropriation, hybridization, dissidence and coalition formation. The tumultuous ending of the 1997 congress did not destroy the student movement, nor most of the factions involved. The “classist left” – including both those who exited and those who “stayed to fight” – reconfigured and within a few years had overturned the proposal for a funnel congress and consolidated its strength as an opposition force in the student movement. At a higher level in the fractally structured field, the alliance between the right of the PT and the PCdoB at the 1997 student congress contributed to the institutionalist coalition that elected President Lula a few years later. In counterreaction, a segment of the leftist factions withdrew from the PT altogether and formed their own political party, out of disillusionment with the policies and practices of the “moderate” President Lula. And so the fractal cycle continues.

For the purposes of this volume, the important lesson here is that fractal subdivisions within political arenas generate persistent dilemmas that can only be provisionally resolved with each new configuration of alliances and power relations. I have argued that these divisions are not just ideological, but also stylistic, shaped by shifting orientations toward collaboration and competition, or toward ideas and actions. Those divisions reappear in successive cycles or waves – in part because each of the four modes of communications that I have described has characteristic strengths and weaknesses. Their strengths solve some political problems but generate others; their weaknesses invite repudiation and critique. Innovation often comes through hybridization and bridging efforts, but these can be thwarted by their own histories and routines. Losing sets of ideas and practices often revive within or outside of the dominant force, generating new challenges, dilemmas, and realignments. In this way, political arenas that seem stretched to the breaking point regenerate in new forms, yet bearing the same core tensions and dilemmas.

## Notes

1. This chapter adapts, condenses and theoretically reformulates some of the ethnographic material presented in Chapter 9 of Ann Mische, *Partisan Pub-*

- lics: Communication and Contention across Brazilian Youth Activist Networks* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008). It is used here with the permission of Princeton University Press.
2. These modes reflect many of the dilemmas described by Jasper (2006). The Machiavellian mode involves an intertwining of the Dirty Hands and Sincerity dilemmas, while the Gramscian mode reflects some of the trade-offs involved in the Articulation and Radicalism dilemmas. The Deweyian and Habermasian modes both run some of the risks of the Universalism, Extension and Whose Goals dilemmas, with the Deweyian mode also reflecting the flip side of the Naughty or Nice trade-off and the Habermasian the flip side of Articulation. Many of these dilemmas are reflected in the account that follows.
  3. The translation of these chants loses the resonant rhyming of the Portuguese wordplay. The four chants noted above consisted of the following: “Venha para cá, Prazer em Transformar!”; “Partido, partido, é dos trabalhadores!”; “Delegado, de verdade, eleito pela base!” and “Fica pra lutar!”

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### 3 Beyond Channeling and Professionalization

#### Foundations as Strategic Players in Social Movements

*Edward T. Walker*

Social movements research has been subject to a growing body of criticism for being generally too movement-centric (Walder, 2009; McAdam and Boudet, 2012; Fligstein and McAdam, 2012), and, when scholarship does examine the role of external context in shaping movement practices and strategies, it focuses too heavily on the state (Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008; Walker, Martin, and McCarthy, 2008). Similarly, social movement outcomes research has been challenged for selecting on the dependent variable in the sense of searching for successful cases of collective mobilization (for critiques, see McAdam and Boudet, 2012; Burstein and Sausner, 2005). However, the turn toward new approaches to movements research – reflected in the diverse contributions to this volume – that highlight how contentious claims-makers are only one player among many pressing forward their interests in myriad societal arenas, helps to remedy this limitation and to widen our focus to the place of social movements in civil society, the state, and the marketplace.

This chapter encourages a rethinking of foundations and their place in social movements and advocacy more broadly. Consistent with the movement-centric focus of much prior research on contentious politics, analysts tend to see foundations as instrumental in promoting moderation and professionalization among the social movement organizations (SMOs) that receive their support through grants and in-kind contributions (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Jenkins and Eckert, 1986; Minkoff and Agnone, 2010; Brulle and Jenkins, 2005). The central point in much of this research is that foundations tend to select more moderate organizations for support, in part because professionalization and moderation are linked, and grant-makers often require extensive compliance measures and reporting standards that only more professionalized organizations can meet (Brulle and Jenkins, 2005). In addition, foundations funding SMOs face potential concerns about prismatic network effects (Podolny, 2001), such as the potential fallout for foundations that are connected to politically radical SMOs.

The focus of this research, then, still remains largely on the consequences for movement actors; that is, most research studies what foundation funding



means for the SMOs that receive support, with relatively little attention to the organizational and institutional dynamics of the foundations themselves (but see Ostrander, 1995; Silver, 1997; Silver, 1998). In addition, most of this research neglects other interventions that foundations make into social movements beside grant-making, such as the provision of technical assistance and direct facilitation of public participation in advocacy campaigns (Walker, McCarthy, and Baumgartner, 2011), or even through the creation of new organizations or whole sectors from the top down (Bartley, 2007; Duffy, Binder, and Skrentny, 2010).

Moving beyond movement-centric perspectives, this chapter argues that the heavy scholarly focus on foundations' role in channeling and professionalizing movement activity has unnecessarily narrowed our understanding of the true scope of their engagement in collective arenas. Foundations, as organizations in their own right, face pressures of their own from their donors, their foundation peers, the state, and other stakeholders (see Anheier and Hammack, 2010). However, despite these pressures, foundations are nonetheless strategic in aligning the interests of their donors with the activities of the SMOs they fund. The study exploits evidence from corporate foundations in the health sector – highlighting interorganizational factors that shape their giving patterns, as well as their strategic alignment of grant-making with the interests of their donors – in order to evaluate these claims. This evidence illustrates how the organizational and institutional dynamics of foundations help to direct their strategic interventions in broader arenas. It also provides initial evidence of the scope of social movement influence on foundations.

I start by providing background on how foundations should be defined and how they affect social movements. Then, the core of the chapter (a) provides evidence of how the amount given by foundations is influenced more by the interorganizational and resource pressures faced by foundations and less (but still significantly) by the presence of SMOs and advocacy groups, and (b) shows how the recipients of giving by foundations often reflect the strategic interests of their donors. I conclude by drawing attention to the importance of a less movement-centric understanding of foundations as players in societal arenas.

## Conceptualizing Foundations in Contentious Arenas

Although foundations in various forms have existed since antiquity, the modern grant-making foundation became a distinct organizational form in the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century United States (Prewitt, 2006: 355; Anheier and Ham-

mack, 2010). At this time, US foundations shifted from their colonial-era model of a trust or bequest dedicated to a particular institution and moved toward applying the spectacular wealth of robber-baron magnates like John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie to the pressing social issues of the day. They did so in a fashion that brought the ideas of the Protestant Ethic to bear by converting the spoils of capitalist accumulation into socially beneficial causes (Prewitt, 2006: 361-362). Since that time, the defining features of a foundation are that they have relatively permanent assets that are

not committed to a particular institution or activity, [which] provide a grant-making capacity reaching across multiple purposes and into the indefinite future. A permanent endowment attached to a broad, permissive mission is a defining characteristic of present-day foundations. This configuration provides considerable latitude for changing priorities as new conditions emerge and differentiates the foundation from a long tradition of bequests for a narrow purpose or particular institution, though in this ... there are exceptions. The endowment also sharply distinguishes the foundation from the much larger number of institutions in the nonprofit sector that survive through membership dues, fees for services, government contracts, or product marketing. (Prewitt, 2006: 355)

Nearly a century before the contemporary movement for creating a more socially responsible business sector through corporate social responsibility (Lim and Tsutsui, 2012; Vogel, 2005), then, foundations helped convert the great fortunes accumulated through the capitalist system into concrete social benefits. In the weak state of the United States, foundations could serve the broader public good with resources gained through private enterprise and help to provide for citizen needs unmet by the state. Indeed, foundations were encouraged by the state to fulfill such needs (Anheier and Hammack, 2010).

However, despite the historical legacy of providing an indirect justification for capitalist accumulation, the foundation sector has a long history of supporting citizen efforts to change policy, whether through social movements or through other forms of grassroots advocacy (Jenkins, 1998). Foundations are, some analysts suggest, at their core organizations that seek to improve society and generate positive social change (Prewitt, 2006: 366; see also O'Connor, 2010).

They do so through a variety of means, including by providing support for social service delivery, supporting education and the creation of knowledge,

applying that knowledge through interventions in areas such as health policy, agriculture, environment, and development, making efforts to improve public policy and make institutions more accountable, and, most notably here, grant-making to SMOs and other policy advocacy groups. Importantly, although foundations tend to emphasize their support of social change initiatives, this need not imply an inherently progressive orientation. While the foundation sector is still dominated by socially progressive causes, conservative foundations have risen to prominence in the US since the 1970s (Stefancic and Delgado, 1996; Teles, 2010).

Indeed, foundations have provided substantial resources in support of mass social movements. This has been true not only through US-based social movement funding by such grant-makers as the Ford Foundation, but also internationally in foundation funding of grassroots NGOs involved in empowerment efforts. The latter include especially grassroots programs for economic development, as well as social enterprises such as micro-credit lending (Watkins et al., 2012). Foundations have been active in supporting the civil rights movement (Jenkins and Eckert, 1986), women's rights (Goss, 2007), grassroots urban community organizing (McQuarrie, 2010), and environmental issues (Brulle and Jenkins, 2005). And, as I describe below, they have engaged with health-based advocacy organizations as well.

A powerful refrain in research on how foundations support contentious politics is that foundations tend to be rather conservative in their approach, even if not in their politics (Jenkins, 1998; Brulle and Jenkins, 2005; Jenkins and Eckert, 1986). As Minkoff and Agnone (2010: 347) argue, there are two common narratives for how foundation funding of social movement activity leads movement groups in the direction of greater moderation. In one version, foundations more or less explicitly support more moderate organizations in order to maintain their own elite position in society, with foundations serving as representatives of a sort of civic establishment (see Dye, 2002). Another version – which nonetheless leads to the same conclusion – suggests that the mechanism of moderation is that funded organizations need to survive and require resources in order to do so; these demands tend to encourage both moderation and professionalization among the SMOs that receive foundation funding (Brulle and Jenkins, 2005).

Research to support these suggestions is widespread, especially in highlighting the consequences of foundation funding on the governance, tactical mix, and goals of movement organizations. Following in the resource mobilization tradition of McCarthy and Zald (1973; 1977), Jenkins and Eckert's (1986) classic study of patronage of civil rights organizations found that foundation support went predominantly to professionalized

groups such as the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund rather than grassroots civil rights organizations. Herbert Haines (1984) argued that the key mechanism of a “radical flank effect” operated in the civil rights movement through a dynamic by which confrontational protest tactics by more radical actors helped to promote foundation funding of comparatively moderate civil rights groups.

Other work, by Brulle and Jenkins (2005: 159), finds that foundation funding of environmental organizations favors more professionalized organizations and also more moderate discourses of environmentalism (such as preservation or liberal environmentalism) over more radical ones (such as environmental justice or deep ecology). Rojas (2007: ch. 5) shows how the Ford Foundation shifted its funding strategy away from African-American political organizations and toward professional academic Black Studies departments by the 1970s and 1980s. Additionally, Minkoff and Agnone (2010: 367) find that the “grants economy” for women’s and minority rights SMOs is dominated by a small set of large and well-endowed foundations, and that these foundations are “relatively risk averse” in that their politically evenhanded strategy has kept them from engaging in more path-breaking forms of philanthropy.

However, more recent investigations have challenged this focus of research on foundation support for social change initiatives, noting that foundations engage in contentious arenas in ways other than grant-making and providing moral support to the SMOs they select for patronage. These new studies show that the interests of a wide variety of stakeholders often drive foundation support, and that it need not necessarily involve the channeling of movements into more moderate forms.

Bartley argues that in forest product certification, foundations “co-ordinated their grant-making to build an organizational field in which disruptive protest and market-based forms of governance were at times *synergistic* rather than contradictory” (2007: 231, emphasis in the original). One part of Bartley’s argument is partially supportive of the dominant channeling model described above, in that foundations did indeed support forest certification rather than funding those SMOs who might boycott timber companies. Still, Bartley found that the development of certification programs involved a type of institutional entrepreneurship in which foundations were key players in the formation of a new sector, thus generating real social change through their programs. Similarly, in a study of a foundation created in response to a contentious land use battle over the redevelopment of a former airport site, Duffy, Binder, and Skrentny (2010) also showed how foundations can serve as elite players in the direct

mobilization of social change at the stage of policy formation (independent of much mass movement involvement).

Overall, these studies suggest that our view of foundations should not be so oversimplified as to suggest that they are either (a) powerful civic representatives of wealthy elite interests, or (b) well-intentioned-but-nonetheless-influential agents of movement professionalization and moderation. Foundations themselves are strategic actors, but this need not mean that their actions necessarily promote inequality or reduce the power of social movements. And, although they are selective in their judgments of which SMOs or other causes are worthy of their support, foundations may be active in engendering broader social change even if promoting *organization-level* professionalization (for a similar point, see Clemens, 1993; Clemens and Minkoff, 2004).

## Understanding Foundations in Broader Arenas

Moving beyond more movement-centric approaches, I shift attention now to describing the multiple pressures faced by foundations within their institutional environments. Of course, outside of those foundations which are quasi-SMOs in their own right (Ostrander, 1995; Silver, 1997; Silver, 1998), for most foundations, funding social movement activism tends to represent only a modest portion of their grant-making. Considering this as well as how foundations influence movements in a variety of means beyond channeling, it seems worthwhile to take a step back and examine foundations in a broader context.

First, in the US context, foundations take four primary forms. *Independent grant-making foundations* are the dominant form, and these foundations are characterized by a significant amount of diversity both in their primary fund sources and also in the recipients of their largesse. *Corporate foundations*, by contrast, receive the overwhelming majority of their funds from their corporate sponsor – especially during high-profit years (Galaskiewicz and Colman, 2006) – and tend to focus their giving on areas of their sponsor's market interest. I will say more about these below. Third, *community foundations* tend to be smaller and are often closely tied to the particular locality after which they are named. Lastly, *operating foundations* are defined by the IRS as “a private foundation that devotes most of its resources to the active conduct of its exempt activities.”<sup>1</sup> In practical terms, this means that an operating foundation engages more directly in areas beyond grant-making, through such activities as providing

technical assistance to other organizations (or other types of foundations), hosting conferences, publishing reports, and other practices that fit within their recognized exempt purpose.

In sum, although these types of foundations tend to differ in their fund sources, the scope of their grant-making, and the extent to which they engage in activities beyond grant-making, it is nonetheless the case that *recipients* of foundation grants are only rarely in a position where they need to be aware of these distinctions between foundation types (Prewitt, 2006: 365); they matter more to the foundations themselves than their grantees.

These distinctions do, however, have particular sets of legal rules that apply to each type, and therefore shape the actions of foundations. Most significant is the rule that foundations in general are legally obligated to make annual distributions of their funds, or else face a 30 percent excise tax on the foundation's income that was not distributed.<sup>2</sup> The required annual distribution amount, known by the IRS as the "minimum investment return," represents 5 percent of the combined market value of all assets held by the foundation with the exception of assets retained for uses that fit with the foundation's purpose of tax exemption, as well as any indebtedness that results from the purchase of assets.<sup>3</sup> These rules apply primarily to *independent, community, and corporate* foundations; *operating* foundations are not subject to the excise tax for the failure to distribute income, given that their IRS-granted tax exemption allows for regular activities well beyond grant-making.

There are also particular US federal laws that prohibit so-called "self-dealing" in which those closely tied to a foundation receive grants or other benefits resulting from those ties. These individuals or organizations are known as "disqualified persons," and self-dealing rules also vary somewhat depending on the type of foundation as described above. Certain types of individuals are almost always considered disqualified: foundation board members, officers, any employee of the foundation, substantial contributors/donors to the foundation, family members of any of the prior four categories, and certain government officials. In addition, companies, partnerships, trusts, or estates that are more than 35 percent owned by a person in any of the previous categories are also disqualified.

This has obvious implications for corporate foundations, which often have company executives on their board and also have particular rules that apply to the company's officers and/or executives not on the foundation's board. Importantly, however, as I describe further below, these rules *do not* prohibit corporate foundations from making grants to organizations that benefit indirectly the business of the foundation's corporate sponsor. Thus,

in some respects, the donations made by corporate foundations can serve as a covert (and yet fully legal and tax-exempt) marketing mechanism for those foundations' corporate parents.

### **Corporate Foundations: Institutional Pressures and Strategic Interests**

An ideal place to examine foundations as strategic players in collective arenas is found in the domain of *corporate foundations in the health sector*, especially in looking at the funding of advocacy by these foundations. I focus on corporate foundations in the health sector for a variety of reasons. First, corporate foundations are often overlooked in studies of the funding of contentious politics, despite the fact that they make up a substantial portion of overall foundation giving (Boris and Steuerle, 2006: 70). Second, although scholars have come to recognize the ways that social movements influence change processes within corporations (for reviews, see King and Pearce, 2010; Walker, 2012a), relatively little attention has been paid to the role of corporate-sponsored foundations in mediating corporate engagement in contentious politics. Like other areas of corporate engagement in the public sphere such as grassroots lobbying (Walker, 2009; 2012b; 2014), corporate foundation grants may represent a means of cultivating the socio-political legitimacy of a company's practices, products, and/or the firm itself.<sup>4</sup> Third, as I illustrate in greater detail below, corporate foundations often fund SMOs and other advocacy organizations, although they do so in a way that is not entirely consistent with the dominant "channeling" framework described earlier. Lastly, I focus on the health sector both because of the substantial resources in this foundation sector (given the health sector's vast and growing share of the economy) as well as because of popular and scholarly concerns about how donations by health firms toward health advocacy groups may often exploit public trust in seemingly independent advocacy organizations (Rothman et al., 2011).

I examine both (a) the factors that lead foundations to give greater (or lesser) amounts in a given year and also (b) which types of organizations are most likely to be the recipients of that giving. These questions allow me to address the question of how foundations engage in strategic action as players in broader arenas, both with respect to the interorganizational pressures they face and also in how they make strategic efforts to align their giving with the market and political interests of donors. To do so, I utilize two unique data sources about corporate foundations in the health sector



and apply these data to the two prior questions, respectively: (1) data from the IRS-990-PF tax return filings for all such foundations, (2) data from Foundation Center on the recipients of giving by these foundations.

## Expectations

Thus, turning to the first question above, which pressures should be most relevant in encouraging foundations to give greater amounts in a given year?<sup>5</sup> Foundation giving should in some part be shaped by (1) the presence of advocacy organizations that could receive their funds. However, shifting away from a movement-centric approach, I expect that corporate foundation giving is affected more heavily by two interorganizational influences: (2) giving by noncorporate peer foundations in the same community as ego foundation (*community* pressures), and (3) giving by other corporate foundations in the same subindustry (for example, pharmaceuticals or health insurers) as ego firm (*industry* pressures). I also expect (4) that giving by these foundations is influenced by the characteristics of the foundation's corporate parent, especially in how heavily the firm's board of directors prioritized shareholder interests over other corporate priorities.

Regarding the recipients of foundation grants, I expect that (5) recipients are most likely to be SMOs and other advocacy organizations with goals consistent with the marketing and/or political interests of ego foundation's corporate sponsor. In the health sector, these are often SMOs and other advocacy groups that raise awareness of the conditions that the corporate sponsor's products help to treat.

## Data

The data for this study, described in detail elsewhere (Walker, 2013), come from a broader study of giving by the largest firms in the health sector both through corporate foundations (among those firms with a well-established enough giving program to warrant the founding of a corporate foundation) and also through direct corporate giving. Of the leading publicly traded firms in the health sector, 82 currently have corporate foundations, and this study focuses on giving amounts and beneficiaries among those foundations. The corporate foundations in the data are associated with the following industries: pharmaceuticals (32.9 percent), device manufacturers (19.5 percent), health care providers (19.5 percent), health insurers (15.9



percent), medical sales (9.8 percent), and medical research (2.4 percent). The study tracks giving by these firms over the period 1995-2007, including in the statistical models only those foundation-years in which a foundation was in place ( $N=735$  foundation-years). Thus, the mean firm is observed for approximately 9 years during the window of the study.<sup>6</sup>

The dependent variable in the models presented in Table 1 below is the amount of real 2011 dollars given out by each corporate foundation in a given year. Data were extracted from the Core-PF data file held by the National Center on Charitable Statistics (NCCS).<sup>7</sup> These data were culled from line 25 of IRS Form 990-PF, in which foundations are asked to “enter the total of all contributions, gifts, grants, and similar amounts paid (or accrued) for the year.” A secondary dependent variable, illustrated in Figure 1 below, utilizes data from Foundation Center’s Foundation Directory Online to categorize the recipients of these foundations’ giving.

Independent variables are all lagged one year prior to foundation giving. These include, first, measures of the density of disease advocacy organizations in the health sector (also from NCCS), giving by other foundations in the health sector in the same metropolitan area (“community” effects), and giving by other corporate foundations in the same health industry (for example, pharmaceuticals or insurers; these are “industry” effects). In addition, models control for the number of “outsiders” on a company’s board of directors,<sup>8</sup> as well as the corporate parent’s employee size, gross profits, and assets. All models control for the size of the local population in the company’s headquarters metropolitan area – foundations in large metropolitan areas might feel pressured to give more to charity – although these coefficients are not shown in Table 1.

## Findings: Charitable Giving

Table 1 presents the findings from a series of fixed-effects regressions of logged foundation contributions to charitable causes in a particular year. Fixed-effects models are appropriate for the present purposes because of the study’s interest in accounting for unobserved heterogeneity at the foundation level, while also accounting for variation within foundations across years of observation.<sup>9</sup>

Model 1 includes only the effects of health advocacy organizations and financials of the corporate parent. Model 2 replaces the advocacy organization measure with variables associated with giving by peers in the foundation’s interorganizational environment. Model 3 includes all variables in the final estimation.

**Table 1** Fixed effects panel regressions of logged foundations giving on advocacy, interorganizational, and corporate parent characteristics

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Health Advocacy Groups</i>			
Disease advocacy group density	0.619* (0.269)	---	0.584* (0.250)
<i>Interorganizational Pressures</i>			
Community: Foundations in MSA (logged real \$)	---	0.906* (0.429)	0.849* (0.409)
Industry: Corp. Foundations in Industry (logged real \$)	---	0.270* (0.114)	0.239 (0.124)
<i>Corporate Parent Characteristics</i>			
Outsiders on Board (proportion)	-2.732* (1.085)	-3.280** (1.129)	-3.472** (1.088)
Employees (logged)	1.151* (0.564)	0.367 (0.414)	0.257 (0.419)
Gross Profits (logged real \$)	10.65 (5.534)	4.667 (3.789)	6.442 (3.642)
Assets (logged real \$)	-1.789 (0.978)	-1.295 (0.880)	-1.551 (0.844)
Constant	-136.9 (72.13)	-77.71 (53.18)	-94.60 (52.49)
Fixed Effects?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Dummies?	Yes	Yes	Yes
N Observations	658	422	422
R-squared	0.176	0.194	0.211
N Foundations	73	59	59
<i>Robust standard errors in parentheses</i>			
<i>Significance Levels: *** = <math>p &lt; 0.001</math>, ** = <math>p &lt; 0.01</math>, * = <math>p &lt; 0.05</math></i>			

First and foremost, the estimates in Table 1 suggest that giving does seem to be somewhat responsive to variation in the density of health advocacy groups in their local community. In particular, the coefficient for the disease advocacy measure shows that an expanding population of disease advocacy organizations is associated with a significant increase in the amount of corporate foundation giving in the following year, regardless of any fixed characteristics of a particular foundation. Although it is well established that SMOs respond to expanded resource pools (McCarthy and Zald, 1973; 1977), this evidence suggests that foundations also respond to changes in the advocacy organizing.

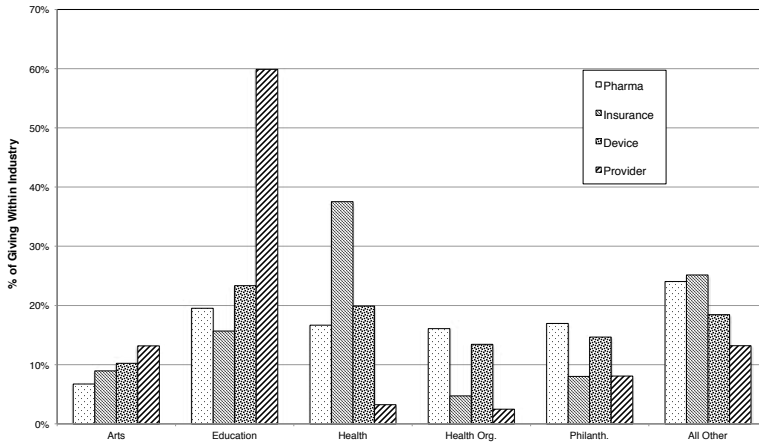
Still, a more important finding is that a larger share of variation is explained by interorganizational influences and factors associated with the foundation's corporate parent than with the influence of advocacy groups. In particular, foundations appear to be responsive to signals sent by other health-related foundations in their community that are not linked directly to a corporation.

Corporate foundations, then, appear to take their signals from their noncorporate peers, and these estimates indicate that a 10 percent increase in giving by peer foundations in a firm's community is associated with an increase of approximately 8.49 percent in the giving by corporate foundations. They are also especially responsive to one particular characteristic of their corporate parent: the number of members of the company's board of directors who are "outside" members without a direct tie to the company's executives (such as, for example, also serving as CEO). Each additional percentage point increase in outside board members is associated with a 3.6 percent drop in foundation giving in the following year. Thus, it appears that these foundations are also swayed to some extent by corporate practices and the ability of outside directors to press for the interests of shareholders in reducing the "agency cost" of philanthropic giving.

Interestingly, the other measures show mixed results. Foundations with corporate parents who see changes in their employee bases, levels of profit, or overall assets do not experience significant changes in the amount they contribute in the following year. The models also show inconsistent effects of the interorganizational pressure represented by a firm's industry peers, such that the variable is not significant in the final model. It appears that the key interorganizational pressure influencing foundation giving is found at the community level, consistent with previous work by Galaskiewicz and his collaborators (Galaskiewicz and Wasserman, 1989) and also with the conceptualization of Marquis, Glynn, and Davis (2007).

## Findings: Recipients of Giving

To which causes do corporate foundations in the health sector give? Figure 1 utilizes the data from the Foundation Directory Online in order to illustrate how patterns of giving by substantive area differ across the four (of six) industries best represented in these data: pharmaceuticals, insurance firms, device manufacturers, and for-profit health-care provider organizations. The figure compares these industries across the five most common types of causes to which corporate foundations give: arts and culture (NTEE category A), educational institutions (B), health institutions (E; these are nonprofits active primarily in providing care), health advocacy organizations (G; advocacy organizations in the health sector, disease awareness and support groups, and other associations in the health sector),<sup>10</sup> and philanthropic/voluntary associations (T). The rightmost column displays the percentage of grants within each industry to all other NTEE categories.

**Figure 1 Major grant giving areas by aggregate industry, 2003-2008**

Importantly, these findings illustrate, as suggested above, that philanthropic giving by corporate foundations in the health sector is, although beneficial to society, often quite strategic in nature. Examining industry-level differences in giving to health advocacy groups, for instance, it becomes clear that the two manufacturing industries represented here – device and pharmaceutical firms – give much more to such associations. This finding is consistent with the work of Rothman et al. (2011), who find that major pharmaceutical firms tend to target their giving at patient advocacy organizations that promote a medicalized view of mental illness, in a fashion ultimately consistent with the marketing aims of the donor; the present research expands upon this by finding that foundations linked to device manufacturers are almost as likely as drug companies to fund advocacy groups that may indirectly facilitate the firm’s market aims, such as when device manufacturers hope to raise awareness of heart conditions that their devices can help to treat. Again, such giving is generally well within the law in terms of the self-dealing rules outlined by the IRS.

The giving patterns of health insurer-backed foundations are also noteworthy for their apparent strategic aims, in that they are the most likely to give to nonprofit health provider organizations, as these are often the providers through which their enrollees receive coverage; insurers are in regular negotiation with them over pricing. Insurers have a strong interest in encouraging providers to keep their costs down, such that premiums are kept as low as possible for subscribers. This evidence, then, suggests that

insurers' foundations may offer such charitable donations as a means of rewarding those providers that do the most to keep their costs in check. Although important, this finding is preliminary and warrants further research.

Provider-backed foundations, for their part, differ in marked ways from the other foundations included in this study, as they are the industry that is most closely rooted in local communities and their parent companies also face the most direct competition from nonprofit organizations within their subfield (Schlesinger et al., 1996). Accordingly, providers' foundations give very little to other health providers, with only a few rare exceptions. Providers' largesse is directed instead primarily to educational institutions at a dramatically higher rate than any other health industry; nearly 60 percent of all charitable gifts by providers go to education. Providers, importantly, are much more dependent than other industries upon educational institutions for training the next generation of their sizable staffs. Indeed, whereas the median provider firm in the data has over 20,000 employees, median firms in the other three respective large industries have no greater than 12,500 employees. Thus, giving to education by providers' foundations may be strategic in facilitating high quality human capital flows into their organizations. On a less strategic level, however, providers of care give notably more to local arts and cultural causes than any other health industry, as they seek to maintain goodwill in the communities where their operations are rooted.

## Conclusion

Consistent with the other contributions in this volume, this chapter sought to illustrate how a fuller understanding of foundations in collective arenas can be reached by moving beyond movement-centric perspectives. Such perspectives, while generally quite illuminating, overemphasize dynamics of channeling and professionalization among the SMOs and other advocacy groups that receive support from foundations.

The contribution of this study is both to shift the perspective away from the movement by investigating foundation practices more broadly and also to illustrate how social movement groups may unintentionally help to fulfill the strategic interests of the foundations who support them (and those of foundations' donors).

To these ends, the study illustrated that within the domain of corporate foundations in the health sector, charitable contributions are only somewhat responsive to changes in advocacy. Stronger influences on foundation

giving come instead from their foundation peers (especially other noncorporate foundations in the health sector, who are more influential players than corporate foundations) and also from the financial and governance characteristics of their corporate parents (especially the proportion of the corporate parent's board that is controlled by outside directors).

The study also illustrated that these corporate foundations tend to be strategic in aligning their giving with the marketing interests of their corporate parents. Much of the money for patient advocacy groups comes from pharmaceutical firms and device manufacturers, who have an interest in supporting those who raise public awareness of the conditions their products treat. Drug-maker Eli Lilly, for instance, is a major supporter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, which promotes a medicalized view of mental illness (Rothman et al., 2011). I also found that corporate foundations associated with for-profit health-care providers, as the industry most in need of vast pools of employees to staff hospitals and treatment centers, give disproportionately to education, and that insurers give most to nonprofit health-care provider organizations. It appears that these donations effectively skirt the narrowly written IRS regulations concerning self-dealing by corporate foundations, which, surprisingly, allow corporate foundations to serve covert marketing ends for their parent companies.

Foundations, then, appear to act as strategic players in their own right. While foundations do respond to SMOs, they are much more responsive to other pressures in their environments. These pressures especially include those emerging from their peers and from those who provide resources passed through as contributions, just as policy-makers are often much more attentive to factors such as overall public opinion rather than the mobilization of SMOs (Soule and King, 2006). A less movement-centric understanding of foundations leads to a less distorted view of those who provide resources to support collective action, and one that more adequately acknowledges their role as strategic actors.

## Notes

1. <http://www.irs.gov/charities/foundations/article/0,,id=136358,00.html>.
2. <http://www.irs.gov/charities/foundations/article/0,,id=137632,00.html>.
3. <http://www.irs.gov/charities/foundations/article/0,,id=137646,00.html>.
4. Foundations that use the wealth of former health industry executives or directors are not considered corporate foundations, as they are not directly linked to the company, its brands, or its interest in promoting its market interests.

5. Note that the requirement that foundations distribute at least 5 percent of their assets, described earlier, tends to set a floor (although an imperfect one) on foundation giving in a particular year.
6. The discrepancy between this mean (9) and the period of observation (13 years) is due largely to the fact that certain firms did not establish their foundations until the later years of this window.
7. Used with permission. Thanks are due to the Urban Institute for granting access to these data.
8. Studies of corporate philanthropy suggest that outside directors, as more independent agents of shareholders (Brown et al., 2006), should have a significant negative influence on giving. Thus, corporate parents should be more likely to rein in the charitable giving of their corporate foundation when the board has a heavier presence of outside directors.
9. Further, Hausman test results were significant in the final model, thereby indicating that a random-effects model would be incorrectly estimated. The necessity of a fixed-effects specification ruled out the inclusion of industry-level controls, as industry is completely determined by the identity of the foundation's corporate parent. In additional random-effects models (available by request) carried out as a check on the findings, industry-level dummy measures were not significant predictors of logged giving.
10. Note that this variable is more encompassing than the independent variable used for the models in Table 1, which focused on disease advocacy in particular.

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## 4 Mind the Gap!

### Strategic Interaction during Summit Protests

*Christian Scholl*

#### Summit Protests as Protest Wave

Triggering a series of tactical interactions between authorities and protesters, the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle unleashed a wave of summit protests. While the ideas and the organization of the counter globalization movement<sup>1</sup> have received ample scholarly attention (Pleyers, 2010; Maeckelbergh, 2009; Juris, 2008; della Porta, 2007; Freyberg-Inan, 2006; Starr, 2005), the interactions of this movement with authorities and other players are surprisingly unexamined (Scholl, 2012). The analysis of interactions during summit protests may, first, help us to understand the development of the counter globalization movement, and, second, enrich our scholarly understanding of tactical interaction, especially in transnational arenas.

This chapter analyzes summit protests as a chain of tactical interactions. Bringing back agency by focusing on what different players are doing and how this creates, shapes, redefines, and reproduces political arenas, I will consider five players, constituting, at the same time, arenas for dynamic interactions: counter globalization movements, intergovernmental organizations, governments, police, and the media. As pointed out in the introduction to this volume, these kinds of compound players are neither homogeneous nor stable.

The analysis of the dynamic interactions between the players is based on several years of ethnographic fieldwork, qualitative interviews, documentation, and film analysis. The time span covers summit protests from 2000 to 2009, with a geographical focus on Europe. Where necessary, however, background information on previous protests and other geographical areas is included.

In the next section, I discuss how tactical interaction has so far been grasped and how we can build toward a useful framework for understanding tactical interaction in various transnational arenas. I then examine the five key players at summit protests and the arenas they constitute through their interaction. In my conclusion I reflect on the dynamic interactions that took place during counter globalization protests in the past decades and argue that the initial tactical innovations by protesters were neutralized, which therefore made summit protests “events without events.”

## Tactical Interaction

Tilly (1986: 4) argues that a contentious repertoire of action comprises all the means a group has available to make claims. In this chapter, however, I focus on tactical repertoires: all those action forms contentious players use consciously to protest. Although protest mainly takes place in the streets, social media show that it does not necessarily have to be so. However, online and street protest have become increasingly connected and intertwined (Gerbaudo, 2012; Van Laer, 2010).

Looking at tactical interaction means looking at the actual doing of purposeful actors. This has consequences for how we study social movements and their interactions. So far, what social movements or police say is more often the object of inquiry than what they do (and how they do it). Systematic ethnographic fieldwork, but also film and photo analysis are important methods to foster deeper understanding into the dynamics of interaction during public protest.

The proposal of this volume to focus on strategic interaction rather than on political opportunities is very useful in this respect. Strategic arenas create a context in which various players interact with each other. The context is no longer seen as a set of “structures,” but as other players who use their tactical tools to influence the other players. This chapter also takes into account a temporal perspective: summit protests throughout the past decade as a chain of interaction. How do we analyze the process of interaction over time?

The most exhaustive long-term study of tactical interaction is probably McAdam’s (1983) study of the “pace of black insurgency.” In his work, he highlights that a process of interaction is structured by tactical steps in response to each other, stressing the necessity of protesters to introduce new tactical dilemmas each time.

In looking at the tactical repertoires of the players involved in summit protests, I also want to foreground the process of tactical innovation and tactical adaptation, and the moments in which new tactical dilemmas have been created.

The above account of innovation and adaptation might suggest a certain symmetry between protesters and authorities. However, this would be misleading. The “doing” of protest requires entirely different tactical choices than the “doing” of social control (see Scholl, 2012). As many scholars have argued, disruption is an important tool of social movements (Piven, 2006; Gamson, 1990; Piven and Cloward, 1977). Della Porta et al. (2006) admit that the earlier observed shift in policing protest in the Western world from

escalated force toward negotiated management (della Porta and Reiter, 1998) has not necessarily been beneficial for protest movements. Protest became normalized, regulated, channeled, and, ultimately, ineffective (McPhail and McCarthy, 2005: 6). Hence, transgressive summit protest can also be seen as a reaction to the pacification of protest in the decades before.

As opposed to protesters' attempts to disrupt summit meetings, the police try to control them. Their activities are typically called "policing" in the literature. This term and its operationalizations, however, tend to eradicate the more subtle forms and effects of police work, and it also neglects the fact that a lot of "policing" takes place during and around summit protests and involves many other players such as intelligence services, cross-border security agencies and think tanks, armies, and corporations. Elsewhere, we therefore suggest the term "social control" as a better term to grasp the subtle, pervasive and networked character of contemporary police work (Starr, Fernandez, and Scholl, 2011).

The different "doings" of protesters and police are thus contradictory. Whether confrontation or even violence happens or not, there is an underlying antagonism within any street interaction. Too often scholarship has internalized and interjected the police view into its analytical categories, for example, by relating "less violent events" to "more democratic policing." Knowing about the contradictory logic of doing protest and doing control, we also need to unravel it in the micro-events of protest interactions.

However, protesters do not only interact with police. Governments, media, and – in the case of summit protests – intergovernmental organizations, are equally important to understand the dynamics of protest interactions. In the literature on protest policing, these players often do not receive systematic attention, partly because analyzing the interactions between several players is fairly complex. Since all these players constitute important arenas as well for other players and, therefore, influence their tactical considerations, innovations, and adaptations, this chapter attempts to move our understanding of multiplayer interactions forward.

## Players in Transnational Contention

In the following section, I unravel the complex interactions during summit protests by looking at five key players that shape this process: counterglobalization movements, police, media, intergovernmental organizations, and governments. By presenting them as five distinct players, I do not want to suggest that they are homogeneous or cohesive. Protesters, governments,

the police, and the media are compound players and can have different and often conflicting but also shifting views on tactical choices. Where possible, my analysis will point out these conflicts. Moreover, I do not want to suggest that empirically they appear as “one” actor. Protesters do many things at the same time and can stage several actions parallel to each other. In a similar way, one police unit can use tear gas against protesters at one spot, while a nearby unit leaves a sit blockade in peace. Last but not least, all of these players constitute arenas as well with certain rules and resources that shape the interaction of various players within (and across) certain arenas.

### Counter globalization Movements

Social movements are necessarily a different sort of player than the others: although formal organization may take part and play vital roles in social movements, there are many other participants and networks much less institutionally embedded, and normally come together to effect some sort of social change. This makes them more fluid and less stable, heterogeneous, and, at times, contradictory. The diversity of counter globalization movements has been a point of attention and might make it a special movement in this sense.

Hardt and Negri (2004) nicely capture this point with their term “multitude” (as opposed to the homogenizing idea of a “mass” movement) and compare the first summit protests with the list of grievances French citizens presented in 1789 to King Louis XVI in the “*Cahiers de Doléances*.” In order to coordinate the diversity of people and struggles that came together under the frame of global justice, counter globalization movements organize above all in networks. Although not free from hierarchies, these relatively flat and horizontal networks enable a rapid exchange of information and coordination of large-scale actions (Maekelbergh, 2009). Nevertheless, the diversity has led to certain tensions between various currents that calibrated over the years (see Pleyers, 2010: 181 ff.).

Shifting and developing, throughout the past decade summit protesters have consolidated a certain repertoire. The summit repertoire consists of a number of elements. Notable is the combination of the logic of numbers, the logic of damage, and the logic of bearing witness (della Porta and Diani, 2006: 171). Summit protests are mass protests attracting ten to hundreds of thousands of protesters that converge close to the venues of summit meetings. However, they do not only converge and protest; they also attempt to disrupt these meetings by applying transgressive tactics such as blockades

or collective intrusion into the red zone. Underlying these disruptive tactics is the logic of damage: by trying to “shut them down” (Harvie et al., 2005), protesters heighten the costs of summit meetings and the scope of the logistical operations. Finally, summit protests also bear witness. Many protesters organize or participate in symbolic actions that are intended to (globally) send out a message about global inequalities and specific policies established during summit meetings.

Influenced by the British anti-roads movement, “Reclaim the Streets,” combining joy, creativity and protest during mass actions in the streets (see Scholl, 2011), summit protests in the late 1990s were often called “Carnival against Capitalism.” This was a conscious decision by organizers in order to revive the dull practice of mass rallies but also to invoke unpredictability. Many action forms attempted to imitate carnival by “putting the world upside down.” Mocking authorities and the police, Pink and Silver protesters danced in pink (and silver) costumes and feather boas to the energetic music of samba bands, without avoiding battle with police lines. The “Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army” (or CIRCA) consisted of protesters dressed as clowns in military uniforms, marching, crawling, and mocking the police. Humor was an important instrument to create confusion (see Scholl and Duyvendak, 2010). It also helped to create a sympathetic image for bystanders and an attractive one for potential participants. Tactical carnivals also created dilemmas for the police. How do you tell a clown to stop playing? However, not everyone agrees with the tactical use of humor and some action forms also ended up being purely about having joy and fun. The more militant protesters saw this as counterproductive to their confrontational or “serious” actions. Reversing a famous statement by Emma Goldman, one activist commented to me: “If I have to dance, I am not part of your revolution.”

Another important tactical innovation of the summit protest repertoire is the use of “swarm intelligence.” Swarm intelligence refers to the capacity to converge from many sides toward one point (in this case the summit venue or the red zone) without centralized command and control. Nunes (2005: 305) points out that “swarm networks must be able to coalesce rapidly and stealthily on a target, then disperse and redispense, immediately ready to recombine for a new pulse.” Even the military think tank RAND researched extensively the swarming logic of networks as an organizational practice of oppositional movements that could inspire counterinsurgency initiatives (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2001).

Decentralized swarming tactics created a number of dilemmas for police: it forced them to disperse officers and attention, it made it difficult to use

the police tactic of arresting or neutralizing central leaders, and it was difficult to avoid reconfiguration after a police intervention (for example, protesters joining another rally or action after being stopped by police). At the 2007 G8 protests in Heiligendamm, protesters innovated decentralized swarming and purposefully stretched police lines each time by splitting up into “five fingers.” So much space came free in-between police officers that protesters could just glide through. “Mind the gap” was the advice a German action network gave to the protesters. This advice also nicely captures the interaction between police and protesters on a more general level.

Swarm intelligence was frequently combined with another innovation: “tactical diversity.” This was the result of a creative resolution of a tactical dilemma many mass protest movements face: how to deal with the fact that there is not one leader but many tactical preferences that may imply very different risks and police responses (see also Hurl, 2005). In the absence of a central command center, protesters at the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle decided to take the WTO venue as the center and divide the space around it into slices like a cake. These slices had different colors signaling differing levels of militancy and risk (Dixon, 2009). Next to organizing the protesters for swarming from multiple directions toward the WTO meeting, this approach, while still acting in common, also helped to keep different tactics spatially separated. A similar tactical approach was applied at the 2000 IMF/World Bank protests in Prague. Protesters broke up into three marches designated by different colors and each march applied different tactics to encircle the conference center.

Finally, summit protesters have introduced a number of innovative tactical uses of the body for street protest. The centrality of the body also reflects the logic of damage and the choice for direct action and civil disobedience tactics. In both traditions, the individual and the collective bodies of protesters are put in the way in order to create obstacles for the opponent. However, each tactical use of bodies differs. The Italian *Tute Bianche* (White Overalls), for example, padded their bodies and used huge shield constructions to protect their bodies from police attacks and to highlight the violence of police resulting in theatrical and comical clashes. The aforementioned CIRCA poses a very different dilemma to police, as do the Pink and Silver protesters. Both action forms use the body for cross-dressing, art, and confusion.

Counter globalization movements also constitute an arena, first and foremost, for the involved activists. Because of identification and the projection of hope for change, movements can easily result in internal conflicts on ideological, organizational, and tactical questions. The various tactical preferences described above, have frequently triggered fierce debates and



mutual accusation, above all on the question of confrontational tactics (see, for example, George, 2001).

Counter globalization movements also serve as arenas for some politicians or business leaders who want to profile themselves by subscribing to (some of) the ideas of the movements. They are also an arena for police to carry out investigations, for example, with undercover cops infiltrating the movements. Even the media sometimes “infiltrates” the movement in order to get exclusive coverage. In order to avoid such types of infiltration, the internal arena of counter globalization movements may be protected (for example, avoiding online communication on action plans).

### **Intergovernmental Organizations**

Disruptive mass protests during summit meetings did not remain unanswered. Intergovernmental organizations responded by making summit meetings arenas for relegitimation of their meetings and policies. Relegitimation included a number of co-optation tactics.

Many intergovernmental organizations exist, and new ones are created, so they constitute a compound player. Despite their differences, they can also act in a coordinated way, such as the classical Bretton Woods organizations: the World Bank, the IMF, and the GATT (forerunner of the WTO). Those three organizations, and the EU and the G8 (reflecting the hegemony of the rich Western countries in all the other organizations) have also been the most frequent target of counter globalization protests. Generally, it concerns organizations that serve as important arenas for global economic decisions and that have been carrying out neoliberal ideas and policies since the 1970s (which is not to say that they are the only actors of neoliberal capitalism; see Harvey, 2007).

A first step undertaken by intergovernmental organizations was to use the visibility created by the very protests for their messages. Having a spotlight turned on their major meetings, intergovernmental organizations could not, as they did previously, hold their meetings far removed from public attention. The first G5 and later G6 meetings in the 1970s, for example, were fairly informal meetings. After being faced with mass protests in front of their doors, intergovernmental organizations now try to come up with ambitious agendas for their meetings that are made public in the media. Using the visibility of their meetings, they now claim to discuss and solve global problems. Depending on attention issue waves, however, the exact topic may change quite frequently (Dowling, 2010).



Another co-optation tactic of intergovernmental organizations was to project increasing inclusivity by selectively expanding access for previously excluded players. This could be representatives of big NGOs, such as at the 2000 IMF/WB meeting in Prague, or government officials of Southern countries, such as at the 2001 G8 summit in Genoa. Responding to the critique of being undemocratic elite spaces, this rather tokenistic practice nevertheless transmits the idea that summit meetings are engaging in serious dialogue with civil society and the developing world.

In response to the critique of the content of their policies, intergovernmental organizations started to selectively address – if only rhetorically – certain demands of counter globalization movements. In fact, this process started already in the 1980s when AIDS, hunger, and poverty were making it to the top agendas of these meetings. In the first years of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium, a number of summit meetings responded to the recent wave of counter globalization protest by addressing poverty, debt, and climate change. Final declarations caught worldwide attention, such as the G8's 2005 statement to alleviate poverty of the world's 20 poorest countries and helped to create an image of benevolence suggesting that these organizations respond to criticisms from civil society and are, after all, not that undemocratic.

This selective interaction with their critics was accompanied by a geographical move that helped intergovernmental organizations to insulate themselves from counter globalization movements (Scholl and Freyberg-Inan, 2013). For many years after the 2001 G8 protests in Genoa, summit meetings took place in remote rural areas that were difficult for protesters to access. Although this geographical move did not stifle big counter globalization mobilizations, it made it harder for protesters to apply their disruptive repertoire of blockading. Moreover, it helped intergovernmental organizations to organize their meetings as exclusive spaces for political debate on global problems. Anyone outside of the large fenced areas was associated with political hooliganism rather than with political dissent.

Being an international platform for national governments to meet, discuss, and make decisions, intergovernmental organizations function as well as arenas. Governments may use these organizations to (re-)gain legitimacy on the national level, to portray a positive image of their country, to make strategic alliances, and to push certain (often economic) decisions supposedly to benefit their national economies.

Counter globalization movements, as I have shown above, have used summit meetings of intergovernmental organizations to confront neoliberal capitalism. Whether protests at summit meetings were a good tactical choice or not, they definitely had a visualizing effect. Power holders and

relations on the transnational level are not easy to unmask and pinpoint (Uitermark, 2004). In this sense, summit protesters acted foremost as geographers by saying, "Here is where decisions on transnational affairs are being made." The transnational capitalist class of neoliberal globalization is not an abstract idea; it is a concrete reality, with meetings, suppers, hotels, big limousines, press conferences, logistical operations, and so on. It is an entire world opened for staging protest, intervening disruptively, and by doing so, creating transnational contention.

For the media, summit meetings accompanied by large protests are "hot" items, and constitute an arena to get access to the discussions and procedures of intergovernmental organizations, but also to counterglobalization movements, their ideas, action plans and spokespersons. As events with global repercussions, summit protests can provide a competitive arena for mainstream media to profile themselves (to an international public) as the best, quickest, and most exclusive news outlet covering the events.

