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Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930–1970

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edgment of all. There are others, however, to whom I owe more specific debts of gratitude.

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Introduction

In writing this book I was guided by four distinct objectives. For the sake of categorization, two of the objectives could be classified as theoretical, another as empirical, and the fourth as a marriage of theory and empirical analysis.

The principal theoretical goal of this work is to summarize and evaluate the current state of social movement theory within sociology. The 1960s saw a level of social movement activity in the United States unparalleled since the depression decade of the 1930s. Blacks, students, women, farm workers, and a variety of other groups struggled to effect basic changes in the political and economic structures of society as well as to redefine minority status. The political turbulence of the era, however, caught the social scientific community off guard, triggering a renewed interest in the study of social movements. A decade later, however, social movement theory remains a conceptual muddle. The various classical formulations that earlier dominated theorizing in the field—collective behavior, mass society, etc.—remain much in evidence.[1] These formulations, which emphasize the irrationality of movement participants and the discontinuity between "ordinary" political activity and movement behavior, must be seen as ideologically and substantively flawed.

Recent movement analysis has criticized the classical model on both substantive and theoretical grounds. The result of these efforts has been a systematic shift in attention from social-psychological to political and organizational determinants of movement development. The dominant theoretical perspective to emerge from this literature has been the resource mobilization model. In some hands, the perspective reads like little more than an organizer's manual on fund raising. A discernible model of movements, however, does emerge in the work of the model's more sophisticated proponents. Emphasizing the constancy of discontent/strain and the variability of resources, mobilization theorists have sought to account for the emergence and development of insurgency on the basis of this variability. That the model represents a marked improvement over the psychologism of the classical formulations is beyond dispute. At the same time, for reasons to be discussed later, the ultimate utility of the resource mobilization perspective must be questioned. As yet, however, the model has received very little empirical attention or, for that matter, critical comment, in general.

Building on the critiques of these two models, I propose to outline an alternative "political process" model of social movements. This alternative model seeks to explain insurgency on the basis of a favorable confluence of factors internal and external to the movement. Specifically, I will argue that the emergence of widespread protest activity is the result of a combination of expanding political opportunities and indigenous organization, as mediated through a crucial process of collective attribution. Over time, these same factors continue to shape the development of insurgency in consort with one additional factor: the shifting social-control response of other groups to the movement.

The second theoretical objective alluded to above concerns a standard topic for much social scientific—and indeed popular—speculation: power in America. It is my contention that all models of social movements imply adherence to a more general conception of institutionalized political power. Accordingly, one of my intentions will be to link the three models of social insurgency to the more general models of political power implicit in each.

This objective has its roots in my growing sense of dismay over the absence of any real dialogue between political scientists and sociologists working in the field of social movements. All too often sociologists discuss social movements without assessing their relationship to institutionalized political processes. There are, of course, exceptions (Gamson, 1975; Tilly, 1978), but I think it is fair to say that most movement scholars treat their subject matter as a bounded field of inquiry distinct from more general questions of political power.

On the other hand, political scientists have traditionally conceptualized power almost exclusively in institutional terms. Accordingly, they have failed to adequately explain or take account of the impact of social movements on the institutionalized political establishment. Certainly, one can cite exceptions to this rule such as Theodore Lowi's fine book, *The Politics of Disorder* (1971). Yet even here, a sociologist reading Lowi's book would be struck by the author's ignorance of the relevant sociological literature on social movements. This ignorance may result from the traditional conceptualization of social movements as an apolitical form of "collective behavior," a conceptualization that assigned the topic to social psychologists for study, leaving the field of "rational" (read institutionalized) politics to the political scientists. Whatever the origins of this separation, it remains, in my view, both an artificial and an unfortunate one. I agree with Gamson: "In place of the old duality of extremist politics and pluralist politics, there is simply politics. . . . Rebellion, in this view, is simply

politics by other means. It is not some kind of irrational expression but is as instrumental in its nature as a lobbyist trying to get special favors for his group or a major political party conducting a presidential campaign" (1975: 138–39).

polisci still
ignore sociology
i.e. PP lit

It is time the links between institutionalized and insurgent politics were established and the insights from both sociology and political science brought to bear on a complete analysis of the topic of power in America. One aim of this volume, then, is to contribute to this emerging dialogue.

Distinct from these theoretical objectives is the empirical focus of the work. Quite simply, I hope to provide a more comprehensive empirical analysis of the black protest movement than has yet appeared in the literature. Much, of course, has already been written about the movement. That material generally falls into two categories: journalistic or impressionistic accounts of particular phases or campaigns during the movement (Brooks, 1974; Watters, 1971), or scholarly analyses of particular aspects of the movement (organizational structure, tactics, etc.). However, to my knowledge, no systematic scholarly treatment has yet been completed on the movement as a whole.