Also for police, international summit meetings serve as an arena. On the one hand, they like to show that they can manage such events in a professional and smooth way. Policing summit meetings is always a chance for police commanders to profile themselves and prepare their next career steps. The police chief of the 2005 UK G8 security operation, for example, became head of the International Permanent Observatory on Security during Major Events (IPO). On the other hand, summit meetings serve as an arena for police to introduce, test, and present new police tactics, ranging from the use of less-lethal weapons (such as taser guns or rubber bullets) to cooperation with military forces. These new weapons and tactics often continue to be used after summit meetings and can durably change the practice of protest policing in certain countries.

## **Governments/Politicians**

Governments act as compound players taking on various roles in the interaction with counterglobalization movements. On the one hand, national governments act as the official hosts of international summit meetings, and therefore are responsible for all the logistical and security-related preparations. Summit meetings are often seen as a chance to put the spotlights on the hosting country, and national governments therefore desire a smooth and sometimes glamorous course of the meetings. However, due to the increasing intensity of the security preparations in response to the first

mass protests since the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle, and the potential damage to the city, few cities queue for hosting a summit meeting.

On the other hand, governments may respond to counter globalization movements beyond such summit protests. Their responses comprise various forms of social control, such as co-optation, surveillance, and prosecution. One way of co-opting counter globalization critique is by selectively inviting certain moderate groups for consultative talks. This way, in 2007 the German government suggested that there was no reason for protest, since the critique was part of the official summit. Another form of co-optation is to rhetorically integrate some of the discourses, arguments, and values of counter globalization movements. A good example is President Clinton, who immediately after the 1999 Seattle protests suggested that he understood and shared the critique of the protesters (see the 2000 film *This Is What Democracy Looks Like* [dir. Jill Friedberg and Rick Rowley]).

Monitoring of counter globalization networks and groups on a national scale has become a continuous effort. This can happen through police infiltration, paid informants, and phone and computer tapping. In order to stop certain activists at the border governments keep lists that may also be exchanged in case of a concrete mass protest. At the 2009 NATO summit in Strasbourg, for example, German police used data collected at the 2007 G8 protests to return hundreds of Germans at the French border.

An additional aspect of governments as compound players is their access to the judicial apparatus in order to maintain the public order. State prosecution usually starts many trials after summit protests, sometimes against individual protesters perceived as leaders (for example, two girls supposedly having shouted "Push!" to other protesters in front of police lines at the 2009 UN climate conference in Copenhagen), or against entire groups (such as the 25 protesters charged for ransacking the city of Genoa in 2001, 10 of whom were sentenced for a total of 98 years' imprisonment), or against random protesters arrested in the streets in order to set an example. The fact that police officers (or governments) are rarely charged demonstrates that access to and use of the judicial apparatus are not symmetric.

Governments can play a role on the national, provincial, and local level. For the 2009 UN climate summit, the city of Copenhagen introduced a special law package enhancing the discretionary responsibilities of police and restricting the rights of protesters. Before the 2000 IMF/WB protests the mayor of Prague suggested that the local population not leave their houses during summit or even leave the city (German, 2000). Hence, beyond national politics, local governments have their own agency.

Governments also constitute a contested arena that is used by other players. In the first place, governments may constitute an arena for political debate on the national scale. This can be a debate about the central issues of a summit meeting, or about the critique articulated by counter globalization movements. The debate can also focus on the legitimacy of the summit, or the government itself. An example is the government of Berlusconi and his Minister of Internal Affairs, who were at the center of a fierce debate after the police violence at the 2001 G8 summit.

Counter globalization movements use this arena for voicing their critique, gaining legitimacy, and questioning the impact of the security preparation on the right to protest. Sometimes they find allies among members of parliament or even the government, who may help to push parliamentary investigations around the security operations. An important entry for stirring parliamentary debates is the extensive cost of such security operations (see Starr et al., 2011). After the 2003 G8 in France, parliamentary debates heated up in Switzerland because this non-G8 member country had to carry huge security costs for the operations taking place largely on Swiss territory. Also after the 2007 G8 in Germany, a number of German parliamentarians questioned the government about the costs, above all of the deployment of the army (see, for example, Ströbele, 2007).

By critically interrogating government representatives and monitoring their decisions, the media can amplify such debates. The media's general interest in contentious issues makes them receptive to discussions of controversial security preparations. One example, are the ever higher and larger fence constructions erected for summit meetings to keep intergovernmental institutions separated from protest. Besides their gigantic costs, the fences trigger media attention as visible manifestation of the fear of governors. However, not all media outlets are critical toward such government measures, and those who are usually are not all the time.

## Police

Police are compound players for many reasons. Police forces consist of many departments and differing scales of responsibility (local, state, federal, international), and all of them can be involved in the control of counter globalization protest at summit meetings. Police are the visible representation of the state's internal monopoly on violence (Lipsky, 1970); at the same time, they can retain varying levels of discretion (Waddington, 1998: 128). Big police operations usually involve the government, parliaments, the judicial

apparatus, and police unions. The variety of police unions in many countries also shows that police cannot be seen as a single player.

Various scholars have observed a shift in police tactics in response to counter globalization protests (Scholl, 2012; Starr et al., 2011; Fernandez, 2008; Vitale, 2007; Vitale, 2005; Peterson, 2006). Della Porta and Reiter's edited volume (1998) discerned a shift in Western democracies after the 1960s and 1970s from an escalated force approach toward a negotiated management approach, focusing on the channeling of protest. This policing style came under pressure by the counter globalization movement's disruptive and confrontational tactics. In response, policing has been both violent and subtle, ranging from massive use of pepper spray and batons to the extensive preparatory manipulation of the media and the geography of summit meetings (see Scholl, 2012).

The new approach is often preemptive and focuses on the preclusion of undesired events (read: disruption). This translates into increasing focus on preparations, such as information gathering, preventive monitoring, constant risk assessment, but also into a prevalence of certain tactics *during* street protests, such as corralling, constant surveillance, and the use of less lethal weapons instead of baton charges. Notwithstanding differences between national police cultures, the shift toward such tactics marks a difference between the early counter globalization protests and the ones after the 2001 G8 in Genoa.

One of the remarkable features of police work around counter globalization protests is the increasingly networked collaboration and the exchange of standardized information and procedural protocols. This collaboration not only happens through traditional outlets such as intelligence services, liaison officers, and heads of police departments, but also through newly created security think tanks and agencies, such as the EU's UNICRI and IPO program. Conflating a football championship with a G8 protest, these intergovernmental agencies give general advice and develop security protocols for what they call "major international events." Various handbooks are in circulation, as well as several undercover police agents operating across various countries (Monroy, 2011).

The police are an arena for internal conflict; various fractions within police forces may disagree about the legitimacy, strategy, or organization of certain operations. These conflicts are sometimes reflected in reports and publications of police unions. One example is the biggest German police union criticizing the difficult circumstances and the poor provision of rank-and-file police officers during the 2007 G8 protests (Gewerkschaft der Polizei, 2007).

Defending the preparations and operations of “their” police forces, governments can also enter the arena of the police. However, governments may also be urged to respond to public critique and outrage in reaction to police brutality or police actions widely seen as disproportionate. The 2001 G8 protests in Genoa, above all the violent raid of two protest convergence centers and the subsequent torture of the arrestees, provide a case in point. Although the Italian government felt pressured to react to criticism, no senior police officer was suspended, and the then-head of the Italian police served afterwards as the head of the Italian intelligence services.

Through media attention conflicts around police brutality may receive more urgent scrutiny. Though usually being a rather useful arena for the police, media can also enter the arena of the police through critical investigation of certain methods or entire operations. This is especially the case when journalists themselves become the target of police brutality, such as at the 2001 protests in Genoa. When police preparations become more and more extensive and visible in the months before the actual summit meetings, media play an important role in questioning the sense, extent, and costs of such operations. The construction of the 12-km-long barbed and razor-wired fence in Germany for the 2007 G8 meeting lasted nearly five months and triggered many news features with critical remarks about the security operations (see Scholl, 2012).

The 2001 G8 protests in Genoa are a good example for seeing how activist footage feeds into mainstream media coverage. This combination made the Italian police violence widely accessibly and visible to an international audience. Like this, activists often document incidences of police misconduct to feed the mainstream media and stir a debate about certain police methods, the entire operation, or even the police as an institution (see also Scholl and Bril, 2012). For the 2007 G8 protests in Germany activists cooperated with a network of left-wing lawyers to observe and document police behavior during the street protests.

## Media

Frequently mistaken for a dataset, media are themselves an important player during counter globalization protests. Media do not simply reflect the reality of protest events; they actively intervene in them and shape social struggles. Given the multitude of outlets, media clearly are a compound player with varying interests and values. Nevertheless, as Herman and

Chomsky (1988) pointed out, a number of structural filters reflect the corporate media's tendency to reproduce the view of the elite.

Media often claim to "represent" the voice(s) of a movement in an adequate way, and for many people these "representations" then become the first access to learn about a social movement. In trying to represent the movement, most journalists try to speak to what they consider the "representatives." In the case of counter globalization movements, this causes frequent trouble: many networks and action groups explicitly refuse to have "representatives" (see Wood, 2005); they are easily outflanked in media representation by networks and especially bigger organizations that do have visible media spokespersons. As the research on the 2007 G8 in Germany by Rucht and Teune (2008) shows, media cited repeatedly a very small number of spokespersons (typically belonging to big organizations).

Through the selection mechanisms in the search for movement representatives media actively shape the representation of the movement and, moreover, create a contrast between "professional" activists and the "rank-and-file" protesters. Incited by the occurrence of confrontational protests, this can lead to a perceived division between "good" and "bad" protesters. After the 2001 G8 protests in Genoa, for example, European corporate media univocally demonized the so-called black bloc. The effects of such media categorizations are far-reaching and can result in internal movement splits, loss of support and sympathy, and outright criminalization of (parts of) the movement. In the case of counter globalization movements in Europe, this has frequently happened, not without associating counter globalization protesters in general with violent terrorists (Fernandez and Scholl, 2013).

Media are a contested arena as well and many players consider it an important arena to be visible. Politicians and police communicate the justification of the security measures to the local and national population via the media, activists try to disseminate their critique and independent coverage of their actions. The battle for media presence of all these players reflects the battle for the sympathy of (the so-called) public opinion. Though unclear what exactly that is, many of the players perceive media representations as a reflection of the reality of that public opinion. Visibility in the media, then, can be seen as a legitimation strategy invested by various players in order to achieve credibility.

The increasing effort that many counter globalization activists invest in media campaigns and press management testifies to the contestation of the media arena. Even the more radical networks at the 2005 and 2007 G8 protests in, respectively, Scotland and Germany, had press working groups



producing daily press releases and establishing contacts with journalists and interview partners. At G8 protest in Germany there were attempts to bring together the press teams of various protest networks in a daily press conference. However, the proactive management of the movement's media representation, such as receiving journalists at the entry to a summit protest camp, contradicts the wish of other protesters to remain anonymous and uncooperative with the corporate press. Quite some energy has therefore gone into the elaboration of independent media outlets, such as Indymedia, a website for participatory and shared news reporting (Kidd, 2003). This creates a new media arena, equally interesting to other players, such as police and journalists. Other action forms, such as the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (see Scholl, 2012), explicitly aim to create frivolous but friendly photo ops for the mainstream media.

For intergovernmental organizations the media are an important arena for responding to critique and opposition by shedding a benevolent light on their meetings. The harmonious final group photo with all the leaders for the front pages of daily newspapers is a crucial part of this. At the 2007 G8 in Germany, some protesters successfully blocked the access of journalists to the summit. Because of bad conditions on the water that day, the alternative route via the sea was also blocked, so in the end no journalists could make it to the official photo shoot.

Throughout the summit protests in the past decades, police have improved their media management. Nowadays, they devote much more money, personnel, and time to their press work. International manuals for securing summit meetings include extensive sections on police media work and ensure that best practices can circulate internationally. The German police copied the activist practice of hosting information evenings and, on several occasions in the months preceding the G8 summit, invited the local population to attend them. Preparations also included the construction of a special media center close to the summit (and far from the protesters) and an accreditation procedure for journalists wanting access to this center. The office of the German Federal Criminal Police refused to give accreditation to a number of journalists. During the week of summit protests, the police were present with several mobile information vehicles to facilitate easy access for their version of the events to journalists. They also released several press briefings on a daily basis, some of which turned out to contain false and misleading information discrediting the protesters (Backmund, 2009).

Governments also found corporate media a useful arena in their response to the first major counter globalization protests. Their legitimation strategy often includes co-optation. This means that parts of the movement's critique



is (rhetorically) integrated, which makes it harder for the more radical and anti-systemic messages to be heard. This way, governments regain agency in the debate on global justice. During the 1990s governments already invited civil society representatives to their summit meetings, normally high-ranking officials of large NGOs. These kind of initiatives are widely circulated in the press and do suggest that governments are responsive to critique. For the 2005 G8 protests in Scotland, the British government designed an even more elaborated media campaign including pop stars such as Bono and Bob Geldof, a free pop concert (possibly distracting people from participating in the protests), and a broad alliance of large NGOs supporting the British government in their supposed attempt to come with solutions concerning global poverty (Dowling, 2010).

### **Summit Protests as Dynamic Interactions**

Interaction during counter globalization protests is a complex phenomenon and not easy to unravel. Many compound players are involved, and each of them, in turn, can constitute an arena for all the others. Nevertheless, a careful, systematic, and patient attempt to take them apart and relate them to each other can broaden our understanding of what happens during a single summit protest, but also of how players (in different arenas) respond to each other over time.

We have seen how intergovernmental organizations, governments, and police have reacted to certain tactical innovations of counter globalization movements, and how those, in turn, try again to innovate in their tactical repertoires. Innovation and adaptation are important mechanisms to understand tactical interaction throughout time. They can explain the continuation, transformation, but also the sudden end of certain interaction dynamics. In the case of counter globalization protests, we can observe successful adaptations of authorities and a standstill in tactical innovation on the side of protesters, which channeled the initial vibrant interaction dynamic into more predictable and contained interaction rituals.

After having staged a number of tactical innovations, such as decentralized swarming and tactical diversity, which became central to the summit protest repertoire, counter globalization movements found it difficult to move forward and to pose new tactical dilemmas to authorities. Governments, intergovernmental organizations, and police, on the other hand, have adapted their co-optation and control tactics to these early innovations and neutralized them in large part. The media have been a useful arena for their purposes.

Summit meetings as an arena for transnational contention thus have revealed a dynamic interplay of contestation, co-optation, and control. However, even though many players interact in various arenas, street protest still reflects the underlying antagonism between contenders and authorities, the “doing” of protest and the “doing” of control. So far, authorities – police, governments, and intergovernmental organizations – have been successful in forming a law-and-order alliance to control the disease of counter globalization dissent. Where anti-austerity protests take it from here, is yet to be seen.

## Note

1. I prefer the term “counter globalization” over “alter globalization” or “global justice movement,” because it stresses the oppositional character of the alternative practices in question.

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**Part 2**  
Market players



## 5 Corporations as Players and Arenas

*Philip Balsiger*

Dissatisfaction with the contentious politics framework has been voiced time and again. Perhaps reflecting the rules of the academic arena, opponents of the dominant model have – while raising fundamental points – mostly used moderate action forms and pursued a reformative agenda, if at times spiced up with provocative language (Goodwin and Jasper, 2004; McAdam et al., 2001; Fillieule, 2006; Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008; Goodwin and Jasper, 2012). The classic agenda offers a mostly static and dichotomous analysis. Some of the founding case studies trace movements over time (McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 1989), but they tend to stress changes in structural factors over the dynamics of contentious action. Even studies of waves of contention (Koopmans, 2004) mostly build on aggregate data of individual protest events and fail to address the relational character that link one event to the other, different collective actors in those events, and actors with each other in networks or coalitions (for a similar point, see Diani, 2011). The static analysis has, in addition, led to a perspective where a movement's targets are pictured merely as context (Jasper, 2012).

To use a sports metaphor, the dominant conceptualization of social movement activity resembles a tennis player firing balls against a wall. The tennis player is the social movement, using different tactical action repertoires – slice, stop balls, lobs – and having specific resources and skills. His opponent, meanwhile, is pictured as a wall: exhibiting certain structural characteristics – the wall may be made of uneven concrete, with spots where the ball rebounds particularly well – it is incapable of strategy, it cannot “play.” It is time for a dynamic perspective where the tennis player has another tennis player as her opponent; both can adapt to the repertoire of shots from each other; sometimes doubles are played and the two players on each site have to coordinate; and a match can go on over several sets, where winning or losing one set does not necessarily mean losing the match. Emotions are important, and surprise shots may make the opponent lose his temper.<sup>1</sup>

The tennis metaphor is apt to capture the dynamic aspect of protest and fits contexts where movement players mostly oppose their targets directly and contentiously. But a player's goals are usually not as evident as in a tennis match and may be multiple and even contradictory. In many cases strategies are not limited to contention, but may include forms of collabora-



tion, switching arenas (as when disputing the result of a game in a sports court) or the establishment of a new game, with slightly different rules, outside the first arena. In this chapter I build on the players-and-arenas approach to explore the interactions of movements and corporate players, using the example of an anti-sweatshop campaign in France.

As of late the analysis of movements and markets has greatly developed, as part of a call to study protest in other institutional arenas than the state (Van Dyke et al., 2004; Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008; Taylor and Zald, 2010). Markets are the site of a great variety of protest activity (Raeburn, 2004; Schurman, 2004; King and Pearce, 2010; Schneiberg and Lounsbury, 2008; McAdam and Scott, 2005; Soule, 2009; Soule, 2012; Walker, 2012). Movement players launch boycotts and public campaigns, develop and promote alternative forms of production and consumption, or collaborate with firms to change their practices. Corporations react to protest in diverse manners: they shut down production facilities, mobilize important communication resources to delegitimize protesters, try to infiltrate them, or use the judicial arena for processes against campaigners. But they also find themselves changing business practices, negotiating with movement organizations, creating new activities, investing in new markets. How does protest work when targeting corporate players? What kind of action repertoires are used by protest players? What actions do corporate players take to react to movement demands?

I start with a very brief overview of economic sociology's theories of corporate action in order to understand the goals and interactions of corporate players in market arenas. From there, I use the empirical study of the anti-sweatshop movement campaigns in France (and occasionally Switzerland) to show the interactions between movement players and discuss the functioning of protest in markets.

## **Corporate Players and Markets**

Economic sociology and studies using it to explain the role of movements in markets for the most part do not adopt a strategic perspective. In opposition to neoclassical economics and also to some earlier organizational theories, the most important insight of economic sociology is that firms are seen as part of (or embedded in) networks, fields and institutional environments, which decisively shape their strategies and structure (Davis, 2005). Institutional theory and economic sociology have developed structural theories explaining stability in markets; studying tactics of avoidance or resistance

are not part of their traditional agenda (Campbell, 2005). This has changed, however, with growing attention to institutional change, including the role of institutional entrepreneurs and social movements (King and Pearce, 2010; Schneiberg and Lounsbury, 2008). Studies stressing the open polity of firms (Zald et al., 2005) encourage analysis of the strategic struggles *within* firms. Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) recent formulation of a general theory of fields further accentuates the idea of contentiousness and struggle within fields, whether it be everyday jockeying for positions or transformative change triggered by exogenous shocks. Their field perspective, however, tends to focus on interactions within a given field, while the players and arenas approach concentrates on players acting strategically *across* arenas.

Corporate players pursue different goals. In classic economic terms, a corporate player's only goal is profit. Balancing this view, economic sociologists have suggested corporate player's ultimate goal is market stability (Fligstein, 2001) to overcome the coordination problems at the core of markets (Beckert, 2009). They also point at corporate players pursuing symbolic goals: they care for their reputation and legitimacy with regard to social norms and institutions (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), and build up corporate identities. Goals can be complementary: pursuing symbolic goals may favor profit because it avoids risks of public shaming by campaigns; building up corporate identities can help to create stability by establishing a niche, ultimately favoring profit. But goals are also often conflicting: a firm that cares for its reputation and therefore subscribes to a voluntary program of code monitoring may jeopardize its profits. Corporations can themselves be seen as arenas where different individual and collective (i.e., departments or offices) players face each other. Within such a corporation-as-arena, players may privilege competing goals and interact strategically to advance them.

Corporate players interact with each other within market arenas. The defining logic of interactions in market arenas is competition: corporations jockey for position and fight for market share, through imitation or differentiation, resulting in convergence and divergence of practices (Beckert, 2010). On the one hand, neoclassical and neoinstitutional economic theory expects all market participants in competitive markets to adopt the most efficient practices, pushing them to convergence. Institutional theory in sociology has put forward other mechanisms that provoke convergent practices among market players: coercion, normative and mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Firms come to imitate each other because they are submitted to formal rules, because of the attraction of models diffused through networks and professional groups, and through simple

imitation as a response to uncertainty. On the other hand, interactions in market arenas also lead to the adoption of practices of differentiation. To secure market positions, corporate players try to specialize and build up distinctive product and producer identities (Chamberlin, 1933; White, 1981).

Ultimately differentiation allows producers to create niches that avoid direct competition. This can also be achieved when firms cooperate and coordinate their actions. Cooperation can take many forms. It may be informal through interfirm networks, or be conducted through business associations, distinct players that represent corporations. Cooperation is also used to lobby state players for favorable legislation; in turn, states may fight against cartels and advocate competition. Cooperation does not necessarily involve all players of a market; there may be different competing groups that cooperate, such as chain retailers and small independent retailers.

When can we expect firms to do what? The characteristics of market arenas are likely to play an important role in the goals and strategies used by firms. In markets where producers cater to individual consumers, reputation is likely to be much more important than in business-to-business markets where corporations exchange goods with each other. This is especially true for markets with fewer players where brand recognition is high. The positions of corporate players within market arenas are also capable of shaping their strategies (Fligstein, 2001). Big and incumbent firms can be expected to be more conservative, to imitate each other's practices and possibly to collaborate to commonly defend their interests. This also means that when an incumbent firm actually changes its practices, it is likely to be followed by its immediate competitors (Briscoe and Safford, 2008). Smaller challenger firms may be more prone to strategies of differentiation and niche creation (Schurman, 2004).

### **Strategic Interactions of an Anti-Sweatshop Campaign**

I will illustrate the advantages of the players-and-arenas (P&A) perspective with a social movement campaign targeting clothing retailers in France (with occasional illustrations from the Swiss case, too). The case study is based on interviews with key actors, publications by firms and the campaign, and the campaign archives. The study initially focused on campaign activity and data collection concerns mostly these players. Ideally, a symmetrical effort of data collection should have been done for corporate players – interviews with executives and officials involved in the interaction with campaigners, firm archives. Such symmetry, a key require-

ment of a P&A approach, proved difficult to achieve. Access to business executives, especially those with decision-making power, is more difficult than access to movement officials, especially for controversial and ongoing issues like production conditions. Even in interviews, the researcher is often confronted with formatted discourses that do not give insight into decision-making processes. However, this does not rule out an interactionist perspective insofar as publicly accessible sources (in particular press articles, firm reports, documents published by business associations, the information gathered by the campaign) allow us to reconstruct in detail the strategies employed by firms and business associations in reaction to campaigns.

In the following, I first analyze the rise of the French campaign and show how it used different arenas to fight for its goals. I then turn to the strategies its corporate targets used to fight back against the campaign, by building up a new player through cooperation. A quick look at the Swiss case highlights a different interaction dynamic with corporations competing over ethical records and creating a new market arena for ethical clothes. A final section brings together the insights from these illustrative cases to put forward the contribution of the P&A perspective to understanding movement-corporate interactions in markets.

## **The Formation of the Player**

In France, the campaign that would later be part of the European-wide coordinated Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) started as a project by one fair trade organization to launch its own public campaign on the broad issue of “conscious” consumption. The exact outlook of the campaign owed much to historical circumstances. At the time – the early 1990s – anti-sweatshop campaigns had started to appear in the US and some European countries, especially the Netherlands. In France, the debate on production offshoring was vivid, with prominent cases of factory closings in the textile sector. And there were ongoing discussions among development aid organizations and unions about the possibility of adding a “social clause” to the General Agreement on Taxes and Trade (GATT), that is, the obligation of trade partners to respect minimal labor standards set by the International Labor Organization. Finally, the European Union was funding civil society initiatives promoting “citizen-consumption.”

In this context, the fair trade organization drafted a proposal for a public campaign for consumer mobilization targeting clothing retailers.

From the beginning, the organization sought to enroll other players to the campaign to form a coalition, both in order to secure public funding and with the rationale that the broader the coalition, the larger its appeal and legitimacy. The coordinator of the campaign therefore explicitly sought out reform-oriented actors such as a Catholic development aid NGO and the Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (French Democratic Confederation of Labor, or CFDT) rather than radical unions like the Confédération Générale du Travail (General Confederation of Labour, or CGT) or Solidaires Unitaires Démocratiques (SUD). The result was a coalition that brought together movement players with very different backgrounds (consumer associations, unions, development aid and solidarity organizations), which, in the eyes of the coordinator, was most likely to have an impact on clothing brands.

### **Fighting against Sweatshops in Different Arenas**

The nascent French Clean Clothes Campaign chose to place its actions in the market arena. It wanted to fight for improving working conditions in the global garment industry, but it also had as a goal the promotion of a political form of consumption by making the issue of production conditions an aspect of consumption decisions. Questioning firms about their practices constituted a novel and promising strategy to raise consumer awareness and built on a repertoire of public campaigning that had recently emerged. Retailers were chosen as targets because they could be reached through consumer pressure. Thus, the choice of corporations as targets and markets as an arena for action was closely linked to the campaign's more immediate goals of promoting political consumption.

Other potential targets could have been chosen to achieve goals of improving worldwide labor standards: national and transnational policy-makers as targets would have brought the interaction to different arenas. At the beginning, especially the transnational arena was equally in the spotlight, as many NGOs lobbied national decision-makers for the adoption of a social clause in the GATT. Actions took place in both arenas: there was a sort of division of tasks between social movement players pursuing different yet complementary strategies at the same time. When it finally turned out to be impossible to achieve the adoption of a social clause through international regulation – when a majority of states clearly opposed such a measure and social movement players therefore no longer perceived any opportunities in the GATT negotiation process – the targeting of corporations and the

solution of “private regulation” through codes of conduct, standard setting, consumer awareness and independent monitoring organisms became the main strategy to advance workers’ rights in producing countries.

But the question of the arena in which claims should be raised was not decided once and for all. Three consecutive “campaign rounds” focused on clothing retailers, each one consisting centrally of a petition and attempting to pressure firms using consumer power and public opinion. After this, the campaign paused for a year with the goal of advancing negotiations with firms and building a model for independent monitoring. During this break, political players came into the focus of the campaign. Initially, it was due to an action that had nothing to do with the campaign. The children’s parliament – an assembly of kids taking place every year – passed a resolution to ban child labor in the production of school equipment. As is customary with these resolutions, a deputy went on to elaborate a legislative proposal based on it. This deputy asked the campaign coalition for help due to its expertise on questions of working conditions. For the coalition, this led to the developing of a campaign targeting municipalities. It demanded that municipalities adopt resolutions requiring minimal social standards for public purchases such as uniforms or school equipment.

This campaign, called “Let’s Consume Ethically for School,” targeted the local political players, in particular local deputies and local governments in their role as legislators, but with the ultimate goal of affecting municipalities’ purchasing behavior. Ethical consumption by these collective consumers should serve as a further incentive for producers to adopt codes of conduct. Local governments who adopted such resolutions eventually even became part of the campaign coalition, through the organization *Cités Unies*; thus they transformed from intermediate targets to allies. Some state-owned companies, such as *La Poste* (the French postal service) or *SNCF* (the French rail service), also committed to buying products respecting certain ethical standards (but without becoming part of the campaign).

The campaigns thus used the connectedness of local and regional political arenas and markets to create leverage for action (Evans and Kay, 2008), using local governments as collective consumers. But this action in the local political arena did not replace the campaign’s directly targeting corporations. Both ran in parallel. While local administrations act as consumers, they do not buy that many clothes, which reduces their potential impact. Worse, this leverage did not allow the campaign to reach the same targets as those at the center of its direct campaigns of denunciation, that is, the big retailers. Markets are structured into different niches (Aspers, 2010), each one constituting an arena. The denunciation

campaigns reached one such arena – well-known retailers competing with each other – whereas the action involving local administrations reached another one. Municipalities as well as state-owned companies don't go to the supermarket or branded retailer stores in the city center to buy clothes; they mostly purchase in a specialized market, constituted of middle-size firms producing working gear. In this market, a number of small firms adopted "ethical" criteria for their commodity chain. These firms were actually never directly targeted by the campaign as the big retailers were, but they adopted social standards at least in part because of the demand for ethical uniforms, that is, the change in procurement policies by municipalities and state-owned firms.<sup>2</sup>

After the break, the campaign launched a new round of activities targeting big retailers, this time with an evaluation of corporate players' ethical performances as the main tactic. The campaign makers wanted to renew pressure to push companies to yield to movement demands. The strategy of directly targeting corporations in the market arena only started to be questioned when, after about four years of campaigning, firms had crafted a counterattack, and the campaign found itself in a deadlock. The achievement of the campaign's main goals – having companies collaborate with protagonists from the campaign in an independent agency to monitor codes of conduct – seemed more and more unlikely, which put the coalition into a strategic dilemma over the arena where further action should be fought. Although ideological differences between organizations had been present in the coalition all along, they mattered little as long as the participants in the coalition perceived some chances of success of their strategy. All of them agreed on targeting retailers in the market arena through consumer pressure. Now, facing the strong counterstrategy by the targeted retailers, such chances seemed to dim, and coalition members started to break apart. The moderate organizations in the coalition still wanted to continue on the same track and opposed more radical ones – in particular, the founding of a fair trade organization – who wanted to adopt a much more critical attitude. The former feared that such an attitude would foreclose any possible collaboration. The latter, on the contrary, wanted to drop the goal of collaboration and pushed for a political strategy – an arena switch to the political arena (national or European) – advocating for legislative action. However, it was not clear how that should work, as nation-states do not have legislative power over subcontractor firms in textile production countries such as China, Bangladesh, or Guatemala. In the end, the campaign coalition ceased its activity due to financial problems, which cut short these discussions.



## Choosing Corporate Targets

Within the market for clothes, the campaign coalition had to choose its targets. Given that any market is composed of several players, the selection of targets is tricky for social movements. On what criteria was this selection based, and what consequences did the selection have? The goal of the campaign was to target the *entire* clothing market, but its petitions needed a specific addressee. For the first one, the campaign organizers picked three companies without any particular justification; one of them was not even a French firm. It turned out that this created some confusion: were these companies particularly bad concerning production conditions? And did that mean that others did better? Officials of the targeted firms complained about that, and the campaign makers (unofficially) admitted that they had made a mistake. For the second round, they picked three companies on more objective criteria: three leaders of three sectors – mail-order businesses, specialized stores, and sports retailers; in addition, a business association was also explicitly targeted. The idea, again, was that these firms stood for a broader trend in the whole market. For the third petition, big retailers – specialized sports retailers and general retailers – became the main focus. Those firms would then remain the main targets.

What was the thinking that drove this target selection? Two criteria were crucial: first, the public visibility of a company – the campaign targeted brands that were known and could be linked to broader issues, such as sports wear retailers when the campaign takes place during the World Cup. Second, prior public commitments made a company become more likely to be targeted. For the second petition, the campaign targeted companies that had shown “an interest” in the issue by contacting the campaign. To the campaigners, this signaled that something could be achieved with such companies. The firms that had publicly engaged themselves could then be held accountable against their own standards, using the “accountability politics” strategy identified by Keck and Sikkink (1998: 17). Paradoxically, the more a firm did, the more it came under the spotlight of campaigners.

Focusing on these targets had important consequences for the campaign. It meant that its opponents were powerful companies with a strong business association behind them. Through this organization, they would start collaborating and put in place a counterstrategy to oppose the campaign. Thus, what was at first a reaction to some encouraging signs turned, with the strategy employed by the campaigns, to a major drawback for the campaign coalition.



## Fighting Back: What Corporate Players Do

Corporations reacted with an array of strategies. At first, they ignored the movement or denied responsibility (Barraud de Lagerie, 2010; Merk, 2007; Featherstone and United Students against Sweatshops, 2002). But quickly, many yielded to demands by adopting codes of conduct. They seem to have realized that this measure alone did not imply much beyond a public statement. The concession was mostly cosmetic (Soule, 2009), with minimal concession costs (Luders, 2006). The two biggest French retailers, Carrefour and Auchan, reacted most to the campaign; others did nothing beyond adopting a code. Carrefour started a program to attest to its respect for human rights in partnership with a human rights NGO that was not part of the campaign. By cherry-picking a competing social movement player and associating with it, the retailer thus sidestepped campaign demands and tried to divide its opponent. The organizations in the campaign coalition were extremely critical of this partnership and dismissed the NGO as selling out. Auchan later also attempted to establish such a partnership with Amnesty International. But at that time, Auchan had already agreed to collaborate with the campaign coalition, working on the improvement of labor standards in some production factories. Training sessions with buyers were organized with the goal of raising their awareness of social issues, and several visits to factories producing clothes for Auchan were carried out. This was the biggest success of the campaign, but it fell very short of an encompassing monitoring system and revealed the gap between the participants' goals and their favored means.

Was it because of the difficulty of finding a common ground that Auchan ultimately abandoned the project? Two other reasons seem just as important. First, the campaign lost its "internal ally" within the company, namely a manager (and a member of the firm's board) who had once served in a socialist cabinet and who was sympathetic to the campaign's cause. When he left the company, the collaboration lost its advocate. Second, an alternative response had been elaborated by the interest group FCD (which regrouped the main French retailers, including Auchan and Carrefour). They built up a common program of social auditing, called Initiative Clause Sociale (ICS). Auchan ended up relying on the ICS and so collaboration with the campaign was no longer necessary and even incompatible with this joint response by retailers.

The move by the FCD and the creation of a monitoring initiative meant that there was now a new player in the game, one that federated many of the campaign's most important corporate targets. What drove the firms to cooperate? In the past, the business association had dealt with a number of

“collective action problems” the retailers had faced, such as quality control. There was thus precedent for the FCD playing such a role, especially in the context of movement pressure (Bartley, 2007). But one would need to conduct more research to gain insight into the decision-making process that led the FCD to take the lead in this interaction with the campaign, and to see the role of corporate players in this process.

At first, the ICS could be seen as a technical solution to the problem raised by the campaign. Retailers came up with a joint way to monitor codes of conduct, using social audit firms. The campaign coalition got mixed signals from this newly created player, and hoped with good reason that it might get to participate in its work. The campaign was invited to presentations and other meetings with the ICS. In other words, intercorporate collaboration did not rule out collaboration with the campaign. This only came about in further interaction, as the ICS became a counterstrategy to exclude the campaign. Launching, in 2001, the first ranking of retailers giving them grades according to their “ethical performance,” the campaign wanted to increase ethical competition between the retailers. The goal of the rankings was to push firms with poor grades to do better in the future to catch up with their competitors. But the intercorporate collaboration undermined this tactic. The ICS turned out to be an astute strategic response because it avoided competition among firms on this issue. With all retailers joining the same program and having the same social standards, none of them stood out by positioning themselves as particularly “ethical.” In other words, the joint response made it very difficult for the campaign to use the strategy of dividing the opponents into good and bad pupils.

The campaign sanctioned the lack of progress (that is, the fact that none of the firms was willing to agree to independent control) by degrading companies with every new edition of the yearly rankings. The firms perceived this as a provocation and refused to cooperate with the campaign, eventually refusing to answer their questions regarding their business practices. Turning to the media arena, the ICS held a press conference on the same day the rankings were released. It published an open letter defending its approach and accusing the campaign of turning the “noble” issue of ethics into a matter of competition between retailers. They also attacked the campaign’s legitimacy and competence in this matter. The counterstrategy of the firms thus ceased to be limited to the technical realm of the issue and became one of publicly fighting back against the campaign’s actions in the arena of mass media. Overall, the dynamic observed resembles one of early (albeit modest) gains that subsequently get lost as targets join forces and organize their response (Jasper and Poulsen, 1993).

## Consumers and Markets

The strong reaction by the French retailers was thus provoked by the ratings, which allowed potential consumers to distinguish between more or less ethical firms. This tactic was introduced into the campaign at the beginning of the year 2000, after three consecutive petitions. The petitions had singled out specific targets, but they were framed as a general claim; they did not imply that the targeted firms were behaving particularly badly, nor did they explicitly differentiate between firms. The firms interpreted the rankings as more threatening than the petitions. Rankings are a market tactic, based on the model of product evaluations by consumer organizations. They give consumers the tools to make informed purchasing choices – in other words, to boycott or buycott firms (Micheletti, 2003). Although the French campaign gave bad grades to all evaluated companies, there were still distinctions, and letters by consumers written to the campaign makers suggest that they were interpreted that way (Barraud de Lagerie, 2010).

The mobilization of consumers and the creation of tools like rankings that make it possible to incorporate political dimensions into consumption decisions is a specific tactical action repertoire movement players can use in market arenas (Balsiger, 2010; Dubuisson-Quellier, 2013). But while rankings can threaten firms, on the flip side they also potentially reward those firms that do better than their competitors. In France, retailers refused to play this game; by cooperating with each other, they managed to avoid making ethics an aspect of producer differentiation. This worked because all the important corporate campaign targets were collaborating, thanks to the prominent role of the business association.

A look across the border shows what can happen if this is not the case. There was also a branch of the Clean Clothes Campaign in Switzerland, raising the same claims and using similar tactics. But instead of cooperating with each other and shielding themselves against forms of “ethical” competition, some of the targeted clothing retailers in Switzerland actually started developing specific offers for “ethical” consumers. Doing so, they, too, only partly responded to the campaign’s claims. They sidestepped them by producing clothing lines that were particularly ethical, while few changes were made on the commodity chain of all the other products. This led to the development of a niche market for ethical clothes. Other movement players – NGOs not part of the campaign – played an important role in this development, as they collaborated with firms to develop socially and ecologically responsible commodity chains for fair trade and organic cotton.

The Swiss example highlights market-based responses by corporations and shows how targets can use competing movement strategies to their benefit. There is a potential conflict between forms of collaboration between movement players and firms, such as organic and fair trade labels, and the Clean Clothes Campaign's goals: for firms, the development of niche markets for ethical goods is a strategy to avoid demands for more encompassing change. The development of a fair trade label for cotton, in which many Swiss development aid NGOs were involved, led to a sharp conflict with the campaign. This label threatened the campaign, but the campaign could not prevent its development. Firms could use such labels to sidestep campaign demands, thus playing different movement actors against each other.

The rise of this niche market is a byproduct of the campaign, which pushed companies to show they care about production conditions and raised awareness among consumers about this issue. It is further favored by the activities of competing social movement players and even state players that contributed financial support. The rise of a new niche market can be seen as the development of a new arena as a consequence of movement action. Firms create this new arena together with collaborating NGOs. The creation of the new arena changes the context for the original movement player, the Clean Clothes Campaign. It now has to deal with a novel context, characterized by the existence of a niche market for ethical clothes supported by competing NGOs.

In this modified context, the Swiss campaign's strategy reveals a recurrent strategic dilemma between promoting the development of alternative markets and fighting for more encompassing change on the mainstream market. In its rankings, "good practices" by brands and labels were put forward and recommended to consumers. One volunteer group associated with the campaign created an "ethical shopping map" to offer guidance to ethical consumers. But the campaign makers then refused to continue on this consumerist track and decided to refocus on denunciation campaigns. The concern that campaign makers had – and this was already a big issue during the first such consumer campaigns by the same organization in the 1970s – was that promoting alternative markets may create the impression that no more mobilization is necessary, and may thus have a demobilizing effect.

## **Movement Players: Building up Influence Chains to Attack Corporations**

How do social movements target market actors and use market arenas as a site for protest? The case of the anti-sweatshop movement gives important

insights into this question. The campaign in France targeted firms directly and attempted to build up pressure to make them yield to its demands. It did so by building up influence chains (Zietsma and Winn, 2008) that allowed it to create leverage over retailers. These companies in turn should take responsibility for the working conditions at their supplier factories. In a way, retailers were thus only intermediary targets; the campaign used their power in the supply chain to improve working conditions at factories in developing countries that do not directly sell to consumers and are therefore difficult to target.

Within the market arena, the campaigns used two interlinked influence chains. First, it was based on raising the awareness of consumers and mobilizing them. The creation and articulation of a consumer demand for more ethical clothes should bring firms to respond. Second, the campaigns attempted to damage the reputations of firms by publicly questioning and denouncing their practices. The threat to corporate reputations should provoke change. These strategies thus belong to what King and Pierce (2010), in analyzing the “contentiousness of markets,” classified as contentious actions taking place in the market place. The privileged arena is the market arena itself, where consumer power and public shaming threaten profit and reputation.

Threats to reputation worked particularly well in the case of the well-known big retailers, as is shown by their strong reaction to the social record evaluations published by the campaign. This market consists of a limited number of players with high public brand recognition. The rankings for the first time directly named and shamed companies for their specific malpractices. The campaign hoped to pit the retailers against each other, driving them into an “ethical competition” and splitting what might otherwise be a united opponent. Such a consumerist strategy (building on the model of product quality tests by consumer associations) attempts to take advantage of both firms’ tendencies to differentiation *and* imitation in markets. Differentiation should lead some of them (especially small “challenger” firms [Schurman, 2004]) to adopt better practices to appear as a leader in this regard and gain competitive advantages; through imitation, other firms should come to adapt to this benchmark, which is put forward as an example to be followed by movement players (see also Raeburn, 2004).

While these influence chains take place in the market arena where firms compete, the campaign also tried to build influence chains *within* companies. Here, corporations appear as arenas composed of different players pursuing sometimes distinct goals. On the one hand, consumer

power itself can be seen as taking place within companies, especially when changing consumer preferences incite firms to adapt their offer. On the other hand, the presence of unions also offered the campaign a chance to bring up its demands from within companies. However, this was done in a very limited way. Within the CFDT, the cause was especially promoted by the textile industry branch, but French textile producers were not targeted by the campaign. Retailer employees, in turn, were much less unionized. In one specific case (a public shaming action directed against Carrefour with regard to a dramatic accident at a Bangladeshi factory), unionized workers who were supposed to promote the campaign were uncomfortable and rejected the focalization of the public campaign on their company, criticizing the campaign's attempt "to make Carrefour the scapegoat of all retailers."<sup>3</sup>

Influence chains were also built when the campaign succeeded in finding internal allies. Movements may find sympathizers within companies who can be of great help in advancing movement goals (Dobbin, this volume; Raeburn, 2004) or weaken advocates of opposing ideas (Weber et al., 2009). In the case of Auchan, the campaign had found an important internal advocate of its goals who pushed for a greater commitment to social responsibility of the company, and his departure cut this internal influence chain. Similarly, the development of corporate social responsibility departments may lead to the recruitment of personnel sympathetic to movement goals, although such departments are often used to conceive of alternative strategies bypassing movement demands.

Finally, the campaign took advantage of the connectedness of market arenas to other arenas and players. It began actively targeting local legislators to push for the adoption of ethical public procurement policies. In this way, legislative change could be used to put pressure on clothing firms and ultimately to improve working conditions in factories of the developing world. This strategy proved effective, but it reached different firms than the ones targeted by the other petitions and rankings of the campaign. Markets are structured into various niches subarenas; while one such niche could be reached via targeting local governments in their role as consumers, the broad retail market remained unaffected by this strategy, and the campaign had to continue targeting it through means of consumer and reputation pressure.

Table 1 shows the different strategies used by the campaign to target corporate players, distinguishing between the arenas where actions take place.

**Table 1** Arenas and influence chains to target corporate players

Arena	Influence Chain
Market	Mobilizing consumers
Market	Damaging reputation
Corporation	Allies within companies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Consumers</li> <li>– Unions</li> <li>– Sympathizers in management</li> </ul>
Local politics	Local legislators to adopt ethical procurement resolutions

## Corporate Players: Confronting and Sidestepping

The analysis furthermore points to the wide range of responses one finds among corporations targeted by movement players. Within corporations, the anti-sweatshop campaign as well as other initiatives around the promotion of corporate social responsibility often led to the establishment of new departments to specifically deal with these questions, i.e., devising strategies to respond to civil society demands. Thus, because such issues were relatively new in the European context, new players were created within firms or existing players were given new tasks.

As far as the reactions to campaign claims go, we can distinguish between actions of sidestepping, confrontation, compliance and ignorance (see Table 2). Ignorance means nonreaction, while compliance is its opposite: fully yielding to movement demands. Sidestepping is in-between: companies take up some of the demands, but usually leaving out the most binding (and costly) aspects. Confrontation, finally, has drawn the least attention so far. It means that companies attack movement players. It may be done by corporate players who have taken actions of sidestepping previously, or players who had so far chosen to ignore demands. It involves “hostile” actions where corporate players directly fight back against movement players by delegitimizing their claims and frames. When choosing confrontation, corporate players act similarly as countermovements opposing each other (Meyer and Staggenborg, 1996; Bob, 2012).

**Table 2** Corporate strategies when facing movement demands

Ignorance	Compliance	Sidestepping	Confrontation
Nonreaction	Fully yielding to demands	Taking up aspects of demands without fully complying	Fighting back



Ignorance was the targeted firms' first response. Indeed, for many of them the hope to sit out protest and let the wave of agitation and media attention pass was a successful strategy. Because movement players gradually focused on those firms that had given in to some aspects and could then be held accountable to these resolutions, those firms that did not react at all fell out of the spotlight and did not face any more public pressure.

Compliance designates firms completely yielding to movement demands. While some companies in other countries did decide to fully cooperate, in France we only find the first steps to such compliance in the response of Auchan. Quickly, Auchan's collaboration with the campaign coalition was supplanted by a form of sidestepping which ultimately led to confrontation. With the help of their business association, the targeted retailers built up a new player, the Initiative Clause Sociale. The ICS was first conceived of as a technical solution to the issues brought up by the campaign. Because it did not agree to associate the campaign coalition with its monitoring scheme, it sidestepped campaign demands, taking up some demands (adopting and monitoring codes of conduct) without fully complying (independent monitoring involving NGOs and unions). The ICS soon became a powerful player to fight back against movement attacks and eventually to openly confront the coalition. In particular, the ICS counterframed the issue by publishing statements that attempted to delegitimize the coalition and its tactics, and defending the approach pursued by the ICS. The campaign's goal to split the companies and lead them on a track of "ethical competition" thus failed; the strategy had the opposite effect – it brought companies to cooperate and to oppose the campaign jointly.

Firms used other strategies of sidestepping, too. In particular, they tried to cherry-pick more moderate social movement players for collaboration to sidestep demands. This is what Carrefour and Auchan were doing when they collaborated with human rights NGOs. Doing so, they broadened their own coalition by associating movement players. This strategy of "splitting the opponent" parallels attempts by movement players to bring some firms to cooperate, thus dividing corporations into good and bad, cooperative and confrontational. Finally, a different form of sidestepping occurs when firms create new market arenas by developing niche products that take up movement demands without fully embracing movement goals. This is what happened in Switzerland. The creation of this niche market benefited from the presence of competing social movement players whose tactical approach was not to denounce companies, but to collaborate with them by creating ethical labels (Balsiger, 2012). Corporations could collaborate with them and thus gain greater legitimacy in selling ethical clothes. As in the



cherry-picking collaborations above, sidestepping thus took the form of playing off different movement organizations against each other.

### **Making Use of the Players and Arenas Perspective**

The players and arenas perspective highlights the strategic interactions between movement players and their targets. Through the empirical analysis of the anti-sweatshop movement in France, I show the heuristic use of this perspective for social movement analysis. In particular, it allows focusing much more on the exchange of moves and countermoves between different players involved and puts much more emphasis on the strategies used by targets – in this case, corporations – to counter movement demands and shape the further unfolding of the interaction.

Some processes identified in the case study point at general dynamics at work in movement-corporate interactions on markets. First, the analysis shows the importance of distinct market arenas that can be reached through different influence chains. The movement coalition in France focused on public campaigns targeting clothing brands and general retailers. But it also conducted a campaign targeting local legislators to change the purchase behavior of public agencies. Although pursuing the same ultimate goal, these two strategies reached different market arenas. The latter brought the issue of codes of conducts to the agenda of medium-sized firms specialized in the production of professional clothes, a market that could not be targeted through public campaigning. The public campaigns, on the other hand, proved useful to put pressure on firms catering to individual consumers and caring about their reputation.

Second, the cases thus suggest that the study of social movement activities facing corporate players should not be reduced merely to classic forms of protest such as those that are collected in protest event analysis; indeed, such forms – for example, demonstrations – may not be the most effective nor the most often used in this particular context. Paying attention to strategic interactions in different arenas thus points at the variety of protest repertoires across arenas or in different institutional environments (Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008). Public campaigns and in particular consumerist tactics such as boycotts, buycotts, brand evaluations or the creation of labels, seem to be particularly efficient forms of protest in market arenas. In consumer markets, they allow for the construction of leverage vis-à-vis firms, both in a negative and in a positive way through potential consumer rewards. When looking at the articulation of these

tactics within a given player or the social movement arena, one finds a specific dilemma for mobilizations in this tension between the promotion of alternative markets (be it indirectly through evaluations and other tools for political consumerists, or directly through the creation of labels) and protesting against existing market practices.

The players and arenas perspective furthermore proves useful to study the variety of corporate reactions to movement claims. The cooperation of French retailers and their attempts at counterframing and attacking the campaigners demonstrates how corporations fight back. Through their cooperation the companies succeeded in countering the movement player's attempt to pit them against each other; at the same time, they built up a common strategy that partly takes up movement demands and is designed to counter efforts to damage their reputation. The Swiss example shows what happens when firms choose differentiation by launching different ethical labels. This is a form of sidestepping whereby a new arena of ethical fashion as a niche market is created. It points to a recurring logic of the interaction between movements and corporations. What a movement player denounces – for example, animal rights in poultry factories, environmental pollution in the production and transport of food, genetically modified seeds, sweatshops, or the facility to watch porn on smartphones – can be taken up by existing or emerging entrepreneurs and turned into its opposite, thus developing an alternative product – animal welfare chicken, organic food, ethical fashion, or phones blocking X-rated content (Shamir and Ben-Porat, 2007). Often this process is described as the capacity of capitalism to feed itself from its critiques, which is true, but tends to underplay the fact that many movement players themselves actively promote the development of such markets and become crucial players in it – as entrepreneurs, makers of labels, and so on.<sup>4</sup>

Features of the market structure – the existence of a powerful business association in one case and the existence of two dominant and a number of smaller players in the other – as well as a diverging assessment of potential profits when adopting more ethical practices, may explain the different reactions observed in the two countries. In this respect, more future research should be done on the possible development of interaction routines between firms and movement players. More and more firms – especially big and transnational companies – now have whole departments that deal with politics, social responsibility, or risk management. An entire professional field has emerged around these issues. Through this, firms develop an expertise in dealing with corporate campaigns; they try to monitor movement players and are better equipped to react to campaigns. Investigating how this development affects interactions between movement and firms should be a research priority.

## Notes

1. Tennis aficionados will enjoy recalling the legendary underhand serve by Michael Chang when playing Ivan Lendl in the 1989 Roland Garros fourth-round match, or his approaching the T-line while waiting for Lendl to serve. Destabilizing his opponent with these surprise moves, he wore out his opponent and eventually won.
2. One also needs to emphasize the role played by a “broker” NGO that specialized in accompanying small firms when trying to implement sustainability criteria on their commodity chain; this NGO, in addition, was importantly financed by a business association, La Maison du Textile, representing French clothing producers.
3. Quoted from the newsletter of the union’s section at Carrefour: *L’Hyper* 204/205 (May 27, 2005), <http://cfdt.carrefour.free.fr/carrefour/hypers/Hyper%20204.pdf>.
4. It is possible that a similar functioning can be observed in the interaction of movements with the state regarding the development of new policy fields. Here, too, movements provoke the making of new specialized policy areas where they come to play roles that go beyond contention. A well-studied example would be the case of AIDS policy.

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## 6 Professions, Social Movements, and the Sovereign Corporation<sup>1</sup>

*Frank Dobbin and Jiwook Jung*

It is well known that social movements have become professionalized in recent decades. They have CEOs and CFOs, MBAs and CPAs. But it is not so well known that some professions have become social movements. We argue that the professions play two underrecognized roles as social movement actors in the market arena. First, professions have taken over from mature social movements, creating permanent beachheads within the firm for activism. To illustrate we discuss the role of the personnel profession in promoting the civil rights and women's rights agendas, even after the civil rights and women's movements had largely faded (Mansbridge, 1986; McAdam, 1988). Personnel experts devised early equal opportunity measures and soon appointed in-house equal opportunity experts who fought for new rounds of diversity initiatives, and fought to extend protections to new groups, including Hispanics, older workers, and the disabled (Skrentny, 2002). Other social movements have similarly been picked up by professionals within organizations. From the 1930s, labor leaders and labor relations managers institutionalized the labor movement and its corporate opposition. From the 1960s, women's advocates within state and federal governments have promoted the feminist agenda (Harrison, 1988; Vogel, 1993). From the 1970s, environmental engineers carried the green movement forward within the firm.

Second, professions have substituted for social movements, mobilizing to change corporate behavior from without. We illustrate with the example of institutional investors, who became vocal advocates for a "shareholder value" movement comprising virtually no actual shareholders. The "shareholder value movement" was in fact a movement led by professional fund managers who claimed to be carrying the flag for their clients – investors. They promoted a range of corporate reforms that fundamentally altered the ways of leading firms. As we argue below, the reforms they promoted did more to advance their own interests, as fund managers, than the interests of their clients – investors in their funds. In this case, professionals from outside of the firm used social movement tactics to change corporate behavior. They did this in their roles as professionals. Other exogenous professional groups have played similar roles, notably international labor standards and

environmental professionals, who created third-party private regulatory agencies to vet the practices of firms in a wide range of industries, from Vietnamese footwear and apparel to Brazilian forestry products (Bartley, 2007).

We begin by arguing that the position of the corporation in society changed significantly as it grew to control the lion's share of resources and to determine the life chances, social benefits, and employment rights of individuals. We then turn to the two case studies to explore how professional groups behave as social movement activists. In each corporate decision-making arena – personnel and corporate governance/strategy – we find a wide range of players at work: professionals, executives who may be movement allies or opponents, academic experts who offer strategies and vocabularies, and federal regulators, to name a few. These players may also be arenas, for collectivities such as professional societies may be arenas composed of individual players advocating different positions in one moment, and players acting with a single voice in the next (Mische, 2008). Thus the Society for Human Resources Management is an arena in which personnel professionals developed diversity programs to implement, and then it becomes a player promoting said programs. The Council of Institutional Investors (CII) is an arena for investment professionals to determine their preferences as to corporate governance and compensation practices, and then it becomes a player when it promotes certain practices.

Both of these movements had opponents. Personnel managers who championed equal opportunity faced opposition from some executives, and opposition from the White House during the Reagan era. Institutional investors promoting shareholder value faced vocal opposition from executives who were trained in one management system and were then asked to embrace another. Yet personnel managers and institutional investors largely won their battles, even if equal opportunity programs met with mixed success and shareholder value was unevenly implemented.

Social movement theorists have been particularly attentive to how structural openings create space for activism (Kitschelt, 1986; McAdam et al., 2001; Tilly and Tarrow, 2006). Political openings were key to the success of both of these movements. Equal opportunity laws created a “political opportunity structure” (Tilly and Tarrow, 2006) within the firm, although it was not a foregone conclusion that a professional group would take over, or that the group would be personnel experts rather than, say, lawyers. Moreover, regulatory changes created opportunities for the realization of shareholder value reforms. Two key reforms, dediversification and industry concentration, were facilitated by weak enforcement of antitrust in the



1980s, and by the Supreme Court's refusal to enforce anti-takeover laws (Davis, Diekmann, and Tinsley, 1994). A third reform, executive performance pay, depended on regulatory approval of stock option grants. But no one could have guessed that these regulatory changes would facilitate institutional investors' promotion of the "shareholder value" movement. Professional activism drove the diversity management and shareholder value management revolutions.

We take up several themes that are woven through the volume. First is the identification of an important new player in the social movement arena generally, the professional group. Second is the identification of an important and understudied political arena, that of corporate policy. As the corporation plays a larger role in social outcomes, from gender equality to environmental protection, we can expect it to be the target of more activism. Third is the balance between different forms of strategizing in firms. In the introduction to this volume James Jasper outlines three forms of strategy – persuasion, coercion, and payment – that a player may use to get her way (see also Jasper, 2006). In the case of the diversity management revolution, we argue that personnel professionals use a combination of persuasion and coercion, exaggerating the threat of regulatory intervention to convince executives to follow their advice. In the second case, we argue that some institutional investors used a modicum of coercion to promote shareholder value precepts, notably shareholder proposals to boards, but that the strongest pressure came from the implicit threat by institutional investors to sell their shares. It was not positive sanction, in the form of reward, but negative sanction, in the form of the threat of withdrawal of financial support, that won the day. Payment and persuasion reigned in the end, for the payment was for embracing a new management paradigm, and without the persuasive force of the paradigm, firms would never have capitulated to the changes fund managers promoted.

## **Professions and the Sovereign Corporation**

We argue that professions have taken on social movement activities in part because the corporation has become sovereign in its own realm. The corporation is increasingly a giver of rights, creator of inequality, and steward of the environment. Professional groups have thus led social movements addressed to firms, sometimes from the inside, sometimes from the outside, sometimes taking the banner from an external social movement, sometimes initiating the charge themselves.



The classic literature on the professions focuses on how particular groups win public confidence and state credentials (Friedson, 1975; Sarfatti-Larsen, 1977; Starr, 1982). Andrew Abbott's systems perspective attended to how contending groups vie for authority in a given domain. In France of the ancien régime, the groups competing for work as healers included "physicians, surgeons, pharmacists, 'empirics,' operators, *spagiristes*, and ... the various members of the clergy" (Abbott, 1988: 157). The state would eventually license some groups and prohibit others from claiming expertise.

Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the corporation has become increasingly important to professions as a source of power and authority. Jurisdictional disputes between professional groups now often play out before executives rather than public officials. Professions win authority within the corporate world not through licensure per se, but by popularizing the management practices they favor. Management innovations, accounting principles, and best practices in medicine are vetted first by corporations, and only after the fact by state regulators, if the state gets into the fray at all. Institutionalists have thus examined how experts seek to establish authority within organizations (Dobbin and Sutton, 1998; Fligstein, 1990).

This has occurred in part because corporations have come between the individual and the sovereign state. Fifteen short decades ago, only a handful of Americans worked outside of farming, government, and the clergy, in firms operating canals, banks, railroads, and textile mills. A hundred years later, nine-tenths of Americans worked in formal organizations. Books like *The Organization Man* (Whyte, 1956) and *The Organization Society* (Presthus, 1962) described this change as revolutionary. For Charles Perrow (1991: 727) the formal organization had "absorbed society." In the process, the corporation became an increasingly important collective actor. Corporations employ more people, and do more of society's work, than the government these days, and so it should come as no surprise that they are, more and more, targets of political activism.

Meanwhile the liberal professions that predated the modern corporation, and played a central role in the early industrial economy, have been subsumed by corporations in several ways (Dobbin et al., 2007; Greenwood et al., 2002; Suddaby et al., 2007). In some cases, groups of professionals formed corporations to pursue their professions jointly, in publicly owned accountancy, investment bank, and medical practices (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005). In other cases, members of the autonomous, liberal professions, including lawyers, doctors, and accountants, were hired as regular employees by firms, to provide their services from the inside. In still other cases, new professional groups emerged solely to serve the corporation, such as

management and personnel professionals. These groups are often neglected by scholars of the professions, who define them as nonprofessionals because their authority is recognized by firms rather than by the state.

Meanwhile, organizational scholars have begun to recognize that professions sometimes behave as social movements. This idea can be traced to Abbott's (1988) description of nascent professional groups lobbying the state for licensure. The growing literature on social movements and organizations (Bartley, 2005; Strang and Jung, 2005) has demonstrated that within the firm, managers and professionals often behave like social movement activists, developing lobbying strategies and political agendas through professional associations and networks and then advocating for change in the firms they work for (Davis et al., 1994; Dobbin and Kelly, 2007; Edelman et al., 1999; Fligstein and McAdam, 2012). We build on this literature to consider the role of professionals in the arena of corporate decision-making.

### **The Personnel Profession Takes Over Civil Rights**

The conventional wisdom about social movements, as operating independent of corporations and as addressing their claims to the nation-state, dates to before the rise of the modern corporation. The American model of the social movement as a force outside of the party system arose in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the Second Great Awakening, and was institutionalized as part of the political process only with the temperance, suffrage, and labor movements. Before those movements, issue-oriented political activism outside of the party system was all but unknown (Clemens, 1997). The civil rights movement helped to reestablish the model of the issue-oriented social movement for a new round of movements in the 1960s and 1970s, including the anti-war, women's rights, and environmental movements (Skrentny, 2002).

Apart from stimulating other conventional social movements, the civil rights movement spawned political action in a newly professionalized form. After Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, social movement groups such as the NAACP and the Urban League picketed employers who wouldn't hire blacks, organized jobs banks, and filed charges against companies that discriminated. Otherwise the movement turned to new tasks, and gradually petered out.

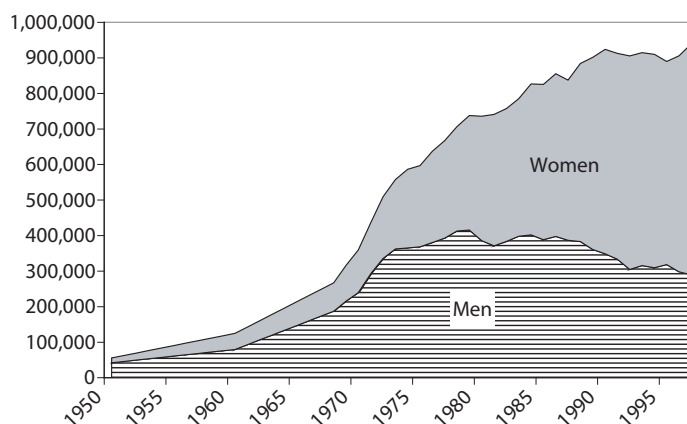
But a new movement emerged within the personnel profession to carry the civil rights project forward. Because we don't have a language for describing a national network of professionals as a social movement, we have

neglected its emergence. Many personnel experts fought equal opportunity innovations, but by the late 1970s, every major firm had equal opportunity experts on staff. Personnel was transformed from a bastion of white men with backgrounds in labor relations to a bastion of white women attracted by equal opportunity goals. By the end of the century, seven out of ten personnel experts were women. They were rarely the same people who marched for civil rights in Selma and Washington, but they continued the work of that social movement just the same.

Figure 1 traces the expansion, and increasing feminization, of the personnel profession. The changes were driven in large measure by new equal opportunity and affirmative action regulations that spawned a series of personnel innovations from 1961, when John F. Kennedy issued Executive Order 10925 requiring federal contractors to practice “affirmative action” in ending employment discrimination. While the number of managers in the United States roughly doubled between 1960 and 2000, personnel management grew tenfold.

Personnel experts brought their professional toolkit to the task of eliminating discrimination at work. They had long designed bureaucratic systems to manage federal regulations, beginning in the 1920s with wages and hours and labor relations regulations (Brandes, 1976; Brody, 1980). After the Wagner Act of 1935 empowered unions, they negotiated union contracts

**Figure 1 Men and women in personnel management**



Note: Data on personnel specialists and managers, excluding clerical workers, from US Decennial Census of Population and Current Population Survey of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Annual data before 1968 are interpolated from the decennial census. <http://factfinder.census.gov/> and <http://www.census.gov/cps/>, accessed November 1, 2006; Bureau of Labor Statistics 2006; US Census Bureau 2006.

alongside labor lawyers and went on to implement the grievance procedures, seniority systems, job classification schemes, and pension programs written into those contracts (Kochan et al., 1986; Selznick, 1969).

After passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, personnel experts promoted compliance practices they had developed in earlier years, building their profession strategically. The players-and-arenas approach emphasizes attention to the full roster of strategic players (Jasper 2006). In this case, personnel professionals have been neglected by others, who emphasize the courts, executives, the civil rights and women's movements, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulators, Department of Labor overseers of federal contractors, and elected officials (Blumrosen, 1993; Chen, 2009; Graham, 1990; Harrison, 1988; Skrentny, 1996; Stryker, 2000; Vogel, 1993).

We build on Jasper's (2012) argument that there are three broad strategies players use to get their way: persuasion, coercion, and payment. In this case we identify a hybrid strategy, "persuasion of coercion." Personnel experts persuaded executives that coercion was a real threat. They talked up the legal risk, exaggerating the coercive authority of the state and the risk of regulatory and judicial sanction. We suggest that government coercion is socially construed by professionals, who use public policy as a strategic resource for their own purposes. Edelman, Abraham, and Erlanger (1992) study the personnel literature to find that experts significantly exaggerated legal risks to employers to win executive attention and resources. Because employers are not experts, "professionals have become social filters who determine how employers perceive legal threats, how they understand the law, and how they construct the compliance requirements" (Edelman, 2002: 195). Personnel specialists claimed to be able to develop bureaucratic inoculations against future judicial and administrative rulings (Dobbin and Sutton, 1998).

This strategy worked, in that personnel won control over equal opportunity compliance at a time when unionization was declining and thus their labor relations function was waning. They built new roles for personnel officers within the firm. In the 1960s, they wrote nondiscrimination policies based on union nondiscrimination rules, and set up recruitment and training programs for women and minorities. In the 1970s, they formalized hiring and promotion systems to eliminate managerial opportunities to exercise bias. In the Reagan years, when affirmative action was on the ropes, they argued that the new hiring and promotion practices helped to rationalize "human resources management" and relabeled "equal opportunity" programs as "diversity management" programs. Then in the

1990s and 2000s, the increasingly feminized human resources profession focused on women's issues, pushing for the expansion of work-life and anti-harassment programs.

Personnel's equal rights advocacy, via "persuasion-of-coercion," evolved through four distinct phases. In each of these phases, the personnel profession worked out strategies and practices to lobby executives in their professional meetings, and then took these strategies and practices back to their organizations and championed them. Each acted, at first, as the lone local representative of a wider social movement. In the first phase, personnel experts put their heads together and recommended special recruitment and training systems. In response to Kennedy's 1961 order requiring federal contractors to take "affirmative action" to equalize opportunity or risk losing federal contracts, personnel executives began to dismantle *de jure* discrimination. Experts at Lockheed's Marietta, Georgia, aircraft factory were first to propose changes, soon after Lockheed won a billion-dollar air force contract. In short order a network of personnel experts in firms with government contracts organized Plans for Progress as the private-sector arm of the President's Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity (PCEEO), which was headed by Vice President Lyndon Johnson. That group soon had 300 members that pledged to strike rules that excluded blacks and Latinos, and later women, from jobs ranging from meat cutter to chief executive.

Federal contractors certainly felt the strong arm of coercion in the early 1960s, for they were concerned about losing contracts. One might conclude that in this arena, personnel experts were merely carrying out the coercive requirements of federal agencies. But federal regulations did not specify corporate practices that had to be changed. And so the strategy of personnel experts was to use persuasion to convince executives to accept the programs they favored, and then to suggest to the courts that they should accept emerging industry norms, which they themselves had created.

Personnel experts built on traditional recruitment programs, which targeted Harvard and Yale and the Big 10, with recruitment programs for blacks and women, targeting Howard and Spelman, Wellesley and Mount Holyoke. They recruited production workers not only in white high schools, but in inner-city high schools that had never before seen recruiters. They also built on conventional skill and management training programs, establishing programs designed for blacks and women. By creating new recruitment programs, personnel experts defined discrimination as the categorical refusal to consider minorities and women for jobs. By creating new training programs, they defined discrimination as the failure to provide women

and minorities with the skills they needed to succeed. Executives at federal contractor firms often went along with these innovations out of fear of losing their contracts, although few actually lost them.

Opposition to these programs came from both sides. On the one hand, some executives thought new recruitment and training programs went too far and resisted them. An executive interviewed by the Bureau of National Affairs reported that he would not countenance active recruitment of blacks: "I have given instructions as of 1965 ... that if any good Negro applicants appear and if we have any openings, hire them. We have had none during this period ... [but] to go outside our area and recruit them would discriminate against local applicants" (Bureau of National Affairs, 1967: 3). On the other hand, civil rights activists argued that firms were not keeping their nondiscrimination pledges. The NAACP and Urban League protested that employers who had pledged to open jobs to blacks in 1961 would not even let blacks in the door to apply, and picketed large employers in the South (New York Times, 1961: 31).

Federal agencies in charge of Civil Rights Act and affirmative action enforcement looked to what Plans for Progress employers were using for guidance. The foot soldiers of the movement were to be found not on the streets of Selma, but in the personnel office at Lockheed's Marietta, Georgia, plant. They weren't always willing conscripts, but now the personnel profession had added a specialty, and the old hands would have to change their focus from guarding against unions to protecting equality of opportunity. The President's Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity lobbied firms to do more to promote equality of opportunity, but they left it to private-sector personnel experts to figure out what to do (Graham, 1990).

In the second phase of the evolution of personnel strategy, experts considered changes in the law and collectively settled on the formalization of hiring and promotion as the second broad response. The stimulus was a three-pronged increase in federal oversight in the early 1970s. First, the Supreme Court extended the definition of discrimination in 1971, in *Griggs v. Duke Power Company*, striking down employment practices that appeared to be neutral but which had the effect of needlessly excluding blacks. Second, the Department of Labor expanded affirmative action reporting and enforcement. Third, in 1972 Congress gave the EEOC power to bring lawsuits, and the number of suits skyrocketed from several hundred to over five thousand a year by the end of the decade (Burstein and Monahan, 1986; Peterson, 1974; Skrentny, 1996: 127). With its new powers the EEOC negotiated \$75 million in settlements in 1973 and 1974 with AT&T in the

first in a string of high-profile discrimination consent decrees (Shaeffer, 1975: 5).

Personnel experts like Barbara Boyle, who designed IBM's first equal opportunity program before opening a consultancy, now argued that the courts would question many common employment practices. The solution, they argued, was equal opportunity programs built on the foundation of classic personnel administration, beginning with formal hiring and promotion practices to stop managers from discriminating (Dobbin et al., 1993). They recommended test validation procedures pioneered by industrial psychologists. They designed quasi-judicial grievance and disciplinary mechanisms, adapted from their union management toolkit, to intercept discrimination complaints before they reached the courts (Edelman, 1990; Sutton et al., 1994). In the process, Boyle and colleagues defined formal, legalistic employment rules as the antidote to discrimination, equating fairness with the rule of law. They also built an equal opportunity arsenal that they, personnel experts, were uniquely qualified to deploy.

These professionals faced some social movement pushback, particularly from feminists who argued that this approach did little for women (Harrison, 1988; Vogel, 1993), and that personnel specialists and federal regulators alike were only concerned with race (Danovitch, 1990). Feminists in the government led this charge, not disenfranchised activists (Badran, 2009; Stetson and Mazur, 1995). But liberal judges generally supported the equal opportunity measures firms embraced in the 1970s. They often asked why firms charged with discrimination had not instituted the job descriptions, validated job tests, job posting systems, and salary classification systems that the personnel profession prescribed as anti-discrimination measures (Boyle, 1973: 92; New York Times, 1962).

In the third phase, personnel developed "diversity management" practices to take the place of equal opportunity practices. Ronald Reagan became the first high-profile opposing player in this arena when, in the 1980 election campaign, he called for eliminating bureaucratic red tape to unleash the potential of the economy. Once in office he made plans to dismantle the affirmative action regime and diminish the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Reagan's predecessors had expanded equal opportunity and affirmative action regulations, and his Republican predecessor, Richard Nixon, had done as much as any (Skrentny, 1996).

The success of the social movement that personnel experts organized within their firms can be seen in executive attitudes. When Reagan challenged measures to integrate the workplace, corporate executives came to the defense of personnel (Fisher, 1994: 271). In 1979 the *Wall Street Journal*



reported a poll showing that two-thirds of top executives favored programs to promote women and minorities, and by 1985, a survey of Fortune 500 executives found that 95 percent would continue to use numerical goals for the representation of women and minorities even if Washington backed away from affirmative action regulations (Fisher, 1994: 270; Harvard Law Review, 1989: 661). A 1986 survey found that while enforcement had been cut, nine out of ten Fortune 500 companies planned no changes to affirmative action programs and the tenth planned to expand programs (Bureau of National Affairs, 1986: 90). Many executives came out in support of affirmative action, in amicus briefs, telegrams to Reagan, and congressional testimony (Harvard Law Review, 1989: 662). In the end, Reagan's own Republican cabinet officials talked him out of eviscerating the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and putting an end to affirmative action regulations for federal contractors. A key player in the equal opportunity debate, the administration, had become an arena for dissent and deliberation.

While Reagan did not eviscerate federal enforcement agencies, he did diminish their powers and send the clear message that equal opportunity was on the chopping block. Equal opportunity experts within firms redefined their activities under two different banners. They recast performance evaluations, skill training, and job-posting systems as part of an effort to rationalize the allocation of "human resources" (Dobbin and Sutton, 1998; Kelly and Dobbin, 1998). Those programs had been torn from the modern personnel administration manual of the 1950s, and rebranded as equal opportunity measures, and so now they came full circle. Social movement activists internal to the firm were covering their tracks, claiming to be working for the bottom line.

The efficiency argument worked for programs like job-posting systems that were nominally race- and gender-neutral. For other programs, consultants such as R. Roosevelt Thomas dropped the language of legal compliance for a language of "diversity management," which became the second banner (Bureau of National Affairs, 1995; Lynch, 1997). The personnel profession worked out a new rhetoric for their equal opportunity programs, arguing that the workforce would have growing numbers of women and minorities (Johnston and Packer, 1987). Diversity training, culture audits, and diversity performance evaluations would help the employees to work better together.

In the fourth phase, which overlapped with the third but came to dominate in the 1990s, personnel experts turned their attention to women's issues; work-family programs and anti-harassment measures. The human resources profession had gradually become feminized between 1970 and 1990, and leaders came to champion gender equality. In the 1970s, personnel



experts pushed firms to install maternity leave programs to comply with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, until the Supreme Court ruled in 1976 that the act did not require maternity leave. By that point, leading firms had maternity leave programs on the books, which helped to quell corporate opposition to the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978. After that, personnel experts did not argue that other work-life programs were required by the Civil Rights Act, but they did argue that flexible working arrangements and child care supports could be part of a “good-faith effort” defense against claims of sex discrimination. Public officials had created tax incentives and federal demonstration projects that supported on-site child care, dependent care expense accounts, flextime, and part-time career options, and these helped personnel experts to build a case for work-family programs.

Women’s advocates in personnel did tie the issue of harassment at work to Title VII. After a struggle in the 1970s to win recognition of workplace sex harassment as employment discrimination, legal scholar Catharine McKinnon and her colleagues saw three federal court decisions in 1977 defining workplace sex harassment as discrimination under Title VII. In 1986 the Supreme Court upheld this view, and in 1991, Anita Hill’s charge that Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas had sexually harassed her at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission focused national attention on the issue. The press coverage helped win congressional support for the Civil Rights Act of 1991, which gave women the same right to sue for punitive damages in discrimination suits that African-Americans had (Bequai, 1992).

Personnel experts proposed remedies from their professional kit bag: sexual harassment grievance procedures, modeled on union grievance procedures, and harassment sensitivity training, modeled on diversity training and ultimately on the management sensitivity training seminars of the late 1960s (Dobbin and Kelly, 2007). In time the Supreme Court would follow the lead of personnel experts. Absent any hard evidence that training or grievance procedures quell workplace sexual harassment (Bisom-Rapp, 2001), in 1998 the Court found that these practices could inoculate employers against liability in certain harassment cases (*Faragher v. City of Boca Raton*, 534 US 775 [1998]; *Burlington Industries, Inc. v. Ellerth*, 524 US 742 [1998]).

The personnel profession came to play a surprisingly central role in the civil rights arena, taking up the baton from movement activists after passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. For a few years the NAACP still picketed the odd company that failed to comply with the law, but in short order, the movement had moved within the firm. Personnel managers made changes to corporate personnel systems that no one could have anticipated in 1964, ostensibly in response to the law and changing judicial interpretation.

In 1964, civil rights leaders hoped that firms would open jobs to blacks. By 1994, firms had instituted culture audits and diversity training and discrimination grievance procedures, changes that civil rights advocates from 1964 could not have imagined.

Affirmative action and civil rights laws spawned a professional subgroup in personnel largely because the requirements of the laws were unclear, and thus personnel experts could claim the unique ability to divine what the courts would expect of employers. It was thus the law's ambiguity that created a subspecialty within personnel management which, now institutionalized, continues to use social movement tactics to fight for equal opportunity from within the firm.

### **Institutional Investors as Movement Activists**

If the case of personnel manager advocacy for equal opportunity demonstrates how a social movement can be taken over by professionals within the firm, the case of institutional investor advocacy for shareholder value demonstrates how a social movement, directed at the firm, can be initiated by professionals outside of the firm. Both cases illustrate how the firm has become an object of social movement activity, conducted by professionals not in their spare time but in their work roles. Both cases show the dividing line between the professions and social movements to be changing.

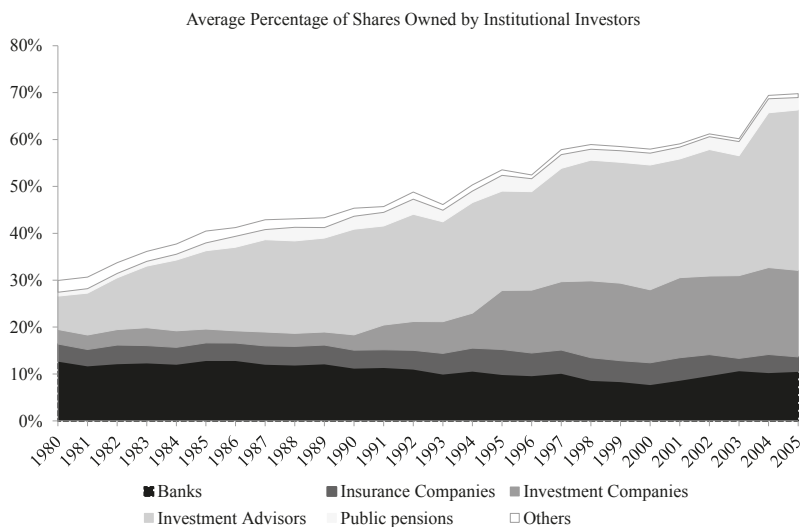
The arena of corporate strategy and governance is populated by a set of players spanning the public and private sectors. Corporate executives, shareholders, and board members are all tied to the firm. The Securities and Exchange Commission regulates publicly held firms, as do industry specific regulators, such as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and the Federal Communications Commission, and domain-specific regulators, such as the Environmental Protection Agency and the EEOC. A number of market intermediaries play important roles, including institutional investors (mutual fund managers, investment banks, commercial banks, insurance companies, university endowments), securities analysts, hedge funds, and private equity firms (Dobbin and Zorn, 2005). Market intermediaries influence firms through "payment," in Jasper's (2012) language of strategizing, but they mostly use the threat of negative sanction, through shareholder proposals that challenge management decisions publicly and the threat to sell their shares, causing share price to decline and making it harder for firms to raise capital.

When they began to promote new shareholder value practices, institutional investors faced concerted resistance from executives who had built

their careers on the business model that the shareholder value paradigm attacked. Under that model, executives were paid salaries that were little affected by corporate performance. They released little information to investors beyond what was required by law. They dominated their own corporate boards to keep shareholders from challenging decisions, appointing their subordinates as members and chairing boards themselves. They operated internal capital markets, expanding through acquisition. They use diversification to hedge against the decline of a single industry. This system provided stable income and employment for corporate executives but, shareholder value advocates claimed, did not promote the interests of shareholders in maximizing firm value. Executives built huge diversified empires with little concern for profitability or share price, focusing their efforts on expanding into new industries that would guarantee stability. Executives maximized firm size to increase their salaries, and stability to maximize their longevity in office.

In the 1970s American industry was pummeled by rising oil prices, competition from Japanese automakers, and stagflation. Investors and executives questioned whether there was something wrong with American management. Meanwhile institutional investors were winning growing

**Figure 2** Average percentage of shares owned by institutional investors



Note: Data on shares controlled by institutional investors are for a sample of 829 large US corporations (see Dobbins and Jung, 2010), and come from Thompson Financial.

influence over firms, as their control of shares skyrocketed through the democratization of shareholding, led by the rise of 401k plans and defined-contribution pension plans, both of which funneled savings into the stock market.

The ageing of the baby boom generation, pension regulations that popularized 401k plans, and the growth of private investment in mutual funds gave fund managers huge quantities of cash to invest, and unprecedented power over firms (Swedberg, 2004). Peter Drucker's *Unseen Revolution: How Pension Fund Socialism Came to America* (1976) and John Stephens's *The Transition from Capitalism to Socialism* (1979) anticipated the change. Figure 2 shows the growth in institutional investor holdings, between 1980 and 2005, in a sample of 736 large US firms, most of which at some point appeared on the Fortune 500 list. Institutions held about 30 percent of stock in the average company in 1980 and about 70 percent by 2005 (Dobbin and Jung, 2010).

Institutional investors began to coordinate their activities – something they had previously eschewed as industry competitors – to challenge corporate strategy. While investors had historically tended to avoid direct confrontation with management, some institutional investors, notably public pension funds such as CalPERS (the California Public Employees' Retirement System), began to talk of collective action. When disappointed by incumbent managers, investors had long taken the "Wall Street Walk," quietly divesting. Selling shares, however, was not always a viable option for institutional investors. On the one hand, index funds designed to match the performance of the market had trouble doing so if they dumped the stock of a major firm. On the other hand, the biggest funds held 5 percent or more of the stock of many companies, and news of a sell-off could depress share price before they could get out, leaving them with large paper losses. Fund managers instead sought to improve performance of firms in their portfolios by taking collective action to improve management practices.

To advance their agenda of corporate governance and management reforms, activist fund managers utilized social-movement-like tactics. The first thing they did was to organize a collective, with public pension funds in the lead (Davis and Thompson, 1994). In 1985, Jesse Unruh, a trustee of the CalPERS board, gathered public and private pension fund managers to found the Council of Institutional Investors (CII). Corporate America recognized its potential power immediately. Members controlled \$130 billion in assets. One Wall Street executive was quoted as saying, "If the institutions start speaking with one voice, they could become a financial OPEC" (Jacoby, 2007: 244). CII endorsed a "Shareholder Bill of Rights" in

1986, which broadly defined its governance-reform agenda, including independent oversight over management and greater shareholder input in key corporate decisions. A regulatory change helped the burgeoning activism by institutional investors. Previously, communications aimed at influencing the votes of more than ten other shareholders had to be examined and approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in advance of a shareholder meeting. The SEC adopted new proxy rules in 1992 allowing direct communication among shareholders, which facilitated collective action among fund managers.

Taking advantage of their newfound political as well as economic influence, the CII and leading public pension funds challenged management. For the purpose, they adopted both informal and formal measures. With the rising financial power of fund managers, firms put in investor-relations offices and chief financial officers to manage corporate image (Zorn, 2004). Now they privately negotiated with companies to embrace the governance and strategic reforms advocated by shareholder value proponents (Carleton, Nelson, and Weisbach, 1998).

Where behind-the-scenes lobbying failed, the formal step of anti-management shareholder proposals sometimes succeeded. While submitting proposals for a vote at the company's annual meeting was a measure available to virtually any shareholder, proposals were rare, and individuals who submitted them had been mocked as "corporate gadflies." From the mid-1980s, groups of fund managers became more active. Between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s the number of shareholder resolutions supported by institutional investors tripled (Proffitt, 2001), and institution-led proposals now won more votes than individual-led proposals. While shareholder proposals were nonbinding, they put pressure on management to change. Institution-led proposals covered the range of shareholder value prescriptions, from board independence to executive pay for performance.

Fund managers dubbed their activism the "shareholder value" movement, but shareholders were rarely involved. They described a David versus Goliath struggle, pitting small-holding pensioners against the fat cats who ran America's largest public companies for their own benefit. In fact, institutional investors advocated shareholder value principles that would support their own interest in short-term share price increases, but that might not serve shareholders so well. A cornerstone of the shareholder value paradigm, as institutional investors promoted it, was the stock option. Options tied executive compensation to annual increases in share price, aligning executive compensation with the compensation of institutional fund managers, who earned bonuses based on annual increases in the value

of stocks under management. Unlike actual shareholders, both groups benefitted from market volatility, for each drop in the market offered executives, and fund managers, the chance to reap the benefits of the market's next rise through bonuses and option grants.

Part of the shareholder value ethos was to transform poorly managed companies to boost their share value. Next we discuss each of the reforms that shareholder value theorists advocated. We argue that fund managers succeeded in promoting the elements of the shareholder value playbook that they really wanted. The best evidence that the "shareholder value revolution" was promoted by a social movement made up of fund managers may be in the outcome of this revolution. Firms embraced the changes that fund managers wanted for their own benefit, but not those that would serve the long-term interests of shareholders, such as those that would dampen risk-taking and market volatility, which served fund managers who, again, reaped the rewards of every rise in the stock market but paid little of the price of market declines.

Shareholder value reformers promoted *pay for performance and executive equity-holding* by arguing that executives had become lazy and self-serving in part because their compensation was ill suited to the needs of shareholders. But only performance pay was in the interest of fund managers, because performance pay encouraged short-term increases in share price at the cost of long-term stability, and fund managers' annual bonuses were based on short-term share price increases. The movement pushed hard for performance pay, neglecting the prescription for long-term equity-holding to stabilize growth. Circa 1975, the best way for a CEO to get ahead was to "grow the company" through diversifying acquisitions. Most of the money CEOs made came in the form of salary, and the bigger their companies, the bigger their salaries. Reformers cited agency theory in economics to argue for performance pay. Michael Jensen, a finance professor at the University of Rochester who would later move to Harvard Business School and become a principal of the Monitor Group consultancy, was coauthor of the seminal article (Jensen and Meckling, 1976). Writing in *Harvard Business Review*, Jensen and Murphy (1990) argued forcefully that major firms made the mistake of paying their executives like bureaucrats, tying compensation to showing up for the job rather than to performing. They called for boards of directors to require CEOs to be substantial shareholders and link compensation to performance through stock options and bonuses (Khurana, 2002: 191).

There were good reasons for executives to oppose both performance pay and equity-holding (Jensen and Meckling, 1976). If performance pay was to

replace straight salary, executives might lose out in a downturn that was not of their own making. Moreover, portfolio theory suggested that no investor should have all of his eggs in one basket, and equity-holding schemes such as corporate long-term incentive plans (LTIPs) required executives to hold substantial equity in the firm, preventing them from diversifying. Fund managers convinced firms to move to performance pay but did not convince them to increase executive equity-holding (Westphal and Zajac, 1994). Long-term executive equity holding did not serve fund managers' personal interests, because their bonuses were tied to short-term increases in share value (Dobbin and Jung, 2010).

Shareholder value theorists also called for firms to *dediversify*. But their heart was not in it, because dediversification incurred significant one-time costs of reorganization, which dampened profits in the immediate future. Fund managers were in it for the annual bonus, and thus while they talked about dediversification, CII and the movement generally did not hold executives' feet to the fire.

Focused firms, shareholder value advocates reasoned, would be able to pursue business opportunities with more agility. C.K. Prahalad and Gary Hamel argued in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1990 that firms should focus on industries their managers knew well. As Michael Useem (1996: 153) argues, "While diversification had been a hallmark of good management during the 1960s, shedding unrelated businesses had become the measure during the 1980s and 1990s." Corporate executives resisted dediversification publicly, fighting break-up takeovers through poison pills, golden parachutes, and state anti-takeover laws (Davis, 1991; Davis and Stout, 1992). In the end many conglomerates were broken up, but fund managers played little part in this (Dobbin and Jung, 2010). Instead, hostile takeover firms raided large conglomerates and broke them up, and securities analysts neglected large rambling conglomerates because their prospects were difficult to assess, leading executives to dediversify to get the attention of analysts markets (Zuckerman, 1999; 2000). After 1980, America's corporate behemoths dediversified to ward off takeovers (Davis et al., 1994).

Shareholder value proponents advised, as well, that *debt financing of acquisitions* could prevent unwise takeovers. Jensen and Meckling (1976) offered a prescription for preventing ill-advised acquisitions, building on ideas from financial economics (Miller and Modigliani, 1961; Modigliani and Miller, 1958). Agency costs stem from managers' propensity to favor stability over profits, overreward themselves, and focus on the short term. One way to reduce agency costs is to use debt to finance expansion. This moderates the principal-agent conflict by reducing equity financing, forcing



managers to recognize the cost of capital. Debt also leverages equity by multiplying returns, and frees up profits to be used for share buy-backs that increase stock price (Westphal and Zajac, 1998; Zajac and Westphal, 2004). Debt financing is thought to discipline executives prone to using cash for ill-advised acquisitions that would dilute future profits. Fund managers disliked debt financing, however, because they were working for an annual bonus, and firms used debt to invest in new technologies or industries that would not pay off for several years (Dobbin and Jung, 2010). The average company's corporate debt rose some 50 percent between 1980 and 2000, but this was driven by the rise of hostile takeover attempts, which led takeover agents to buy companies with debt, and some targets to take on debt to make themselves less attractive to suitors (Davis et al., 1994; Dobbin and Jung, 2010).

Shareholder value theorists also talked up *board independence*, with the idea that autonomy would enable boards to monitor executives and replace poor performers. Research confirms that inside directors from the management team are in no position to challenge executives; large boards rarely act decisively (Byrd and Hickman, 1992; Carleton et al., 1998; Hermalin and Weisbach, 1988); and CEO-chaired boards seldom question management decisions (Beatty and Zajac, 1994; Certo et al., 2003). Moreover, inside directors favor poison pills and golden parachutes that protect executives against losses in takeovers, undermining the role of takeover threat in disciplining wayward executives (Jensen, 1984). Financial economists recommended outside directors, small and agile boards, and outside chairmen (Fama, 1980).

Fund managers did not insist on board independence, and in fact, by the best measure of independence (separation of the CEO and chairman), the average Fortune 500 firm saw backward movement (Dobbin and Jung, 2010). Gourevitch and Shinn (2005) argue that fund managers did not press the point because many of them faced conflicts of interest. They invested in firms and sold pension instruments to those same firms. Ford or GM could easily enough favor a pension provider that did not seek to interfere with corporate governance. While firms did decrease the size of boards on average, and did appoint more directors who were not managers of the firm, they became more rather than less likely to give the CEO the title of chairman, and so boards did not become more independent (Dobbin and Jung, 2010; Khurana, 2007).

Finally, institutional investors championed *financial transparency*. Agency theorists advised firms to open their books to analysts, providing both financial and strategic information that would allow analysts to



assess firm prospects and encourage changes to improve performance. Management consultants suggested that new Chief Financial Officers could take charge of increasing transparency, by issuing regular reports, holding conference calls, and issuing earnings preannouncements (Dobbin and Zorn, 2005: 193; Zorn, 2004). Transparency might reduce analyst discord over earnings projections and increase the odds of meeting analyst profit projections, which had been published since the early 1970s (Fox, 1997). Executives at leading firms reported significant pressure from investors and analysts to meet these estimates, and responded by providing more information to investors and analysts and by managing earnings to match forecasts (Useem and Gager, 1996: 625). Firms were slow to provide more accounting information than the law required, but they came around as transparency became the norm, and as they came to see that transparency could boost the value of executive stock options.

Corporate structure and strategy have changed dramatically due to the shareholder value movement, carried out by institutional investors who claimed to be representing their clients, investors. Firms embraced stock options but not executive equity, financial transparency but not board independence, and both debt financing and dediversification. And while they publicly championed all of these changes, the fund manager movement pushed hard only for the changes that served its members, fund managers themselves. Institutional investors only became a key player in this arena when they, collectively, came to dominate control of stock. They organized along the lines of a social movement through the Council of Institutional Investors, despite the fact that fund managers were in direct competition with one another for jobs, and for lucrative investments.

## Conclusion

We have looked at the role of one seldom-studied political player, the professional group as a social movement activist directing its attention at the firm. When they are professionals working for a firm, as in the case of diversity experts, their strategies may be honed in professional associations and networks, where new management models and rhetorics are worked out. Their professional associations are at once players and arenas. They are arenas when members are working out strategies to pursue and programs to promote. They are players when the associations are the locus of actions designed to change firm behavior. Then their firms become arenas, in which interactions between different groups of professionals and managers are

played out. For instance, in the case of sex and race harassment, managers were eager to see programs put into place. In-house counsel often advised that there were no dependable immunizations against harassment lawsuits and recommended waiting for the courts to act. Personnel professionals promoted training and grievance systems, and these spread far and wide before the courts made a definitive ruling. The courts judged that because these were widely popular, firms without them must not be trying to eradicate harassment (Dobbin and Kelly, 2007). Firms had become arenas in which two professions-as-social-movements worked out their differences.

Professions have, in these two illustrations, come to play novel roles in social movements, both as protagonists within the firm and as antagonists outside of the firm. This has occurred in part because the firm has increasingly become the object of social movement activity. On the one hand, it occurred as the firm gained power and influence over citizens. The NAACP demonstrated outside of department stores that refused to hire African-Americans. Environmental activists challenge oil companies directly. The targets of social movement activity are increasingly corporations themselves. On the other hand, it occurred as the state's role in society was circumscribed by neoliberal ideology and fiscal constraint, leading the state to cede certain responsibilities for environmental protection, labor standards, and social welfare to private corporations and nonprofit intermediaries.

Organizational scholars have documented how professional groups operate as social movements, bringing new norms of environmental protection, gender rights, and work-family rights to the corporation (Saguy, 2003; Dobbin et al., 1993). Thus personnel experts pushed for maternity rights for workers while the women's movement was busy pushing for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (Kelly and Dobbin, 1999). Personnel experts won the day, and the women's movement's advocacy of the ERA failed. As we have noted, social movements have entered the firm in a number of other ways over the years. When the Wagner Act guaranteed workers the right to organize, the labor movement gained representatives inside of firms, some working for unions and others for management. As public policy creates new rights for individuals and protections for the environment and community under pressure from traditional social movement activists, professionals take over the details of implementing these rights and protections and become advocates themselves within firms.

The relationship between the professions and social movements would seem to be in flux today, and thus we have argued not only that professional groups can act as within-firm social movements and as extra-firm social

movements lobbying for corporate change, but also that the line between social movements and professions is sometimes blurred. We see a range of different patterns. Existing professionals can spearhead a new movement, as in the case of institutional investors and shareholder value. Professionals can recognize a movement as in their interest and align with it, as in the case of health-care professionals organizing along pro-choice lines and against anti-abortion activists. Professionals can take the lead in new movements that support their own identity politics, as when female human resources managers champion work-life programs. Or individuals may choose to join professions in order to promote their political interests, as in the case diversity managers or environmental engineers.

When market intermediaries such as institutional investors want to change the behavior of firms, they now use social movement strategies to bring firms around to their way of thinking. We expect market intermediaries (hedge fund managers, securities analysts, investment banks) to continue to promote new management paradigms from the outside with social movement language and tactics, acting on their own behalf and on the behalf of the investors they represent.

Some argue that with the rise of “state feminism,” or women’s movements spearheaded by government officials, we are seeing a decline in conventional social movements (Badran, 2009; Stetson and Mazur, 1995). Skrentny (2002) argues that the civil rights movement created a model for related movements, and that these can now proceed largely through the initiative of government actors, who mobilize for the elderly, the disabled, or veterans with or without the involvement of members of these constituencies. It may be that professionals within the state, and within firms, are coming to usurp the conventional role of social movements. Thus, for instance, the movement for work-life flexibility has largely been led by government regulators and legislators, and personnel professionals within firms. Rallies in Washington, DC, are rare in that domain, and yet firms, and legislatures, are steadily increasing work-life programs, policies, and protections.

The conventions of the social movement are thus changing, as are the conventions of the profession. We are witnessing the evolution of the actors and roles that constitute the modern ontology. While social scientists typically presume that ontology to be stable, comprising individuals, occupations, political groups, social movements, corporations, and nation-states with distinct roles, we have documented how some of these groups and roles are morphing before our eyes. Social movements become more professionalized, as others have shown, but in addition, professional groups take

on the tactics and rhetoric of social movements, blurring the line between activism and professionalism.

## Note

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## 7 The Double Game of Unions and the Labor Movement

*Ruth Milkman*

After a long period of neglect, sociological interest in the labor movement has burgeoned in recent decades, despite the relentless decline of trade union density in nearly all the world's nations. The ubiquitous growth of class inequalities since the 1970s and the accompanying expansion of what has come to be called "the precariat" (Standing, 2011), along with a wave of innovative organizing efforts and the emergence of progressive union leadership in many countries in the 1980s and 1990s, helped to stimulate this unexpected renewal of labor movement sociology. "Not since the 1930s, when the 'labor problem' was omnipresent, has unionism commanded as much attention by sociologists," an essay in the 1992 *Annual Review of Sociology* declared soon after this new literature began to develop (Kimeldorf and Stepan-Norris, 1992).

Indeed, by the early 21<sup>st</sup> century sociology had become the primary disciplinary home for scholarship on unions and the labor movement, especially in the United States. This occurred partly by default, as economists, who formerly had dominated the study of "industrial relations," all but abandoned the subject as the subfield of institutional economics faded away and as union density declined to what many economists viewed as trivial levels. Some heterodox political scientists are engaged in research on labor movements, as are a few geographers and anthropologists, but in all these fields the number of labor scholars is modest relative to that in sociology. Labor historians continue to make significant contributions, but even their numbers have dwindled since the 1970s and 1980s, when figures like E. P. Thompson and David Montgomery inspired a new generation to enter the field. In the 1980s, sociologists also engaged with the "new labor history" that this generation produced (for US examples, see Kimeldorf and Stepan-Norris, 1992); soon after, however, the focus of sociological research on labor shifted to contemporary studies of "organizing the unorganized" and union revitalization (Clawson and Clawson, 1999).