Besides the comprehensive focus of this analysis one other factor marks the perspective adopted here as distinctive. Virtually all other treatments of the black movement date its beginnings with either the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955–56 or the 1954 Supreme Court decision in the Brown case. Certainly these were landmark events. Nonetheless, to single them out serves, in my view, to obscure the less dramatic but ultimately more significant historical trends that shaped the prospects for later insurgency. Especially critical, I will argue, were several broad historical processes in the period from 1930 to 1954 that rendered the political establishment more vulnerable to black protest activity while also affording blacks the institutional strength to launch such a challenge. Later events such as the 1954 decision and the Montgomery bus boycott merely served as dramatic (though hardly insignificant) capstones to these processes.

While distinct, the theoretical and empirical foci discussed above should not be regarded as unrelated. Indeed, they come together in the fourth and final objective of this work. In the next three chapters I will discuss the aforementioned models of social movements. My intention in doing so is to analyze the existing classical and resource mobilization perspectives and to outline the alternative political process model. Ultimately, however, the analytic utility of these three models will be determined not on their abstract theoretic merits but on the basis of how well each accounts for particular social movements. Thus, my final objective will be, wherever possible, to assess the degree of "fit" between the empirical implications of these three perspectives and the data drawn from the analysis of the black movement.

It should be noted that this exercise in no way amounts to a rigorous "test" of these three models. Given the complexity of the processes under examination and the broad time frame adopted in this study, even a rough approximation to the experimental model of scientific inquiry is impossible. Instead, I am simply presenting evidence that I think allows for a comparative judgment of the empirical merits of these three models as regards the single example of insurgency analyzed here. My claims are modest, indeed. Nonetheless, on the basis of this evidence I will argue that the black movement is more consistent with a political-process than with a classical or resource-mobilization interpretation of insurgency.

The mix of these empirical and theoretical objectives is reflected in the structure of the book. Chapters 1 through 3 contain discussions and critiques of the three models of social movements mentioned earlier. The classical model is critically examined in Chapter 1. Resource mobilization comes in for the same treatment in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3 the political process model is outlined and proposed as an alternative to these two models. In Chapter 4 the empirical implications of all three models are discussed and outlined to afford a basis for the empirical analysis to follow. In Chapters 5 through 8 the focus is largely empirical, with each succeeding period in the development of the movement analyzed in chronological order. The period from 1876 to 1954 is discussed in Chapter 5 as a means of providing the reader with an understanding of the historical context out of which the movement developed. In Chapter 6 the crucial period (1955–60) of movement emergence and white reaction is analyzed. The period popularly conceived of as the heyday of civil rights protest, 1961–65, is the focus of attention in Chapter 7. Finally, in Chapter 8, the complex period from 1966 to 1970 is analyzed in an attempt to shed light on the much-neglected topic of movement decline. Chapter 9 presents a synthesis of the empirical findings and theoretical themes contained in the previous eight chapters. Specifically, the analytic utility of all three models of insurgency will be assessed in light of the study's empirical findings. In turn the practical implications of those findings for insurgency in contemporary America will also be discussed.

[illegible] I.V. D.V.

- Causal link?
- unit of analysis
- method / inquiry

⇒'s logic — logic: coding ⇒ variable

what is wrong → evidence
→ inadequate [illegible]
→ aggregate problem

how correct it?

1 The Classical Model of Social Movements Examined

During the past twenty years the accuracy of the pluralist model as a description of the American political system has been increasingly questioned. Yet pluralism represents more than just a description of institutionalized politics in America. In addition, the model is important for what it implies about organized political activity that takes place *outside* the political system.

The pluralist view of social movements follows logically from the way the model characterizes institutionalized politics. The central tenet of the pluralist model is that, in America, political power is widely distributed between a host of competing groups rather than concentrated in the hands of any particular segment of society. Thus Dahl tells us that, in the United States, "Political power is pluralistic in the sense that there exist many different sets of leaders; each set has somewhat different objectives from the others, each has access to its own political resources, each is relatively independent of the others. There does not exist a single set of all-powerful leaders who are wholly agreed on their major goals and who have enough power to achieve their major goals" (1967: 188–89).

This wide distribution of power has favorable consequences for the political system. The absence of concentrated power is held to ensure the openness and responsiveness of the system and to inhibit the use of force or violence in dealing with political opponents. With regard to the openness of the system, Dahl writes that "whenever a group of people believe that they are adversely affected by national policies or are about to be, they generally have extensive opportunities for presenting their case and for negotiations that may produce a more acceptable alternative. In some cases, they may have enough power to delay, to obstruct, and even to veto the attempt to impose policies on them" (1967: 23). The implication is clear: groups may vary in the amount of power they wield, but no group exercises sufficient power to bar others from entrance into the political arena.