One inspiration for the revival of interest among sociologists was the rise of "social movement unionism" in the 1980s in several countries in the global South, in particular in Brazil, South Africa (Seidman, 1994) and South Korea (Koo, 2001). A decade later many commentators applied the same label to

the grassroots union organizing that unexpectedly emerged among recent immigrants and other low-wage workers in the United States. Despite the widespread use of the term “social movement unionism” in these varied settings, however, the 1990s scholarship on this phenomenon developed almost entirely independently of the vast and growing literature on social movements. Indeed, the late-20<sup>th</sup>-century sociological literature on the labor movement generally disregarded – and was disregarded by – what Jasper (2010) calls the “McTeam” group of social movement scholars who elaborated the “political process” paradigm that was hegemonic at the time. Some labor sociologists did situate their work explicitly in relation to earlier social movements literature, especially resource mobilization theory (see Conell and Voss, 1990; Ganz, 2000; Martin, 2008), and a few were overtly critical of the political process model (Lopez, 2004; 2008), but most simply ignored it. The lack of attention was mutual: the voluminous “McTeam” literature seldom mentions union organizing or workers’ movements, despite the capacious, open-ended conception of social movements embodied in the political process paradigm.

This disconnect did not always exist. As recently as the 1970s, trade unions and labor movements were a central preoccupation among sociologists of social movements. Well-known examples from the canon include Charles Tilly’s detailed analysis of strikes in his *From Mobilization to Revolution* (1978), and Piven and Cloward’s analysis of the labor upsurge of the 1930s in their influential *Poor People’s Movements* (1977), among many others. Scholars like Michael Mann (1973), if less directly identified with the social movements subfield, also made influential sociological contributions to theorizing about labor in this period. Others, notably Offe and Wiesenthal (1980), developed a probing sociological analysis of trade unions based on a critical revision of Olson’s *Logic of Collective Action* (1965).

Social movements theorists’ attention to labor seemed to evaporate in the 1980s. To some extent this reflected the new attention during that decade to “new social movements” led by Alberto Melucci (1988) and Alain Touraine (1981). Their interventions generated a wave of new research on the environmentalist, feminist, and various other identity-based movements, which were far more vibrant than organized labor at the time. Even earlier, many sociologists had joined André Gorz (1982) in bidding “Farewell to the Working Class” as an agent of social change. By the early 1980s, unionism’s strength and influence already had declined greatly from its post-World War II peak in many countries, and what remained of organized labor often resembled an encrusted bureaucracy rather than an active “movement.” The collapse of communism across Eastern and Central Europe at the end

of the decade further reinforced the perception that trade unions, along with the class conflicts in which they had once played a leading role, were relics of a bygone era.

That soon changed in the United States, however, where the 1990s brought progressive new leadership to the AFL-CIO and a resurgence of union organizing activity – a key stimulus for the revived interest in the US labor movement among sociologists that began during that decade. But this new literature emerged entirely outside the social movement subfield, as political-process scholars did not respond to the changes in US unions and the nation's wider labor movement, and paid little heed to the burgeoning of scholarship those developments inspired.

One reason for this neglect may be that, as Walder (2009) has recently argued, the scope of inquiry in the social movements literature had narrowed dramatically by this period, moving away from its original concern with the macro-sociological dynamics giving rise to movements and shaping their political orientation. In addition, as Jasper (2004) points out, the subfield's attention shifted to the micro-foundations of collective action. Even as the social movements literature continued to proliferate in the 1980s and 1990s, it tended to concentrate on a single, if ambitious, goal, "to explain the conditions under which a movement – of any type – can grow and succeed."

Perhaps the tendency of the "McTeam" group to presume that all social movements are alike in their basic dynamics is one reason that labor movements – which, as detailed below, are distinctive in many respects – so rarely appear in the political process literature; another may be that in recent years labor movement "growth and success" have been rare. And crucially, as Walder suggests, social movement scholars of this period exhibited a conspicuous "lack of curiosity about the social structural roots of protest" (Walder, 2009: 398, 407). As a result, the vast changes in the organization of work unleashed by the neoliberal turn of the 1970s, which later helped to transform many unions and labor movements, were not on the radar screen.

Several other features of the political process paradigm also deflected attention from labor. As its main proponents have themselves acknowledged (see McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001: 42), it emphasized opportunities more than threats, yet in the late 1970s and 1980s labor movements faced a frontal assault from employers in many countries and their opportunities for expansion were few and far between. That the political process literature also focused "inordinately on the *origins* of contention rather than on its later phases," as its proponents have acknowledged (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001: 42) also may have helped push labor movements to the periphery of the field. Even the burst of new union organizing in the United States

associated with John Sweeney's election to the presidency of the AFL-CIO in 1995 involved union "revitalization" rather than the emergence of anything resembling a new movement, as Voss and Sherman (2000) have shown.

Another "defect" that McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly identify in their self-criticism of the political process paradigm, namely that "it works best when centered on individual social movements and less well for broader episodes of contention," is also relevant here, since as Dan Clawson (2003) has emphasized, labor movements tend to grow not incrementally but through large bursts of activity like the one in the 1930s in the United States. Finally, the internal dynamics of labor movements bear little resemblance to the US civil rights movement that was the main exemplar for political process theory. Nor do trade unions have much in common with the "new social movements" – defined precisely by their distinctiveness from the "old" social movements (unions and working-class political parties).

Perhaps the political process paradigm is a better fit for analysis of the community-based low-wage worker organizations known as "worker centers" that took shape in the United States (Fine, 2006) during the 1990s, although these resemble NGOs more than "movements" (see Milkman, 2010). Worker centers have also contributed to the rise of the US immigrant rights movement in recent years, a movement that, as I have argued elsewhere (Milkman, 2011), can be understood as a type of labor movement, and one that happens to share several features with the civil rights movement. Indeed, the best analyses of this movement do make use of the social movements literature (Bloemraad, Voss, and Lee, 2011). But this may be the exception that proves the rule; in general, concern with unions and labor movements is conspicuously absent from recent social movements literature.

Against this background, it is useful to explore the ways in which unions and labor movements might be analyzed in terms of the "players and arenas" perspective that motivates this volume. Due to space constraints as well as the limits of my own expertise, I attempt this only for the US case, but it could also prove a fruitful approach for labor movements in other national contexts. Because of the way it privileges strategies and tactics, as well as individual and collective choices, and because it is so resolutely anti-determinist, the "players and arenas" framework seems especially well suited to the analysis of unions and labor movements. Indeed most sociological studies of recent labor struggles already include detailed attention to strategies and tactics (see Bronfenbrenner, 1997; Ganz, 2000; Lopez, 2004; among many others).

## Labor Is Not Just Another Player

Trade unions and labor movements are different from many of the other players considered in this volume. Unlike corporations, the media, or professionals, they regularly engage in protest activity themselves, either on their own or as part of larger coalitions. Indeed, the most common form of labor protest, the strike, typically involves not only a work stoppage intended to disrupt operations at the target employer(s) but also direct appeals to members of the larger community for support. In addition to strikes, unions and other worker organizations often launch consumer boycotts to protest employer abuses, again appealing to the wider community. In recent decades, as strikes have become increasingly ineffective (for reasons discussed below), US unions and other workers' organizations have increasingly turned to "corporate campaigns," which pressure employers through appeals to third parties or by actions that threaten to tarnish the public image of the corporate target (Manheim, 2000).

A classic article by Offe and Wieselth (1980) remains among the most valuable analyses of the radically different structural positions of workers and employers and their collective associations. As they point out, employers are the primary "organizers" of workers, in so far as they select individuals through the hiring process; unions are thus subordinated from the outset as *secondary* organizers (Offe and Wieselth, 1980: 72). In addition, both because they are fewer in number and because their collective interests are narrower, employers are far less easily divided internally than are workers.

For the same reasons, whereas labor organizations must continually struggle to build and maintain solidarity and collective identity among their members, for employers building unity is a much simpler task. Of course, employers also have far greater resources at their disposal when they do engage in collective action than unions do (78). And because governments depend so directly on the capital accumulation process for their own survival, employers' political power is far greater, and far more easily hidden from public view, than that of organized labor. Indeed, the relatively weak position of unions and other workers' associations often forces them into the vulnerable position of making public "demands," a position that corporations are never compelled to assume (85-87).

Offe and Wieselth's critique of liberal political theory, emphasizing the asymmetry between unions' and employer associations' collective action repertoires, offers an important caveat that is vital for the "players and arenas" perspective as well. Players vary in the nature and extent of their

power and influence, and unions are at the weak end of the spectrum (even if they seem strong compared to other protest groups).

A related and equally crucial difference between unions and the other “players” analyzed in this volume, at least in the United States, is that organized labor’s legitimacy has long been contested. That is true to a degree of some of the other players analyzed in this volume – for example, the legal profession is famously held in low public regard, and in some sectors of the population, the same is true of corporations, especially the largest and most powerful ones. But the illegitimacy of labor organizations goes much deeper, rooted in the long tradition of anti-communism in the United States and the nation’s pervasive cultural discomfort with the language of class. Even in the 1940s and 1950s, when US labor unions were at the height of their power, they were often tagged as “unAmerican,” their systematic purge of communists in the postwar period notwithstanding.

In recent years, what limited legitimacy unions enjoyed in the past has been further eroded as external attacks on them have escalated. Those attacks rarely come from conventional “protesters”; instead they are orchestrated by employers and corporate-funded right-wing political organizations. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, despite the precipitous decline in organized labor’s membership, power, and influence since the 1970s, unions are regularly pilloried as “Big Labor,” a pejorative term that encapsulates their illegitimate status in society.

Despite all this, and even in its weakened state, the US labor movement *is* in some respects a player within “the Establishment.” Unions still have substantial human and financial resources that enable them to influence politics and public policy. As is often pointed out, organized labor is the single largest organized entity that speaks for and works in the interests of nonelites in the United States. It does so in four distinct arenas, each of which is governed by highly institutionalized rules:

- a) *Collective bargaining.* Labor unions see their primary role as representing workers in collective bargaining with employers, in order to improve compensation (both wages and benefits), working conditions, employment security, and so forth. Other types of (nonunion) workers’ associations, while rarely able to engage in formal collective bargaining, are also sometimes able to build up enough leverage to extract concessions from employers.
- b) *Organizing the unorganized.* Unions, and in recent years other labor movement organizations like worker centers, organize workers who do not yet have collective bargaining relationships with employers, with the goal of either establishing such relationships or finding other means through which to obtain concessions from employers on behalf of workers.

- c) *Electoral politics.* Organized labor's role in US electoral politics remains substantial and well-known. Unions and labor federations provide large campaign donations to Democratic candidates, and also fund and staff get-out-the-vote efforts on behalf of those candidates. They do so in hopes that those elected with their help will support labor's policy and legislative agenda, although as many commentators (e.g., Davis 1980) have pointed out, those hopes are regularly disappointed. For example, labor's efforts to win passage of labor law reform have failed consistently over the last half-century.
- d) *Legislative lobbying.* The failure of labor law reform notwithstanding, the US labor movement is a significant player in the legislative arena, both at the national level and in states with high union density. In this capacity, organized labor represents not only the interests of union members but also those of the larger working population. Over the past eight decades labor has successfully lobbied for minimum wage and living wage laws, regulation of overtime and working hours, occupational health and safety regulations, unemployment insurance and workers' compensation, pension insurance and family and medical leave legislation. In recent years labor has also lobbied for comprehensive immigration reform and opposed trade liberalization, although in these areas its efforts have been far less successful. Still, as Taylor Dark (2001) has argued, labor's influence in the legislative arena remains far greater than its dwindling membership would lead one to expect.

In all four of these arenas, the US labor movement participates in what is colloquially known as the "outside" game of mobilizing protests as well as – indeed sometimes simultaneously – exerting its leverage "inside" the system. Again, this dual approach differentiates labor from other "players" considered in these pages.

Over time, the balance between these two sets of activities has shifted: In the 1935-1975 period, the inside game was predominant; since the 1970s, however, with the neoliberal turn and the relentless decline of union density and power that accompanied it, the balance has tipped more and more toward the "outside" game. Indeed, this is precisely what gave rise to the "social movement unionism" of the 1990s, which involved the proliferation of strategies and tactics that were rarely used in the 1935-1975 period, although many of them were reminiscent of labor's pre-New Deal repertoire (Milkman, 2006). Ironically, just as this shift was taking hold, social movements scholars abandoned the study of labor movements, as we have seen.



## The New Deal and the Inside Game, 1935-1975

The recent wave of “social movement unionism” echoes many features of the era of US labor history that is most often associated with social movement activity among workers and their unions, namely the early 1930s. Although the scale of organizing in the 1990s was miniscule by that historic standard, on other dimensions the parallels between the two periods are striking. At the outset of the depression decade, as in the 1990s and 2000s, private-sector union density was in the single digits, amid extreme levels of income inequality. At the time few commentators thought that labor had any prospect of growth or revival. “I see no reason to believe that American trade unionism will so revolutionize itself within a short period of time as to become in the next decade a more potent social influence,” George Barnett (1933), then president of the American Economic Association, famously stated in a December 1932 address. “Trade unionism is likely to be a declining influence in determining conditions of labor.”

The massive labor organizing upsurge that emerged shortly after this grim prognostication had a broad social base and a transformative agenda and impact – a major social movement by any standard (like many other major movements, its emergence came as a rude surprise to social scientists). Millions of workers won new legal rights and economic benefits through unionization itself and from the New Deal policies that the resurgent labor movement helped to secure. Among the key outcomes was the “Great Compression” in income inequality (Goldin and Margo, 1992), which benefitted not only union members but the entire working class. So did legislation like the 1935 Social Security Act and the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act. Especially important for organized labor was the 1935 National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), which for the first time guaranteed the right to union representation and collective bargaining to most US private-sector workers (albeit with significant exclusions such as domestic and agricultural workers as well as public-sector workers).

Over the next decade, the labor struggles that helped generate all these changes would be successfully channeled into state-sponsored institutional arrangements that rapidly rendered US trade unions far less “movement”-like. The 1947 Taft-Hartley amendments to the NLRA, along with the Cold War purges of communists and other radicals from union leadership positions, effectively preempted much potential worker militancy in the postwar era. This “postwar settlement” created a relatively stable system of industrial relations that would endure for the next three decades. During that period, the role of unions as “players” in the collective bargaining and

organizing arenas became highly routinized. The rules were defined by the NLRA (as amended by Taft-Hartley), a statute often referred to by labor and management alike in this period simply as “The Act,” precisely because it was so fundamental to their relationship. It formally regulated collective bargaining as well as the electoral process through which unions could recruit new members.

The law was peculiar by international standards in regard to its winner-take-all system that granted exclusive representation for workers in a given “bargaining unit” to a single union. But much like its counterparts in other advanced capitalist countries, the basic purpose of the system was to create “labor peace” and an orderly process of dispute resolution. Under the act, this took the form of legally binding multiyear contracts specifying wages, hours, working conditions, and fringe benefits, along with job security provisions, seniority systems and a variety of “work rules.” In contrast, the organization of the labor process, product choice and design, as well as marketing, were cordoned off as “managerial prerogatives” that were *not* mandatory subjects for collective bargaining. Contracts nearly always included elaborate grievance procedures as well; under some conditions labor-management conflicts could also be adjudicated by government agents, or as a last resort, the courts.

Inside this arena, which directly governed about a third of the private-sector workforce at the peak of union density in the mid-1950s, and persists in some sectors to the present day, the key players on the labor side were elected and appointed union officials, as well as rank-and-file workers, who typically had their own informal leaders (many of whom eventually became union officials). Those union players interacted frequently with management representatives (ranging from foremen and supervisors to top executives), and with the government functionaries who administered “the Act.” Other players included private arbitrators and attorneys.

Labor was not a monolith: national and local union officials often had different agendas, and rank-and-file leaders and workers were not always in accord with the union “bureaucrats” who served as their official representatives. As well, workers were divided by race, ethnicity and gender, which sometimes created internal conflicts within unions. Thus unions had the continual challenge of unifying and creating a collective identity among their own members (see Offe and Wiesenthal, 1980), along with developing strategies and tactics vis-à-vis employers.

On the whole, the NLRA system functioned effectively in this period. Building on the foundation laid by the highly regulated political economy of the World War II years, a tripartite system in which unions were key

players (Lichtenstein, 1987), the postwar settlement not only stabilized labor-management relations, much to the benefit of employers, but also “delivered the goods” for unionized workers in the form of improved wages and benefits (especially health insurance and pensions); seniority systems to ensure equity in the distribution of layoffs, job assignments, shift schedules, overtime, and the like; it established avenues to pursue grievances against management; and perhaps most important, job security. Parallel systems of labor regulation directly modeled on the NLRA were later established in the public sector in many US states, and in California’s vast agricultural industry as well.

The NLRA and the various laws modeled after it also defined the rules under which unions could organize new workers (the second “arena” listed above), through government-supervised “representation elections” in which workers voted for or against a particular union (or in some cases, in which they voted to choose among two or more unions competing to serve as their exclusive collective bargaining agent, or for the “no union” option). If a union won an election, it then entered into negotiations with the employer that typically led to a multiyear contract regulating the labor-management relationship in a given workplace or company. A standard feature of these agreements was a “no-strike” pledge, ensuring that for the duration of the contract work stoppages would not occur (although unofficial “wildcat strikes” could and did break out without union authorization). As the contract expiration date approached, negotiations for a new agreement would begin, and once that date arrived authorized strikes could be launched.

Many commentators (most recently Burns [2011]) have argued that the power to withdraw their labor – the strike – is the most important resource available to workers to advance their collective interests vis-à-vis employers, both in already-organized workplaces and in those where new organizing is underway. Indeed, it was mainly in strike settings – either end-of-contract strikes or those seeking initial union recognition – that the act’s effectiveness in stabilizing and regulating labor-management relations sometimes faltered. In an effort to address this problem, Taft-Hartley gave the government added legal means to intervene in strikes, mandating “cooling off” periods and binding arbitration under some circumstances.

Thus from the end of World War II through the 1970s, organized labor in the sector covered by the NLRA only appeared as a recognizable social movement, actively protesting against the status quo, when strikes broke out, often spilling over the boundaries of “normal” labor-management relations into the public arena. In these situations unions typically appealed for community support, both indirectly by seeking to advance their case

through the mass media, and directly by reaching out to the public through pickets and printed flyers. The struggles of workers in the 1960s and 1970s who were not covered by the NLRA, such as farmworkers and public-sector workers, more often took the form of social movements – indeed in the latter case, there was a direct intersection with the civil rights movement, since African-Americans were so often employed in the public sector. Over time these led to NLRA-like regulation of labor-management relations in those sectors as well.

In addition, as a key partner in the Democratic coalition that emerged in the New Deal era and then governed for much of this period, labor mastered the “inside game” in electoral politics and legislative lobbying in this period as well (Dark, 2001). It offered financial support to candidates, launched massive get-out-the-vote efforts, and developed a strong presence among lobbyists in Congress and key state legislatures, which helped secure legislation benefitting the nation’s workers.

Offe and Wiesenenthal’s analysis (1980) appeared just as this era, when a critical mass of employers (however reluctantly) endorsed the principle of collective bargaining, was coming to an unceremonious end. Their account was based on the presumption that, in their words, “Unions have been accepted, in all advanced capitalist states, as an indispensable element of interest representation and of order and predictability, in the absence of which labor conflict and the disruption of social peace would be much harder to control” (99). That is an apt characterization of the 1945-1975 period even in the United States, as commentators like C. Wright Mills also recognized at the outset of the postwar settlement (Mills, 1948). However, starting in the late 1970s, that system came under sustained attack from employers, and before long it ceased to function effectively.

### **Neoliberalism and the Outside Game, 1975-Present**

The managerial reaction against unions, which began gathering force in the 1970s, was part of the larger neoliberal turn: deregulation and deunionization went hand in hand. Although the conventional wisdom often attributes union decline to global economic competition and new technologies, their impact was concentrated in the manufacturing sector, where outsourcing and massive deindustrialization further strengthened management’s ability to rein in once-powerful unions. But in sectors like construction, where jobs cannot be outsourced and international competition is negligible, a systematic managerial assault on union power also led to dramatic declines

in density (Linder, 2000). And although they were never as highly unionized as manufacturing and construction, density also fell sharply in industries like hospitality and retail, neither of which can be outsourced. Indeed, private-sector unionism fell in almost every industry and sector from the 1980s onward.

In earlier decades, forward-looking employers had erected a parallel “human resource management” (HRM) model as an alternative to the traditional NLRA-based system of labor relations that took root in the New Deal era. As Sanford Jacoby (1998) has documented, this approach was motivated from the outset by employers’ desire to avoid unionism. Over time, the HRM model became hegemonic, embedded in business school curricula and widely celebrated in accounts of managerial “best practices.” The unionized sector was simultaneously condemned as cumbersome, inefficient, and overly “adversarial” (Kochan, Katz, and McKersie, 1986).

By the early 1980s, nonunion HRM-based employers who, despite their best efforts, did face unionization efforts among their employees, could turn to the burgeoning “union avoidance” industry for expert assistance in combating the scourge (Logan, 2006). Virtually any company willing to pay the steep consulting fees of the new “union busters” and willing to adopt the prescribed battery of anti-union strategies and tactics they promoted had an excellent prospect of “preventing” unions from gaining a foothold. Many of the strategies and tactics in this new playbook were perfectly legal, thanks to a series of previous anti-union court decisions, but others were blatantly illegal (if highly effective) tactics, like firing union activists. Such firings occurred in 34 percent of a representative sample of 1,004 union organizing campaigns conducted between 1999 and 2003 (Bronfenbrenner, 2009). Between 1950 and 1990 the number of workers fired during organizing campaigns grew nine-fold (Meyerson, 2012: 24), making a mockery of the NLRA representation election system. Even when unions somehow did win representation elections despite all these tactics, many employers dragged their feet in the follow-up negotiations, engaging in “surface bargaining” so that first contracts were delayed or in many cases proved impossible to secure.

The ongoing process of “creative destruction” in market economies that guarantees the continual appearance of new firms and the disappearance of old ones, combined with the growing influence of the HRM model and the rise of the union-avoidance industry, contributed to the sharp decline in private-sector union density that took off in the 1970s. By the 1980s, apart from the public sector, unionism was largely confined to “legacy” companies that were organized decades ago.

But in this period, employers within such former bastions of unionism mounted a different kind of assault on union power. With the advice of the union-avoidance industry and partly inspired by the dramatic air controllers' strike of 1981, they learned how to transform strikes, once the most effective tactic in organized labor's arsenal, into vehicles for *undermining* unions. Now employers learned to deliberately provoke strikes by demanding massive "givebacks" when their union contract expired. (If their unions failed to take the bait and declare a strike, lockouts often followed.) Taking advantage of the legal option under the NLRA of hiring "permanent replacements" for strikers, employers then moved to either eliminate unionism entirely or to bludgeon unions into accepting dramatic concessions in order to maintain a foothold. Recent examples of such employer-initiated work stoppages include the southern California supermarket workers' strike in 2003-2004, which involved some 70,000 workers (LeDuff and Greenhouse, 2004), and the multiyear *Detroit News* strike (Rhomberg, 2012). Since 1980, strike rates have plummeted in the United States, and the few strikes that do occur tend to be defensive struggles of this sort (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011; Burns, 2011).

In short, the rules defining labor relations under the NLRA, although nominally still in force, have been captured by the union-avoidance industry and by the employers who rely on it. As a result many unions today have abandoned the NLRA framework entirely in favor of a broad array of "new" organizing strategies, some of which are not really new but recapitulate the pre-New Deal labor movement repertoire. Most of these new strategies involve the "outside game" of mobilizing rank-and-file workers and their supporters in the wider community into various types of public protest. The inside game has not been abandoned entirely – for example, many unions appeal to elected officials and other elites (such as clergy) for support as they seek leverage against targeted employers, as a supplement to grassroots mobilization and protest. But the balance has decisively tipped toward the outside game in recent years.

Another characteristic of the neoliberal era that has contributed to organized labor's woes is the proliferation in advanced capitalist countries of precarious workers, including temporary and contract workers, interns, as well as a variety of nominally self-employed workers like day laborers, domestic workers, taxi and truck drivers and street vendors. Another growing group in the US case is comprised of "independent contractors," many of whom are legally misclassified as such. For all these workers, NLRA-type unionization is either impractical or legally prohibited, further undermining what remains of the New Deal system. The term "excluded workers,"

often used in the US context to denote precarious workers, reflects the continuing legacy of the NLRA, in that such workers are explicitly excluded from coverage under the act (as well as the Fair Labor Standards Act and Social Security Act).

For a variety of reasons, then, although in principle the bedrock labor laws passed in the 1930s remain in force today, in practice they have become increasingly ineffective. Traditional unions, many of whose leaders came into power under and became acculturated to the old New Deal order, were slow to adapt to this radically changed situation. A widespread siege mentality in union circles (understandable in that they *are* indeed under attack) has added to the difficulty many union leaders face in responding to the new challenges. Nor did it help matters that many of these leaders were approaching retirement age and thus had limited personal motivation to shift course.

Nevertheless, starting in the 1990s some unions did begin to experiment with different strategies and tactics, and to recruit a new generation of leaders, many with experience in other social movements (Voss and Sherman, 2000). This gave rise to the “social movement unionism” of the period and, equally important, to a new internal emphasis on leadership development. At the same time, impatient with the traditional unions and skeptical of their ability to adequately represent excluded workers as well as low-wage, undocumented immigrants in NLRA-covered jobs, other labor activists began to develop new community-based organizational forms in the 1990s.

Most important among these are the “worker centers,” now numbering in the hundreds, which have a much broader repertoire of advocacy and organizing than traditional unions (Fine, 2006). Targeting the most precarious, casualized occupations in which traditional forms of unionism are difficult to establish, such as day labor or domestic work, along with low-wage industries that unions have largely abandoned, like restaurants and garment-making, as well as nominally self-employed workers like taxi drivers and street vendors, these fledgling organizations have attained a high profile in recent years and have greatly increased public awareness of the plight of low-wage workers. Recently some worker centers have attempted formal unionization efforts, recognizing the need for long-term, financially sustainable forms of organization; at the same time traditional unions have begun to experiment with the strategic and tactical repertoire of the worker centers, in a process of mimetic isomorphism (see Milkman, 2010).

Thus the players on the labor side have proliferated in the past two decades, and have broadened their tactical and strategic repertoires. This had generated an assortment of highly creative campaigns, many of which have succeeded despite the formidable forces arrayed against them. To date,



however, virtually none of them have been brought to scale, and desperation is the order of the day inside labor's ranks, especially in collective bargaining and organizing (Meyerson, 2012).

Organized labor retains significant leverage in the legislative and political arenas, however. Until very recently, the level of union density among public-sector workers like teachers, protective service workers, hospital workers, home care and child care workers has remained intact, even as private-sector union density has fallen into the single digits. Indeed the gap between private- and public-sector density has never been wider.

But in 2011, a long-brewing assault against public-sector unions burst into view, most dramatically in the state of Wisconsin, where Republican governor Scott Walker signed a bill virtually eliminating most public-sector collective bargaining rights in the state. Ironically, half a century earlier, in 1959, Wisconsin had been the very first state to legislate collective bargaining rights for public-sector workers. The rollback of that law by a Republican-dominated government, organized by the right-wing American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), sparked a new outbreak of social movement unionism, as Wisconsin workers took to the streets to defend their unions, among other things occupying the statehouse for weeks (Buhle and Buhle, 2011). Their spirited efforts, however, followed by an unsuccessful drive to recall Walker from office, failed to restore the earlier law, and public-sector union membership in the state has fallen dramatically.

Similar attacks on public-sector workers in other states, also emanating from ALEC, are proliferating. Although in late 2011, Ohio voters reversed a law similar to the one that is now in effect in Wisconsin through a referendum, the one remaining bastion of unionization in the United States – and the last pillar supporting what remains of the “inside game” – is now coming under the same kind of systematic attack that began in the private sector in the late 1970s.

The US labor movement in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century increasingly resembles its counterpart during the pre-NLRA period, when workers lacked any formal right to collective representation and when the judicial system as well as the police and military were regularly mobilized on behalf of employers faced with labor disputes. The iron fist is less often deployed against labor today than in the past, replaced by the velvet glove in the shape of the “union-avoidance industry” – although that would likely change rapidly were a major labor union upsurge to develop. In the meantime, unions and other worker organizations increasingly have no alternative but to play the outside game, as their insider status is steadily evaporating. The renewed grassroots organizing and protest this has already begun to unleash deserves careful attention from social movement scholars.



## Conclusion

Unions and the labor movement are different from the other players considered in this volume, in that they are simultaneously part of the “establishment” and active agents of social protest. From the New Deal era onward, the US labor movement in particular has played both an “inside” game – using its leverage with elected officials and other elites and within the collective bargaining process to secure advances for workers – and an “outside” game – mobilizing workers and their allies in public protests and deploying tactics that disrupt normal routines. As organized labor’s power and legitimacy have declined in recent decades, however, the balance has shifted decisively toward the outside game. Thus 21<sup>st</sup>-century labor unions have increasingly turned to the strategic repertoire of their pre-New Deal counterparts, and nonunion forms of labor organization have proliferated, as they did a century ago. As a result, the distinctiveness of labor as a player relative to other protest groups is more muted than in the past, even as labor’s status and capacity as an institutional player has become increasingly tenuous. These shifts both help to explain the recent resurgence of sociological interest in labor movements and point to the relevance of the players and arenas perspective that is the framework of this volume.

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**Part 3**  
Experts, intellectuals, and media



## 8 Giving Voice

### The Ambivalent Roles of Specific Intellectuals in Immigrant and LGBT Movements

*Walter Nicholls and Justus Uitermark*

Intellectuals are central players in all social movement and movement organizations, broadly conceived as people specialized in discourse production as a result of their education and experience. They often take up leading roles within organizations, setting up decision-making procedures, negotiating with authorities, writing legal proposals, and communicating with the media. The fact that intellectuals are better than others in producing (legitimate, convincing, enticing, coherent) discourses creates certain dilemmas. On the one hand, it is good for the movement as a whole if intellectuals use their wit and knowledge to the fullest, effectively appealing to the public and pushing forward the movement's ideas. On the other hand, such wielding of power may marginalize others within movements. They may simply not be represented and there may even be cases where the discourses espoused by intellectuals delegitimize and marginalize weaker groups within the movement. Intellectuals who represent the movement thus contribute to the movement's strength but may – wittingly or unwittingly – repress images and ideas not fitting their representations. The risk that marginalization by intellectuals happens is probably higher when the people they represent have scarce cultural and symbolic resources (as in the case of movements for undocumented immigrants) than when they have substantial resources (as in the case for movements for LGBT people). Still, the power to represent the movement and what it stands for is an issue to some degree in all movements. In short, intellectuals can be a force *for* the movement but may also exercise power *over* others within the movement. The resulting Power of Representation dilemma – intellectuals have superior skills of representation but if they use them *for* the movement, they marginalize others *within* the movement – has been a topic of heated debate within many movements. Prominent movement intellectuals have suggested different ways of resolving the dilemma both in theory and in practice.

This chapter provides an overview of how some activist intellectuals in the past have addressed and sought to resolve the Power of Representation dilemma. It then zooms in on one particular way of resolving the dilemma

advocated by Michel Foucault. By introducing the concept of “specific intellectual,” Foucault outlined a role for intellectuals that would allow them to supersede the Power of Representation dilemma. Specific intellectuals could and would use their concrete expertise in different arenas (planning, law, psychiatry, etc.) to assist marginalized groups rather than lead or represent them. They would lend their technical expertise to struggles, “speaking with” the people in those struggles rather than “speaking for” them (Foucault, 1984; Artières, 2002; Kurzman and Owens, 2002). In this way, he argued that this new kind of intellectual (or what other scholars have called the “new class” [see King and Szelényi, 2004; Eyal and Buchholz, 2010]) would play a different role than the “traditional intellectuals” like Émile Zola, Jean Paul Sartre, and others: rather than claim superior knowledge of the truth, specific intellectuals would use their intellectual resources to facilitate marginalized peoples to represent their own interests and meanings in the public sphere.

The remainder of the chapter empirically examines the roles of specific intellectuals in two prominent social movements seeking equal rights for marginalized and stigmatized people: the immigrant and LGBT rights movements in the United States. These movements seek the extension of basic rights within a liberal citizenship regime. The common conditions of exclusion (legal-judicial) and hostility facing immigrants and LGBT people present activists of these different movements with common constraints, goals, and internal dynamics. These movements are players within political arenas where they position themselves in relation to other players, including opponents and bystanders. Movements are internally also arenas, with different factions and persons struggling to define what the movement is about and how it should be achieved. The Power of Representation dilemma arises because choosing strategies in political arenas will have repercussions for the internal functioning of movements; it is a form of the Janus dilemma (Jasper, 2006).

The “arenas” facing the “players” present them with “rules” that help set the stakes of political action, inform strategic possibilities, and distribute value to the specific kinds of resources (capital) that “players” bring to the game (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Fligstein and McAdam, 2012; Jasper, this volume). We understand that intellectuals can constitute their own arenas, with their own distinctive rules of the game (Jasper, this volume). However, for the purposes of this chapter, we focus on them as players with certain resources that enable them to play a specific and important role within social movements. By focusing on these two social movements – both struggling against stigmatization discursively but having very dif-

ferent resources to do so – we can deepen our analyses of the factors that precipitate intellectual involvement and better assess persistent dilemmas within them. The chapter shows that specific intellectuals took up key positions within the largest organizations within these movements, and in both cases produced discourses that resonated strongly with the general public. However, their strategy also marginalized certain voices, which sparked conflicts over the nature of rights being demanded and the ways in which subject populations were represented.

### **Specific Intellectuals as Players in Social Movements**

Intellectuals have long been key players in social movements (see Gramsci, 1971; Mann, 1993) and their roles have been debated by scholars and activists alike (Kurzman and Owens, 2002; King and Szelényi, 2004; Eyal and Buchholz, 2010). This section traces the efforts of theorists involved in past social movements (from Lenin to Foucault) to define the roles of intellectuals, the dilemmas arising from these roles, and different ways for resolving these dilemmas. Early Marxists argued that it was the task of intellectuals to reveal the deeper meaning of particular struggles to the marginalized working classes engaged in these struggles (King and Szelényi, 2004). While many of these Marxists employed the concepts of “false consciousness” and “ideology” to analyze problems with working-class thought, Lenin employed the concept of “trade union consciousness” to diagnose the problem (Mayer, 1994: 673). He argued that the squalid living conditions of the working class tempted most workers in the struggle to forego the distant goal of class emancipation for the immediate goal of winning “bread and butter” concessions from employers. The intellectual possessed the knowledge and cognitive resources to see beyond day-to-day struggles and to fashion strategies and visions that would enable the working class to achieve far-reaching goals. Intellectuals played a strategic role in social movements because they served as the true consciousness of the working class. Without intellectuals, the working class would be tempted into one short-term concession after another, trapping itself in the cul-de-sac of reformism.

Many of his contemporaries agreed with Lenin’s diagnosis of the problem (trade union consciousness), but some believed that his solution introduced an important dilemma: the Power of Representation dilemma. Top-down intellectual leadership would bolster the revolutionary resolve of working-class social movements but this created a new oligarchy and blocked workers from speaking for themselves. Lenin and his allies accepted



this as a necessary trade-off that would be resolved after the emancipation of the working class. However, democratic socialists like Leon Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg argued that the intellectual leadership needed to design institutional mechanisms (workers' councils, soviets, etc.) that could diffuse intellectual resources and skills to workers and help raise their consciousness. By diffusing intellectual resources downward in this way, workers could see the true meaning of class struggle and assume leadership of the movement, avoiding the Power of Representation dilemma (Trotsky, 1970). Most Marxists involved in these debates agreed that the resources of intellectuals (theoretical knowledge and discursive skills) were essential for keeping working-class social movements on their historical mission and saving them from reformism. The disagreement stemmed over whether workers could acquire the intellectual capacities needed to think, speak, and lead themselves. Lenin was skeptical, while democratic socialists believed that the dilemma could be resolved by diffusing theoretical knowledge to the working classes through consciousness-raising activities.

Antonio Gramsci (1971) addressed the Power of Representation dilemma in a new way by seeking to dissolve the very distinction between intellectuals and workers. He questioned the assumption that intellectuals possessed a monopoly on legitimate knowledge and argued that "all men are intellectuals but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals" (Gramsci, 1971: 121). He argued that the values, norms, and ethics of the dominant class were reproduced in the everyday lives of people through institutions like the church, schools, associations, trade unions, and the family. Through the diffusion of ideas across different sites in civil society, the dominant ideas of the bourgeoisie became the common sense of the people. This common sense denied workers the vocabulary and concepts needed to make its implicit knowledge of wrongs and injustices explicit. In this context, "organic intellectuals" (part-time theorists and organizers, teachers, religious leaders, etc.) aligned with the working class played a fundamental role by introducing discourses and ideas that challenged the "common sense" and provided the working class with frames needed to articulate what the class implicitly knew but did not know how to say. The organic intellectual was therefore to function as the "tongue" of the working class rather than its conscience. Because of the proximity (knowledge, social, geographic) of the organic intellectual to real working communities, they would not "speak for" the people but would "speak with" them, resolving the Power of Representation dilemma.

The 1960s and 1970s marked a widespread embrace of Gramsci's bottom-up intellectualism. Paulo Freire (1971) developed a "pedagogy of

the oppressed” that largely drew on Gramsci’s work (O’Cadiz et al., 1998). His theories were influential in Latin American social movements and counterbalanced the Leninism of traditional communist parties and of the Cuban Revolution. Freire’s theories and methods would diffuse to the United States through the concept of “popular education” in the 1980s and 1990s as Central American immigrants became active members in labor and immigrant rights movements (Milkman, 2006).

In France, Michel Foucault and his colleagues extended Gramsci’s ideas of the organic intellectual by introducing the concept of the “specific intellectual.” It must be noted that his formulations coincided with similar efforts by other sociologists during this time to broaden the concept of the intellectual beyond that of the traditional intellectual (Eyal and Buchholz, 2010). Foucault highlighted the growing importance of a new kind of intellectual in the post-1968 mobilizations. The expansion of the postwar welfare state increased the need for teachers, psychiatrists, planners, and so on. This expansion channeled intellectuals to work in a wide variety of institutional sites where power was deployed to discipline and control different population groups (such as hospitals, housing, schools, prisons, and factories). These changes reflected an important departure from traditional intellectual work. Their work in concrete institutional sites blurred the distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge. It also moved intellectual work away from the search for a single transcendent truth to the application of useful and practical knowledge in a wide variety of institutional settings. Structural changes therefore precipitated a dramatic change in intellectual work and the use of knowledge, moving from the search for universal truth to gaining concrete understandings of governing practices and applications in plural, concrete, and specific institutional settings. Moreover, specific intellectuals became frontline executors of state power but this raised ambivalences with regards to the populations they were supposed to govern. As they worked in institutional sites, the interests of some specific intellectuals coincided with the patients, students, migrants, residents, and prisoners they were supposed to govern. Intellectuals in other words found themselves drawn into criticisms of specific modalities of power alongside actually repressed people.

According to Foucault, these changes in intellectual work (from theoretical to practical knowledge; from the search for truth to engaging in governing practices; from thinking in the “ivory towers” to concrete and face-to-face engagements with repressed people) changed intellectuals’ role in social movements. Specific intellectuals were less likely to focus on giving voice to the voiceless or reveal the truthfulness of particular struggles. Instead, they

played a more supportive role in these struggles, deploying their technical knowledge of institutions (prisons, hospitals, schools, immigration law, etc.) to support the multiple forms of resistance. Foucault thus resolved the Power of Representation dilemma by inverting the role of intellectuals and the groups they represent. While Marxists had claimed that intellectuals possessed supreme knowledge of the (class) struggle, Foucault argued the opposite, that workers and other oppressed groups best knew what their struggles were about. The role of the intellectual, too, is inverted as specific intellectuals take on the role previously assigned to workers – they put their labor at the service of struggles envisioned by others.

Foucault's analysis of these changes is reflected in the way he assessed his own activism in support of prisoners. In 1971, he helped organize an anti-prison organization called the Prison Information Group (GIP),<sup>1</sup> which laid out its new position:

The GIP does not propose to speak in the name of the prisoners in various prisons: it proposes, on the contrary, to provide them with the possibility of speaking for themselves and telling what goes on in prisons. The GIP does not have reformist goals; we do not dream of some ideal prison: we hope that prisoners may be able to say what it is that is intolerable for them in the system of penal repression. (Eribon, 1991: 228)

The prisoners know the wrongs being done to them. They do not need intellectuals to reveal the “hidden” powers of penal repression or the deeper meanings of their political action. What they lack are the technical skills and information needed to express these problems to the public. They need the *practical knowledge* of specific intellectuals to express themselves in the public sphere. This latter point is reiterated in a discussion between Foucault and a striking worker, when he tells the worker,

We are in agreement that workers have no need of intellectuals to know what it is they do. They know this perfectly well themselves. *His [the intellectual's] role consequently is not to form the workers' consciousness, since that already exists, but to allow this consciousness, this worker's knowledge, to enter the information system and be circulated.* (Foucault, in Eribon, 1991: 253, emphasis in the original)

Intellectuals' technical and practical knowledge permits the experiences of marginalized groups to get into the “information system.” Intellectuals

are thus key players enabling marginalized groups to voice grievances within political arenas.

Foucault's intervention was not simply a normative prescription (what intellectuals *should* do). It stemmed from an analysis of the dramatic changes of intellectual work in the postwar period and reflects contemporary efforts to theorize this "new class" in the postwar context (Gouldner, 1982; Kurzman and Owens, 2002; King and Szelényi, 2004). We can summarize his argument in the following way: First, power in the postwar context was diffused through a wide variety of relatively autonomous institutions (psychiatry, medicine, penal institutions, schools, housing, immigration) and these institutions created demand for professionals with intellectual skills. Second, as more intellectuals were channeled into disciplinary institutions, the line between theoretical and practical knowledge was blurred. Most intellectuals were no longer searching for universal truths by acquiring substantive/theoretical knowledge but instead focused on the technicalities of governing target populations in diverse institutional spaces. These intellectual workers interacted with targeted populations and many developed strong motives to ally themselves with the struggles of prisoners, patients, residents, and students. Third, because mobilizations and campaigns were carried out in a diverse range of very specific institutional domains, they tended to be partial and nonuniversal. Overlaps were possible (universities were envisioned as a connecting point for assembling diverse struggles) but such overlaps were not enough to create a single, "historical" social movement. This marked the age of partial resistances to localized power rather than large social movements for achieving singular truths and historical change. Lastly, these *structural* changes brought new intellectuals into proximity (in knowledge, social relations, and physical relations) with marginalized groups. As a consequence, intellectuals were less inclined to "speak for" marginalized groups and would "speak with" them. Thus, the core Power of Representation dilemma associated with intellectuals ("speaking for" or "speaking with") was supposed to be dissolved as intellectuals mobilized their technical and practical knowledge – rather than pointing the way, they would help others to get to where they wanted to go.

Specific intellectuals have indeed assumed a great presence in different social movements. Scientists and experts in European environmental movements legitimated the idea that uncontrolled industrialization posed a threat to the planet (Hajer, 2005). When struggles emerged in the 1970s to deinstitutionalize psychiatric care, trained welfare and medical professionals assumed central roles (Duyvendak, 2011). Trained professionals (such as lawyers, nonprofit professionals, or communication experts) have

assumed important roles in the immigrant rights movements in Europe and the United States (Siméant, 1997; Voss and Bloemraad, 2011; Nicholls, 2013a; Nicholls, 2013b). Urban planners trained in the most prestigious universities of the United States have dedicated themselves to a range of urban mobilizations to expand the “right to the city” (Soja, 2010). Social movements that have undergone professionalization assign specific intellectuals prominent and strategic roles to play.

The following sections assess the actual role of specific intellectuals in two social movements of highly stigmatized groups seeking recognition for rights in hostile environments. We find that the rising importance of specific intellectuals has not resolved the Power of Representation dilemma as Foucault predicted. Instead, the increased professionalization of social movements and the increased importance of mass media both make specific intellectuals more powerful players within social movements and exacerbate the Power of Representation dilemma.

### **Marginalized Groups as Threats: Denying the Rights of Others**

Marginalized groups have historically been denied recognition to equal rights because they are represented as a threat or polluter to the established political community (Elias, 1994; Isin, 2000; Benhabib, 2004; Alexander, 2006). “Others” are said to lack necessary values that would make them fully productive citizens: they don’t have the mental capacities to participate in democratic deliberations or the civility needed to fulfill core citizenship duties (Rancière, 1993; Raissiguier, 2010). For example, workers in 19<sup>th</sup>-century France were denied political rights because they were said to lack the mental and moral capacities to engage in a public debate over the “general interest” (Rancière, 1989, 1993). Marginalized groups may also possess beliefs, values, needs, manners, and languages that *pollute* or contaminate the community of citizens (Isin, 2000; Alexander, 2006). The *lack* of necessary attributes and the *possession* of polluting conduct/cultures make these marginalized groups into fundamental threats to the established political community. If established members want to preserve their community, it is argued that they have no choice but to deny marginalized others recognition as human beings deserving full rights. In Hannah Arendt’s terms, their otherness makes them ineligible for the “right to have rights” in the established political community (Arendt, 1973; Benhabib, 2004). While some individuals may consider these inequalities in how basic rights are distributed to be a “moral shock,” most people assume that inequalities are a normal and

banal part of the order of things and that the denial of rights to the other is a necessary part of life (Arendt, 1994).

Since the 1980s and 1990s, immigrants and rights activists have faced an extremely hostile discursive and political context in the US (Nevins, 2002; De Genova, 2005; Menjivar, 2006; Chavez, 2008; Massey and Pren, 2012). Anti-immigrant forces produce compelling messages for why federal and state governments should strip immigrants of many basic rights (social, political, and civil) and forcefully remove them from the country. They stress that immigrants present a core threat to national stability, economically and culturally. They (immigrants) make Americans foreigners in their own lands, competing for jobs, and cheating the welfare state. Following from this, anti-immigrant forces argue that even though some immigrants may have sympathetic stories, it would be impossible to allow them access to basic rights because this would open the “floodgates” for more immigrants. These arguments were articulated by professional anti-immigration associations (Federation for American Immigration Reform, Americans for Immigration Control, Numbers USA, among others) and taken up prominent state and national politicians (Diamond, 1996; Money, 1999). Moreover, a new generation of public intellectuals articulated a coherent discourse that painted immigrants, and particularly Latino immigrants, as a *cultural* threat (rather than just economic) to the national community (Chavez, 2008). Framed in this way, it became “common sense” that immigration was a serious if not existential problem that required some kind of action from local, state, and national government officials. This resulted in a series of government measures to criminalize unauthorized migration and suspend the rights of immigrants in the country (Nevins, 2002; Massey and Pren, 2012), including the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) and Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PROWARA), both signed into law in 1996 by President Bill Clinton.

The 1980s and 1990s presented the LGBT community with a similarly hostile environment. First, the prominence of the Christian right within the mainstream Republican Party contributed to mainstreaming culturally conservative discourses. The discourse on “family values” saw the decline of the heterosexual and patriarchal family contributed to deviance, breakdown, and decline. The LGBT population was seen as a threat because it embraced moralities, practices, and categories that departed from established norms. It needed to be kept apart from the “normal” populations, criminalized through the continued enforcement of anti-sodomy laws, and denied some basic rights. Second, the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s compounded the stigma

associated with the LGBT population. The disease's strong association with gay men reinforced general perceptions that this population was a polluting element. Christian conservatives in organizations like Moral Majority and the Family Research Institute used AIDS to reinforce stigmas, asserting that the disease was brought upon gay men as punishment for their wicked ways. By the 1990s, conservative forces had gained enough political and ideological influence that they were able to push through the passage of the highly restrictive Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 1996.

Undocumented immigrants and LGBT people were both represented as a powerful threat to the country. The threatening character of these populations provided justification to enact laws (both signed by President Bill Clinton in the same fateful year) that suspended access to basic rights.

### **The Stakes: Gaining Recognition of the Right to Have Rights**

When basic rights are denied to marginalized people, activists must craft counter representations that demonstrate that these people indeed have the "right to have rights" in the country (Arendt, 1973; Benhabib, 2004). Only when activists craft such representations can "banalities of injustice" (Arendt, 1994) (such as borders, closets, raids, and segregated spaces) be considered "wrong" by larger portions of the population and recognized as a violation of fundamental principles of equality. For those groups that bear the greatest stigmas and face the greatest hostility, the options for creating effective representations tended to be limited. An effective representation consists of demonstrating that they are not irreducibly different and do not bear polluting attributes that threaten the established community. They must show that they share established values and cultures and stand to make contributions to the community. Representations of conformity cleanse the marginalized group of stigmas that made them polluters and threats. By emphasizing their intelligence, love of family, love of country, creativity, and civic engagement, they demonstrate that they are not threats but instead reinvigorate the moral, political, and economic life of the country (Honig, 2006). Demonstrating identification with established values helps to transform this "impossible" other (Raissiguier, 2010) into a group that may indeed deserve recognition of equal rights. Facing the positive representations of a marginalized group, other players within political arenas have greater difficulty justifying restrictive policies on moral and ethical grounds. Effective stories, arguments, messages, and performances do not guarantee the extension of full rights, but make such an extension a



legitimate issue for public debate. The centrality of mass media in structuring the “public sphere” has only served to enhance the importance of crafting effective representations as a preliminary step in gaining recognition as rights-bearing human beings (Gamson, 1995; Koopmans, 2004).

The modern immigrant rights movement dates to the 1980s (Coutin, 1998; 2003). While this movement faced increasing hostility through the 1990s, the situation worsened significantly in the 2000s with the War on Terror (De Genova, 2007; Coleman, 2007; Massey and Pren, 2012). Within this context, immigrant rights activists pushed for several measures to legalize the status of undocumented migrants. Two of the most prominent measures were the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act (2006, 2007) and the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. The latter measure aimed to provide a pathway to legalization for college students, youths involved in community service activities, and military service members. Advocates of the DREAM Act have sought to increase public support for the measure by representing undocumented youths and their cause in a favorable light. In particular, the immigrant rights movement has sought to destigmatize undocumented youths by stressing their conformity with national values (Nicholls, 2013a). The youths were also portrayed as the “best and the brightest,” rebutting the stereotype of immigrant youth as deviant and delinquent. Rights associations also sought to absolve youths from the stigma of illegality by stressing that their status was “no fault of their own.” These youths could not be held legally accountable for breaking the law because they did not *choose* to cross the border. The argument stressed that this group of immigrants possessed the right set of cultural and moral attributes that made them deserving of rights within the existing order of things.

The LGBT movement has a longer history than the contemporary immigrant rights movement and has experimented with various strategic lines (Armstrong, 2002). Whereas one faction embraces a strategy that stresses the common values of homosexual and heterosexual populations, another faction argues that society needs to accept different forms of partnerships that depart from heterosexual norms. While both representational strategies became prominent in the early 1970s, growing hostility in the 1980s and 1990s favored a strategy that stressed identification and assimilation over disidentification and difference. In the late 1990s the fight against the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) placed marriage rights on the movement’s political agenda. Gaining recognition of this basic right depended on representations of same-sex couples as people sharing the same values, aspirations, and family structures as “normal” heterosexual couples:



Marriage provides families stability and security.

One thing that both sides of the marriage issue can agree upon is that marriage strengthens families. ... [LGBT] people deserve equal access to the American dream. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people grow up dreaming of falling in love, getting married and growing old together. Just as much as the next person, same-sex couples should be able to fulfill that dream. We know from anecdotal evidence that after same-sex couples have a commitment ceremony, their friends and family treat them differently – as a married couple. Shouldn't they, too, have the legal security that goes along with that? (Human Rights Campaign, in Davidson, 2006: 46)

A powerful discourse emerged that stresses the universal virtues of the “traditional” family. By denying lesbian and gay couples the right to marry, the state is denying them a fundamental right. In this instance, identification with established values has become a way to assert that a fundamental wrong has been committed against this population.

During the 1990s, both undocumented immigrants and LGBT people were embedded in political arenas that framed them as potent threats to the national community. Within such a context, the fight for rights depended first on their need to demonstrate that they were indeed rights-deserving human beings. In both cases, similar strategic lines were pursued: they asserted their “right to have rights” by stressing their sameness with the established population and, following from that, asserted that continued denial of inalienable rights from these clearly deserving human beings was unjust and morally wrong. Producing and expressing effective discourses in the arena of public opinion was a necessary part of the struggle to achieve recognition as rights-deserving human beings.

### **The Role of Specific Intellectuals**

To craft resonant representations for stigmatized groups requires particularly high concentrations of cultural and symbolic capital that intellectuals possess (Bourdieu, 1994; Wacquant, 2005). Activists must have an intimate knowledge of the political culture of the established community and understand how to pitch messages that resonate with the public at intellectual, moral, and emotional levels. They must also possess enough symbolic capital to ensure that the arguments, messages, and stories they articulate

are considered legitimate by the national public. Lastly, they must possess connections with media gatekeepers who can assist in transmitting their frames, messages, and talking points to the public (Koopmans, 2004). These forms of capital however are not equally distributed across a social movement. University-trained professionals embedded in social movements have greater access and control over these forms of cultural and symbolic capital. By contrast, less educated activists and newcomers to social movements are less prepared to craft and disseminate compelling representations of themselves or their rights claims, requiring them to depend on well-trained professionals to represent them in the public sphere. These specific intellectuals therefore become key players as representational brokers mediating relations between marginalized groups and the outside world.

Professionals in local and national immigrant rights associations have played instrumental roles since the 1980s (Coutin, 2003; Varsanyi, 2008). In the mid-2000s, prominent immigrant and human rights associations formed coalitions to support the DREAM Act. The rights associations took a leading role in crafting a discourse that represented undocumented youths in a way that would gain broad public support for their cause. The more the campaign sought to convince people in conservative areas of the country, the greater the need to produce a clear, simple, and sympathetic representation of these youths and their cause. Highly professionalized specific intellectuals took leading roles in devising messaging campaigns, working with media, and ensuring messaging coherency across the national social movement network. Legal and communication experts within these organizations crafted representations and played brokering roles within this campaign. The undocumented youths making up the rank and file of the movement played a marginal role in crafting representations of themselves and their cause, at least until 2010 when an internal struggle erupted over these power imbalances in the movement issues (more on this in the next section).

Similarly, the hostile conditions of the 1980s and 1990s encouraged one of the leading LGBT organizations in the United States, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), to pursue a strategy that stressed identification with the values and moralities of the established community. While the HRC competed with other organizations within the LGBT movement, it eclipsed these organizations in the late 1990s and 2000s. Its national membership is estimated at 600,000, its 2010 income was \$37.92 million (up from \$21 million in 2001), and it has local steering committees in 21 states. Like the immigrant rights organizations discussed above, the organization's leading staff members are university-trained legal and communication professionals, with advanced expertise in messaging, marketing, public relations,

and political lobbying. Communication experts assumed responsibility for producing representations of the LGBT community and arguments for equal rights. Once these arguments are produced, they also diffuse them through different media channels (online and offline), across regional networks, into the political arena, and into national and state-level courthouses across the country. These communication experts assume a strategic role in creating a discursive space through which both activists and different publics think about and frame the issue at hand. They provide thousands of activists and sympathizers with a discursive template to think and speak about why the denial of basic rights to this group is wrong and why changes are needed.

Thus, specific intellectuals have played vital roles in producing discourses that represent these marginalized groups and their claims for equal rights. They became “brokers” because they created representations that connected groups discursively and emotionally to publics that had cast them to the margins. However, contrary to Foucault’s expectations, the specific forms of knowledge possessed by these intellectuals placed them in a leading role in crafting and disseminating representations of marginalized groups. By assuming a central role in demonstrating how the status quo is wrong and expressing the case of these groups in the public sphere, the specific intellectuals in these cases became both the “voice” and “conscience” of these groups.

We turn now to two variants of the Power of Representation dilemma. Each is associated with distinct cleavages in these kinds of social movements.

### **Cleavages between the Leadership and the Rank and File**

The greater control that specific intellectuals have over cultural and symbolic capital introduces representational hierarchies whereby they assume a leading role in crafting and disseminating messages to the broader public. Assuming this role raises the risk of specific intellectuals “speaking for” marginalized groups. While most movements are internally stratified in this way, the gap between the intellectual leadership and the rank and file depends on the cultural and social composition of the movement. The tendency for a large representational gap increases when a social movement is made up of large numbers of people with low levels of cultural and symbolic capital (e.g., immigrant movements). In these instances, there is less likelihood that the specific intellectuals will be drawn directly from the rank and file and a greater likelihood that they will be drawn from

the professionalized organizations (i.e., human rights groups, nonprofit organizations, etc.) that support these struggles. This contributes to the likelihood that the leadership will “speak for” marginalized groups rather than “with” them, planting the seeds of conflict between the leadership and rank and file of the movement.

Conflicts erupted in 2010 between youths and the intellectual leadership of the immigrant rights movement over the strategic direction of the movement, reflecting deeper cleavages over who should represent who in the immigrant rights movement. Many of the undocumented youths were frustrated that their calls for a change in strategy were not taken seriously by the leadership of the movement. These sentiments were expressed in an op-ed article in *Dissent* (Perez et al., 2010). The piece, written by some of the more prominent dissident youths, questioned the legitimacy of the traditional leadership to represent undocumented immigrants like themselves. They argued that the leaders did not share their social background and residency status and because of this, they did not face the same pressures as undocumented youths. They also argued that while the professionalized leadership gained increased funding, political prestige, and media exposure, these gains were not distributed to undocumented activists who took most of the risks. “Because if we accept and embrace the current undocumented student movement, it means the social justice elite loses its power – its power to influence politicians, media and the public debate. The power is taken back by its rightful holders” (Perez et al., 2010). These critiques ultimately culminated in efforts of the undocumented youths to reject the leadership of the movement, with many shifting their support to more “organic” immigrant leaders around the country.

Movements with more mixed levels of cultural and symbolic capital have more muted hierarchies, with intellectuals more likely drawn from the rank and file. Their common positioning with the rank and file allows them to “speak with” the movement rather than for it. For example, the mixed social, cultural, and activist background of LGBT activists increased the likelihood that the leading intellectual forces of the movement would also be drawn from the gay and lesbian community itself. There was no need to go “outside” the group to find people with the resources needed to pursue core intellectual functions. Nevertheless, the middle- and upper-middle-class backgrounds of leading intellectual voices (now and historically) has resulted in representations of the LGBT cause with a very distinctive class background (Valocchi, 1999; Armstrong, 2002). The dominance of middle-class framings provides greater opportunities for activists with middle-class dispositions to assume leadership roles. These internal class divides have

spurred complaints by working-class activists of cultural marginalization, fewer opportunities for upward political mobility, and less influence. They feel that the leadership is “speaking for” them rather than “with” them. Thus, the LGBT movement has been able to recruit intellectuals from its own ranks, allowing it to temper a central dilemma of intellectual involvement in social movements. Nevertheless, class-based selection mechanisms result in the prominence of an intellectual leadership from middle- and upper-middle-class backgrounds, resulting in representations and representatives that stress middle-class values and silencing those from working-class backgrounds.

In sum, specific intellectuals assume a leading representational role within the social movements of marginalized groups because their access to scarce resources enables them to craft effective representations. Their possession of these scarce and necessary resources makes them into powerful players within movements, introducing divides between them and rank and file activists. Although the Power of Representation dilemma cannot be fully resolved, the tendency of intellectuals to “speak for” marginalized groups does seem to vary according to movements’ social and cultural makeup: divides are more likely in movements predominantly composed of resource-poor groups.

### **Cleavages between “Deserving” and “Undeserving” Groups**

Gaining rights for a marginalized group depends on crafting representations that stress conformity and identification with the values of the established group. Specific intellectuals working for the largest organizations in the LGBT and immigrant rights movements have worked hard to cleanse the movements they represent from stigmas by emphasizing the qualities that make these groups normal, law-abiding, and productive citizens. While this representational strategy opens the door for some, it also differentiates “good” and “deserving” subjects from those who fail to conform to established values, norms, and moralities. Those who fail to fit the discursive boxes of the “good” and “deserving” subject often find themselves pushed further to the legal and symbolic margins. Strategies by intellectuals to improve the position of the movement within political arenas therefore have trade-offs for groups unable or unwilling to meet mainstream norms of respectability.

Within the undocumented youth mobilization, leading advocates have become fully aware of this dilemma. On the one hand, they recognize

that representations of the “good immigrant” sharpen differences between this group and other immigrants who may not assimilate so easily with established norms. If “good” immigrants deserve legal rights because they are the “best and brightest” and are not at fault for their legal status, those who are not particularly the “best,” “brightest,” or “innocent” find it difficult to justify their own rights claims. Some within the general immigrant rights movement criticize the messaging strategy of the youth campaign and the leadership responsible for creating it. On the other hand, while undocumented youths and their advocates fully recognize problems associated with these representations, they also recognize that they have been effective in gaining support from conservative publics and politicians. They believe that their ability to become a leading force in the general immigrant rights movements has been a function of this particular messaging strategy and that changing it dramatically would weaken their political support. Thus the dilemma: that the more they push this representation the more they alienate other immigrant groups making up the broader social movement but the less they push this representation the less likely it is to gain the support of hostile publics and wavering politicians.

Similar debates developed within the LGBT movement with the increasing centrality of the marriage campaign in the 1990s and 2000s. The conservative turn in the 1980s and 1990s favored representational strategies stressing identification, assimilation, and marriage. This shift aggravated tensions with factions that had rejected heterosexual assimilation and embraced difference. As one observer noted, “Since 1993, marriage has come to dominate the political imagination of the national gay movement in the United States. To read the pages of *The Advocate* or *Out* is to receive the impression that gay people hardly care about anything else. ... I have no doubt that a large constituency has formed around this belief. *But the commitment is not universal, to put it mildly*” (Warner, 1999: 120, emphasis added). The prominence of Queer theory provided specific intellectuals working in dissident groups a powerful discursive repertoire to deepen their critiques of the assimilation line. Josephson summarizes these criticisms in the following way:

For some queer critics of the same-sex marriage quest, the current hetero-centric vision of marriage inappropriately associates the public granting of a privacy privilege with adult citizenship for those professing lifelong, monogamous sexual relationships. Their objection is not so much to the fact that same-sex couples wish to have such relationships recognized, but rather to privileging this form of sexual relationship above all others.

If married couples – opposite or same-sex – are provided greater social, economic, and political privileges than nonmarried individuals, the result will be secondary exclusions and reinforcement of an undesirable link between a particular form of intimate association and adult citizenship. (2005: 271)<sup>2</sup>

The central criticism was that in focusing on gay marriage, LGBT rights advocates were inadvertently privileging (morally and legally) one way of living (marriage) and downgrading multiple others who did not agree with a “heterocentric” vision of life. Marriage advocates have come to recognize the merits of the critique, but they also recognize that the marriage campaign (and its associated representational strategy) has provided the LGBT community an important vehicle to achieve basic rights in the country. This exposes a critical dilemma within the movement (again, a dilemma shared with undocumented immigrants): representational strategies that stress identification with the norms of the established group work to extend basic rights to marginalized groups but the strategy produces new divides because it privileges certain norms and groups within the broader marginalized population over others. Those failing to abide by established norms and expectations are excluded; deprived of privileges and rights accorded to those who can more easily adopt to the moral and cultural attributes of the “good” and “deserving” lesbian or gay person.

## Conclusion

All contemporary movements consist in part of intellectuals, i.e., people with comparatively strong skills of representation. These skills are an important resource of movements but they also raise an important dilemma: if intellectuals use their skills *for* the movement, they marginalize others *within* the movement who lack such skills. Different movement intellectuals have sought to resolve this Power of Representation dilemma in different ways. While Marxists debated how exactly intellectuals should use their privileged position to guide the masses, more recent theorizing has maintained that intellectuals can and should speak *with* movements rather than *for* them. This idea is most clearly stated by Michel Foucault, who argued that specific intellectuals would and should use their skills not to guide or represent marginalized groups but amplify their voices.

We examined how specific intellectuals actually operate in two movements in the US: the immigrant rights movement and LGBT movement.



While recognizing important differences between the immigrant rights and LGBT movements, our analysis shows that the largest organizations within them have as a central objective to convince the general public that their constituents merit recognition as equals. Before actual laws are enacted to extend basic rights to excluded others, these groups must first gain recognition of these people as rights-deserving human beings. They must be deemed to have the “right to have rights” within the existing citizenship regime before legal-juridical rights are granted to them (Arendt, 1973). The imperative of gaining recognition from a hostile public raises the importance of representations (i.e., discourse, symbols, performances, diffusion) in the campaigns for marginalized groups. In these contexts, an important function assumed by the specific intellectuals is to craft such representations and articulate them in public. They produce new languages and feelings that connect the worlds of outsiders to the worlds of the established group, working to reveal the humanity (and therefore their inalienable rights) of the “other” through the careful construction of arguments, talking points, storylines, public performances, etc. In performing these functions, the specific intellectuals become representational brokers between the previously disconnected worlds of marginalized groups and established populations.

Although there are important differences between the LGBT and the immigrant rights movement, we also find similar dilemmas. Tensions continue to arise over elites “speaking for” marginalized groups. We also find that the representations produced by leading intellectuals contribute to differentiating “good” and “deserving” groups from less deserving others, introducing a powerful and important cleavage within both movements. In both cases intellectuals and activists may temporarily patch up cleavages and fissures but the dilemmas cannot be fully overcome. In both cases we studied here, the largest movement organizations aimed for legal reform and strategically decided to selectively portray the groups they represent as sharing established values and moral norms. Representations of conformity cleansed the marginalized groups of stigmas that made them polluters and threats but at the same time alienated more radical and marginalized groups. These dilemmas are by no means accidental. They result from the efforts of specific intellectuals to employ their resources and respond most effectively to the “rules of the game” of their political arenas.

The promotion of the intellectual as a mere channel for already existing voices and the rejection of the intellectual as leader of interpretation and representation amounts to what Bourdieu called a “strategy of condescension” – “the refusal to wield domination can be part of a strategy of



condescension or a way of taking violence to a higher degree of denegation and dissimulation, a means of reinforcing the effect of misrecognition and thereby of symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 145). By claiming to merely assist marginalized groups or amplify their voices, specific intellectuals simultaneously hide and exercise their power to shape and steer mobilizations. Contrary to what the idea of the specific intellectual assumes, intellectual action cannot merely assist groups but necessarily selects some rather than other voices and helps to construct identities, groups and claims. For intellectuals operating within movements it is essential to recognize this in order to assess their own role and responsibility as central players within movements. For sociologists studying movements it is essential to recognize that the resources of representation within movements are unequally distributed. The unequal distribution of these powerful resources results in many different conflicts that fragment social movement and shape their internal relational dynamics.

## Notes

1. Group d’Information sur le Prison.
2. Baird and Rosenbaum expressed early on the criticism in the following way, “Traditional marriage is integral to the corrupt authoritarian structures of society; it is a suspect institution embodying within itself the patriarchy. ... [T]he most important issue for gay and lesbian couples is whether or not they should ‘sell out’ to the enemy – the patriarchal culture – that seeks to oppress and eliminate them” (Baird and Rosenbaum, 1997: 11).

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## 9 Playing with Fire

### Flame-Retardant Activists and Policy Arenas

*Alissa Cordner, Phil Brown, and Margaret Mulcahy*

“The lack of an entirely clean toxicological profile for BFRs [brominated flame retardants] ... raises a fundamental public health policy question: whether we should act on the evidence of increasing body burdens given uncertainty about the magnitude of the health hazard.”

– David Littell, Deputy Commissioner of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection

Emerging environmental health concerns are often marked by disagreement over the scientific basis for establishing the causal impact of toxic substances on human health. In these controversies, anti-toxics activists, scientists, government regulators, and industry representatives interact in a variety of scientific and regulatory arenas and universally call on science to justify their positions. The ubiquity of science in regulatory and legislative arenas by players with and without scientific credentials challenges dominant notions that science must be objective and certain in order to be valuable and actionable. By claiming that uncertain science can still be used to influence policy, environmental activists and other proregulation players seek to further their policy agendas, and simultaneously push the bounds of what counts as legitimate science.

This chapter describes a case study that highlights alignments between activism and science that frequently occur in regulatory arenas and which allow multiple actors to draw on similar frames and strategies to advance their causes. We focus on state-level regulation of flame retardants (FRs), chemicals that are used to slow or prevent fire but that may be linked to health and environmental hazards. These chemicals are an ideal case study because they have been subject to both regulation and voluntary market action; have attracted the attention of a wide variety of players; and are widely studied and thus the subject of sometimes contradictory scientific research. We integrate multiple bodies of theory to reconcile a focus on players as they act, react, and interact across scientific, regulatory, and advocacy arenas, with the recognition that constraints can be imposed by other players as well as by structural inequalities or the rules of arenas. We

also highlight the commonalities and differences in players' agendas and messages by analyzing over a hundred in-depth qualitative interviews and formal testimony submitted in response to a state-level FR ban. Additionally, we apply the dominant epidemiological paradigm framework, from medical sociology and environmental sociology, to a nondisease (though still health-related) setting. This framework aligns with recent theoretical advances in the study of health social movements in two important ways: by describing a case study of a social movement with various institutional, state, and nonstate targets, and by offering a new conception of *how* social movements operate within a multi-institutional setting (Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008; Banaszak-Holl, Levitsky, and Zald, 2010).

## The Politics of Science

Our analysis takes seriously both the actions and goals of the *players* engaged in the environmental health controversy around FRs, and the *arenas* in which they interact. *Players* are individuals and organizations who actively work to advance state-based regulation and affect corporate practices related to FR chemicals. FR players interact in multiple arenas, such as state legislatures and organized public protest. The large and diverse arena of anti-toxics activism shares some overlapping political and organizational territory with the large and diverse arena of biomonitoring research (measuring the presence and concentrations of chemicals in tissues).

Players play on uneven turf, since not all players have equal access to all arenas or equal ability to influence arenas' structures or participants. An environmental activist described these inequalities: at a legislative hearing, the chemical industry will "have ten people in the room and we'll have two. They're up there lobbying every day and we can't be. So there's an issue of just resources, and being able to basically pick your battles. ... We can't be everywhere all the time." The FR story tells us that it is important to be attentive to these social and political structures. As another activist explained, "it's a David and Goliath [story]. Many of us are volunteers, or running on a shoestring. We aren't even certain about our funding sources and what the future holds. ... [A]ll those advantages that come with more resources, which equals more power." Building on this understanding of players and arenas, we integrate theories from the sociology of science and medical sociology with an empirical focus on social movements and regulatory action.

Scientific authority and knowledge is increasingly valued and required in nonscientific fields, such as regulation and civil society, through a pro-

cess of *scientization*. Questions in regulatory, legal, and social movement spheres are increasingly asked and answered in scientific or technical terms (Frickel, 2004; Kinchy, 2010; Michaels and Monforton, 2005; Morello-Frosch et al., 2009). Scientization privileges an ideal of objective and value-natural science that cannot be met. By placing science on a pedestal, scientization gives way to *scientism* – the belief that science provides all needed answers. This has parallels with technocratic approaches to international development, in which technological fixes are applied – often with disappointing results – to problems that are social or political at their root (Ferguson, 1990). The ubiquity of formal and informal risk assessments across multiple nonscientific spheres is a symptom of this scientization; that is, debates focus on the veracity of risk assessments, not whether they are asking the right questions, relying on the correct assumptions, or including all necessary points of view. An overreliance on scientism and dominant frames implies that activists must wait for action or resolution, sometimes as long as 27 years in the case of the EPA's dioxin assessment (Cone, 2012).

This discourse of scientism combines with discourses of neoliberalism to limit both state regulatory capacity (to topics for which scientific certainty seems to be available) and public participation (by restricting participation to expert voices) (Kinchy, 2010; Kinchy, Kleinman, and Autry, 2008; Moore et al., 2010). Additionally, some social movements have responded to neoliberalism and scientization by challenging dominant social structures and systems, developing consumer-based campaigns, improving their scientific expertise, and conducting their own research projects, as with advocacy biomonitoring (Frickel, 2004; Morello-Frosch et al., 2009; Polanyi, 2000; Szasz, 2007).

The *dominant epidemiological paradigm* (DEP) is the codification of science, government, and private-sector beliefs about disease and its causation (Brown et al., 2001; Brown, Morello-Frosch and Zavestoski, 2012). It includes established institutions entrusted with the diagnosis, treatment, and care of disease sufferers, as well as journals, media, universities, medical philanthropies, and government officials. By showing the connections between institutions, practices, and knowledge about disease, the DEP explains how prevailing scientific authority and knowledge makes sense of environmental factors and a general understanding of the scientific framing of environmental health hazards and disease causation. While prior use of the DEP has been to explain diseases or syndromes (such as Gulf War Illness), here we extend the DEP to analyze the assessment of health hazards of chemicals and other contaminants hazards such as the use of FRs, acknowledging the ways in which it provides various players a common

language to both express and contest ideas in public arenas. In doing so, we explore the ways in which scientific authority and expert knowledge is increasingly influential in nonscientific arenas through scientization.

Perhaps because of its pervasive nature and application in nontraditional areas, some are questioning the role of science by situating it in the social world. The political sociology of science focuses on the role of power and inequality in science and knowledge production, and thus provides a lens for studying the interactions among players in contested arenas. In particular, the *new political sociology of science* assumes that science is inherently political, and explores the *networks, institutions, and power structures* that are both visible and hidden in contemporary scientific practices and organizations (Frickel and Moore, 2006). Scholars in this tradition build on Actor Network Theory's sensitivity to scientific practices and connections between actors (Latour, 1987, 2005), without treating structures and macroforces as exogenous or fixed. This perspective is useful for studying players and arenas because it recognizes the value and necessity of expert scientific knowledge in many circumstances and the fact that scientific authority is influential in a variety of nonscientific fields (Bourdieu, 2004; Polanyi, 2000). Thus the new political sociology of science takes science down from its pedestal by interrogating knowledge generation as heavily influenced by social, cultural, economic, political, and institutional forces.

## The Case of Flame-Retardant Chemicals

FR chemicals are widely used as additives to consumer and household products, including mattresses, electronics, car and airplane interiors, insulating foams, and carpeting, to slow combustion. The widespread use of chemical FRs since the 1970s has coincided with state and national policies, educational campaigns, and behavioral changes (like decreased smoking rates) that have decreased fire mortality, injuries, and incidence in the United States from approximately 12,000 in 1970 to 3,500 in 2007 (Birnbaum and Staskal, 2004; Blum, 2007; US Fire Administration, 2009). Most research, activism, and regulations on FR chemicals have focused on certain formulations that have been found to be persistent (they persist in the environment without quickly breaking down), bioaccumulative (they accumulate in body tissues and thus concentrations increase up the food chain), and toxic (they can cause harm to body tissues). In particular, two general groups of FR chemicals have received the most attention: *polybrominated diphenyl ethers* (PBDEs) and *Tris* formulations (multiple chlorinated and brominated versions).



FR chemicals are ubiquitous and rapidly accumulate in the environment, wildlife, and in people, who are exposed through household dust, physical contact, ingestion, smoke, and contaminated air (Betts, 2004; Betts, 2009; Hites, 2004). Brominated FRs can disrupt the endocrine system, interfering with hormones and potentially harming reproduction and development (Rudel and Perovich, 2009). In animal studies, PBDEs have been shown to be neurological and reproductive toxins and potentially carcinogenic (Betts, 2008; Birnbaum and Staskal, 2004). Recent epidemiological studies have connected PBDE exposure to developmental and reproductive effects in people (Harley et al., 2010; Herbstman et al., 2010; Main et al., 2007; Meeker and Stapleton, 2010; c.f. Harley et al., 2011). Several FRs have been regulated in the US. In the 1970s, polybrominated biphenyls were accidentally mixed with animal feed and contaminated millions of people in Michigan, and were subsequently removed from production (Egginton, 2009). Also in the late 1970s, tris (2,3-dibromopropyl) phosphate, a mutagenic chemical used in children's pajamas, was investigated by the Consumer Products Safety Commission and removed from use in children's clothing (Blum and Ames, 1977; Consumer Products Safety Commission, 1977).

PBDE FRs have received much regulatory attention in the US, and state-level bans on certain PBDEs have provided a focus for activist attention, pressuring the supply chain to shift away from some or all brominated FRs and motivating FR manufacturers to phase out chemicals. Starting in 2003, 11 states passed bans on several PBDEs and they were subsequently regulated by the EPA. The subsequent phase-out of a third widely used PBDE was followed by further EPA restrictions in 2012 (US EPA, 2012). Other states have recently taken action to restrict several types of tris chemicals (N.Y. *Envtl. Conserv. Law* §§ 37-0701 – 37-0709 and 71-3703). Despite these restrictions, FRs remain a profitable and growing international industry (Fink et al., 2008; Voith, 2010).

### **Arenas and Players Is State Bans**

Our case study involves multiple arenas and players operating within the larger environmental health social movement. Following Verta Taylor and Mayer Zald, we understand social movements as “networks and organizations in a variety of institutional settings where groups contend over ideas, practices, identities, and resources” (2010, 304). In this case study, we examine the legislation enacting a partial ban on PBDE FRs in Maine in 2004 within the context of state-level anti-toxic regulation, under the larger

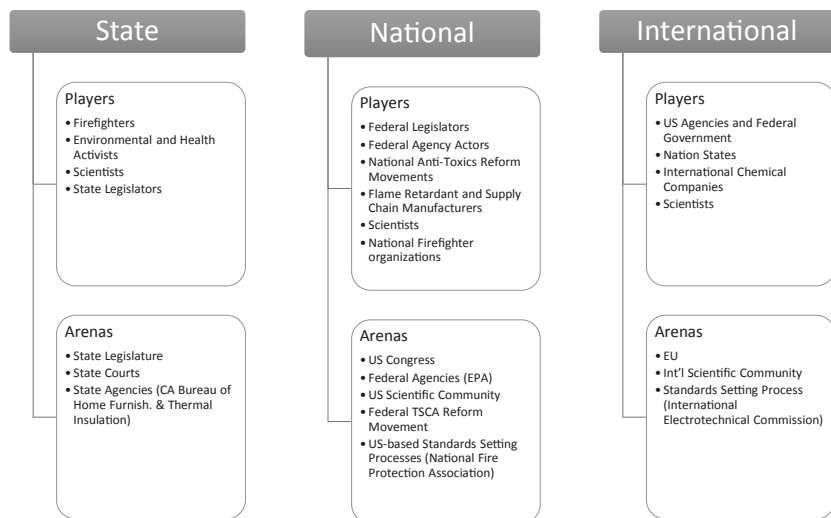


umbrella of national environmental health controversies. This chapter is part of a larger project on the social implications of FR chemicals (Brown and Cordner, 2011). We draw on in-depth interviews with approximately 110 respondents, including scientists, state and federal regulators and legislators, industry representatives, fire safety experts, and activists from environmental and health social movement organizations (SMOs) (for specific details on methodology, see Brown and Cordner, 2011). Although we classify individuals according to professional categories, we recognize that these categories are fluid and not clear-cut: for example, some activists have PhDs in scientific fields.

Starting in 2003, state legislatures in California, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Washington State restricted the production, use, sale, and/or distribution of two formulations of PBDEs: pentaBDE and octaBDE. Similar bills failed in Alaska, Montana, Vermont, and, notably, Connecticut, home of one of the world's three major brominated FR companies. Several states also restricted the use of decaBDE in certain product uses (for example, mattresses) or following the identification of a safer alternative.

Activist arenas regarding state-level chemical regulation are home to many types of players (Figure 1): national coordinating environmental organizations (e.g., Safer Chemicals Healthy Families); state-based anti-toxics organizations (e.g., Clean New York); national organizations that

**Figure 1** Examples of flame-retardant chemical players and arenas



supported state-based efforts (e.g., NCEL); local affiliates of national organizations that endorsed state campaigns (e.g., Planned Parenthood of Alaska); local, state, and/or national firefighting organizations; mothers groups and breastfeeding advocates (e.g., the Maine State Breastfeeding Coalition); and organizations with offices at the state and federal level (e.g., US PIRG and state-based PIRGs). Activists were also keenly aware of opposed players such as industry-funded advocacy and research organizations (e.g., Citizens for Fire Safety); and FR users, including the product and component manufacturers and retail operations that make up the supply chain. All of these activist actors use scientific evidence about the dangers of chemical exposure to argue for stricter regulation. They argue that their campaigns are scientifically grounded, demand participation in decision-making processes, and even carry out their own scientific research. This is similar to other environmental social movements; anti-GMO activists in Mexico used three scientific tactics: “(1) using scientific information as a resource; (2) participating in scientific research; and (3) reframing policy problems as broadly social, rather than as solely scientific or technical” (Kinchy, 2010). State and federal regulatory and legislative contests provided a central arena attracting the involvement of these players. State campaigns coordinated with and learned from each other, showing how players interact within regulatory and activist arenas. Someone who had been involved in the Maine legislation described their collaboration with Washington State: “We also worked closely with Washington State, who were doing the PBDE action plan which had quite a bit of alternatives information, so were sharing information.” Additionally, there are multiple state and nonstate regulatory arenas that matter: different federal agencies, such as the EPA and the CPSC; state agencies, including California’s Bureau of Home Furnishings and Thermal Insulation; and nongovernmental standards-setting organizations, such as the National Fire Protection Association. Arenas can also exist *within* government offices; NGOs, scientists, fire experts, the FR industry, and chemical users participate in the alternatives assessments of chemicals of concern through the EPA’s Design for the Environment program (Lavoie et al., 2010).

Events in arenas leave behind memories and symbols that continue to influence activity in the future. For example, the use of a type of tris flame retardant in children’s pajamas continues to affect contemporary understandings of FR regulation and activism, so much so that even well-informed individuals simply use the word “tris,” even though there are multiple types of tris FRs. Activists and scientists alike mention this incident as part of the background to their work. One scientist said that when he gives public

talks about FRs, “someone always asks me, well is that the stuff that was used in kids’ pajamas 30 years ago?”

## Environmental Health Activism and Science

Activism against FR chemicals is located within a larger environmental health movement, which grew up alongside of the environmental justice movement to which it is connected. The broad FR arena overlapped substantially with other arenas of anti-toxics organizing, especially the larger campaign for reform of the US EPA’s Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). Indeed, most activists explicitly described their FR campaign as being part of a larger strategy for TSCA reform. One activist commented that FRs aren’t the only chemicals of concern from scientific or populist perspectives, “but they are representative: their routine release into the environment, routine exposure, environmental and human exposure. All of that becomes representative of the broken federal chemical safety system.” Others called FRs “a poster child” for TSCA reform.

Approximately 84,000 chemicals are currently registered with the US EPA’s Toxic Substances Control Act Inventory (US EPA, 2010). For most there is little information on the potential health and environmental dangers of exposures (Judson et al., 2008), especially the long-term, multiple exposures that characterize daily life. Beyond the toxic disasters associated with chemical explosions or historical contamination sites (Zavestoski, 2009; Brown and Mikkelsen, 1990), research is also accumulating about the potential dangers from long-term, low-level exposure to the toxic and hormone-disrupting chemicals that are ubiquitously used in household products. In response, NGOs have developed campaigns and national coalitions around toxics regulation (Belliveau, 2011; Lubitow, 2011).

Along with the growth in activist attention to toxics, research methods have advanced dramatically. Scientists can measure chemicals in the human body at parts per trillion. The Tox21 program, an interagency research collaboration, is conducting high throughput screening of thousands of chemicals through hundreds of bioassays (Kavlock et al., 2009). For these advances in exposure and toxicological screening, scientists’ ability to conduct research has outpaced their ability to interpret the results for human health outcomes. Technological risk has outpaced technological benefit (Beck, 1992) and our ability to accurately interpret risk. In short, environmental health hazards in modern society are ubiquitous but uncertain. According to one environmental health advocate, we are in the middle of an

“uncontrolled chemistry experiment,” with potential but highly uncertain long-term reproductive, neurological and other toxic health problems for everyone, especially future generations.

### Rhetoric, Research, and Regulation

Science is the central rhetoric in all arenas related to environmental regulation. Regulators, industry representatives, and activists alike frame their positions as being based on the best available science. Activists follow the latest scientific developments, share abstracts of recent publications through Internet listservs, and invite scientists to speak on conference calls and at activist meetings. Some activists also carry out their own science: numerous environmental organizations, often through projects developed through national coalitions, have conducted research commonly known as *advocacy biomonitoring*, in which participants are recruited based on their willingness and ability to publicly speak out about their body burden and their interpretation about the potential origins of their personal exposure results (Morello-Frosch et al., 2009). In 2007, for instance, environmental advocates in Maine conducted a biomonitoring project of 13 individuals with a compelling public story, and tested for a number of FRs, partially to support proposed legislation to phase out the use of PBDEs (Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Maine, 2007).

Scientists often tread a fine line between pure science and policy applications. As we explore the actions of those involved in FR science and policy, we find that roles are sometimes fluid and manifold. For instance, current NIEHS director Linda Birnbaum plays multiple roles in diverse arenas in the FR issue: she is a researcher investigating the chemicals, directs an NIH institute that grants funds for research and oversees publication of the leading journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*, and acts as a public figure who speaks openly about the need to study FR hazards. Her research trajectory and interests may influence the research orientation of the NIEHS; the articles published in *Environmental Health Perspectives* may increase awareness about particular toxics issues both among scientific communities, who can pursue similar research, and among lay people, who might petition legislatures and government agencies for regulations based on scientific findings. This shows how players in one scientific arena – government research – can influence players in other scientific arenas as well as activist and regulatory arenas.

Individuals interested in influencing the use of FRs simultaneously function within and across many arenas, and their activity in one arena

influences activity in another. We interviewed one activist in a state-based anti-toxics organization who participates in multiple national activist networks: she is on the Steering Committee for an EPA Design for the Environment Partnership to assess alternatives to a current-use FR; coordinates a state-level partnership of labor activists, teachers, lawyers, nurses, environmental justice leaders, and consumer advocates; testifies at committee hearings at the statehouse; is on the board of a governmental FR panel; helped to organize advocacy biomonitoring projects; and attends scientific conferences. As with Birnbaum, this activist's work in one arena may bleed into others: she may learn of new efforts to use alternatives through her role in federal arenas and may share this information with members of her state partnership to encourage them to pursue similar measures. Additionally, she may be able to share exciting, local initiatives in national arenas such as conferences and panels.

### Science in State Regulation

In 2004, Maine became the second state to pass a partial ban on PBDE FRs: LD1790, titled "An Act to Reduce Contamination of Breast Milk and the Environment from Release of Brominated Chemicals in Consumer Products." Testimony concerning this bill provides a window into the types of claims used by actors on both sides, specifically claims about whether the science on PBDEs and other brominated FRs was strong enough to justify regulation.

On February 17, 2004, the Natural Resources Committee of the Maine House of Representatives heard testimony from environmental activists, learning disabilities activists, medical professionals, former firefighters, the bromine FR industry, plastics manufacturers, and trade associations. Originally introduced as a sweeping set of regulations of many FRs, it was scaled back during several committee meetings to a ban on pentaBDE and octaBDE, and provided for possible future restriction of decaBDE following a series of research reports by the Maine Department of Environmental Quality and the identification of safer, functional alternatives. The bill was enacted by the state legislature and signed by Governor Baldacci on April 14, 2004.

The nearly 300 pages of testimony and supporting documents in the committee files contain a wealth of information about the players involved in this dispute and the multiple arenas in which they worked, including claims by all sides that the science supported their position (State of Maine, 2004).

Analysis of the testimony from this hearing reveals that science provided the *primary* argument for many people's position on the legislation, whether in support or in opposition. Scientific authority was highly valued: attendees with advanced degrees mentioned these in their testimony, or wrote "PhD" after their name on the sign-in sheet; submitted testimony often included a list of references; and people cited researchers in academia and at NIEHS by name. In addition to the written testimony of all attendees, the committee files contain several research publications, the 37-page curriculum vitae of a leading FR researcher, a "fact sheet" and bibliography on PBDEs prepared by a local environmental health nonprofit, and a detailed PowerPoint presentation made by an industry advocacy group.

Those opposing and supporting the legislation used remarkably similar scientific language to justify their claims. The director of science and policy of the Environmental Health Strategy Center, a Maine-based nonprofit, testified, "The growing body of scientific literature makes an increasingly clear case for phasing out brominated flame retardants." On the other side, Susan Landry of Albemarle Corporation, a leading brominated FR manufacturers, said, "The numerous scientific studies do not support the ban of all flame retardants" and Raymond Dawson of the Bromine Science and Environmental Forum, an industry advocacy organization, said that a ban on all BFRs "is not based on science."

The two sides emphasized different consequences of the use of brominated FRs. Those in support of the legislation included medical professionals and representatives of several learning or developmental disabilities organizations, and they highlighted the potential human health hazards of exposure to these chemicals. Arthur Lerman, a state representative and the executive director of a nonprofit working with disabled children, cited six scientific articles and four news stories to support his statement that "[s]cientific research to date suggests that brominated flame retardants could be yet another contributor to abnormal brain development in children." In contrast, those opposing the regulation emphasized the chemicals' contribution to fire safety. John Moritz of a plastics company, wrote in his testimony, "There have been scientific studies to demonstrate that the use of brominated flame-retardant chemicals in TV and computer components dramatically reduce the spread of fire in these products."

Scientific uncertainty around this type of environmental health controversy thus acts as a mechanism for players to advocate their point of view while employing a dominant and respected language of science. Those opposing the legislation argued that the absence of data should prevent the legislation. Fern Abrams, representing a trade association for the

electrical interconnect industry, wrote that “there is no data indicating that the halogen FRs presently used in printed circuit boards present any significant environmental or health hazard.” This echoes testimony by Sandra Kennedy, of the Retail Industry Leaders Association, that “there is no data indicating that these FRs present any significant environmental or health hazard.” In contrast, several attendees argued that uncertainty about the potential risks of brominated FRs should not preclude legislative action. Saskia Janes of the Maine Public Health Association stated, “We don’t know what chemicals are found in our bodies and homes, nor do we have any idea whether or not these chemicals are safe.” David Little, deputy commissioner of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, commented “though the bio-accumulative tendencies of BFRs are clear, the actual health hazard posed by exposure to these chemicals is less clear due to a lack of definitive and nonconflicting toxicological studies of BFRs in humans.” His testimony contained a reference list of 20 scientific research papers. Finally, Joel Tickner and Ken Geiser of the Lowell Center for Sustainable Production testified in favor of the component of the legislation aimed at assessing safer alternatives: “Policies to promote adoption of safer substitutes to problem substances provides a cost-effective means to protect health and stimulate innovation in the face of uncertain, but potentially high risks.”

### **The Dominant Epidemiological Paradigm**

The dominant epidemiological paradigm (DEP) is the codification of science, government, and private-sector beliefs about disease and its causation, which we extend here to include the analysis of health risks of contaminants. The DEP is well suited to a model based on players and arenas, since it focuses on a multiplicity of actors who work in multiple locations. Analyses of environmental health contestations usually rely on a smaller number of players, typically scientists, environmental activists, government, and business. The DEP includes a rich set of actors, some of whom may not even recognize their role in a particular contestation, such as journal editors triaging articles or mentors who discourage graduate students from exploring potentially risky areas of research. The complex dynamics of the FR case study demonstrate the importance of scholarly attention to both the actions of the players and how players’ decisions can be constrained by the arenas in which they operate, as illustrated above with the cases of Birnbaum and the activist.

It is precisely these kinds of realizations that make the DEP useful for following the actors and understanding their motivations. We view



the DEP as a *model* that helps us understand the complexity of disease discovery and dictates or at least influences a variety of processes that play out on the ground. Actors participate in the DEP process at different locations, as they take action in one or more of the relevant arenas. For example, a toxicologist looking at chemical action on DNA and epigenetic biomarkers, an epidemiologist looking at thyroid dysfunction, an environmental health activist engaging in legislative campaigning, and a regulator crafting regulations all believe that work in their specific arena will lead to better understanding of disease and its causation and prevention. By participating in these DEP-relevant areas, they are promoting certain forms of knowledge and beliefs over, or at the expense of, others. These players all depend on the knowledge and beliefs created and promulgated by those who came before them and on the multiple roles they may be playing simultaneously.

Unlikely players are also relevant in the FR controversy, including firefighters, burn victims, and furniture manufacturers. Arenas, too, are more varied. In addition to the activist arenas described above, state, federal, and international regulatory bodies are important at the state, federal, and international levels. As examples, California's Bureau of Home Furnishings and Thermal Insulation created de facto national requirements through a furniture flammability standard, Technical Bulletin 117; the Consumer Products Safety Commission is responsible for developing flammability standards for certain products; and the International Electrotechnical Commission provided an important arena where a world-wide collaborative of players successfully halted a strict new flammability standard (Kirshner and Blum, 2009). Specific industries, such as furniture and electronics, act as both players and arenas; the furniture industry can act as an arena in which players, including other industries, regulators, and scientists compete to influence purchasing and product-use decision-making, but can also act as a player when designated trade associations release position papers or send representatives to testify at important hearings. Indeed, the alliance of players involved in seeking regulation, bans, and phase-outs has succeeded in entering a surprisingly large number of arenas. In these different arenas, FR advocates face different sets of players and must act quite differently. Our notion of "field analysis" (Brown et al., 2010) complements the DEP approach, providing both current groupings of actors and their prior influences. Whereas the DEP comprises the totality of inputs necessary to change a particular causal connection for an environmental health concern, the field analysis highlights the main players currently working on that in concerted fashion.



## Conclusion

Through this case study, we have demonstrated the complex and overlapping arenas surrounding anti-toxics regulation, and the various roles that players take on in these arenas. In doing so, we have sought to provide a more nuanced understanding of how players operate in response to relevant scientific and regulatory constraints, notably the mandatory role of scientific evidence and scientific uncertainty in science policy, and how health and science are understood and constructed within the dominant epidemiological paradigm.

Multiple players grounded their FR policy positions on scientific evidence. However, science and policy are both arenas where power matters greatly. For example, activists point out that the different funding levels of environmental nonprofits and international chemical companies mean that they end up with unequal access to decision-makers, unequal amounts of time to devote to each relevant regulatory or legislative activity, and different abilities to create and publicize their own research even though they are operating in the same paradigms and employing the same language as their opponents. In addition to scientific authority, individuals also called on multiple types of authority to fortify their argument.

We have seen stark differences in how different actors interpret the common language of science, particularly when uncertainty is involved. The scientists who interact frequently with activists working on FRs and other toxics issues are influenced by their understanding of whether and how scientists have a stake in policy-making when their research is policy-relevant. We argue that some activists and scientists are trying to reclaim scientific uncertainty as something that can still be scientific and useful for policy-making. Specifically, those in support of FR regulation use scientific uncertainty to encourage legislators to err on the side of caution and put the burden of proof on the chemical industry. Conversely, industry representatives attempt to use uncertainty to support the continued use of products.

To overcome the uncertainty in FR health effects, advocates often highlight uncertainty as stemming from the lack of adequate research, rather than as an inevitable characteristic of any body of research. They seek a precautionary, preventive approach, especially in light of similarities to known hazardous compounds. Producers of FRs, as well as some product manufacturers and retailers that use them in secondary production, highlight uncertainty as an end result, calling for extensive additional research before action and, in many cases, supporting a conclusion of overall safety. Some of the secondary producers are caught between chemical manufactur-

ers' claims that uncertainty means safety, and public and advocate claims that uncertainty means potential danger, perhaps leading to boycotts or lost market share. Regulators and legislators must mitigate between the opposing sides, while meeting often conflicting goals of fire safety, economic growth, and public health. If scientists can reclaim uncertainty from its negative connotations, they can expand the arena of scientific authority. But more importantly, this involves embracing uncertainty as a fundamental element of science, rather than a temporary condition of science. This could bring them closer to advocates, who have legitimate fears, and to regulators, who are thwarted in their capacity to regulate. This in turn could lead to an expanded role for precautionary public health concerns in environmental regulation.

The dominant epidemiological paradigm was conceptualized in relation to controversies over disease causation, but it proves useful to understand this contestation over the health effects of FRs because of its identification of a broad range of involved actors and a multitude of institutional targets. In this way, our research aligns with the "multi-institutional politics" focus in recent work on health social movements (Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008; Banaszak-Holl, Levitsky, and Zald, 2010). This body of work recognizes that health social movements no longer target their activism exclusively (or, sometimes, even primarily) toward state targets, but instead work for change in a broad institutional "field of contention" (Taylor and Zald, 2010: 307). Scientific discourses, we have shown, are a source of authority that can bridge across multiple institutional levels, often but by no means always directed at state decision-makers. Looking at the activism around FRs as a multi-institutional arena of contestation allows us to identify unexpected alliances, discuss the multiple levels at which players become involved in policy claims, and analyze the strategic role of science in pursuing those policy claims.

In our work we have emphasized contestations over environmental health issues, extending our prior focus on embodied experience of diseases to the present focus on hazards of FRs (Brown et al., 2004). We note similar approaches in David Hess's *technology-oriented social movements* and Scott Frickel and Neil Gross's *science and intellectual movements* (Hess, 2005; Frickel and Gross, 2005). We believe that our framing of scientific and advocacy work on FRs raises several questions for social-movement scholarship beyond health and science realms. For one, we learn that key players, like the advocates we described, are not monolithic in their beliefs and actions. Rather, they have conflicting roles in their own professions or grouping. They also move between arenas, which force them to act differently in

diverse settings. Any set of players will face both internal pressures (from their field) and external pressures (from larger social structures). They will vacillate between a pure professional practice and an applied, sometimes value-laden one. We can better understand these players through their reflexive interaction with others, including those who challenge them.

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## 10 Put Me in, Coach? Referee? Owner? Security?

Why the News Media Rarely Cover Movements as Political Players<sup>1</sup>

*Edwin Amenta, Neal Caren, and Amber Celina Tierney*

Social movements desire coverage in the news media mainly as a means to other ends (Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993). The news media can amplify the messages of movements to train the attention of the mass public on their causes (Ferree et al., 2002) and organizations (Vliegenthart, Oegema, and Klandermans, 2005). News coverage also catches the eye of political officials who are often the targets of the action (Lipsky, 1968). The news media may also lend these organizations and leaders legitimacy (Koopmans, 2004) and broadcast their grievances, preferred ways of conceptualizing an issue, and what to do about it (Gamson, 2004; Ryan, 1991; Ferree et al., 2002). Thus movements seek news media coverage and often devote much time and energy to trying to secure it (Gitlin, 1980; Gamson, 2004; Ryan, Anastario, and Jeffreys, 2005; Sobieraj, 2011).