Once inside the arena, groups find that other organized contenders are attentive to their political interests. This responsiveness is again a product of the wide distribution of power characteristic of the pluralist system.

Groups simply lack the power to achieve their political goals without the help of other contenders. Instead, they must be constantly attuned to the goals and interests of other groups if they are to establish the coalitions that are held to be the key to success in a pluralist system.

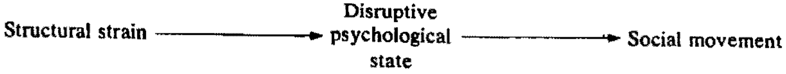
Efficacious political interaction also requires that groups exercise tactical restraint in their dealings with other contenders. Any attempt to exercise coercive power over other groups is seen as a tactical mistake. Lacking disproportionate power, contenders are dependent on one another for the realization of their political goals. Thus, according to the pluralists, the exercise of force is tantamount to political suicide. A broad distribution of power, then, insures not only the openness and responsiveness of the system but its restrained character as well. "Because one center of power is set against another, power itself will be tamed, civilized, controlled and limited to decent human purposes, while coercion . . . will be reduced to a minimum" (Dahl, 1967: 24). In place of force and coercion, the system will "generate politicians who learn how to deal gently with opponents, who struggle endlessly in building and holding coalitions together . . . who seek compromises" (Dahl, 1967: 329).

If the pluralist portrait is accurate, how are we to explain social movements? Why would any group engaged in rational, self-interested political action ignore the advantages of such an open, responsive, gentlemanly political system? One possible explanation would be that the group in question had simply made a tactical mistake. Yet the regularity with which social movements occur makes it difficult to believe that, as a historical phenomenon, they represent little more than a consistent strategic error made by countless groups.[1] However, pluralist theory implies another logical answer to the question. Movement participants are simply not engaged in "rational, self-interested political action." Accordingly their departure from the "proper channels" is not seen as evidence of tactical stupidity so much as proof that the motives behind their actions are somehow distinct from those leading others to engage in "ordinary" politics. This answer represents the underlying assumption of the "classical" model of social movements.

THE CLASSICAL MODEL

As referred to here, the classical theory of social movements is synonymous with a general causal model of social movements rather than with any particular version of that model. For analytic purposes, the following variations of the model have been subsumed under the general designation of classical theory: mass society, collective behavior, status inconsistency, rising expectations, relative deprivation, and Davies' J-curve theory of revolution. No claim is made that these models are interchangeable. Each possesses features that are unique to the model. However, the idiosyncratic components of each are relatively insignificant when compared to the consistency with which a general causal sequence (see fig. 1.1) is relied on in all versions of the model to account for the emergence of social movements. This sequence moves from the specification of some underlying structural weakness in society to a discussion of the disruptive psychological effect that this structural "strain" has on society. The sequence is held to be complete when the attendant psychological disturbance reaches the aggregate threshold required to produce a social movement.

Figure 1.1 Classical Model

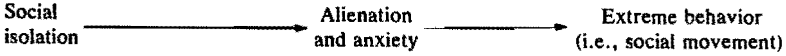


The various versions of the classical model agree on this basic sequence and differ only in their conceptualization of the parts of the model. That is, a variety of antecedent structural strains have been held to be casually related to social movements through an equally wide range of disturbed "states of mind." To appreciate the similarities underlying these various formulations, it will help to review briefly a number of them.

Mass Society Theory

According to proponents of this model, the structural condition known as mass society is especially conducive to the rise of social movements.[2] "Mass society" refers to the absence of an extensive structure of intermediate groups through which people can be integrated into the political and social life of society. Social isolation is thus the structural prerequisite for social protest. The *proximate* causes of such activity, however, are the feelings of "alienation and anxiety" that are supposed to stem from social "atomization." Kornhauser tells us that "social atomization engenders strong feelings of alienation and anxiety, and therefore the disposition to engage in extreme behavior to escape from these tensions" (1959: 32). This sequence is diagramed in figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2 Mass Society



Status Inconsistency

Another version of the classical model is status inconsistency (Broom, 1959; Laumann and Segal, 1971; Lenski, 1954).[3] Like "mass society," the term "status inconsistency" has both an objective and subjective referent. Objectively, status inconsistency refers to the discrepancy between a persons's rankings on a variety of status dimensions (e.g., education, income, occupation). If severe, we are told, this discrepancy can produce subjective tensions similar to those presumed to "afflict" the "atomized" individual. For some proponents of the model, these tensions are explainable by reference to the theory of cognitive dissonance. Geschwender, for example, writes: "Dissonance is an upsetting state and will produce tension for the individual. This tension will lead to an attempt to reduce dissonance by altering cognitions . . . or deleting old ones. Attempts to alter reality-based cognitions will involve attempting to change the real world. . . . The set of circumstances described by the 'status inconsistency' hypothesis would produce varying intensities of dissonance and dissonance-reducing behavior according to the degree of discrepancy between relevant status dimensions" (Geschwender, 1971b: 12, 15). As diagrammed in figure 1.3, status inconsistency is thus another variant of the basic causal sequence moving from structural strain, to discontent, to collective protest.