Key scholarship sees the news media as a “master forum” in public discourse and as an “arena” in which various “players” seek to make gains in public debates and discursive contests (Ferree et al., 2002). Yet the player and arena metaphors are only partially helpful in describing the interactions between the main news media and movement participants, and better describe interactions between the news media and institutional political actors. The news media are themselves players in news coverage, but they see and comport themselves more as impartial referees, moderating debates. But more important for movements is the news media’s role as gatekeepers to coverage. The news media mainly confine movements to the sidelines, as they are typically barred from participating in these discursive contests. With respect to movements, the news media acts more like team owners or stadium security. The discursive interactions and contests of movements often pit them against police and other guardians of order. On the rarer occasions movements do get covered in political contexts, they do not choose who is speaking or playing for them and do not call their own plays, unlike institutional political actors, who usually do. Also, the contests involving movement actors are usually not refereed fairly, unlike

those between representatives of the two major political parties. If seeking news coverage is a game, movements are playing a vastly different one from political institutional actors who appear routinely and often at their own discretion. All that said, movements do sometimes gain coverage and get points across in it, and their efforts are well worth studying.

We mainly address the most professional and nonpartisan news media with a national focus and use US examples to demonstrate our points. At the center of the news media are the main national newspapers, such as, in the United States, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, the wire services, including the Associated Press, United Press International, and the US branches of Reuters and the Agence France-Presse, national newsmagazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek*, and the network television news programs of NBC, CBS, and ABC (Sigal, 1973; Gans, 1979). The professionalization of the news media was largely a 20<sup>th</sup>-century phenomenon, peaking in the last third of that century in the United States (Schudson, 2002). Although we focus on the United States, our claims are meant to apply broadly to professional news organizations in capitalist democracies with widespread freedom of the press.

These national news media have undergone great changes and are not the only media of interest to movements. Over the last two decades, the United States has seen the rise of outright partisan news television organizations, notably cable's Fox News, and 24-hour news cable channels, such as CNN, as well as the ubiquity of the Internet and other new electronic means of communication. Websites like *Politico* compete with national newspapers in political newsgathering. The drop in ad revenue for the print news media has killed off many newspapers and reduced the "news hole" of those remaining, while altering their delivery of news, such as the web transformations of *Newsweek* and *U.S. News & World Report*. Moreover, partisan political weeklies, such as the *Nation* or the *National Review*, often provide movements coverage (Rohlinger, Kail, Taylor, and Conn, 2012). Furthermore, the Internet has provided new ways for movement actors to communicate with potential supporters (Earl and Kimport, 2011). Finally, movements also seek favorable treatment in television programs, films, and books.

All that said, the national newspapers are still the central institutions of newsgathering. The folding of newspapers heightens the importance of the remaining ones, as newsgathering has become more centralized; in many ways, to the extent that the newspapers constitute an arena, it is a more restrictive one. Newspapers such as the *New York Times* still set the agenda for other news outlets, and their articles are amplified further by the many aggregating websites. Newspapers' professionalized form of organization, operating procedures, and staffing remain largely unchanged.



In this chapter we make some of these points through a review of the academic literature on the news media and their approach to social movements and other political actors and the discussion of some recent research. In the review we address the use of the player and arena model and indicate its advantages and disadvantages in describing the interactions between the news media and social movements. From there, we turn to a review of the literature on the operating procedures and institutions of the news media, and its approach to political news. We contrast the way institutional political officials are treated with the way movements are treated by the news media. We follow the review with a discussion of research addressing the rare conditions under which social movements and their actions do get covered, and the rarer conditions under which the coverage aids them in discursive debates. Here we review some findings and present some research from the Political Organizations in the News (PONs) project (Amenta and Caren, 2012), which addresses the national newspaper coverage of national US social movement organizations (SMOs). It shows that some SMOs have been covered frequently and that under certain conditions SMOs can advance their interpretations of events and their demands for action in newspaper articles.

### **Movement, Media Students Use Players, Arenas**

Gamson and other scholars have often applied the terminology of players and arenas to the interactions between major news media organizations and movements (Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993; Gamson, 2004; for a more general discussion, see Jasper, 2006). Notably, Ferree et al. (2002) posit a series of public discourse forums, which constitute the public sphere, with the mass news media at its center. In their heuristic model, the news media constitute both the master forum and a major site of political contestation. They divide the news media into an “arena,” a “gallery,” and a “backstage.” Backstage is where potential “players” prepare themselves for these contests (see also Cook, 1998). Those with extensive organizations and resources, collective players or actors, can prepare extensively for these contests. The arena is where discursive contests take place. Everyone important politically is in the gallery. Ferree et al. (2002) employ these terms in ways that seem equally applicable to athletic contests and staged performances, involving either players or actors (see also Oliver and Myers, 1999), as is typical with scholarship relying on Goffman’s framing imagery. However, when we refer to “actors” below, we are using the term not as a metaphor



for someone playing a role or following a script in a play, but instead as a concept, as in Weber's "social action" – for someone engaging in a purposive line of activity.

From the player and arena point of view, social movements might be seen as coequal players, competing in the news arena with various institutional political actors, hoping to win discursive battles. But following Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993), Ferree et al. (2002) also indicate that not all players in the news media are alike. Journalists are more equal than others, as they are, at once, players and gatekeepers, purveyors of meaning and controllers of access to the forum. Ferree et al. (2002) also indicate that "arena" is a misleading metaphor if it is understood to mean an even playing field. They argue that the contours may take different forms for different players and can indeed change during the course of any discursive conflict. Following them, we discuss some of the complications that ensue by using these terms to describe the journalists and the news media in their relation to discursive struggles among political actors, including social movement ones.

Journalists are in some ways akin to players in coverage, as they advance interpretations of issues that shape and influence discursive struggles. However, they typically do not view or represent themselves as players in politics (Cook, 1998). Instead, they view their interpretations as objective and represent themselves as referees, giving a fair hearing or equal time to the most relevant, influential, or legitimate players. Indeed, journalists' code of conduct holds that they should almost never preempt the news or be at the center of the story, and so they try to avoid being called players in coverage by news media watchdogs by using as neutral terms as possible. This includes employing anodyne and specific terms like "anti-abortion" to refer to a movement that calls itself "pro-life" and "abortion rights" to refer to a movement that calls itself "pro-choice." Editors also play a role by debating whether to replace contested terms, such as "partial-birth abortions" or "illegal immigrants," with less provocative language. Reporters are less disingenuous than Supreme Court nominees who claim that they will be neutral umpires despite documented biases and patterned slants in their decision-making. Reporters are more like boxing referees who cannot help throwing a few punches, but then forget having done so.

Journalists' strategizing mainly has to do with gaining access to sources and information, outdoing their counterparts in other news organizations for scoops, and displacing their coworkers from page one. In this way, they are mainly playing in a different arena than those with political goals. Because journalists see their writing as disinterested, they do not strategize about it in the same way as those seeking coverage for political purposes.

Indeed, in the most professionalized newspapers there is a metaphorical wall between the editorial page and the news. The executive editor of the *New York Times* claims to learn about the paper's editorials at the same time as the reader. Similarly, there is a separation between the business and content ends of newspapers.

More important, journalists act more like gatekeepers and debate moderators with respect to political contenders in discursive struggles. Journalists decide whether public actors or political contenders get to participate in public debates and, once that is decided, which players are going to be taken most seriously and receive the most playing time. That is, they decide whose voices will be heard most prominently, whose understandings of an issue are to be presented, and which issues will be deemed as representing the main lines of conflict. In short, what the journalists do is more akin to the activities of owners, management, promoters, and stadium security, as well as referees, in sporting contests. But the news media employ these roles selectively, treating institutional political actors more like star players and movements more like wannabe players or, sometimes, trespassers.

The term "player" is a helpful shorthand in referring to political institutional actors in discursive contests in political news coverage. The news media will usually allow them into the debate or arena, allow them to engage the political issues they choose, allow them to speak for themselves, and treat them relatively equally and fairly. This is most certainly true for officials in high offices representing opposing parties in a two-party system. The views of top institutional officials are solicited, and they can often generate coverage simply through news releases and press conferences. Indeed, they resemble the types of superstar or "franchise" players that make far more money than their general manager and coach and are guaranteed playing time. These top officials usually face decorous institutional rebuttal by opposition political leaders in what is a fairly evenly refereed discursive contest. Here the news media serve as referee and there is not much gatekeeping.

However, the news media mainly act as team owners and stadium security with regard to movement actors, making them mainly wannabe players – like nonprospects soldiering away in the low minors or development leagues. The news media's security function is selectively applied to movement speakers, who are usually prevented from entering discursive contests. Worse, movement actors are often treated less like players than like spectators illegally trespassing on the field of play. When movement actors are allowed to enter the discursive contests of the news media, they often find themselves not in the political contest they were hoping for, against

political institutional actors, but instead facing police or less legitimate political actors. It is a far different game than the one top institutional political officials play, and one without much discursive payout.

In addition, when movements are allowed to engage in a political debate with the institutional political players, movement leaders often do not choose who represents them in the debate, and the news media referees the discursive contest differently. Journalists select the movement participants and do so frequently as foils for elected officials, in the way that a boxing promoter of a promising fighter will select for him unskilled but eager opponents (tomato cans) to enhance his record, or baseball organizations will develop prospective players signed with expensive bonuses by populating the low minor leagues with former collegiate players with almost no chance to advance to the major leagues (scrubs). Sometimes movement participants are chosen on the basis of how authentic or novel they seem to reporters rather than how central they are to a movement. When movement actors are juxtaposed to institutional political actors in a news article, moreover, the news media do not referee this contest in the evenhanded way they would when two institutional actors are involved. It is no surprise that movements infrequently appear in news coverage, relative to institutional political officials, and are infrequently presented substantively.

The term “arena” is also only partially useful in depicting the interactions among journalists, institutional political actors, and movements. First, the arena metaphor is a stretch when applied to discussions in newspapers because only rarely do these actors physically enter any arena, in the way that they might walk into legislative chambers, courtrooms, or the White House. The only ones that truly enter are the journalists, who, as noted, do not act mainly as players in the discursive contests that are their articles and do not see themselves as players when they are acting that way. The journalists find source material either in the output of government bureaucracies, on the spot, or over the telephone. From there, they conduct the discursive game within their offices or at least on their own electronic devices, in the articles they construct. The arena is constructed by the way the news media are organized to gather and report news and its standards and operating procedures employed in deciding what is news. The process of gaining the ear of journalists takes place not only on an uneven playing field, but the field plays differently for different actors doing more or less the same thing.

Movements are covered too infrequently to be players in the news media in the way that institutional political actors frequently are. So in order to make sense of the news coverage of movements, we start with news organizations and journalists, whose form of organization and rules

are central in determining when and how movements are covered. We discuss the differences between how news organizations and journalists treat institutional political and movement actors, by focusing on the social organization of the news (Schudson, 2002).

### **New Rules Lift Some, Demote Others**

The divergences in the coverage of social movements and institutional political actors are rooted in professional news organizations' form of organization, practices, and thinking (Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Gamson, 1988; Ryan, 1991; Smith et al., 2001; Oliver and Maney, 2000; Schudson, 2002; Sobieraj, 2011). A key source of news is politics, and the news media's central mission is in covering it according to a relentless calendar of institutional political events (Sigal, 1973; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1980). The news media treat key institutional political actors as newsworthy by default and they are covered, typically substantively by politics beat reporters on the national desk – which signals that their activities are of national importance. By contrast, the news media marginalize movements in political coverage, viewing them mostly as wannabe players who lack legitimacy and political influence, and are unworthy of substantive coverage. Instead, movement activities, notably protest, achieve newsworthiness chiefly by way of their potential threat to public order, often leading journalists to cover their activities as something akin to crime by way of the metropolitan desk. This approach relegates movement activities to local importance only and typically focuses on the logistics of interactions between protesters and noninstitutional political players, often police. This coverage does not help movements in their bids for political influence and can make them seem dangerous or bizarre.

At the center of the mission and business model of the news media is to publish what it deems to be news. Professional news organizations are money-making operations, but enforce a strict separation between the newsroom and the editorial page, and between the newsroom and the advertising that supports the business (Sigal, 1973; McQuail, 1992; Kahn and Kenney, 2002). This reinforces their claim to their paying audience that they are providing high quality, fresh, and objective daily news, and advertising revenue is based on subscriptions, viewers, or “clicks,” for their web pages. Professionalized newsrooms are organized in specific ways based on their understanding of newsworthiness, with journalists assigned to cover people and issues expected to be recurrently newsworthy in the context of separate

orienting “news desks,” with subject, issue, or territorial concentrations known as “beats.” News organizations are staffed with journalists trained in the practices and ethics of reporting and editing, and who employ standard operating procedures regarding what constitutes news and which events deserve coverage (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1980; Soloski, 1989).

Professionalized journalists play by their own rules, with their peers and standards as their main reference groups. Professional journalists see news as being based on qualities including timeliness, the impact of events, the prominence of the people involved in them, the proximity to readers, with local news angles considered important in national stories (e.g., Mencher, 2008). News also comprises events that are unusual in some ways, or highly conflictual. Reporters and editors focus on events with currency, which means many people taking a sudden interest in a situation. These qualities are open to interpretation, but most claims by reporters to editors regarding the value of a story, and claims by editors to other editors regarding the placement and length of the story, will refer to these guidelines. There is substantial subjective agreement among news professionals on individual cases of what constitutes news and the relative salience of different news items, and these standards are reinforced daily on newspapers when news desk editors meet with managing editors to decide what will go on the front page (Sigal, 1973; Clayman and Reisner, 1998).

Journalistic rules privilege political actors. Politics is a staple of news coverage and typically receives the highest profile in coverage, and accordingly newsrooms are organized around it (Sigal, 1973; Fishman, 1980; Tuchman, 1980; Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993; Bennett, 2007). Routine political newsgathering on the “national” news desk revolves mainly around institutionalized political activity and official state actors. News “beats” are organized such that most coverage of politics is initiated by those elected to the highest offices, those seeking their positions, and those appointed to positions of administrative authority. Political decisions have high impact and involve prominent people to whom reporters have great access, as compared to, say, business leaders. Some issues receive recurrent attention: new laws being proposed, debated, enacted, or rejected; cases before and decisions being made by courts; candidates being nominated and elected to key offices. These lawmaking and electoral activities typically run on standard schedules that guide and constrain news organizations. Often political stories involve conflict and disputes, such as those between the major political parties in a two-party system like the US, the president and Congress, factions of parties in Congress, and factions on the Supreme Court. These stories are expected to include the views of the main opposing

sides, somewhat evenly balanced, as reporters seek to provide “fair” coverage (Hallin, 1984), and so journalists see themselves as moderating or refereeing debates among these crucial political players.

Journalists are mainly competing with one another in this coverage, to find and publish this information. They are playing by self-determined rules and largely against one another. No beat journalist wants to be “scooped” or “beaten” on a story by local or national competitors covering the same official or institution. Similarly, reporters compete with one another on their own newspapers to write stories their desk and managing editor will see worthy of page one. This competitive spirit meshes with the organizations’ desire to cultivate a reputation for vigorous and diligent reporting, as well as their organizations’ mission to sell more newspapers or web subscriptions by providing the freshest and highest quality news.

Similarly, simply by following their own rules, journalist often marginalize movement actors. Like politics, crime and scandal are also central to news coverage, given their timeliness, impact on people, and the fact that they sometimes involve important people (Hetherington, 1985; Schudson, 2002; Harcup and O’Neal, 2010). Although institutional political officials and movement people are both subject to reporting about scandal, movement activities are more likely to be covered in that context and far more likely to be featured in crime-related reporting (Gitlin, 1980; Oliver and Maney, 2000; Bennett, 2007; Sobieraj, 2011). Protest has been largely routinized over the last several decades, but still often strays into vandalism, traffic disruption, countermovement disputes, or various conflicts and confrontations with police. Protests that involve these sorts of threats to public order will typically be covered as crime. These articles provide extensive information about the particulars of the events, focusing on specific threats to public order posed by protest or first-amendment issues surrounding the right to protest, and tend to avoid discussion of the substantive issues of protest (Kaniss, 1997; Iyengar, 1991; Bennett, 2007; Sobieraj, 2011). Assignments for these articles are typically made by the metropolitan news desk to reporters covering spot news, with the news seen to be of local interest and brief duration.

### **News Media Are Refs, Pols Are Players**

Political news coverage centers on the activities of institutional political officials (Gans, 1979; Fishman, 1980; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994). These officials exercise great political influence and, unlike movement actors, often do not need coverage to achieve political goals. Having been elected

or appointed by elected officials, they exercise legitimate authority over the polity and control the levers of political power. They can decide whether to engage in an overseas war or a war on poverty, whether environmental laws will be enforced, and whether discriminatory or health-care laws are deemed constitutional. Given their potential influence and agreement regarding the news value of influence, the news media take them seriously and are indeed highly constrained to cover them (Gans, 1979). Much information is handed to the news media as a result of press conferences and released reports, with the expectation that it will be covered (Sigal, 1973). Political officials emit a regular stream of scheduled events and activities, and there is often daily news to be reported about the president, Congress, administrators, and the courts. For similar reasons, there is extensive news coverage of the election bids of these officials, those who seek to displace them, and on the selection of key administrators and justices.

The elected and appointed officials typically want to reveal information about their plans only in the manner and time of their choosing, and are often successful in doing so (Sigal, 1973; Cook, 1998). They know that they are going to be covered – it is only a matter of when, how favorably, and whether the coverage will provoke support or opposition to their plans. If they are unsure about the potential political support behind a line of action, they may “leak” information to see how it plays among other political actors, through a “trial balloon.” If they suspect that opposition is going to build against plans to which they are firmly committed, they may try to effect them without prior journalistic scrutiny. These officials also want to thwart or minimize the publication of news accounts revealing questionable, improper, or illegal activities. Such coverage saps their political power and hinders their chances to realize their plans. If political officials do not like how they are being covered, they may lobby or bully the press, in part by reducing access. A president with considerable public support has the greatest leverage and can work the press quite effectively, as after 9/11 when the George W. Bush administration was able to transmit misinformation about supposed weapons of mass destruction in Iraq in the run-up to its 2003 invasion.

However, over time journalists have acted in a more entrepreneurial way, “initiating” an increasing stream of political coverage (Schudson, 2002), in their competition with one another to uphold their missions to inform the public and the citizenry, to spark debate about political issues, and promote democratic processes. This places them in a kind of detective game with political officials, seeking information about any secrets or important unrevealed processes in existing policies and their plans for



the future. Journalists also seek to ferret out improprieties or corruption. A news series with such revelations, with perhaps the *Washington Post's* Watergate coverage by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein 40 years ago being a pinnacle, will enhance the organization's reputation for investigative journalism, elevating it above its competition and placing it in contention for Pulitzer Prizes and other prestigious awards.

### **News Media Are Owners and Security; Movements Are Hopefuls**

The leaders of and participants in SMOs and protest actions seek to gain mainstream mass news media coverage for many reasons (Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993), most of all to aid their organizations and social change missions. There is no better way to reach large numbers of people, gain support and legitimacy for the organization, and influence elite actors than through the news media (Gamson, 2004). They want their own view of issues to be aired in the media, and favorably so, both to change public perceptions and gain political support. That the professional news media aspire to fairness and objectivity also affords their attention greater credibility among third parties than that of partisan news outlets. A movement includes a variety of organizations, leaders, and participants, often at odds in how they define their causes, grievances, and prescriptions, and news coverage will provide advantages in these internecine conflicts (Gamson, 1988; Berry, 1999; Vliegenthart et al., 2005).

Although the news coverage of movements and SMOs is a potential cultural consequence of them (Earl, 2004; Amenta et al., 2009; see also Schudson, 2002), as we have seen this coverage is external to movements and not under their direct control. In this way, movements' newspaper coverage is unlike mobilizing constituents, creating collective identities, increasing individual and organizational capacities, altering the career trajectories of participants, or publishing their own newsletters and websites, and more closely resembles movements' potential political consequences (Amenta et al., 2010). For political decisions the most proximate actors are political executives, legislators, administrators, and judges; for newspaper coverage key decisions about who, what, and how to cover are made by journalists. Given their lack of control, movements face a dilemma in seeking news media coverage. Like powerful allies, the news media can amplify messages, but will often distort them (Jasper, 2006: 129). Despite distortions and the opportunity costs of seeking media attention, most movement actors actively seek media coverage (Sobieraj, 2011).



But the news media are set up in such a way that it mainly keeps movements out of the news. The news media treat political officials like established players and serve them as referee. The news media treat movements as hopeful or wannabe players, in the way that team owners or stadium security would. The relationship between movements and the media has been described as “asymmetric” (Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993), but a better term might be “supplicant.” Movements need the news media far more than the news media need them. The latter find movements only rarely newsworthy, and cover them more rarely still in ways that will aid their myriad goals. Although movements sometimes have the support of many people willing to commit much time and energy to disinterested causes, movements only rarely matter in politics and usually lack legitimacy in political action. Movements that rely on symbolic protest underscore their great distance from political influence.

The news value of protest, often involving large numbers of people and expressing not only worthiness (Tilly, 1999), but also righteous indignation over grievances, is sometimes determined by size (McCarthy et al., 1996) or novelty (Sobieraj, 2011). But with their negligible influence, legitimacy deficits, and nonroutine schedules, movements are subject to far different rules of media engagement than institutional political leaders. Rarely is it any journalist’s beat to acquire information that movements may have and rarely do news organizations compete over it. Movement leaders and participants are often willing to spill all their hopes, dreams, and talking points at a moment’s notice, submitting to what they perceive as the rules of news-making (Gitlin, 1980), but usually the news media are not interested and may be repelled by the efforts (Sobieraj, 2011).

Of far greater interest to the news media is when violence attends movement actions. Because protest often involves many people in public places, it is often treated by the news media as a potential threat to public order (McCarthy et al., 1996; Bennett, 2007). When violence or vandalism or countermovement skirmishes are part of protest, the news media will cover it not as political action, but as a crime story, and will often dispatch metropolitan beat or general assignment reporters to the task. The crime article is unlikely to treat seriously protesters’ grievances, critiques of existing understandings, and potential solutions, and so when protests are covered their purposes are frequently ignored (McCarthy et al., 1996; Smith et al., 2001; Earl et al., 2004). Sobieraj (2011) finds that in protests surrounding party nominating conventions and presidential candidate debates only 2 of the 45 organizations that sought coverage were treated in a meaningful way. The rest were treated as potential criminals or amusing sideshows.

The rules surrounding newsworthiness are similar for institutional political actors and movements in one way – both can make news through scandal. SMOs often survive on funding from everyday people and have public-interested missions, and so any revelations involving the overpayment of leaders, the mismanagement of resources, or the outright theft of funds will provide compelling news. Organizations running afoul of these lofty standards have ranged from the Townsend Plan to the Teamsters, from Operation PUSH to the United Way, and for some SMOs in some years, scandal or investigation constitutes the majority of their coverage. Needless to say, such coverage is unlikely to advance the goals of an SMO and its allies (Amenta et al., 2012a).

### **When Media Grant Movements Play**

Although movement actors receive little news coverage, which is frequently insubstantial in nature, movements can sometimes convince the stadium security to allow them entrance and let them play. More rarely movements can gain a kind of standing with the press (Ferree et al., 2002). In these instances movements are treated as regular news sources with some political legitimacy, more like the official political players, though usually for a specific issue over a shorter period of time, the way minor league baseball players are sometimes called up to the big team when rosters expand in September and are often used to pinch run or in relief to face one batter. Even when movement actors manage to gain this sort of standing, only sometimes do they gain the sort of coverage that portrays them in a relatively favorable light or transmits their grievances, understandings, and demands. Such coverage matters so much to movement actors that it is well worth examining the conditions under which it occurs.

Protest does of course get covered. Research shows that newspapers tend to report on collective action that is large, violent, geographically proximate to the newspaper, or draws the participation of larger organizations (McCarthy et al., 1996; Oliver and Maney, 2000; Myers and Caniglia, 2004; Earl et al., 2004; Strawn, 2008). But the news media only rarely provide protest coverage that transmits the protesters' grievances and demands, as it would for institutional political actors. Protests surrounding the G-20 meetings in Pittsburgh in September 2009 received extensive coverage and sometimes favorably so, but not on substantive issues, only on first-amendment questions surrounding the right to protest (Kutz-Flamenbaum, Staggenborg, and Duncan, 2012).

Fortunately for movement actors, they can be covered in many ways other than protest, as two major databases on protest and SMOs show. The Political Organizations in the News (PONs) project found that approximately 1250 national SMOs appeared in more than 350,000 articles in the *New York Times* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Amenta et al., 2012b), as compared to the 21,000 articles on protest events in the Dynamics of Collective Action data set (McAdam et al., 2009) from 1960 through 1995. If one compares the articles on nonlabor SMOs for this shorter time period with articles on collective action not including lawsuits, there were still about six times as many articles on national SMOs as on protest-related action: about 100,000 articles on SMOs versus about 17,000 articles on protest events, many of which were locally focused.

However, some movement industries are much better covered than others. It was rare for a movement to be covered more than once a day in a given year in the *New York Times* (Amenta et al., 2009). Only the labor movement, for most of the century, the veterans movement, around World War II, the African-American civil rights movement, of the 1950s and 1960s, and the end-of-the-century environmental movement received this kind of standing in the newspaper of record over several years. These movements combined three things: a large number of organizations, a disruptive capacity, and enforced national policies aiding the movement's constituency. For the labor movement, its coverage in the 1930s and 1940s correlated closely with strike activity and afterward with unionization, suggesting that movements may gain coverage early on through disruption, organize to increase their social and media presence, and gain further attention and support through helpful policy changes.

For any given movement industry, however, the PONs project finds that newspaper coverage is typically concentrated in a few organizations. Despite some cases in which the movement industry had more than a hundred SMOs, the top five SMOs in coverage received more than half of the coverage in 31 of 34 movement industries (Amenta, Caren, Elliott, and Tierney, 2013). Overall, these elite SMOs averaged 82 percent of the total coverage. This proportion was highest in the early part of the century when the bench of SMOs was not as deep as it is now. Despite massive shifts in the volume of coverage since 1940, the proportion of coverage going to the top SMOs has been relatively constant. For some movements, one SMO completely dominates the coverage, as the case of the National Rifle Association for gun-owners rights and the American Civil Liberties Union for civil liberties. In contrast, the coverage of the environmental movement is not greatly dominated by its most prominent SMOs, currently the

Sierra Club and the National Resources Defense Council, with only slightly more than half of its coverage captured by the top five. In short, national newspaper attention tends to work to the advantage of a movement's most prominent SMOs, suggesting that even among SMOs gatekeeping to the arena is selective.

What accounts for the newspaper coverage of SMOs within a movement? The literature has answered mainly by identifying characteristics of SMOs that aid them in dealing with the new media or make them particularly newsworthy. These studies typically address SMOs in a given movement at a given point in time (Andrews and Caren, 2010; Corbett, 1998) or focus on one or a few SMOs over time (Barakso and Schaffner, 2006; Rohlinger, 2006). Among the key SMO characteristics found to influence coverage include the resources, bureaucratization (Corbett, 1998), and media staff (Rohlinger, 2006). However, having media capacities certainly did not ensure coverage among the organizations studied by Sobieraj (2011). Combining data on local environmental organizations and their news coverage in North Carolina newspapers, Andrews and Caren (2010) found that organizations that looked and behaved like interest groups or service organizations, with a large membership and professional staff and employing routine advocacy tactics, were more likely to be covered than those that acted like radical protest organizations. Examining political contexts of coverage, Rohlinger et al. (2012) find that routine political events, including elections, legislative debates, and court decisions, boost mainstream media attention for SMOs.

The next steps involve examining the interaction between the news media, political and social contexts, and SMO characteristics to explain their coverage. In a study of the newspaper coverage of LGBT SMOs, Elliott, Amenta, and Caren (2012) find that policy changes interacted with the policy emphases of highly resourced SMOs to heighten their media profiles. Larger LGBT SMOs focused on anti-discrimination were advantaged over those focusing on hate crimes or military matters, because of the considerable policy action on the first issue. By contrast, SMOs with protest orientations drew extensive national newspaper attention during crises. The results support "political reform" arguments that posit a positive influence of policy gains on social movements and their newspaper coverage (Amenta et al., 2012), but also suggest how the process works. As social movement industries gain policies that support their constituents the specific SMOs that advocate the policy and SMO policy advocates with wide policy foci gain in media attention and in influence within the movement as a whole (Vliegthart et al., 2005). Although the

findings support the idea that resources matter for SMOs in influencing outcomes, they also place resources in context. In addition, movements that ultimately make political gains typically receive news attention through protest in their early years and only later gain attention by way of more established organizations and policy debates, a pattern also found with the labor movement (Amenta et al., 2009). However, no research has yet determined or pinpointed the influence of early news coverage on political gains for movements.

But when are they treated by journalists as serious political players? When do movement actors stick with the big club as regular political players? Or under which conditions do movements and SMOs gain broadly favorable or high quality coverage? These questions are important because favorable coverage may lead to gains in political influence or greater support for an SMO in competition with others, and can be an end in itself for SMOs fighting stigma in the treatment of the groups they represent.

There are many ways to interpret “favorable” and “high quality,” most of which are difficult to measure. Coverage may be more subtly “slanted” for or against movement actors (Rohlinger, 2007; Smith et al., 2001) or may sometimes provide a nonindividualistic or “thematic” discussion of issues (Iyengar, 1991). As for more easily researched issues, at a low end of better-quality coverage, movement people may gain a kind of local standing in a given article by being quoted or paraphrased in it (Ferree et al., 2002; Gamson, 2004), providing them with voice and signaling their legitimacy as representing a particular group on an issue. Frequently SMO spokespersons are quoted in ways that do not transmit substantive messages, however, such as when commenting on wayward protesters, organizational finances, or other matters tangential to their cause (Sobieraj, 2010). Better coverage reports the movement’s preferred way to understand or frame an issue and its diagnoses of problems and solutions (Snow and Benford, 1988; Ferree et al., 2002). It is better still if movement points are supported with testimony from elected politicians or scientific experts (Koopmans, 2004). It is especially important to transmit a “demand,” also known as a “claim” (Tilly, 1999) or “prescription” (Snow and Benford, 1988), as demands are central to contests over meaning (Koopmans, 2004; Lipsky, 1968) and convey the movement’s understanding of a policy issue (Ferree et al., 2002; Rohlinger, 2007).

Some research suggests that demands appear in articles partly to the extent that movement players act assertively in the areas typically dominated by institutional political actors. “Assertive” actions engage the

political process in ways that threaten the prerogatives of institutional political actors and include electioneering, contentious conventions that competed with gatherings of the major parties, legislative action, such as placing bills before Congress, and movement-led initiatives and referendums, and have been found to be politically influential (see Amenta, 2006). Assertive action differs from other institutional actions like lobbying, petitioning, or information distribution by attempting to override or overrun institutional political actors rather than working with them. The news media are highly interested in legislation, elections, and court actions, which draw the attention of reporters on politics beats. To be treated like institutional political players movements have to act like them.

Amenta, Gardner, Tierney, Yerena, and Elliott (2012) examine front-page articles across five national newspapers mentioning the Townsend Plan and find that a “movement-initiated” article – one whose news peg is movement activity of some sort – involving “assertive” actions reliably included demands. Articles involving assertive action that appeared when an old-age bill was before Congress also included demands in them. Disruptive action worked the opposite way; not being about disruption was a necessary condition for an article to contain a demand.

These results fit with previous and new research. Oliver and Maney (2000) found that protest about legislation was more likely to be covered in Madison, Wisconsin, newspapers. Rohlinger (2007) found that anti-abortion SMOs challenging abortion laws through institutional venues were included in coverage more often than others. Sobieraj’s (2011: 100-101) research on protest surrounding political party conventions finds that Veterans Opposing War, one of two organizations receiving extensive coverage that was substantive, engaged in assertive actions including a convention for members and targeted protests to influence the war positions of Democrats. Their approach contrasted with the media-centered events of the vast bulk of the organizations. Boykoff and Laschever (2011) find that the Tea Party “rose meteorically” in media attention when it was actively campaigning, protesting, and pressuring elected officials during the primaries and general election of 2010 (see also Skocpol and Williamson, 2011). Kutz-Flamenbaum et al. (2012) found that activist groups protesting the 2009 G-20 summit in Pittsburgh were able to gain temporary standing in local newspapers by holding meetings open to the press to compete with the gathering of the G-20 summit leaders. These results concur with the generally insubstantial coverage received by protest elsewhere (Smith et al., 2001; Earl et al., 2004).

Movement actors may gain temporary regular player status by being assigned a political news beat or being treated as representing a group in a policy debate (see Amenta et al., 2013). The *New York Times* assigned Washington-based political reporters to the labor movement from the 1930s until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In other instances, prominent SMOs were incorporated in standard political beats, such as the old-age SMOs to budgetary and health politics, the ACLU to the courts beat, top SMOs from the environmental movement to an environmental beat, and AIDS SMOs to the health beat. The Tea Party received beat coverage from the *Times* in 2011 and 2012. The Townsend Plan and AARP have been treated as players in the debates over Social Security.

However, simply having been assigned a beat or being covered in the context of a beat does not ensure substantive coverage. The *Times* assigned a Jewish affairs reporter, accounting for the Jewish civil rights movement gaining far more coverage in the *Times* than in the *Washington Post* (Amenta et al., 2009), but mainly dealing with local issues. *Times* beat reporters were also assigned to the civil rights movement in the 1960s, but by way of a regional, Southern news beat, one that also comprised the KKK and other movement opponents, and often reported logistically on movement activity. Some high-profile movements, such as the student and black power movements of the late 1960s, received beat treatment, but were not often covered substantively, and were often assigned to local, courts, and police reporters. The recent Occupy movement is another case in point. As these examples suggest, it is worth determining the conditions under which specific SMOs receive extensive coverage and under which such sustained coverage is substantive.

## Conclusion

The terms “player” and “arena” are valuable heuristic tools for analyzing the news coverage of movements and other political actors, but the term “player” best suits major political actors in their interactions with the news media. The mission of the news media, their standard forms of organization, and their reporting rules ensure that these institutional actors will be covered and their disagreements and points of view faithfully transmitted. Although the news media are purveyors of meaning and often provide interpretations of political issues and controversies, they tend not to see themselves as players and instead see themselves as referees or umpires in a match between legitimate players. Because the news media are not



organized around covering social movements and are trained not to see them as newsworthy, movement actors are more like wannabe players in the supplicant role. Journalists act more like owners or hired security as far as SMOs and protesters are concerned. They tend to keep movements out of the news, and when movements are allowed in the paper or on television they gain mainly episodic coverage, often on logistics, and find themselves in debates not with political opponents, but with police and others concerned with public safety.

Social movements want news media coverage for many reasons, but it is difficult to achieve and more difficult still to achieve in ways that are valuable to movements. Movements cannot greatly control what is transmitted by the professional news media. News rules mainly determine when and how movements and other political actors are covered. The news media are organized around providing daily information about elected and other major political figures and are highly constrained by the routine activity of these officials. By contrast, the application of the rules of newsworthiness ensure that movements will be covered irregularly and usually outside political news. When movement actors clear their higher bars of newsworthiness, they usually cannot address the political issues they seek to influence. Only rarely do they find themselves in the sort of substantive discursive debates that institutional political officials find themselves in daily.

Yet coverage is precious to movements, and it is well worth studying when and why movements are sometimes able to enter the discursive game and when and why they sometimes score some points. There is considerable research now on the conditions under which protest will be covered, why some movements are covered more than others, why some SMOs within movements are covered more than others, and why movement coverage gets across points that it seeks to transmit. When movements act like or seek to wrest away the prerogatives of elected political officials they tend to be treated more like them in news coverage. But they may have to go through some protest to get there.

## Note

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# 11 When and Why Religious Groups Become Political Players

The Pro-Life Movement in Nicaragua<sup>1</sup>

*Silke Heumann and Jan Willem Duyvendak*

In this chapter we ask when and why religious groups become political players, by analyzing the involvement of Catholic and Evangelical churches in the Nicaraguan “pro-life” movement. The movement emerged as a collective player after the 1990 elections that marked the end of the Sandinista regime and the transition to neoliberal democracy under the 14-party opposition coalition UNO (Unión Nacional Opositora). Its mobilizing capacity grew dramatically over time, especially in opposition to therapeutic abortion: while the first anti-abortion rally in 1994 drew around 5,000 people (Envío Team, 1994), in 2000 rallies drew 15,000 (La Prensa, 2000), and by 2006 200,000 people (Kampwirth, 2008: 129). The emergence and growth of the pro-life movement represented a major challenge to the quest for greater recognition of gender equality, sexual rights and reproductive rights in Nicaragua and culminated in a total abortion ban in 2006 – even when the life of the pregnant woman is at stake (Heumann, 2010; Reuterswärd et al., 2011; Kampwirth, 2006; Kampwirth, 2008). Much of this success is attributed to the political power and mobilizing capacity of the churches (Kane, 2008).

It may seem almost self-evident to see churches as political allies or even the driving force of the pro-life movement. However, as we demonstrate in this chapter, there is nothing natural about churches becoming an ally or active participant in this or any political movement. In the case of Nicaragua, we show how Evangelical churches were initially at odds with the Catholic Church and eschewed all political activism as outside their spiritual mandate. It was only after pro-life activists strategically targeted the church with their recruitment efforts that Evangelical churches decided to engage with the Catholic Church and with pro-life politics, transforming the pro-life movement’s influence in state politics. Also the Catholic Church, while having a longer history of political involvement, experienced dramatic changes and internal conflicts around what the “nature” and the extent of its political role should be, with “pro-life” and “pro-family” politics crystalizing as a salient

issue only in the 1990s, partly as a result of a conservative backlash within the church.

Rather than starting with pre-given players, we show how political actors and arenas became constituted and transformed over time through constantly changing interactions: religious people – and this is true for both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics in Nicaragua – had to be actively recruited to the pro-life movement. They are not “naturally” or automatically mobilizable. In this case, the relationship between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics evolved over time from stiff competition to brothers-in-arms in the pro-life movement, a development that has to be understood as the outcome of complex interactions between different players, notably pro-life activists, clergy, church members, politicians, public functionaries, and last but not least activists from the women’s movement. These interactions don’t take place in a vacuum, but in particular contexts that change over time. Therefore, while we do not suggest a path-dependency argument, we see these interactions as being partly shaped by the history of these relationships: both in terms of how this history is subjectively perceived and (re)constructed on an individual and collective level and in terms of how it has defined the positions of these different players in relation to each other.

This chapter explores the interactions and strategies that made the emergence and growth of a collective player such as the pro-life movement possible from a historical perspective, while connecting them to the (changing) political contexts, constructions of meanings, and emotional responses that played a role in this process. Rather than taking for granted a connection between social conservatism and religion, and therefore the churches and the pro-life movement, we will look at churches as arenas of struggle to understand when and how certain churches became platforms of pro-life activism. We conclude that when scholars of social movements make movement strategies the object of analysis, it not only helps us understand a movement’s interactions with its opponents, but also how alliances and coalitions are formed, and how those alliances and coalitions not only depend on, but also transform, the respective arenas.

Our analysis draws predominantly on 25 semi-structured and in-depth interviews conducted with Catholic and Evangelical social conservative advocates and activists in Nicaragua between 2004 and 2007, as well as newspaper clips, magazine articles, church pronouncements and institutional documents of the 1980s and 1990s (see Heumann, 2010).

## Relationship between Churches, Politics and Social Conservatism

Even though religious organizations came to play an important role in the pro-life movement, in this study we question the idea that there is a “natural connection” between them. Wood’s analysis of the political role of religious institutions in the US is one of the studies that have shown that religious institutions do not have an “inherent” political nature but that their role depends on their relationship with other players, as well as on their internal struggles and politics (1999: 307-332). Christian Smith (1996) analyzes the strategic advantages that churches enjoy as social movement actors. He distinguishes between issues of motivation and identity, resources, social and geographical positioning, and privileged legitimacy. However, while these “assets” for activism are indeed important, especially to understand why religious organizations may be interesting for social movements, in themselves they are not sufficient to explain when and why religious actors become involved in political struggles and in which ways.

Katzenstein’s (1995) study on feminist activism of nuns and laywomen within the Catholic Church in the US also challenges a monolithic view of the Catholic Church as inherently conservative and in line with the positions of the Vatican. To understand the role of churches in the pro-life movement we have to look at struggles in various arenas and at subjective and emotional processes that led to the transformation of church members and clergy into pro-life activists.

The “causal” relationship between religiosity and social conservatism is also challenged in the findings of a study by Ziad Munson (2008) of the pro-life movement in the US: rather than seeing faith as the driving factor for social-conservative worldviews, he shows how people, once they are recruited for the pro-life movement, come to reinterpret their faith in terms of pro-life values. In our study this is most evident in the case of Evangelicals: for them the salience of the abortion issue was clearly a result of the recruitment efforts of Catholics, not a preexisting concern.

In a broader sense, this perspective challenges the idea that stable and preexisting belief systems in the churches determine church involvement in social movements. Morris (2000), for instance, argues that the US civil rights movement owed its success and mobilizing power to the African-American churches and that it was more than a “structural entity”; it contained the “cultural framework through which the movement would be framed” (Morris, 2000: 448). He argues that the “freedom and justice frame” emerged out of the church’s “transcendental belief system,” a process Morris calls “frame lifting.” In this article, we question this idea of a preexisting frame

in the churches that is lifted into the pro-life movement. We will show how pro-life activists target the churches strategically with recruitment efforts and seek to appropriate religious spaces as mobilizing structures for the movement. In doing so, they appeal to existing frames in these churches, but at the same time they provide these churches a language to politically think about abortion.

## The Catholic Church and Politics

The Catholic Church has been the predominant church in the Pacific region of Nicaragua since the Spanish colonization, deeply influencing both popular culture and politics. Even though at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Nicaragua was officially declared secular, until the 1960s the power of the Catholic Church remained largely unchallenged (Gooren, 2003). In the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century two developments would change that: the growth of Evangelical churches (addressed in more detail in the subsequent section), and the emergence of liberation theology, which challenged the church hierarchy from “within.”

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the official Catholic Church openly supported the military dictatorships in Latin America, but the renewing force of the Second Vatican Council in 1962 changed the role that the Catholic Church played in the region. It gave way to the emergence of a liberation theology, which offered a reinterpretation of Christian dogma and declared its identification with the poor and the excluded (Stein in Walker, 1997: 235-247). The Christian base communities that were organized among the population as well as some members of the church hierarchy started to oppose the totalitarian regimes, and to struggle against poverty, social exclusion, and human rights violations, and in this way found a common cause with Marxist-inspired revolutionary movements in the region. The Vatican soon opposed this development. Liberation theology and the involvement of the clerics and devotees in liberation movements produced a significant split in the Catholic Church across Latin America, between those who followed the precepts of the Vatican and those who refused to.

The blend of Marxist-inspired liberation and Christian faith characterized the Sandinista movement, which in 1979 led a revolution that ended four decades of military dictatorship, the Somoza dynasty (Randall, 1994: ix-xiii, 1-27; Walker, 1997: 1-17). The Catholic hierarchy in Nicaragua had supported the Somoza dynasty for over thirty years. Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, appointed Archbishop of Managua in 1970, was the first to criticize



Somoza and throughout the 1970s denounced the human rights abuses of the Somoza dictatorship. Gill (1998) argues that interreligious *competition* played an important role here. In those countries where the Catholic Church faced the most competition from other churches, the episcopies started to oppose the military dictatorships during the 1960s and 1970s and sought to expand their social basis among the poor (Gill, 1998: 112), Nicaragua being a case in point.

Although critical of the Somoza dictatorship, Cardinal Obando was deeply conservative concerning the organization and mission of the church, and he feared the domination of Marxist and “atheist” ideas in the new Sandinista government, as well as the loss of control over his own constituency. Church conservatives could, however, hardly argue that the clergy was not represented in the Sandinista state, as the Sandinistas placed an unprecedented number of priests in important government positions. But these priests were thought to show more loyalty to the Sandinistas than to their own authorities, and conservatives feared the division of the church (Envío Team, 1981).

By 1980, the relationship between the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church and the Sandinista regime had deteriorated. A deep conflict developed between Nicaraguan bishops – supported by the Vatican – and the Sandinista state as well as between the church hierarchy and its own base communities that were supportive of and actively involved in the revolutionary process (Kirk, 1992). The conflict led to the excommunication of priests who had accepted high positions in the Sandinista state, and the persecution of right-wing clerics accused of counterrevolutionary activities by the government. This included the expulsion of foreign-born priests and bishops from the country, and the censorship of church pronouncements and the media in general. One of the most dramatic expressions of this conflict occurred during the 1983 papal visit to the country in which Pope John Paul II’s speech was drowned out by the crowd, because he refused to express any word of sympathy for those Nicaraguans who had died as a result of the aggressions of counterrevolutionary warfare (Envío Team, 1983). In general the church-state conflict was most intense in the first half of the 1980s. In the second half of the decade the first attempts at demobilization and negotiation between Sandinistas and anti-Sandinistas started. In 1987, Obando was appointed to the Central American Peace Commission as a sign of and attempt at reconciliation. His role in the peace process earned him renewed legitimacy among the population (Kirk, 1992).

After the 1990 elections, under the Chamorro government in which Catholic charismatics were given key positions, many privileges of the



Catholic Church were reinstated. The Catholic Church was exempted from taxes (in contrast to Protestant churches), and also received public funds. The Cathedral of Managua was, for example, a “gift” of the Chamorro government to the Catholic Church. Chamorro also donated real estate to construct the Nicaraguan Catholic University (UNICA) that opened its doors in 1993 under the lifelong direction of Cardinal Obando (Loáisiga Mayorga, 2005).

The Catholic Church is still today the institution with the most legitimacy and credibility among the population (Zovatto, 2002). Political leaders recognize the importance of having public support for the church, something that representatives of the Catholic Church actively cultivate to ensure that their interests are represented in national policy. Since the defeat of the Sandinistas, the Catholic Church hierarchy has therefore regained significant influence in public policy. The change in government-church relations between the revolutionary period and the 1990s, and the recognition that the approval of the church was crucial for any political project, were well illustrated during the pope’s visit to the country in 1996. On this visit, the Sandinista leadership officially apologized to him for the 1983 incident, which he deeply resented. The pope’s visit right before the elections and his indirect “warnings” against a possible restoring of the Sandinista regime are said to have contributed to the electoral success of the right-wing liberal party under Arnoldo Alemán in 1996.

In addition to its increasing political power, by the early 1990s the Catholic Church hierarchy – through exerting pressure on and employing the excommunication and relocation of priests – had also managed to regain power over its constituency, and to neutralize the Catholic Christian base communities that had emerged in the context of liberation theology during the 1970s. The base communities still exist, but have lost most of their former political and social significance (Aragón, 2009). In other words, the internal struggles between different factions that at some point produced visible divisions in the church have over time led to the hegemony of the more conservative sectors. This allows the church to appear in public as a more unified player but internal diversity, differences, and conflicts persist.

## Evangelical Churches and Politics

Protestantism in Nicaragua, although present since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, did not grow significantly until the late 1960s. In the 1980s and 1990s Protestant churches experienced an unprecedented growth to almost 20

percent of the population. Catholic affiliation in these 20 years decreased from 90 percent to 75 percent (Gooren, 2003). By 2002 there were more than 130 different Protestant denominations in Nicaragua with over 5,000 congregations (González, 1998; Zub, 2002).

Protestantism in Nicaragua is highly diverse, with considerable differences between but sometimes also within congregations. While in this chapter we look at both Catholic and Evangelical churches, Evangelical churches behave more like social movements because of their more autonomous forms of organization. The same denomination may have different characteristics in different locations or socio-political contexts. Protestants in Nicaragua tend to be indiscriminately called “*evangélicos*” and are often associated with emotional services that include singing, clapping, and trances (Gooren, 2003).

On the Nicaraguan Pacific coast, the Evangelical Pentecostal denomination Assemblies of God became the biggest denomination. They have undergone a similar process from historical rejection of politics and social involvement, to an increasing incursion into politics since 1990: while in 1986 the Assemblies of God expelled a well-known Sandinista pastor, Miguel Angel Casco, for being involved in politics, by the late 1990s several pastors and representatives were not only publicly involved in pro-life activism but also participated in politics in the strict sense, by working in the Ministry of the Family.

The Baptist Convention represented a significant sector of Nicaraguan Protestantism, especially because of the political role they played during the 1980s (González, 1998; Instituto Nicaragüense de Evangelismo a Fondo, 1998). Baptists in Nicaragua are typically middle class and more highly educated than other Protestants. They have been highly visible since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century because of their social engagement, including the founding of schools, a hospital, and social organizations. During the 1980s the Baptist Convention predominantly supported the Sandinistas. In the 1990s, however, the Baptists became more conservative (Zub, 2002).

The relationship between Evangelical churches and the Sandinistas was complex and also depended on the political orientation of specific denominations. On the one hand, the Sandinistas viewed Evangelical growth with suspicion and were alarmed by what they considered to be “the invasion of the sects.” Because Pentecostal churches and in particular the Assemblies of God were linked in the US to the political and religious right, the Sandinistas suspected Nicaraguan Evangelicals of engaging in counterrevolutionary activities. On the other hand, the Sandinistas also sought the support of Evangelicals, especially given their conflict with the

Catholic Church hierarchy, and they maintained good relations with the more left-wing Protestant churches, particularly the Baptist Convention and also some of the Pentecostal churches (Stoll, 1990).

With the restoration of the Catholic Church's power after regime transition, Evangelicals found themselves ever more marginalized from the state. The restoration of Catholic privileges triggered outrage and protest among Evangelical communities. In light of their growth and political marginalization, Evangelicals from both the left and the right engaged in repeated efforts to enter the political arena in the early 1990s by founding different political parties. Initially, these met with little success, and only one party managed to establish itself: the right-wing Camino Cristiano Nicaragüense (Nicaraguan Christian Path, or CCN) in 1996 (Rodríguez Arce, 1998; Zub, 2002: 64).

### **Emergence of the Pro-Life Movement in the 1990s**

The pro-life movement can be seen as a network of players including individual activists, civil society organizations, religious and political institutions and spaces involved in advocacy or activism to reinforce conservative worldviews, laws, and policies around gender, sexuality, and abortion. The main issue that mobilized the pro-life movement was its opposition to abortion, but the movement has also opposed homosexuality and young people's access to sex education and contraceptives. The first pro-life organization – ANPROVIDA – emerged in Nicaragua in the early 1990s and is a local branch of Human Life International (HLI). HLI, based in the US, claims to be the biggest pro-life organization in the world with over 80 organizations worldwide. It defines itself as a Catholic apostolate – meaning that it is of Catholic faith and has the aim of “spreading the word,” but is led by lay Catholics and is not a structural part of the Catholic Church. Toward the mid-1990s, in reaction to a vibrant international and national women's movement around gender-based violence and reproductive health and rights, other pro-life organizations emerged, such as ANIMU and *Sí a la Vida*. Rafael Cabrera, the founder of ANPROVIDA, also held a number of important positions, such as head of the Nicaraguan Medical Association, dean of the Faculty of Medicine of the American University, and head of the Pastorate for Life of the Catholic Church.

In consequence, all those organizations appeared in the public debate as pro-life players. In the first half of the 1990s, Elida de Solórzano, the founder of the women's pro-life organization ANIMU (Nicaraguan Women's Associa-

tion) was also working in the Ministry of Education (together with another pro-life activist, Minister of Education Humberto Belli), and from 1998 onwards in the Ministry of the Family – together with Minister of the Family Max Padilla, who was recruited to the pro-life movement once he became a minister. In close cooperation, they transformed parts of the state into platforms of pro-life activism. While the UNO government under Violeta Chamorro was supportive of conservative values and of the Catholic Church, it was under the government of neopopulist Arnoldo Alemán (1997-2002), leader of the right-wing liberal party, that the pro-life movement thrived under full governmental support. In the late 1990s, Evangelical leaders from the Assemblies of God – the biggest Evangelical denomination in the country, who were also coordinating an umbrella organization of Evangelical churches – were recruited by Catholic pro-life leaders and subsequently drew other Evangelical churches into the struggle. Together they formed the Nicaraguan Pro-Life Committee, an important factor for the success of the pro-life movement. We now analyze the different trajectories through which Catholics and Evangelicals were drawn into the pro-life movement and effectively became constituted as players.

### **Catholics: The (Trans)formation of Grievances**

The precursors and “moral entrepreneurs” of today’s pro-life movement were a handful of activists who became sensitized to pro-life ideals in the late 1970s. They were lay Catholics mobilized in response to international population policies that promoted massive birth control in developing countries, and as a result of their participation in conservative parts of the Catholic Church, particularly the Catholic Family Movements that have proliferated throughout the world since the late 1960s. One of them, and also one of the most visible faces of today’s pro-life movement, is Rafael Cabrera, a gynecologist who in 1990 founded ANPROVIDA, the first pro-life organization in Nicaragua.

Catholic social conservatives rejected the Sandinista regime for different yet overlapping reasons. Many disagreed with their political and economic model, associating Sandinismo with communism, totalitarianism, and atheism. There was a consensus among respondents that the Sandinistas had a negative impact on the family, especially because their ideologies had divided Nicaraguan families along partisan lines, and forced relatives into exile and combat. Nevertheless, the conflict over the family was not (yet) perceived as more pressing than other issues, such as the general political

situation in the country or the challenge to church authority and power posed from inside and outside its walls. Of course the conflict with the Sandinistas could itself have been framed in terms of gender, sexuality, and the family during the 1980s – and in part it was. But this did not become dominant until the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Catholic social conservatives experienced the regime transition in 1990 – after the Sandinistas lost the general election – as a moment of joy and also an opportunity to undo the “damage” caused by the Sandinista regime to the Nicaraguan family: “The year 1990 as a year of transition, reconciliation, of national salvation. The aim was to reconstruct the families” (personal interview [PI], 2005: 15). Conservative Catholics used the state as a strategic player, as a platform of activism, especially through the Ministries of Health and Education. They received key positions in government and the Ministry of Education especially became a bastion of pro-life politics.

While many social conservatives perceived the new situation as advantageous to their cause, they also felt threatened. The flourishing of the women’s movement in Nicaragua in the early 1990s, especially in the context of two international conferences that put issues of women’s rights, sexuality, and reproductive health at the center of the political debate: the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 and the International Women’s Conference in Beijing in 1995. Each had a significant impact on debates and government policies concerning women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights in Nicaragua (Heumann, 2010; Kampwirth, 2006). These developments, referred to with a range of terms, such as “gender ideology,” “feminism,” “ideologies of women’s liberation,” and “homosexualism” (sic), were held responsible for the perceived destruction of the “family” and “family values”:

There is the liberation, the ideologies of women’s liberation. ... [T]hey are so radical that the man is the enemy of the woman, so a family with a man and a woman is not desirable anymore, but two women or two men, of one and the same sex. All these influences provoke family disintegration. The ideological influence of what is called modernism in quotation marks. It can’t be something modern, modern should be what constructs, not what destroys. And this destroys the family, definitely a homosexual man can’t even procreate but has to adopt. So this is not natural anymore. (PI, 2005: 5)

The UN conferences inspired the first public mobilizations of the “pro-life” movement.

Catholic social conservatives experienced the different governments that ruled throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s as favorable to their goals and ideals. This was especially the case with Arnaldo Alemán, a right-wing populist who governed Nicaragua from 1997-2002 and actively supported the pro-life movement. He introduced the “Day of the Unborn Child” as an official national celebration and personally headed pro-life mobilizations. Alemán also reduced the role of the Women’s Institute and instead founded the Ministry of the Family, which subsequently became another bastion for pro-life activism, once Minister of the Family Max Padilla was recruited by the pro-life movement. The combination of triggering threats and sustained political support throughout the 1990s spurred the power and growth of the pro-life movement.

The leaders of the movement expanded their networks throughout the state, civil society, and religious organizations. Pro-life activists not only had important connections with the churches and key positions in the government, but also kept direct channels of communication and lobbying in all state institutions that could be relevant to their goals, via personal contacts with government officials.

### **Evangelicals: Similar Grievances, Different Trajectories**

Compared to conservative Catholics, conservative Evangelicals had similar readings of the Sandinista period, perceiving them as totalitarian, oppressive, and intolerant toward their religious faith and practice:

Being a church, the problem with Sandinismo lay in the fact that ... they wanted the church to be an instrument to incline people to the revolution. How many times did I have to tell them: “Remember that the church is not a political party, it’s not to politicize people. It’s a free, voluntary issue. In church, we have all the political parties; we enter the temple as church members.” ... It goes without saying that they didn’t accept that and this is why they always had us in the category of counterrevolutionaries, CIA agents. (PI, 2005: 34)

The Sandinistas recognized Evangelicals as an important political force and tried to gain their support, and they interpreted their refusal as hostility. Interviewees described how repressive actions against them ultimately undermined support for the revolution:

They committed various abuses. In the Assemblies of God they killed a pastor of ours, and they killed several deacons of ours. They closed temples of ours on the Atlantic coast, in Ciudad Sandino [and] they destroyed a hall that served us as temple in Villa Libertad. They wounded the pastor and some members by stoning. We had difficulties. But as an honest and objective observer not everything in the revolution was bad, but these aspects, yes. One of the most difficult aspects – and I think this was the reason why we Nicaraguans decided to put an end to the revolution – was that communism and Sandinismo as expressions of international communism, are a persecuting system, there is persecution, in the neighborhood, in the city, in the country, they intercept your telephone. It's a disaster. (PI, 2005: 34)

But some Evangelicals, as members of the poorer sectors of society, appreciated a number of the Sandinistas' social policies and redistributive measures, particularly those that gave them access to (higher) education and better living conditions:

In that period abortions could be easily obtained. There was no promotion of values as such. Of waiting, of abstinence, of faithfulness. They promoted other values, such as solidarity, sacrifice, these were also important values. But the official policy was very distant from God. (PI, 2005: 24)

Despite their resentments of the Sandinista regime and despite the Sandinistas' attempts to draw them into the political conflict, conservative Evangelicals tried to stay out of politics. There is no evidence that they were actively engaged in "pro-life" activism during the 1980s.

Conservative Evangelicals welcomed the end of Sandinista rule as eagerly as the Catholics. It meant the end of the war and military service as well as of the harassments they experienced under the Sandinista regime.

However, regime transition did not have the same effect for them as for the Catholics. On the contrary, the new government, in which prominent Catholics had key positions, regranted a number of privileges to the Catholic Church, and Evangelicals had less access to the state than before 1990. The Sandinistas had at least shown interest in their political support. Zub (2008) notes that after 1990 Evangelicals had no formal channels of communication with the state.

The incursion of Evangelicals into politics has to be seen in light of their growing constituency, their disappointment with existing politics (domi-



nated by Catholics), their quest for a government that would represent them, and also the hope and belief that Evangelical politicians would not be corrupt (Zub, 1992; Zub, 2002; PI, 2005: 33; PI, 2005: 34). The foray of Evangelicals into the political arena entailed a major change of their theological practice and was an important prerequisite for their later involvement in pro-life politics. Despite similar readings and grievances, Evangelicals only became involved in pro-life politics in the late 1990s, and they only did so in response to recruitment efforts by (Catholic) leaders of the pro-life movement.

Different positionings vis-à-vis the state, but also different characteristics of the churches, their politics, and their constituencies, explain the different paths Catholics and Evangelicals took toward social conservative activism. Evangelical involvement in the (Catholic) pro-life movement is remarkable for several reasons: they had to go through deep internal changes in order to become political actors in the first place and they had to overcome a relationship with Catholics that historically had been one of competition and conflict.

### The Catholic Church and Pro-Life Activism

The official position of the Vatican toward birth control and abortion is well known. It is often wrongly assumed that this position has been uncontested and unchanged throughout history. Whereas abortion historically had been condemned as concealment of sexual sin, the hegemony of the “right to life” argument is a relatively recent development of the last 50 years (Catholics for a Free Choice, 1996). It was precisely the conservative movement that emerged in response to the Second Vatican Council that led to what is believed to be the most radical statement of opposition to birth control of the Catholic Church. *Humane Vitae*, an encyclical issued by Pope Paul VI, stated that “each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life” (Shallat, 1994: 150).

In Nicaragua, the Catholic hierarchy as personified in Archbishop and Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, advocated for social conservatism during the 1980s. But at the beginning of the decade, he had been more concerned with the general political situation and the position of the church. A pastoral letter from 1984 expressed concern about the “materialist and atheist education that is mining the children’s and youngsters’ consciences” and the fact that part of the clergy were supporting these “materialist forces.” It also expressed concern about the censorship of the media (Conferencia Episcopal de Nicaragua, 1984). Only in the second half of the 1980s did



“the family” increasingly become the focus of concern. In a pastoral letter from 1986, worries about concrete issues regarding marriage, divorce, and abortion come to the fore (Conferencia Episcopal de Nicaragua, 1986). But the predominant concern of the church hierarchy remained the loss of control over its own constituency and its loss of power with the state.

During the 1990s, the Vatican made sexual politics one of its main targets of struggle. John Paul II reaffirmed the “pro-life” statement of his predecessor in *Veritatis Splendour* (Ioannes Paulus PPII, 1993) and more explicitly in *Evangelium Vitae* (Ioannes Paulus PPII, 1995). It is no coincidence that these two encyclicals were published on the eve of the Population Conference in Cairo and the International Women’s Conference in Beijing, respectively. Through its controversial status as “non-member state permanent observer” of the UN, the Catholic Church hierarchy lobbied actively against birth control and abortion (Kissling, 1999).

We should not equate this hierarchy with the church as a whole. To appreciate the role Catholic networks play in the development of social conservative activism, it is important to distinguish between *platforms* for activism and advocacy (players) and *arenas* where discussion and dissent are taking place among various players. The universities are emblematic of this difference. Nicaragua has three Catholic universities: the Central American University (UCA), the Catholic University (UNICA), and Ave María College. UCA is a Jesuit university founded in 1961, and historically known to support liberation theology and the political left. It has an “Interdisciplinary Gender Studies Program,” and has offered room for discussion forums on sexual and reproductive rights organized by leaders of the women’s movement. UNICA, by contrast, was founded in 1992 by Cardinal Obando. It has received financial support from both the Chamorro and the Alemán administrations. Between 1997 and 2001 Alemán assigned one-third of the whole state budget for university scholarships to Obando’s UNICA (Loáisiga Mayorga, 2005). Ave Maria College (today Ave Maria University) was founded in 1999 as the satellite campus of a US private university founded by Thomas Monaghan, an American entrepreneur who founded Domino’s Pizza. It was headed until 2007 by Humberto Belli, a prominent Nicaraguan Catholic pro-life activist, member of the Catholic institution Opus Dei, with links to the US political and religious right since the 1970s, who also became Minister of Education in 1990 (Envío Team, 1990; Gonzalez Ruiz, 2005). The two conservative Catholic universities thus only emerged in the 1990s.

Some of the pastoral councils of the Catholic Church were also mentioned as important players promoting pro-life ideals. The Pastoral for Family, Life and Infancy, for instance, was led for several years by Rafael Cabrera

and also works closely together with the Catholic Family Movements and pro-life civil organizations.

The Catholic Lay Movements of Evangelization like *Cursillos* and *Encuentros Conjugales* were identified by informants as important spaces that triggered experiences of religious conversion and commitment to pro-life and pro-family ideals. These movements are organized around weekend retreats of self-reflection and community-building that worked as powerful tools of personal transformation.

It is important to see these organizations as dynamic, their political roles and positions continuously changing, and in that sense, at some moments in time more as an arena with conflicting voices than as united players. The role of *Cursillos* in particular has changed considerably. From its conservative origins in Spain under Franco, *Cursillos de Cristiandad* became very popular and important in liberation theology in Central America in the 1970s (PI, 2005: 36). Many left-wing Catholic leaders who joined the revolution, such as Fernando Cardenal, were first recruited through *Cursillos de Cristiandad*. During the backlash in the 1980s, huge internal tensions arose, eventually leading to *Cursillos* being taken over by the conservative Catholic hierarchy (PI, 2005: 38).

The Catholic Family Movements, by contrast, are less susceptible to these changes because they have as their primary goal the promotion of Catholic (sexual) morality. Other parts of the Catholic Church are known for their conservatism and their commitment to socially conservative (sexual) politics and operate in a less public way, such as *Opus Dei*, the *Neo-catechumenal Way*, the *Charismatic Movement City of God*, and the *Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship*. These four groups were established in Nicaragua in the 1990s. Catholic organizations have proliferated since then with the support of the government, the Vatican, and other international actors involved in pro-life activism.

Neither the official position of the church nor its political role is monolithic or static, and therefore the church is not a natural or pregiven pro-life player, but an institution that has become constituted as an important player in and through national and international politics, in various arenas. Once appropriated as platforms for pro-life activism, religious networks help promote social conservatism. Messages, activism, and initiatives of social conservatives can take a variety of forms, including the religious service itself, Bible study groups, religious retreats for young people (*retiros juveniles*) or for married couples (*encuentros matrimoniales*, *encuentros conjugales*), talks in neighborhood centers, schools, and universities, as well as more direct forms of political action, such as petitions and public demonstrations.

## Evangelical Churches and Pro-Life Activism

Conservative Evangelicals in the 1990s were mostly organized either through the Consejo Nacional de Pastores Evangelicos de Nicaragua (CNPEN) or the Nicaraguan Evangelical Alliance (Alianza Evangélica Nicaragüense, or AENIC), an interdenominational organization founded in 1990 (and a legal entity since 1996) that openly rejects “anthropocentric” worldviews (Alianza Evangélica Nicaragüense, 1996). AENIC also became an important pro-life actor at the end of the 1990s.

The leaders of AENIC were also leaders of the Evangelical denomination Assemblies of God. These Evangelical leaders were originally approached by the then-Minister of the Family, a Catholic pro-life activist. In one of the follow-up meetings to the international conferences, he had been approached by the vice president for public policy of Focus on the Family, who urged him to seek an alliance with Evangelicals (PI, 2005: 12).

AENIC claims to encompass 70 percent of the Evangelical churches in the country (PI, 2005: 34), although members of more left-wing Protestant churches (GD, 2007) question this claim. It is even unclear to what extent these leaders are acting in the name of the constituencies of their own denominations. The study by Gonzalez (1998) revealed not only the economic marginality of Pentecostal church constituencies, but also their lack of familiarity with mainstream politics. Most of those surveyed couldn't name more than one or two leading parties in the country and did not know their full names. More than 40 percent of Evangelicals didn't know the leaders of their own denominations. Nevertheless, Evangelical church leaders have been able to mobilize considerable parts of their constituencies for the pro-life cause. Evangelical, and in particular Pentecostal, churches, are present across Nicaragua, literally in every neighborhood, and have very strong and dense networks. Members typically spend much more time at church or being involved in church activities than Catholics. On average the services last for two hours, compared to the Sunday masses of the Catholic Church, which are often only 45 minutes long. These institutions appear to exert more social control than Catholic churches, in that they are constantly active in the neighborhoods: going from door to door to gain adherents, but also organizing members to help each other out in all kinds of practical matters, such as borrowing construction materials for a house, helping in its construction, and aiding members to find employment.

In 1999, the strategic alliance between Catholic and Evangelical social conservatives gave way to the creation of an overarching coalition that claimed to represent the pro-life movement in Nicaragua: the Nicaraguan

Pro-Life Committee (PI, 2005: 17). Members of the committee claimed to be integrated and supported by a large number of organizations that signed on to its public pronouncements. A closer look at their constituency, however, reveals a small number of persons who appear and act as representatives of different institutions, ranging from medical associations to civil society organizations and religious spaces. The pro-life movement depends upon a rather small number of militants committed to the cause, in need of religious networks in order to expand their mobilizing capacity. This however is a choice riddled with strategic dilemmas.

### **The Extension Dilemma: Between Strategic Secularism and the Centrality of the Churches**

While churches offer important platforms for the pro-life struggle, leaders from civil organizations like ANPROVIDA, as well as Evangelical leaders, complained that they often had to lobby within their churches in order to get their support. This is not to say that the churches don't support their goals or don't share their ideals, but they did not necessarily consider the pro-life struggle a priority. Particularly in the Catholic Church, a highly politicized player, informants found it was not always convenient to raise "pro-life" concerns (PI, 2005: 10; PI, 2005: 11).

In general, pro-life activists from civil society organizations consider their association with the Catholic Church a double-edged sword. On the one hand it is important and fruitful, because in the activists' view the secular pro-life discourse and the religious discourse complement each other. They also consider the church indispensable in organizing public mobilizations, as they are aware that they don't have the capacity or the social base to mobilize the masses. On the other hand, the inextricable link between the church and the movement was viewed as potentially harmful because it was seen as making them more vulnerable to the critique of violating the secular character of the state. Some felt it also weakened their arguments by making them appear "less scientific":

Because the message of ANPROVIDA – based on legal, scientific, or social arguments – was weakened when it linked us to the Catholic Church. Because what we had said ... about the scientific and medical arguments was ignored. ... And I think that this is a strategy of the pro-abortion groups, to focus on that [our link with the church] in order to weaken our arguments. (PI, 2005: 10)

In the interviews, some pro-life leaders from civil organizations also tried to emphasize the scientific and legal arguments and downplay the significance of religion. The latter nevertheless becomes evident when looking at their life histories. Pro-life activists view their relationship with the church with ambivalence, considering that without the churches a pro-life movement would hardly exist: “Personally I think that we shouldn’t have appeared together or very connected with each other, and that we had to focus on these topics and [appear together] only in necessary moments, where it was of necessity to appear all united, because of course there were [moments] where we had to appear together” (PI, 2005: 10).

Ultimately, civil society organizations that engage in socially conservative politics, like ANPROVIDA and ANIMU, consist of only a handful of members, who are very committed and keep the movement going. Still, they are not able to mobilize a significant number of people without the churches:

We don’t have the resources or a way to mobilize. This is to say, here we have to resort to the Christian churches. We are the ones who are in the initial position to contradict or to tell whoever, but to mobilize you require a big organization, and we don’t have the money to do that or the possibility that people will believe us. (PI, 2005: 12)

Despite the hesitation to resort to church support, an invitation by a church authority to join a protest or sign a petition is undeniably compelling. This extends to Evangelical churches as well:

Our church has something that is the unity initiated by the pastor. He invites us to be part of transcendental issues in the country where we can’t remain quiet, and he urges us to exercise that when these meetings or kinds of demonstrations take place, in defense of our rights as a church and as Christians. This motivates me to be part of something that is promoted in the church as unity. (PI, 2005: 23)

Political influence thus includes lobbying in the National Assembly or with important public functionaries through petitions, “consciousness raising” activities, public demonstrations and influencing public opinion, and, according to respondents from different sides, direct pressure from the Catholic Church hierarchy.

The pro-life movement consists of a core of militant activists who use a diversity of arenas to promote their ideas. However, these activists are relatively limited in number and don’t have any significant mobilizing capac-

ity. Hence, the Catholic and Evangelical churches play a crucial role in the pro-life movement: they offer a platform for the daily “consciousness raising” activities, for the establishment of transnational projects and networks, and most importantly, they offer the grounds for a common identity based on a shared interpretation of Christianity and the Bible. In this way they constitute a powerful basis for collective mobilization: people are mobilized through church networks, the authority of church leaders, and religious discourse. Pro-life leaders make use of both national and transnational networks. Despite the claims of Nicaraguan pro-life leaders that they speak the native, authentic voice and are guardians and representatives of traditional Nicaraguan values, we find that local organizations have structural and personal links with transnational conservative networks that play an important role in the development of the social-conservative movement in Nicaragua through direct recruitment, financial support, advocacy messaging, and strategic advice.

While religious groups have boosted the pro-life movement’s capacity to influence the state, their mobilizing capacity, and their discursive resonance, pro-life activists experience trade-offs between “secularism” and “religiosity” as political strategies. In the current context, in which secular and religious worldviews are increasingly presented as opposite and incommensurable, and in which religiosity is presented as irreconcilable with the public sphere and the very idea of “modern democracy,” political activists come increasingly under pressure to make a clear “choice” of one or the other. In such a situation, the religious extension of the movement may prove increasingly restrictive.

## Conclusion

What can we learn from the strategic interactions between churches (both the Roman Catholic and the Evangelical), the pro-life movement, and state actors? We can draw three main conclusions regarding the strategic interactions that turn religious groups into political players:

- Political mobilization of religious individuals and groups is sometimes more driven by interreligious competition than by a specific common religious cause (e.g., pro-life): the incursion of conservative Evangelicals into the political arena was mostly caused by interreligious competition. Once they became a political force that could not be ignored, Evangelicals were recruited by Catholic pro-life leaders to join the pro-life coalition. While they share similar frames of understanding about the Family and Christian Morality (with capital letters), the decision to become active

reflects their general quest to gain political influence and participation. This reveals the strategic aspect of the interaction: Evangelicals who had tried without success to fight against the privileges and power of the Catholic Church concluded that they could gain by collaborating with it. In turn, Catholics were forced to acknowledge Evangelicals as a growing political force and potential competitor. As pro-life activists, they considered collaboration advantageous when they could channel their political action toward goals that would favor both their interests. Therefore, rather than presenting a puzzling development (Kane 2008), the historically antagonistic relationship between Evangelicals and Catholics in part explains their subsequent coalition.

- The transformation of churches into platforms of political mobilization demands a lot of bottom-up efforts and top-down support. There is an important and complex relationship between religious networks and the pro-life movement. Most activists have important personal roots in religious communities. In the case of the Catholics, they typically have a history of involvement in the Catholic Family Movements. In Nicaragua the churches became important organizational structures for recruitment and are crucial for collective mobilization, but their participation is a product of active and strategic recruitment by pro-life activists.
- The support of the churches and their constituency will be welcomed by pro-life organizations but the “visibility” of their religiousness in public manifestations will depend on the legitimacy of religious arguments in the political arena (sometimes and by some primarily understood as a secular arena). As the Nicaraguan case has shown, dependence upon the churches is also seen as an Achilles’ heel for some social-conservative leaders, who feel increasing pressure to craft a “scientific” and secular image in order to reach a public that values a secular state, ruled by law and informed by science. In addition, when churches become political players, they are also subjected to competing political goals and, as pro-life activists complain, the support for pro-life politics by church leaders sometimes depends on how strategic it is for churches in a particular political context.

In this chapter, we have dealt with the question of how churches become part of social movements. Assets of churches as outlined by Smith (1996), which give them strategic advantages as social movement players, can contribute to explaining why it may be strategic for some players to recruit church members and appropriate religious organizations as mobilizing structures. But it does not explain how and why church leaders or church



members decide to become involved in social movement activism. To do so, it is necessary to empirically analyze strategic interactions between religious actors and other players (state actors, social movement actors, protestors), and to scrutinize the precise meanings that get attached to “religion” in those specific struggles. Other players may prefer “strategic secularism” to alliances with religious actors, just like religious players may prefer not to become part of movements that are partly secular, let alone being “absorbed” into a secular state. We therefore conclude that churches’ preexisting belief systems do not determine their involvement in social movements, but the strategic interaction among themselves, with third parties and the state. Churches don’t automatically provide the “cultural framework through which the movement would be framed,” as Morris (2000: 448) has argued for the civil rights movement. We didn’t find a clearly circumscribed or uniform pro-life frame in the churches that was subsequently lifted into the pro-life movement. On the contrary, we saw that the churches are internally diverse and changing over time, and are better understood as arenas of struggle between different and often competing forces. Pro-life activists targeted the churches strategically with recruitment efforts in order to appropriate religious spaces as mobilizing structures for the movement – thereby transforming them into platforms of pro-life activism.

## Note

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## 12 What the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street Illuminate about Bystander Publics as Proto-Players

*Hahrie Han and Dara Z. Strolovitch*

Successful movements build like snowballs rolling down a hill. They start small, with a core group of participants, but get larger as they roll, gaining momentum and size as they progress. To generate this momentum, movement leaders and participants must appeal to constituencies that might not seem interested or to have a stake in their issues and goals. They must also mobilize the opinions of many actors who will never join their actions, but whose consciousness about the issues may be raised, who may contact elected officials about them, or who may adopt a position on an issue related to the movement's goals that determines their voting behavior (Lee, 2002). These external constituencies are examples of "bystander publics" – individuals and groups to whom movements may try to appeal, but who have yet to engage with a movement. Some bystander publics never engage with the movements that court them, while others eventually become participants. Some bystander publics may someday become supporters of a movement, while others come to oppose it and its goals.

Although bystander publics stand outside the movement, they are critical players because they exist in dynamic dialogue with the movement. But scholars have given scant attention to the relationship between movements and bystander publics. In their study of social movement audiences, Kathleen Blee and Amy McDowell (2012) argue that the ways in which movements construct, give meaning to, and interpret bystander publics affect the strategies and goals they choose. Viewed this way, these players, real or imagined, affect the strategic alternatives movements see, the strategic considerations they take into account, and, ultimately, the choices they make. That is, movements imagine, interpret, and give meaning to the bystander publics, strategically making choices about whom to engage, whom to ignore, and even whom to antagonize. Charles Tilly (1977) famously analogized movements to street performers rehearsing routinized scripts. The performance analogy is apt, because it captures the way movements perform with audiences in mind: as Blee and McDowell (2012) argue, those audiences become players in the performance itself.

The term “bystander” might seem to connote a passive observer or a mere consumer of movement politics. “Bystander publics,” however, possess as much agency as any of the other strategic players. Rather than standing passively on the sidelines, many members of “bystander publics” are actively engaged in processes and institutions that build their democratic capacities and shape the choices they will make about if and how to engage with the movement. As individuals assemble, interact, and work together as friends, neighbors, cocongregants, students, parents, and coworkers, they deliberate over political and nonpolitical issues. By building relationships and developing civic skills, they develop democratic resources, cultures, and strategies that plant seeds that, under some conditions, social movements may later harvest (McAdam, 1988; Morris, 1984; Putnam, 2000; Skocpol, 2003; Han, 2009).

In this light, many members of bystander publics are more than mere consumers of social movements. Instead, in building these democratic capacities, developing traditions of action (and inaction), creating networks, and learning and crafting democratic strategies, bystander publics develop identities, resources, and capacities that influence the way movements choose to interact with them. As such, bystander publics are not simply objects of social movements’ influence and suasion. Instead, as John McCarthy and Mayer Zald (1977) have argued, they can be important resources *for* movements.<sup>1</sup> While McCarthy and Zald focus on the resources that elites can bring to movements, we examine resources from members of the mass public. In addition, we argue that bystander publics bring much more than just resources – they also have distinct traditions, strategies, and capacities that can shape whether and how movements engage them, as well as whether and how a bystander public responds to movement overtures.

At their cores, social movements attempt to harness and build power, typically among “outsider” groups that “lack the resources, the contacts, or the experience to use other political strategies” (Ginsberg et al., 2009: 256) or that do not have access “to conventional means of expressing their views” (Barbour and Wright, 2009: 607). To do so, movements try to draw attention to political causes by leveraging the power that they *do* have – power that lies with aggrieved constituencies who are or can be motivated to change their circumstances. From the perspective of the movement, then, many members of “bystander publics” are potential sources of power through the resources to which they have access, the strategies through which they develop and deploy those resources, or the traditions that shape those strategies. This power can take multiple forms, including material resources (such as money), technical knowledge (such as facility with online social

media), symbolic support (such as supportive public opinion), affective bonds (such as shared consciousness), or even oppositional targets (such as having clear opponents can help movements build supporters) (see, for example, Snow and Soule, 2010; Snow et al., 2007).

Because bystander publics are agentic players, their engagement with a movement can have feedback effects that shape and change the movement itself. Although movement activists typically want to expand their scope to include as many players and publics as possible, they must also remain mindful about the possible trade-offs of engaging a bystander public and mobilizing it into the movement. Depending on the possibilities that each public might offer, movements can make different decisions about which among the range of possible bystander publics to engage, which ones to ignore, and which ones to oppose, as well as about how to engage with or oppose them. Because movements cannot predict or control the way bystander publics will respond to their overtures, these choices entail what Jasper (2006) calls “engagement dilemmas.” So while bystander publics may bring much needed resources, incorporating them into a movement can alter or transform the identity of the movement itself by changing or watering down messages (Strolovitch, 2007), presenting a movement with what Jasper calls an “extension dilemma” (Jasper, 2006: 26-27).

In other words, movement participants face what Jasper calls the “Bystander dilemma” in which they must decide whether to encourage bystanders to get involved in light of the risks that new players might change the nature of the movement itself (Jasper, 2006: 123). Reaching out, Jasper argues, can bring more diversity but less unity, more power but less focus, and breadth at the expense of depth (Jasper, 2006: 127-128). Each of these strategic choices about whom to engage are implicitly choices the movement makes about its character, agenda, and actions. So while bystander publics are, by definition, not *participants in* a particular movement, they can nonetheless be central to defining the values the movement will embody and the goals that they will pursue.

To explore these relationships between bystander publics and movement values and goals, we examine the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, focusing on each movement’s relationship to what scholars have come to call “intersectionally marginalized populations” – that is, disadvantaged subgroups of broader marginalized groups. In particular, we examine each movement’s choice of targets and the ways in which each one characterizes economic problems and their victims.

We begin by defining “bystander publics” and discussing their relationships to other social movement players. We then move on to a brief

discussion about intersectional marginalization and its implications for understanding social movements in general and the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street in particular. After laying the groundwork for our examination, we explore the similarities and differences in the ways each movement has framed the political implications of economic problems and in the ways each one attempts (or does not attempt) to engage potential participants and sympathizers. For example, we examine the ways in which each movement drew on existing networks and organized groups to build its movement, using this as a lens through which to understand how movements make choices about which possible bystander publics to engage, which ones to ignore, and which ones to cast as their opponents, as well as how these decisions both reflect and serve to construct each one. We argue that although both movements were stimulated by a sense of economic disaffection, the ways in which they came to represent very divergent analyses of and responses to the economic problems of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century help us to understand the role of “bystander publics” in social movements.

### **Bystander Publics: An Overview**

We conceptualize “bystander publics” as “proto-players” who may, but who have yet to, engage with a social movement. Many movement participants – including networks of supporters, artists and intellectuals, religious organizations, and many other movement “players” – were, at some point, members of a bystander public. Once they begin to engage with a movement (as either supporters or opponents, or even in choosing to ignore the movement), their status changes, and they are no longer bystanders. “Bystander public” is consequently an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of different publics, none of which is a monolithic entity.

Indeed, there is great heterogeneity among the range of possible bystander publics as well as among the individuals who comprise any particular one, both in their potential interest in the movement and in the potential power they have to mobilize in support or opposition to the movement. For example, though he does not use the term “bystander publics,” Taeku Lee (2002) foregrounds the role of groups we can conceptualize as bystander publics in his analysis of sympathetic Northern whites, unsympathetic Northern whites, Southern whites, Northern blacks, unmobilized Southern blacks, and others among the range of possible audiences targeted by civil rights movement activists. African-Americans around the country had a direct interest in the civil rights movement, as did the Southern whites who were



being challenged. Northern whites, on the other hand, were more removed but represented a potentially powerful source of public opinion. All of these groups were, at some point, what we call bystander publics, even though they had a range of kinds of relationships to and interest in the movement. Some of them observed the civil rights movement without engaging with it or even forming an opinion about it, while others may not even have been aware that the movement existed. What unites them in this category is that they are outside the movement, but could be drawn into it.

While members of bystander publics may not have decided whether or how to engage with a movement, many of them are actively engaged in civic and democratic processes that shape the way they relate to the movement. As members of and participants in religious institutions, schools, voluntary associations, and the like, individuals assemble with other people in myriad ways as neighbors, friends, partners, colleagues, families, and so on. Each of these relationships is a possible avenue for the development of the democratic capacities, orientations, and culture that shape the choices individuals make about how to engage with movements. In his 19<sup>th</sup>-century classic *Democracy in America*, for example, Alexis de Tocqueville (2001) noted the ubiquity of “associations” in the United States, arguing that nowhere had they been more “successfully used or applied to a greater multitude of objects” (95). Democracy works as well as it does in the United States, Tocqueville argued, because through these associations, Americans become familiar and comfortable with democratic practices and norms (2001). Even if the associations they join do not address the issues that concern the particular social movement in question, people develop democratic capacities through their participation.

For this reason, democratic theorists have argued that the process of being in a public can be transformational (Barber, 2003; Pateman, 1970). Borrowing from performance studies to understand the way in which the choices performers make are shaped by characteristics, actions, and interpretations of the audiences, Blee and McDowell (2012) call these bystander publics “audiences.” In interaction with each other, performers and audiences (or movements and bystander publics) are distinct players that shape one another. This is particularly true of members of marginalized and disenfranchised groups. Before the Nineteenth Amendment enfranchised women, for example, they “came together in organizations devoted to good works: caring for the sick, teaching the young, housing orphans, and the like. Later on, their organizational purposes grew to encompass agitation on behalf of social causes ... and self-improvement through intellectual and literary pursuits” allowing women – particularly educated, white,



and middle-class women – to develop skills and “exercise public influence otherwise denied them” (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba, 2001: 73-74; see also Lerner, 1979; Baker, 1984; Giddings, 1984; Cott, 1987; Kunzel, 1991).

As bystander publics engage in these democratic processes, they are often unorganized. In this sense, bystander publics resemble “issue publics,” or loose groupings of people who share a common, but often latent, interest in a particular issue (Converse, 1964; Hutchings, 2003; Krosnick, 1990). Members of these publics might be relatively quiescent or very action-oriented; they may be budding allies or potential opponents. The public could be large or small, with a well-developed civic infrastructure or only loose ties between people. People may not identify as members of an issue public, and they may not be aware of the issue or active around it until it presents a threat to their interests. Issue publics (and similar bystander publics) may thus be primarily imagined players. Movements and other strategic players may imagine that a reservoir of latent interest in (or opposition to) their issues exists, but be unsure about how large, developed, or organized that public is. They may imagine that a bystander public is ready to act, but be unsure of what the triggers to action are. With respect to issue publics, scholars theorize that the issue public rises up like a “sleeping giant” when its interests are threatened, thus clarifying its interests in the process (Hutchings, 2003). Until that threat exists, however, issue publics are extremely heterogeneous, largely imagined publics. Despite being unorganized, a bystander public is poised to rise up in response to threat precisely because it has engaged in the Tocquevillian processes described above that help it develop a sense of culture that shapes the strategic choices it makes.

Bystander publics and movements each have their own interests that they seek to enact in the relationship they form with each other. Uncovering these interests is often a relational exercise itself. In choosing whether and how to engage with a bystander public, organizers must first get to know them through a process of relationship-building. Because the bystander public is largely imagined until it becomes an organized player, movements rely on individualized processes of relationship-building to get to know and define these publics. As an organizer enters a community and begins to reach out to bystander publics, the beliefs, preferences, strategic interests, and resources they have to offer may not yet be clear. In his description of the Industrial Areas Foundation, for example, Mark Warren (2001) describes the patient relational work in which organizers engage as they get to know a community and map its publics before they attempt to organize it on a particular issue. Much of this interpersonal work is done with bystander publics, or groups and individuals who have yet to engage with the move-

ment. The relationship-building process is an exploratory phase, but can also shape the interactions that emerge. Many elements of their social context affect the way in which bystanders process information about the social and political world, whether they interpret information and form narratives that lead to civic and political action, and the kinds of civic skills they develop (see, for example, Zuckerman, 2005). People participate in politics for myriad reasons, among these motivations are often social ones (Han, 2009; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Green and Gerber, 2004). The social context within which movements develop relationships with bystander publics can influence the choices members of each group make.

Even when they are not actively engaged in action together, then, bystander publics and social movements do not stand in isolation relative to one another. Instead, movement organizers engage in ongoing attempts to assess the micro- and macro-level dynamics within relevant publics. That is, they engage in the kinds of one-on-one relationship-building with individual members of a community that Warren (2001) describes, as well as in macro-level imagining and strategizing about ways to reach out to new constituencies and mobilize bystander publics. Lee, for example, describes how civil rights movement organizers built coalitions across large organizations that helped them mobilize progressive white liberals to their side (2002). Blee and McDowell (2012) show how the shifting interpretations social movement groups ascribed to their audience shaped the kind of strategic actions they wanted to take. At the same time as movement leaders assess the resources and power of a bystander public, individual members of those publics are engaged in social processes that lay the foundations for the democratic deliberation, skill-building, and action that puts them into direct relationship with a movement. These relationship-building processes help transform bystander publics from imagined players into potentially strategic players. If there is a “there there” in the bystander public, it may emerge as a strategic player relative to the movement, with each group assessing and anticipating the role of the other in fulfilling its strategic interests.

This dynamic relationship is thus critical to the development of a movement’s identity and strategic agenda. Important questions remain, however, about the ways in which movements view, reach out to, and engage with bystander publics. How is public opinion mobilized by protestors and their opponents? What do bystander publics do before they are mobilized as players? How do movements strategize about the bystander publics and anticipate their reactions? Bystander publics figure as symbolic (imagined) players even before they become engaged as *actual* players. Are they seen

accurately, or are they distorted in systematic ways? Although the bystander public is not a player per se, it is a player imagined and referenced by other players. How do such strategic interactions unfold? How do movements make choices about reaching out to bystander publics? What kind of mobilizing and rhetorical strategies are most likely to be effective? Under what conditions are these publics transformed into active participants? Although a complete answer to these many questions about the dynamic relationship between bystander publics and social movements is beyond the scope of this chapter, we can gain traction on some important aspects of them by examining the case of the Tea Party movement and Occupy Wall Street in the United States.

### **Bystander Publics, Economic Movements, and Intersectionality**

The early development of the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street demonstrates how decisions about how to engage with particular bystander publics reflect but also shape the values that movements come to embody. In particular, we examine the way the movements chose their targets and the ways in which they characterized the victims of economic injustice, focusing particularly on each one's conceptualization and treatment of intersectional populations. These cases illustrate some of the ways in which movements make choices about which possible bystander publics they would engage, which ones they would ignore, and which ones they would cast as their opponents, and how these decisions both reflect and serve to construct each movement. Although both movements were stimulated by economic discontent, their relationships with bystander publics help us to understand how and why each one came to represent such divergent analyses of and responses to the economic problems of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Intersectionality in the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street**

“Intersectionally marginalized” is a term used to describe multiply marginalized groups, whose disadvantage is constituted by more than one form of inequality (Crenshaw, 1989). Low-income women, for example, experience disadvantages based on both their sex and their economic status. Theories of intersectionality were developed initially by feminists of color who were frustrated with a feminist movement that privileged and essentialized the experiences and positions of white women, representing

these as being those of “all women,” and also with a civil rights movement that similarly privileged and essentialized the experiences and positions of black men. While intersectionality has a long lineage, the term itself was coined and developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a legal scholar and critical race feminist theorist. As many readers know, theories of intersectionality contend that groups can be marginalized along many axes within what Patricia Hill Collins has called the “matrix of domination” (Collins, 1990; for other foundational articulations, see, *inter alia*, Crenshaw, 1989; Combahee River Collective, 1981; Hull, Scott, and Smith, 1982; Mohanty, 1988). From an intersectional perspective, these multiple forms of marginalization – including race, gender, class, sexuality, age, and disability – do not function as “separate, fixed, and parallel tracks, but are rather dynamic, simultaneous, and mutually constitutive” (Strolovitch, 2007: 24).

More generally, intersectional theories reject the notion that one particular form of domination or social relation – be it race, class, patriarchy, or heteronormativity – is the primary source of oppression. While they recognize that important inequalities persist among racial, gender, or economic groups, intersectional approaches highlight overlapping and intersecting inequalities *within* marginal groups. These many forms of oppression and disadvantage are not static or rankable, and they do not operate along single axes in simple or additive ways. Instead of functioning as separate, fixed, and parallel tracks, they are at once dynamic and structural, and they create cumulative inequalities that define, shape, and reinforce one another in ways that constitute the relative positions and opportunities of differently situated members of marginalized groups. The effects of these multiple forms of discrimination are compounded, exponential, and unique products that are different from and far greater than the sum of their parts, creating unique dimensions of disempowerment for differently situated subgroups. Most central for analytic purposes is that because they are mutually constituted, specific forms of disadvantage and privilege cannot be understood, much less addressed, in isolation.

At the heart of the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street movements are concerns about economic conditions – and hence intersectionally marginalized populations – in the United States. Economic issues in the US are ideologically fraught, however, and economic inequalities intersect and overlap with other axes of inequality, including racial and gender marginalization, both in their constitution and manifestation as well as in people’s ideas about their origins, effects, and solutions. As a consequence, many of the issues taken up by these two movements have particular effects on members of intersectionally marginalized groups.

The Tea Party began after an on-air tirade by CNBC commentator Rick Santelli, who blamed “irresponsible” homeowners for the mortgage foreclosure crisis. While the situation was not labeled or treated as a crisis until it began to affect moderate-income whites, it has disproportionately affected low-income people of color. Occupy Wall Street also developed out of economic concerns, but one that harnessed the growing feelings of powerlessness felt by many in the face of rising economic disparities and the increasing institutional power of Wall Street and the wealthiest 1 percent of the population. Although Occupy claims to stand for the “99 percent” of Americans who are left out of what they characterize as a power grab on the part of elites, the most affected populations are often intersectionally marginalized ones.

This shared focus on economic conditions initially led many scholars and journalists to note the similarities between the two movements. Although we do not want to overstate the extent of their similarity, the two movements share what seem at first glance to be striking parallels. “Occupy Wall Street movement intrigues, confounds the Tea Party,” declared one headline in the October 18, 2011, issue of the *Christian Science Monitor*. The article continued by noting that “[s]ome commentators are drawing parallels between the two populist uprisings – opposition to government bailouts of corporations is one prominent example – and some have even suggested a big-tent merger that could yield policy to alleviate the economic dissatisfaction, political powerlessness, and middle-class angst that drives both movements” (Johnson, 2011). The article quoted Rory McVeigh, director of the Center for the Study of Social Movements at the University of Notre Dame, who said, “We’ve ... got a conservative populist movement and a progressive populist movement happening at the same time. ... There’s a sense on both sides that it’s us against that unnamed force out there running the world.” The two movements arose at similar times and in response to similar phenomena. Both claimed to be “big tents” that focus on economic issues rather than on so-called social issues. Both claimed to be populist movements and to speak for broad swaths of nonelite publics.

Despite these similarities, the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street have diverged in the ways they characterize and react to intersectional populations, revealing vast differences in what each one stands for. As grassroots movements, both have resisted the attempt to label them or specify precisely what their goals and claims are.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, certain positions are clear. While the Tea Party blamed marginalized groups such as mortgage defaulters and their government enablers, Occupy Wall Street reached out to these groups as the victims, rather than causes, of economic problems. While

both movements address issues related to inequality, the Tea Party might be seen as attempting to mobilize bystander publics of resentful members of dominant groups while the bystander publics for Occupy Wall Street are marginalized groups and intersectionally marginalized subgroups of these broader populations. A key axis of difference between the movements is apparent in the way each one identifies and defines the “unnamed force” that is “running the world,” and, consequently, who it identifies as its antagonists and its potential adherents. As most readers know, where the Tea Party espouses diagnoses and solutions that are typically conservative, Occupy Wall Street’s positions are typically left-progressive. While the Tea Party focuses its anger on government, Occupy directs its energies to opposing the power of Wall Street and large financial institutions. In addition, while Occupy Wall Street wants to try to overthrow existing power structures, the Tea Party attempts to mobilize constituencies who want to maintain the status quo. So while leaders and participants in each movement may have felt “economically disaffected,” the institutions they blame for this disaffection are different. Examining how each one conceives of and treats intersectional populations thus provides insight into the values that underlie the identity and claims of each movement. To understand how these choices emerged, we next examine the way the relationship between each movement and its bystander publics shaped the choices each one made on this front.

### **Bystander Publics, the Tea Party, and Occupy Wall Street**

The Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street serve as excellent cases through which to examine bystander publics, revealing as they do the strategic choices and dilemmas movements confront about mobilizing possible participants to join their cause. Both movements originated with viral outcries against powerful political and economic institutions that sparked rapid reactions among a previously unorganized public. The Tea Party owes its name to Rick Santelli, a former futures trader and the vice president of Drexel Burnham Lambert, a major Wall Street banking firm. In February 2009, Santelli delivered a rant on CNBC against the Obama administration’s planned assistance to foreclosed homeowners and what he characterized as the irresponsibility of those homeowners. Although his overt goal was simply to voice his anger and discontent, as he was speaking, he urged “all you capitalists” to join him in a Chicago Tea Party on Lake Michigan to dump derivative securities into the water. This call elicited cheers from

the traders around him on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. The video spread virally through YouTube, and within hours someone had created a website, “OfficialChicagoTeaParty.com.”

Similarly, Occupy Wall Street began with a clarion call to protest. In 2011, the radical bi-monthly magazine *Adbusters* sent an email to its supporters calling for a protest against Wall Street. *Adbusters* was run by 69-year-old Kalle Lasn, a refugee from Estonia who had spent his early years in German refugee camps fleeing the Russian Army during World War II, and Micah White, the 29-year-old son of a white mother and an African-American father who says, “I don’t really fit in with either group” (Schwartz, 2011). Lasn and White ran *Adbusters* together in Canada, creating a magazine known for its vivid imagery. Characteristically, in their call to arms, they used a powerful image of a ballerina poised on Wall Street’s “Charging Bull” statue, with pictures of protestors in the background fighting through clouds of tear gas. Unlike other attempts to foment protest that the magazine had tried to provoke, this email spread quickly, prompting White to say, “Normal campaigns are lots of drudgery and not much payoff, like rolling a snowball up a hill. This was the reverse” (Schwartz, 2011). Only 15 minutes after *Adbusters* sent the email, 26-year-old Justine Tunney read it. It took her only one day to register the name OccupyWallSt.org, which eventually became the movement’s online hub.

As Santelli and *Adbusters* went viral, they faced the challenge of harnessing the energy created by the overwhelming response to their rhetoric and organizing it into an actual protest that could have an impact on politics and public policy. Each budding movement imagined a larger group of unorganized bystanders who shared their outrage about economic issues but had not yet joined the movement. Building the movement involved a series of strategic choices about how to partner with organized bystander publics to develop the resources they needed, while still growing the support they were building among this unorganized but imagined group of bystanders. To do so, each movement built on an existing infrastructure of networks and groups that predated their call to action.

By many accounts, neither Santelli nor *Adbusters* had anticipated how powerfully their message would resonate with discontented bystanders around the country. Two weeks after Santelli delivered his rant in Chicago, dozens of Tea Party protests had risen up around the country. These protests drew both organized and unorganized bystanders. Many were disaffected individuals who had heard about the protests through online and traditional media – bystander publics who became activated once they heard a resonant call to action. Other publics were more organized,



drawing on existing social networks and structures. Keli Carender, for example, was a blogger in Seattle who had called for a “Porkulus” protest against government waste a week before Santelli’s rant. Her first protest, which occurred three days before Santelli went viral, did not draw enough people to finish all the pork that had been donated by conservative writer Michelle Malkin. In the end, Carender took the leftover pork to a homeless shelter (Zernike, 2010).

Although turnout for the Porkulus protest was small, Carender began to build a relationship with bystander publics that allowed her to better understand her audience, draw resources from them, and take advantage of the energy that emerged once Santelli’s rant went viral. She capitalized on the energy sparked by Santelli to remobilize the relationships she had built with conservative groups and media. These groups helped her publicize and organize for another protest a week later – which doubled in size. Six weeks later, she hosted another protest that drew 1,200 people. Within a year, she was being flown to Washington by Freedom Works to be more formally trained in organizing and activism. Founded in 1984, Freedom Works became a national hub for Tea Party activity once local groups began to sprout around the country, using its existing infrastructure to provide support to the entire grassroots movement.

*Adbusters* also benefited from the infrastructure of preexisting social networks and groups that helped turn its email message into a movement, albeit very different ones than those that the Tea Party had been able to access and exploit. *Adbusters* was also not the first to call for an occupation of Wall Street. On June 14, 2011, a group called Operation Empire State Rebellion had called for an occupation of Zuccotti Park, but only four people showed up (Bennett, 2011). The *Adbusters* call to arms was different, however, because it spread quickly through the social networks of people on its email list. After Tunney created the website OccupyWallSt.org, for instance, she began operating it with a team of people who were, like her, mostly transgender anarchists. They did not come together spontaneously, but instead had been part of a preexisting social network.

Similarly, as White witnessed the viral spread of the email, he began to seek partnerships with other publics who could help him bridge his relationship with his audience. He reached out to other organizations like New Yorkers Against Budget Cuts (NYABC), a group of student and labor activists who could help organize an actual protest among bystander publics to which they were connected. This group had come to fame months before when they erected “Bloombergville,” a tent city around City Hall to protest New York City’s mayor, Michael Bloomberg. NYABC had been planning a



protest on Wall Street on August 2, a month before *Adbusters's* proposed protest. The group agreed to devote some time at the protest to planning for Occupy Wall Street, but this decision caused some conflict. At the rally on August 2, students and labor activists supporting NYABC tried to run a traditional rally with speakers, alienating the anarchists who came wanting a “leaderless” form of assembly. After some shouting, a group of anarchists broke off, starting their own meeting and establishing the norm that Occupy would be run through leaderless general assemblies (Bennett, 2011). The two groups were not, in other words, necessarily natural allies, but White needed the help of NYABC to organize *Adbusters's* protest.

Both the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street characterize themselves as “leaderless” movements, but the foregoing account of their origins makes clear that each one relied on the access of key individuals to organizations and networks with preexisting infrastructures – to, in other words, bystander publics – to help the movement spread. The structure and makeup of these organizations and networks – in other words, their relationship to the bystander publics – influenced the way the movement began to define itself. The bystander publics thus became players. When Santelli's rant went viral, for instance, FreedomWorks seized on it, creating a website called “I'm with Rick” the next day. Initially a bystander public, but already a political group, FreedomWorks wanted to create a closer partnership with the movement. FreedomWorks was a long-standing conservative organization led by former House Majority Leader Dick Armey that had been fighting losing battles for a less activist government. The organization lacked a viable grassroots infrastructure, but its early support of the Tea Parties endeared it to the movement. As the movement continued to build momentum, the partnership between the insurgent Tea Parties and FreedomWorks became a marriage of convenience: FreedomWorks provided the “unstructured activists” with “political know-how” while the Tea Parties provided FreedomWorks with “street cred” and valuable “free labor in battleground districts” (Bennett, 2011).

Occupy Wall Street similarly drew on the support of progressive institutions and organizations. For example, although it began with a loose collection of anarchist organizations, beginning with White's initial partnership with NYABC, it quickly developed partnerships with unions and other labor organizations. One of New York's largest municipal employees unions threw its support behind Occupy Wall Street, helping to ensure large turnouts for its protests (Ungerleider, 2011). “Big labor” initially sat back, maintaining a position as a watchful bystander. By October, however, the labor bystander public had become an engaged part of the movement, as major unions and

union organizations like the AFL-CIO, SEIU, and the Teamsters endorsed Occupy, offering boots on the ground, organizing experience and support, and a wealth of other resources (Kroll, 2011). Occupy maintained its commitment to “horizontal” organization and anarchist practices in its decision-making, but it was undeniably drawing on the support of organized groups on the left. The involvement of these and other groups illustrates what Jasper characterizes as the “powerful allies dilemma” in which the resources and support of more powerful groups and individuals helps broaden and publicize the movement but can also water down its goals and curtail its radicalism (Jasper, 2006: 129). While powerful allies can be important, then, they are more likely to change the movement or use it for their purposes than they are to be changed by it.

## Discussion

It was far from inevitable that either Santelli’s tirade or *Adbusters*’s email would spark a movement. People like Keli Carender and Operation Empire State Rebellion had tried to foment similar protests but had failed to mobilize bystander publics, or imagine their audience as a player, as effectively as Santelli and *Adbusters*. Once they began to mobilize opinion through their viral battle cries, the early organizers of what would eventually become the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street partnered strategically with groups that could provide valuable organizing resources and infrastructure to turn an ideological cry into a movement. In the early days, then, they were mobilizing the opinion of bystander publics through their ideological stances, but also the resources of other publics through their strategic partnerships. With each choice about with whom they would partner, each movement was also making choices about the values it would embody. By partnering with labor, for instance, Occupy Wall Street made common cause with one of the most longstanding advocates of economic justice and workers’ rights. The Tea Party, in contrast, partnered with groups like FreedomWorks, which explicitly turned a blind eye to questions of socio-political injustice, focusing solely on the effort to remove government intervention in the economy, regardless of the impact it had on marginalized groups. The implications of these choices become clearer in an examination of how each movement characterized and interacted with intersectional populations.

Given the early partnerships that each movement built with these other actors, their divergent reactions to and relationships with marginalized groups and intersectionally marginalized groups in particular are not

surprising. Indeed, in spite of what might have seemed at first to be a similar sense of grassroots economic disaffection at the root of each movement, the radically divergent ways in which each one has characterized economic inequality is not surprising given the partnerships they were creating with bystander publics. Moreover, and most relevant to thinking about bystander publics, both the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street attempted to appeal to broad publics by seeming to try to focus on “economic issues.” However, in trying to cast a wide net so that they might mobilize a wide array of marginalized groups that comprised these bystander publics, each quickly faced challenges: Occupy Wall Street was accused of being insufficiently attentive to racialized poverty, as well as to issues of empire, gender, sexuality. For its part, although the Tea Party had claimed to want to avoid “social” issues, the positions of many movement participants on issues such as immigration, welfare, same-sex marriage, and reproductive rights were difficult to contain and quickly began to define its relationship with several bystander publics by groups such as undocumented immigrants, feminists, people who defaulted on their mortgages, and recipients of public assistance as antagonists, thereby narrowing the range of possible sympathizers.

## Conclusion

What do the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street teach us about bystander publics? In their inception, movements seize on networks and organizing attempts that have already been made – this was true with storied social movements like Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott (Branch, 1989), and was true of both the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street. Both movements grew out of a viral reaction spread quickly through online networks. The organizations and individuals that sparked this reaction could not have anticipated how it would spread, but once it began to spread, a range of organizations and groups (bystander publics) sought to seize on the momentum. As these publics tried to negotiate new relationships with the movement, movement organizers had to make fast choices about which partnerships to create and which ones to reject. Often, they made these choices strategically, thinking about the resources each public could bring to the movement. Indirectly, these choices also affected the movement’s identity. How the movement spreads in the bystander publics thus begins to shape the values the movement comes to embody, and the strategic choices it makes about who is “in” and who is “out.” Both movements began by drawing on long-standing economic and socio-political discontent

among the middle-class, but spread among radically different networks. The indigenous groups, organizations, and social institutions that organize people's social worlds shaped the biases of each network and, eventually, the way each movement addressed questions of economic injustice.

These cases thus provide important insights into our understanding of bystander publics. First, they make clear that these publics are not passive consumers of the movement. Instead, they are actively engaged in democratic processes that help them develop resources that movements may later seek out. Second, the choices that movements make about partnering with or rejecting certain bystander publics affects the identities these movements develop. With respect to the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, we saw this in the divergent reactions they had to intersectional populations. While Occupy Wall Street conceptualized these marginalized groups as victims, the Tea Party sought blame. Had each movement developed different relationships with bystander publics, or had the publics had different resources to offer, the choices they made may have been quite different.

## Notes

1. Note that in *The Art of Moral Protest*, James Jasper asserts that the term "resources" should be restricted to money and the things it can buy, and not include people and the things they do.
2. As such, broad debate exists about exactly what the demands of each movement are (Parker and Baretto, 2013; Skocpol and Williamson, 2012).

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# Conclusion

## Patterned Fluidity: An Interactionist Perspective as a Tool for Exploring Contentious Politics

*Jan Willem Duyvendak and Olivier Fillieule*

In this book, a strategic interaction perspective (SIP) has been applied by authors coming from various disciplinary backgrounds and theoretical traditions. In a way, by participating in this book, the authors are making a statement: we all agree that an approach focusing on the strategic interaction among players in arenas has much to offer the study of protest, particularly compared to the previously – and overly – dominant contentious politics model. Other attempts have been made recently in the same direction, mainly in critically referring to the theory of fields elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu (Mathieu, 2012; Fligstein and McAdam, 2012). While we largely share their ambition, we are convinced that an interactionist approach is better equipped to deal with the challenges raised here than the concept of field is. In this conclusion, we will defend this innovative approach, outlining the strong advantages of the notions of the “social world” and “arena” (as opposed to the concept of field) and the virtue of what we will call a “dispositionalist interactionism” in order to make sense of micro-mobilization processes and agency in interactions (as opposed to structuralist and rational choice theories). Thus, we honor James Jasper’s pioneering work, while at the same time engaging in discussions with him and other authors of this volume regarding various aspects that deserve further elaboration.

Jasper has developed a broad strategic interaction perspective, dealing with various players and arenas – and not merely players involved in protest. In particular, he developed this perspective in *Getting Your Way: Strategic Dilemmas in the Real World* (2006). In this conclusion, we will defend this innovative approach as indeed a major step forward in our understanding of both more and less ritualized forms of interaction, notably protest. We would claim, however, that even though the SIP can be applied to various forms of interaction, it contributes especially to our understanding of the least institutionalized, the least routinized forms of interactions, such as those between movements and their targets. Both players and arenas are very fluid in the context of protest and change, and it is precisely this fluidity which is a central tenet of the SIP. It should come as no surprise that it was as a scholar of protest that Jasper developed this dynamic perspective.



At the same time, we will argue that there is a risk of overestimating the fluidity of players, even in the case of protestors, and that we should look for patterns in the fluidity. Players are not formed overnight, nor do they totally change in the interaction itself. Although we agree with Jasper that players constantly reinvent themselves, we should still pay attention to where they come from and how that informs the strategic choices they make in the *hic et nunc*. Socialization, norms, rules and cultural notions predating interactions do count, even for protestors who might feel cognitively and emotionally “liberated.”

### The Best of SIP

Let us start with what we consider the main contributions of the strategic interaction approach. In the first place, as this volume shows, the SIP centers our attention on the various players that protestors must contend with. These are more or less institutionalized players, more or less supportive of their causes, or more or less coercive. This opening up of the possible worlds of interaction stands in sharp contrast to much recent research on protest that has become very “movement centric.” In that sense we agree with McAdam and Boudet (2012): “The field of social movement studies has expanded dramatically through the past three decades. But as it has done so, its focus has become increasingly narrow and ‘movement centric.’” By this they mean: “The field’s preoccupation with movement groups and general neglect of other actors who also shape the broader ‘episodes of contention’ in which movements are typically embedded” (McAdam and Boudet, 2012: 2). This book – dealing with so many players (and subplayers) and arenas – can be read as an answer to their criticism that movement scholars have increasingly neglected the broader constellation of political and economic (f)actors:

In focusing primarily on movements, the emerging community of movement scholars began unwittingly to push to the margins the very actors – economic elites, state officials and political parties – that had been central to much of the pioneering work that shaped the field in the first place. Gradually, Ptolemy replaced Copernicus as the guiding spirit of the emerging field. Instead of situating movements in a fuller constellation of political and economic forces and actors, movements and movement groups increasingly came to be the central animating focus of the field. (McAdam and Boudet, 2012: 22)

Paying attention to the broader context – as authors do in this book – doesn't mean, however, that one must prioritize macro-factors over meso- and micro-, or political and economic aspects over cultural and emotional ones. On the contrary, instead of a move back to Marxist, structuralist times favoring macro-factors, the SIP proposes to make, what we would call, a *lateral* move. In the words of Jasper: "The main constraints on what protestors can accomplish are not determined directly by economic and political structures so much as they are imposed by other players with different goals and interests" (Jasper, this volume). This book's lateral move implies that a SIP is about various players in the same social space; it is through and in strategic interaction with others in specific arenas that differences in economic resources, persuasion and positions become apparent. It is in the "horizontal" strategic interaction itself, and not in political forces from "above" or, for that matter, economic forces from "below," that these economic, political, and cultural differences materialize, that they are experienced.

The parts of the book dealing with market arenas and experts and with intellectuals and media clearly demonstrate the broad perspective that a SIP encourages. However, the first section on "supporters," including Chapter 1 on factions, and Chapter 2 on fractions, should not be misread as exclusively dealing with movement-internal affairs. Both convincingly show the impact of the "outside," indeed, they fundamentally question the very distinction between movement inside and outside, and posit the irreducible heterogeneity of players within movements.

Second, but related to the previous point, the SIP is not a deductive, "distanced" way of analyzing protest; it helps us to empirically understand the dynamics and outcomes. This stands in sharp contrast to approaches dominant in the US for decades, such as the "early" "political opportunity structure" approach, that relied (too) heavily on structural models. Movements were portrayed as facing contexts with structural characteristics, but rarely as autonomous players actively pursuing their goals. Recent propositions attacking this problem converge on more strategic and interactionist models. For instance, this is the case in France where the study of social movements, strongly influenced by Bourdieu's critical sociology, has long paid particular attention to interaction dynamics within different fields (Fillieule, 1997; Agrikoliansky, Fillieule, and Mayer, 2005; Sommier, Fillieule, and Agrikoliansky, 2008; Péchu, 2006; Mathieu, 2012). Strategic and field approaches have also developed in the American literature, particularly, but not exclusively, due to James Jasper's repeated calls for a perspective oriented toward the analysis of strategic interactions between players across

different arenas (Jasper, 2004; 2006), as well as Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) conceptualization of strategic action fields, which directly relies on Bourdieu's concept of fields as spaces of struggle opposing incumbent actors and their challengers.

In the introduction to this book, Jasper argues for a "doing justice to reality" approach. He stresses that the analytical use of "capacities" or "strategic means" is "more concrete" than Bourdieu's forms of capital, and far more inductive than very abstract analyses in terms of "power." Yet a SIP has a better understanding of not only the means of protest; the same is true – according to Jasper – for the goals: "Strategic theories have the advantage of encouraging (or forcing) the researcher to acknowledge a range of goals through empirical investigation rather than deductive theory". Moreover, he states that "we need to do this kind of work if we wish to acknowledge the lived experience of human beings". Even though this may sound quite ambitious to some, we agree with Jasper that a lot of the theorizing, and particularly the "modeling" in recent sociology has taken us far (too far) from those actual experiences (Bertossi and Duyvendak, 2012; Bertossi, Duyvendak, and Schain, 2012).

Structuralism was not only highly problematic because of its deductive way of analyzing protest behavior, but also because it needed stable, "superimposed" categories (and it never showed much interest in whether people "experienced" those categories, whether these made any "sense" to them). Thus, the first task for a SIP is to destabilize all a priori categories, to de-essentialize any particular characteristics of players and arenas, and to show that movements are indeed "on the move," difficult to grasp. Another way of saying this is that structuralist analyses have been particularly problematic for (the research on) social movements, since the latter are the least structural, the least routinized, the most challenging of everything fixed and stable. In situations of cognitive liberation (McAdam, 1999), "everything solid melts into air"; the impossible is perceived as possible because people have a new look at reality and a new "feeling" about what is possible. Old categories blur and therefore social movement scholars will always emphasize that the quintessence of protest behavior is the embattledness of the possible.

In that sense it comes as no surprise that Jasper in his introduction underlines the importance of agency and choice – the fact that protestors think they have options:

A great deal of sociology has been devoted to showing why people have fewer choices than they think. Social facts, structures, networks, institutional norms or logics all emphasize constraints. Various kinds of habits

and routines are introduced to explain the stability of interactions, most recently in the guise of the *habitus*, an internalized set of dispositions for reacting in predictable ways even while improvising slightly within the set.

As a matter of fact, any scholar familiar with social movement research knows that the existing literature overwhelmingly relies on three different tools, all – at first sight – marginalizing the role of agency: structural conditions (political opportunity structures, the density of horizontal networks and links to the elite, suddenly imposed grievances, etc.), cultural idioms (cultural frames, *Weltanschauung*, traditions, etc.) and mobilization structures (leadership, material and organizational resources). As Rod Aya argues ironically, in this tripartite configuration, structures, culture and the availability of resources dictate the course of events; conversely, these events can also provoke changes in existing structures, cultures and resources. And yet, in this framework, “structure (with an assist from culture) constrains agency to make the events – by violence; and the events constrain agency to change the structure – again by violence. Agency is the Third Man between structure and event who does the killing and coercing. He makes the action happen” (Aya, 2001: 144). As a result, even in the most structuralist models, individuals are at one point or another called upon to explain “the transition from word to deed,” thus surreptitiously introducing a rational choice approach without admitting it. It is thus not surprising that, under such conditions, the existing literature ceaselessly swings between rather unconvincing binary oppositions: the spontaneity of the masses and emotional contagion, versus the calculated and manipulative actions of group leaders; and the reliance on established forms and cognitive shortcuts during routine situations and the prevalence of tactical choices and innovation – usually attributed only to leaders – in situations of structural uncertainty (Bennani-Chraïbi and Fillieule, 2012).

We desperately need a more balanced perspective on the role of agency. We are therefore sympathetic to Jasper’s call for renewed attention to the importance of choice (read: agency), although he may run the risk of overestimating what people in most situations experience as changeable since strategic interactions are always “situated,” that is, historically established: the social norms involved therein are and have been the object of gradual, multiple, and simultaneous developments. The fact that interactions have been changing over time doesn’t mean that the interaction pattern can easily be transformed at any point in the future. Jasper is certainly right that too many sociologists have been looking at rather stable series of interac-

tions – but that is not a reason to misrecognize the stability of many forms of interactions.

When and why people experience choice and have the option to dramatically change the interaction or, vice versa, when and why people do not experience these options, makes a huge difference. We should not too hastily generalize from the experiences of players in protest interaction – who might think about themselves as having multiple options and, hence, agency – to all forms of strategic interaction. We think that it is empirically useful to distinguish between various types of strategic interactions: between players who are part of the routinized organization of the social world and players involved in mobilization, when enormous shifts may occur: in meanings, in feelings and, consequently, in strategic interaction. This book clearly deals with the latter group of players and interactions.

In what follows, we start by critically discussing the notion of a field of contention (Bourdieu, 1984), which is gaining importance in social movements literature, before contrasting it with the concepts of the social world and arena (Strauss, 1978; Strauss, 1982; Strauss, 1984; Becker, 1982). In this discussion, we stress that the *fluidity* of protest interactions makes the concept of arena more apt than the concept of field. In the second part, we look for *patterns in fluidity*, going beyond SIP's fascination with the *hic et nunc*, the synchronic. We argue that one should take into account actors' socialization and dispositions, as well as their cultural and historical dimensions, when exploring the micro-foundations of interactions.

## The Misleading Metaphor of Fields of Contention

Social movements have a historically specific origin that parallels the development of modernity itself, starting at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Gusfield, 1978). The rise of state-building, capitalism, urbanization, and communications provided the impetus for the development of the division of labor, first labeled by Durkheim in 1893 as “social differentiation.” By this term, we mean a historic process that affects society and which suggests a greater complexity of social relationships. This evolution results from the repeated creation of previously nonexistent specialized structures. Many theories attempt to account for this structuring of the social world in more or less independent spaces. Depending on the scholar, there is talk of *fields* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), *organizational fields* (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), *sectors* (Scott and Meyer, 1983), *games* (Scharpf, 1997), *networks* (Powell

et al., 2005), or, in the case of the government, *policy domains* (Laumann and Knoke, 1987) and *polity systems/subsystems* (Sabatier, 2007), and *markets* in the economic realm (Fligstein, 1991; 2001). Social movement scholars have also tried to conceive of movements as specific social orders, starting with the seminal work of McCarthy and Zald (1973; 1977) who coined the concepts of *social movement organizations* (SMOs) and *social movement industries* (SMIs) or the closely related concept of *multi-organizational fields* (Curtis and Zurcher, 1973), referring to all organizations (including both opponents and supporters) with which a protest movement interacts. More recently, scholars have started to recognize that organizations are not the only mobilizing structures in social movements and that social movements do not have *members* but *participants* (e.g., Oliver, 1989; Diani, 1992). Among others, the concepts of *submerged networks* (Melucci, 1989), *ideologically structured action* (Zald, 2000), *social movement networks* (Diani and Bison, 2004) and *social movement communities* (Buechler, 1990; Taylor and Whittier, 1992; Lichterman, 1995) have helped to conceptualize the diffuse nature of protest activities and their moving structures.

Yet, paraphrasing Jasper, all those definitions treat protest groups and other players asymmetrically, reducing the latter to the “environment” of the former, “a structural trick that reduces the agency of all players except protestors. ... All players confront dilemmas, make choices, react to others and so on. We can only understand contention when we pay equal attention to all of them” (2004: 5; see also Walker, Martin, and McCarthy, 2008.) In recent years, the influence of Bourdieu’s theory of structuration on social movement scholars has brought to the forefront the powerful concept of field to describe the complex web of relationships and interactions among contentious movements. To our knowledge, Crossley (2003) was one of the first to use the notion of “fields of contention,” followed by Fligstein and McAdam (2012) who speak of “strategic action fields,” not to mention the numerous French scholars whose intellectual training drives them naturally to refer to Bourdieu’s concepts, which they adopt (on “activist fields,” see Péchu, 2006) or adapt to the empirical reality they are studying (on “spaces of contention,” see Mathieu, 2012).

Our interactionist perspective justifies speaking about “social worlds” and “arenas” as well as our choice of not using the Bourdieusian term “field,” when we try to make sense of social movement emergence and activities. Let us explain. Much of Bourdieu’s work is devoted to the exploration of these social worlds endowed with specific explicit and implicit operating principles, but this is especially true of two of his works, *The State Nobility* (1996a) and *The Rules of Art* (1996b). A field is defined as a *social subworld*, a

sphere of social life which, over time, has become increasingly autonomous and distinct from other fields, with its own specific social relations, issues and resources. We are not all driven by the same motivations or seek the same rewards in the religious field, the field of sports, and the political field.

As a result, two crucial elements appear in this theory, that of the boundaries of the field, and that of the relations that each field has with its environment. According to Bourdieu, the members of the field are constantly working to exclude those lacking the capital specific to the field. A major methodological consequence is that it is not up to sociologists to determine the boundaries of a field. Instead, their task is to study the battles of different agents to define the border, to try to invade the field, or to maintain their position in the field. This means that the fields are not totally set in stone but are instead subject to the influence of other fields while they, in turn, may influence other fields. Therefore, the fields are not absolutely but, more or less, autonomous. In other words, they are more or less endowed with their own law, which is still disputed within each field and which may be subject to external influence, as when the constraints of profitability in the economic field have an impact on artistic creation. This focus on variations in autonomy draws our attention to the fact that there is a history in each field leading to progressive autonomization, the field then acquiring its own rules of the game, from a specific ideology, and institutions responsible for playing the role of gatekeeper. It is in *The Rules of Art* that Bourdieu offered his best empirical demonstration of the validity of the concept of field, by studying the autonomization of the artistic field in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when artists managed to make a living from their art and to liberate themselves from patrons, at the same time that the ideology of “art for art’s sake” emerged.

The concept of the field is the most powerful concept we have today to examine the historical process of structuring our societies. Nonetheless, all the varieties of relations do not fall within fields, and their forms of structuration and modes of functioning fail to fully account for protest activities in particular and their interactions with other social actors.

First, the real world cannot be wholly confined to the fields. This does not exhaust the totality of differentiation phenomena. In fact, field theory is solely interested in relations between dominant forces and in describing the specialized worlds from which many are excluded. “The legitimism of field theory, which can be observed in the diminution of interest accorded to actors the more removed they are from the major agents in the field, is also not without problems in the study of all the dominated actors in the



field and of all the marginal forms of experience, weakly institutionalized” (Lahire, 2013: 164). This critique is particularly appropriate for social movements, which only rarely mobilize the most legitimate social groups with the most resources. An analysis in terms of fields would lead to an examination deliberately focused solely on the leaders and activists, ignoring the rank and file. Now, the force of any mobilization is also based on the power of numbers (DeNardo, 1985), the strength of those “external to the fields.” The notion of strategic action fields developed by Fligstein and McAdam is vulnerable to this critique as well, since they believe that, in using the metaphor of the Russian dolls, they have a universal concept applying to all social relations (including the relationship between two individuals). Now, as Lahire quite rightly observes: “In seeing ‘fields’ everywhere, ... we no longer see anything at all and the concept is no longer interesting” (Lahire, 2006: 44).

Secondly, the rules of field structuration do not take account of the functioning of social movements. If we postulate that any genuinely constituted field is the culmination of a progressive process leading to the acquisition of its own specific ideology, principles of hierarchization and structuration, and institutions empowered to pronounce and guarantee verdicts on the internal struggles for hierarchization and trace the boundaries of the field in excluding laymen, we can conclude that the world of social movements does not constitute a field. The sphere of social movement players does not seem sufficiently institutionalized, structured, and unified to correspond to Bourdieu’s definition (Mathieu, 2012). Here, three elements must be explained.

Not all individuals who devote themselves to protest activities are professional activists. Thus, it would be very reductionist to claim that the positions and practices of participants in protest activities could be explained by their position in the field. As Lemieux correctly observes: “The investment in the game, however wholeheartedly, cannot be absolutely continuous, other social games having inevitably to be played as well, if only those organized around *bios* and *oikos* (the management of the domestic space, sexuality, health, family relations, the raising of children ...)” (2011: 89; for a similar critique from a feminist standpoint, see McCall, 1992). The interactionist sociology of activism, in focusing on all spheres of individual life (family, professional, and so on) has demonstrated that life outside the field (prior to activism, as well as in other parallel activities) is important in understanding “activist careers” (Fillieule, 2001; 2010).



In addition, the notion of the field suggests fixed boundaries demarcating a finite list of competitors. Now, the particularity of protest struggles is that the spatial limits are both shifting over time and specific to the causes concerned. Thus, the anti-AIDS movement saw its borders redefined when the state established public policies to combat the epidemic (Epstein, 1998; Voegtli and Fillieule, 2012), and it does not involve the same actors as, for example, the battle against drinking and driving (Gusfield, 1981). Finally, the particularity of protest battles is not to be part of the domains controlled by gatekeepers tasked with ensuring that borders are respected. The special nature of political mobilization concerns the ad hoc bringing together and opposition of diverse groupings, whatever their legal status (associations, NGOs, loose networks, unions, parties and even specific sectors of the state). Moreover, one of the central issues of any protest struggle is to obtain from state authorities the recognition of their legitimate right to act (Mathieu, 2012). The notion of strategic action fields developed by Fligstein and McAdam suffers from the same flaw of assuming a priori boundaries based on established formal rules, when they make the existence of “formal governance units that are charged with overseeing compliance with field rules and, in general, facilitating the overall smooth functioning of the system” (2012: 14) a defining criterion.

Third, as Fligstein and McAdam (2012) do rightly stress, relations between social movements cannot be grasped only as relations of domination and competition, as is assumed in field theory. These relations may also reflect various forms of cooperation, indeed games of competitors-partners when the activities of opponents seem to constitute a vital driving force in the maintenance of mobilization and structures connected to the struggle. Overall, and to conclude with field theory (and its various proposed reformulations), it seems to us that it may accurately describe certain very hierarchical social subspheres, generally those where some players exercise power over some sector of the social realm. Yet, for all the reasons we have just presented, protest activities themselves are not part of a given and specific field. Contention is not limited to a circumscribed and relatively stable sphere of activity, more or less autonomous from other fields.<sup>1</sup> By nature, contentious activities develop at the margins or at the intersections of multiple fields, depending on the issues at stake, as well as on the individual or complex players they mobilize or target. This is why we prefer to draw upon the notion of the *arena* to designate the space delineated by anti-establishment mobilization, a space by definition specific to each cause and potentially shifting over time.

## The Social World and the Arena Perspective in the Interactionist Tradition

The perspective developed in this book suggests turning to another conception of the structuration of society, expressed in terms of “social worlds” and “arenas.” The interactionist tradition in its symbolist version (H. Blumer, G. H. Mead, and A. Strauss), as well as its rhetorical and dramaturgical version (E. Goffman and J. Gusfield), has a dual advantage. First, it draws particular attention to the link between individual, meso-, and macro-social levels, as well as to strategic interactions, from a dynamic and processual perspective, which rejects all structuralism (Blumer, 1969: 50).

Interaction defines the social world deliberately vaguely, as a network of actors cooperating to accomplish specific activities. It is up to the sociologist to identify who is acting with whom, to produce what, with what degree of regularity and based on which conventions. Approached in this way, the activities of cooperation and competition may be distributed along an axis, from the most routine, formally organized, and strictly repeated activities, to the most unstable, rapidly changing ones. One consequence of this theoretical approach is to deny the operational value of descriptions which establish strict boundaries and watertight classifications. Any individual or complex player may at any moment be or get involved in a given world or subworld.

Therefore, the notion of a world has the advantage of being more inclusive than that of a field in not limiting the boundaries only to dominant actors. All those (individuals and organizations) are part of a given world who have a stake in the accomplishment of a task.

Our task becomes tracking groups of individuals who cooperate to produce things which belong to this world, at least in their eyes. A world is not strictly speaking a structure or an organization, but rather a network of individuals who cooperate so as to allow a given product to exist. Nonetheless, people caught in the same world may have divergent interests and, while the concepts of coordination and cooperation are central, they fall along a continuum, from entirely conflictual relationships to those of pure coordination.

The notion of a “world” is associated with that of an “arena.” In its dramaturgical and rhetorical version, the term “public arenas” appeared first in Gusfield’s *Symbolic Crusade* (1963) to designate the space of status struggles over the issues of the temperance movement, and then in *The Culture of Public Problems* (1981), where Gusfield studied the field of controversies around the public problem of drunk driving. For his part, Strauss used the

term “arenas” in *Psychiatric Ideologies and Institutions* (Strauss et al., 1964), to designate the idea of a “‘negotiated order,’ which emerges, takes shape and stabilizes within interactions, both within and between organizations” (Cefaï, 2007: 104). Strauss (1978: 124) explained the meaning:

Within each social world, various issues are debated, negotiated, fought out, forced and manipulated by representatives of implicated subworlds. Arenas involve political activity but not necessarily legislative bodies and courts of law. Issues are also fought out within subworlds by their members. Representatives of other subworlds (same and other worlds) may also enter into the fray. Some of these social world issues may make front page news, but others are known only to members or to other interested parties. Social world media are full of such partially invisible arenas. Wherever there is intersecting of worlds and subworlds, we can expect arenas to form along with their associated political processes.

On this basis, we define an arena as a space both concrete (that is, from a dramaturgical perspective, the place and time of the staging of interactions, for example, the street or a courtroom) and symbolic (that is from a rhetorical perspective, the site of the polemics or the controversy, of testimony, expertise, and deliberation) which brings together all the players, individual or complex, participating in the emergence, definition and resolution of a problem. The arenas do not exist at the time the problem appears. It is the emergence of a problem that generates its contours as a function of individuals and groups which intervene in the situation, and mobilize a specific part of the social world or field,<sup>2</sup> either openly or discreetly.<sup>3</sup> This has numerous consequences.

First, a theoretical and disciplinary consequence is that the sociology of social movements and the sociology of public problems are closely related, as Blumer (1969) emphasized when he observed that social problems are the products of collective action. This echoes the calls from some scholars, on one side, in the field of social problems, such as Spector and Kitsuse (1973; 1977) and, on the other side, from those involved in social movement studies (Benford and Hunt, 1992; Neveu, 1999; and Cefaï and Trom, 2001), since the two areas share “an interest in the ‘rhetoric of collective action’” defined as “the demands of members of public institutions, advocacy groups and social movement organisations” (Hunt, 1992, in Cefaï, 2007: 599).

The concept of *problematization* constitutes in some ways the point of connection between these two sociological traditions. This concept refers to

all social activity with the objective of entailing the emergence of a problem and rendering it a potential subject of public policy. Foucault defines it as

all the discursive or non-discursive practices that bring something into the game of true and false and constitute it as an object for thought (whether this be in the form of moral reflection, scientific analysis, or political analysis). ... Problematization does not mean representation of a pre-existing object, nor creation through discourse of an object which does not exist. (Foucault, 1994: 670)

Therefore, the success of mobilization around a problem results from the capacity of certain players to enlist other players, to have them in some way enter the game and, thus, to create a coalition which necessarily keeps the problem on the “agenda” of institutions and organizations which can provide a response, whether this be from a particular sector of the state, private operators acting in the market, or institutions such as churches. Other players oppose these groups for various reasons, and try hard to prevent this being placed on the agenda since they fear that it will lead to an action contrary to their interests, one which might be benefiting from the complicity of institutional agents and political managers reluctant to deal with a “hot” question that would disturb their routines and could ultimately lead to the challenging of positions they occupy in their respective fields or worlds.

In fact, the latter observation is crucial. The arenas at the heart of which activities of problematization develop can very well transform themselves over time into social subworlds, indeed even into new fields. There are very many examples of these trajectories of arenas ending with the perennial establishment of specialized subspheres, for example, in the sector of poverty management and solidarity where the churches lost their monopoly to various forms of public management during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Another example would be feminist movements, some fractions of which (“femocrats”) became institutionalized, leading to the creation of specific subfields of public action in favor of women’s rights, contributing, in turn, to a modification of the sphere of feminist struggles. In this book, particularly Chapters 5 and 6, dealing with corporations, provide examples of this tendency of institutionalization of interactions, transforming arenas into more established fields.

Yet, above all, the concept of arena has a major methodological consequence which brings us back to the heart of the SIP developed by Jasper. The identification of an arena as a site of interaction around a problem

can not be decided a priori and must be based on the concrete observation of interactions among a multiplicity of actors in a process. This requires starting with players and their strategies. It is only subsequently that the observation of their interaction can feed the knowledge of a level of social reality which is not that of the situation or of the interaction but that, more macro-sociologically, of the social world. It is to this question of the connection of different levels of social reality, at the basis of the link between structure and agency, that we devote the following section.

### Hodiecentrism?

A strategic approach runs the risk of exclusively focusing on the interaction itself: a kind of “hodiecentrism,” a fascination with the *hic et nunc*, the synchronic, whereas we think that a strategic perspective should take the historical dimension, the diachronic, into account as well. Players are more than “constituted” in a series of interactions – they have some stability; they embody a certain continuity. Hence, even though history indeed acquires meaning in the present, experiences and convictions predating the interaction play an important role when we want to understand interaction dynamics.

By emphasizing the “biographical” part of players, Jasper seems to agree that these diachronic aspects should be carefully taken into account: “One can only understand these decisions if we come to grips with the biography and psychology of that single person; such factors must find a place in social-science models” (1997: ch. 9). However, in her chapter, Polletta, in particular, seems to worry that in a SIP this “meaningful” past is not sufficiently taken into account:

It is not only that individuals’ and groups’ goals are often multiple and sometimes unacknowledged. It is also that the choices that are on the table in a dispute are viewed through the lens of preexisting frameworks of meaning. An option comes to be viewed as the “black” choice or the “strategic” option, not because of any logical connection to what is black or what is instrumental, but rather because of structures of symbolic associations that predate this particular battle.

Polletta seems especially worried that a strategic approach becomes too voluntaristic (our term) when it would suggest that in every interaction everything is open and possible – as if players are not burdened by all forms

of “cultural constraints” (Polletta’s term): “Their ideas about what counts as strategic are shaped by cultural associations that they sometimes challenge but more often do not.”

We agree with her on this latter point but we would also stress the fact that an interactionist perspective is not necessarily anti-diachronic, blind to the “forces of the past,” whether acting at the level of individuals, through their system of disposition or their habitus, or at the level of the memory of past battles and accepted forms of political conflict. We shall briefly explain these two elements.

An interactionist perspective is compatible with a firmly dispositionalist approach which endeavors to study observable practices in situ (and therefore players’ calculations) not only in the light of the contexts of action (the structure of observed interaction) but also in the light of the history of individuals, that is, to their socialization and their system of disposition. Consequently, the interactions observed always trigger incorporated dispositions, even if they also generate new dispositions. In other words, the players, individually or collectively, prepare to act on the basis of their understanding of the objects populating their world. Yet interpretations of their meaning are mediated by their system of dispositions, which orients their behavior and their decisions. This does not prevent interaction from *also* being the place and time of a *formative* process whereby individuals modify their lines of action, in light of the actions of others. From this perspective, players’ moves and countermoves are “neither the pure and simple replica of what has been internalized, nor the sudden and mysterious eruption, *ex nihilo*, of innovation” (Dobry 1986: 260).

Such a conception, which Lahire coins a “dispositionalist and contextualist sociology,” keeps us at an equal distance from both certain ethnographic studies satisfied with describing a situation or an action that is occurring, and from the authors of rational choice theory. The former tradition is particularly strong among French pragmatists who defend purely contextualist conceptions of action (Boltanski, 1990; Cefaï, 2007; Dodier, 1993). For example, Boltanski is solely interested in “constraints related to the arrangement of the situation in which people are placed” (Boltanski, 1990: 69). The skills attributed to the actors are assumed to be universally mastered by the individuals concerned and therefore Boltanski does not study them, which also means that he presupposes that mental dispositions as well as dispositions to act are transferable or transposable from one domain of social activity to another.

Rational choice scholars are certainly right that individual actions are the combined result of rational choice (which, nevertheless does not explain

what motivates such choices) and the hope of success (which does not presuppose the “reasonable” nature of said choices) but they are misleading when attempting to reconstruct how actors make calculations *in situ*. As Kurzman writes (2004), rational choice theory is primarily interested in predicting action, based on the identification of preexisting preferences. As a result, “we do not see players making decisions” (Jasper, 2004: 4; see also Jasper, 2006: ch. 3). In addition, the anthropological foundations of rational choice theory often circumscribe it within the confines of cognitivism, even when attempts are made to “contextualize” the explanatory models. We are, therefore, still very far from obtaining an adequate account of actors’ socio-cultural roots, whether concerning the nature and strength of preexisting ties, opportunities and obligations that the latter engender, or their spatial grounding in cost/benefit matrices (Gould, 1995). Finally, many historians have demonstrated how the momentum of protest activities also significantly contributes to redefining social ties and forms of interpersonal attachment, thus rendering futile the attempt to reconstruct cost/benefit structures by means of static, one-dimensional models. (Redy, 1977; Bouton, 1993: ch. 5)

### Patterns in Protest Players and Arenas

Dispositionalist interactionism suggests that the truth of the social world is not entirely confined to the order of the interaction. Here, the early studies by Goffman, *Face Work* (1955) and *Behavior in Public Places* (1963), prove extremely insightful in showing that interactions are framed like a ceremony. They follow the rules of intervention stemming from the law (Gusfield, 1981: ch. 2), from learned mechanisms defining conduct and organization (Wright, 1978; on crowds and riots, see McPhail, 1991; on demonstrations, see Fillieule and Tartakowsky, 2013), and from more implicit constraints, notably with respect to decorum and civility (on the public perception of protest, see Turner, 1969). From a Durkheimian perspective, we believe that strategic interactions are deployed in an “already existing” world and that

the individuals with whom I’m dealing are not inventing the world of the chess game each time they sit down to play; neither are they inventing the financial market when they buy stock, nor the pedestrian traffic system when they move on the street. Whatever the singularities of their motivations and their interpretations, they must, in order to participate, fit into a standard format of activity and reasoning which makes them act as they act. (Goffman, 1981: 307)



Beyond the more or less universally accepted and imposed rules of intervention in a given society (reflecting laws and mores), each field, each social world and subworld is characterized by its own rules, which Becker, in *Art Worlds*, calls “conventions.” This concept designates the fact that

people who cooperate to produce a work of art usually do not decide things afresh. Instead, they rely on earlier agreements now become customary, agreements that have become part of the conventional way of doing things in that art. ... Conventions thus make possible the easy and efficient coordination of activity among artists and support personnel. ... Though standardized, conventions are seldom rigid and unchanging. They do not specify an inviolate set of rules everyone must refer to in settling questions of what to do. Even where the directions seem quite specific, they leave much unsettled which gets resolved by reference to customary modes of interpretation on the one hand and by negotiation on the other. (Becker, 1974: 771)

As a logical consequence of the structured character of society, fields, and social worlds, the modalities by which arenas are constituted and function also correspond to conventions, explicit or implicit, rhetorical (in the notion of frame) and dramaturgical (in notion of tactical repertoires), even though in the case of arenas these modalities will be less stable and more fluid than in the case of fields and social worlds.

Action can only be grasped in concrete circumstances of a copresence, in fully considering the requirements stemming from mutual involvement in a social relation and the inherent uncertainty in the sequential unfolding of exchanges. Nonetheless, these circumstances – which Goffman terms *situations* – are preordained: while the course the action will take cannot be predicted, it always falls within a particular context which one can characterize as a collection of conventions, that is, significant elements of orientation which impose a certain regime of obligations on those who participate. The conventions which constrain the functioning of an arena are characterized by four traits.

First, an arena’s conventions stem from the conventions in the fields or subworlds, at the margins or intersection of which the arena emerges and develops. If they do not entirely overlap, they are partially linked to them.

Second, an arena’s conventions stem from the conventions internalized by individual or collective players who are involved in a specific arena, depending on their own history, memories and culture. Therefore, if they do not entirely overlap, they are partially linked to them.



Third, these conventions are not equivalent to the arithmetical sum of conventions characterizing the fields, worlds, and players involved. The very morphology of an arena (i.e., the form at its core made by the networks of alliance and conflict) and its dynamic (the entrance or departure of players, as well as the shifting of borders in the social space) determine a configuration that is always specific to relationships between players, so that the conventions are both a restrictive framework for action and a strategic issue in the struggle for actors. They promote the conventions to which they are most attached or which serve them best against those put forward by their adversaries, or even by their allies.

Fourth, and as a consequence, the conventions structuring an arena are inevitably idiosyncratic and patterned. From this perspective, studying a protest arena requires that we attempt to disentangle references to settled and mutually recognized conventions from those linked to innovation and invention (Mariot, 2011; Fillieule and Tartakowsky, 2013).

From what we have discussed, we must draw one central conclusion. Beyond the irreducible heterogeneity and diversity of protest arenas, some common patterns could be detected, as the work of Jasper and others show so well. One of the most interesting aspects of Jasper's work is how he effectively "dismantles" any fixed or central idea about players and arenas on the one hand, and yet he searches for recurring patterns and typical forms of strategic interaction involving certain players in specific arenas on the other hand. To quote his introduction once more: "Only in the strategic back-and-forth of engagement can we ever achieve a fully dynamic picture of politics, in the plans, initiatives, reactions, countermeasures, mobilizations, rhetorical efforts, arena switches, and other moves that players make." The fully dynamic picture doesn't imply, however, that we can't distinguish among types of arenas (with their specific conventions) and among players, with particular resources, experiences, ambitions, etc. In other words, Jasper proposes to go beyond the totally idiosyncratic. He doesn't want to claim any universal rules governing these interactions, but he makes the point that we can develop "catalogs" of interactions that "typically" happen between specific "types" of players and/or within certain arenas. "Although the strategic complexity of politics and protest is enormous, in this book we hope to make a beginning through a careful examination of players and arenas, accompanied by theorizing on the strategic interactions among them." Organized around different types of players and arenas, the book tries to empirically grasp the types of strategic interactions that can be considered "characteristic." In many cases, these patterns could be summarized as strategic dilemmas, typical of certain players in specific

arenas. As Polletta puts it in her contribution: “To gain analytic purchase on strategic choice in the swirl of multiple players, audiences, and arenas, complex goals, and ambivalent emotions, Jasper (2004) introduces the concept of strategic dilemmas, a concept that is developed in this volume.”

Our ambition here is not to summarize all these “typical” strategic interaction patterns and dilemmas so characteristic of a player and/or an arena, but we hope that anyone who has read this book agrees that this is indeed a very fruitful way to move forward. In every chapter, these “typical” aspects came to the fore, showing the enormous diversity of types of interactions protestors have to deal with, depending on the other players, and the arenas they are in. Although we have not yet been able to offer a catalog of typical strategic interactions, based on various arenas and players, we are getting close(r) to it, since every chapter is able to refer to typical forms of interaction, “bound” to the rules of that arena and the type of players involved.

This more systematic understanding of strategic interaction runs the risk of resulting in a rather “structuralist” approach, in which interaction is predictable, expected to follow a certain pattern. In his introduction, Jasper seems to be aware of this risk when he criticizes such a structuralist approach of Kriesi et al. (1995), who claim that – in the case they discuss – “social democrats usually do this and that.” “Overt facilitation of action campaigns of new social movements by a Social Democratic government is unlikely, because of the risk that such campaigns might get out of hand.” Jasper doesn’t agree that this risk is “objectively given,” and sees it rather as something that government decision-makers might have to think about case by case, might disagree about, and might try to manage in creative ways.

Beneath such visions, it seems as though costs, benefits, and risks are already given rather than emerging and shifting constantly during engagements, due to all the players’ actions. In contrast, an interactive approach would see various players adapting to each other, anticipating moves, and trying actively to block opponents. Both sides are constantly moving targets.

We partly agree with this criticism, but wonder if our definitions of arenas and of conventions do not offer a middle way between the type of claims made by Kriesi and his collaborators, and the typical forms of strategic interaction – summarized in “catalogs” – proposed by Jasper himself.

In other words, in our view, the book's case studies in fact show the "typical" forms of strategic interaction between protestors and other players in specific arenas in their situated and dispositionalist forms. Moreover, as Jasper himself writes in the introduction:

Each of the following chapters combines illustrative materials from case studies with theoretical formulations and hypotheses. More theoretical generalizations are possible for those players that have already been well studied, such as the media. ... In other cases, authors stick closer to their case materials to tease out observations about interactions. In all cases, our aim is to advance explanations of how protest unfolds through complex interactions with other players.

As the various chapters show, "theoretical generalizations" mean generalization in line with the case study, based on more (of the same) cases. In the end, a SIP is an inductive, robustly empirical approach that only allows for generalizations – theorizing – as long as the concrete case studies permit, given the dynamic, complex, and situated character of strategic interaction.

## Notes

1. For that reason, while we largely share Mathieu's (2012) critique of the notion of a field of contention, we think his concept of a "space of social movements" is wrong in considering that social movements constitute a specific universe, clearly distinct from other social fields. (Please also see Ancelovici 2009 for the same observation.)
2. Our conception of arenas is, therefore, very different from that used, for example, by Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) for whom there exist in the social world, in a permanent and structured manner, different public arenas, such as, for example, the media arena, the political arena, the legal arena, and, one might add, following Neveu, the "arena of social movements," defined as "an organized system of *institutions, processes* and *actors* that has the property of functioning as a space of appeal, in both the sense of a demand for a response to a problem and that of legal recourse" (Neveu, 2000: 17, emphasis added).
3. This point is crucial and explains why we speak of an "arena," following Strauss and not a "public arena," as does Gusfield. To avoid the lack of realism of the contentious politics approach which limits the definition of social movements to open and public actions, we defend a more inclusive definition which falls on a continuum of public and open actions, lobbying and pressure and hidden actions (Fillieule, 2009).

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