Figure 1.3 Status Inconsistency

Severe and widespread status inconsistency → Cognitive dissonance → Social movements

Collective Behavior

Collective behavior is the most general of all the classical models.[4] As a result, it approximates the causal sequence outlined in figure 1.1 quite closely. The model, as proposed by such theorists as Smelser, Lang and Lang, and Turner and Killian, does not specify a particular condition, such as status inconsistency or atomization, as the presumed structural cause of social movements. Instead, any severe social strain can provide the necessary structural antecedent for movement emergence. Thus, according to Smelser, "some form of strain must be present if an episode of collective behavior is to occur. The more severe the strain, moreover, the more likely is such an episode to appear" (1962: 48). Such strains are the result of a disruption in the normal functioning of society. The precise form this disruption takes is not specified, but frequent mention is made of such processes as industrialization, urbanization, or a rapid rise in unemployment. Indeed, any significant social change is disruptive in nature and therefore facilitative of social insurgency. Joseph Gusfield captures the essence of this argument: "We describe social movements and collective action as responses to social change. To see them in this light emphasizes the disruptive and disturbing quality which new ideas, technologies, procedures, group migration, and intrusions can have for people" (1970: 9).

Unit of analysis → individual

In this model, then, social change is the source of structural strain. Social change is described as stressful because it disrupts the normative order to which people are accustomed. Subjectively this disruption is experienced as "normative ambiguity," which we are told "excites feelings of anxiety, fantasy, hostility, etc." (Smelser, 1962: 11). Once again, the familiar causal sequence characteristic of the classical model is evident in the theory of collective behavior (see fig. 1.4).

problem of explanation

Figure 1.4 Collective Behavior

System strain → Normative ambiguity → Social movements

These brief descriptions of various classical theories demonstrate that, despite superficial differences, the models are alike in positing a consistent explanation of social movements. Specifically, all versions of the classical model seem to share three points. First, social movements are seen as a collective reaction to some form of disruptive system strain. Such strain creates tensions which, when severe enough—when some aggregate "boiling" point or threshold is reached—trigger social insurgency. Movement emergence is thus analogous to, and as inexorable as, the process by which water boils.

Second, despite the emphasis on system strain, the classical model is more directly concerned with the psychological effect that the strain has on *individuals*. In this view, individual discontent, variously defined as anxiety, alienation, dissonance, etc., represents the immediate cause of movement emergence. Some versions of the model account for discontent on the basis of the personal malintegration of movement participants. Such accounts depict movement participants as anomic social isolates. However, even if one discounts hints of personal pathology, the individual remains, in empirical analysis, the object of research attention. As seen in these formulations the social movement is an emergent group of discontented individuals.

level / analysis

Third, in all versions of the classical model, the motivation for movement participation is held to be based not so much on the desire to attain political goals as on the need to manage the psychological tensions of a stressful social situation. The functions ascribed to movement participation by various classical theorists support this contention. For the mass society theorist the movement offers the atomized individual the sense of community he lacks in his everyday life (Arendt, 1951: 316–17; Kornhauser, 1959: 107–13; Selznick, 1970: 263–66). Selznick, for example, notes that for individuals in mass society:

> The need to belong is unfulfilled; insecurity follows and, with it, anxiety-laden efforts to find a way back to status and function and to a sense of relationship with society.
>
> But these efforts are compulsive: enforced by urgent psychological pressures, they result in distorted, pathological responses. There arises the phenomenon of the Ersatzgemeinschaft, the "substitute community," in which essentially unsatisfactory types of integration—most explicitly revealed in fascism—are leaned upon for sustenance (Selznick, 1970: 264).

Similarly, proponents of the status inconsistency model describe movement participation as one means by which the individual can reduce the dissonance produced by his inconsistent statuses (Geschwender, 1971b: 11–16). In a more general sense, the same argument is advanced by collective behavior theorists. The social movement is effective not as political action but as therapy. To be sure, movements are not unrelated to politics. Indeed, Smelser explicitly tells us that they frequently represent a precursor to effective political action (1962: 73). Nonetheless, in themselves, movements are little more than crude attempts to help the individual cope with the "normative ambiguity" of a social system under strain. The "therapeutic" basis of movement participation is implicitly acknowledged by Smelser in his discussion of the "generalized beliefs" that underlie collective behavior: "collective behavior is guided by various kinds of beliefs. . . . These beliefs differ, however, from those which guide many other types of behavior. They involve a belief in the existence of extraordinary forces—threats, conspiracies, etc.—which are at work in the universe. They also involve an assessment of the extraordinary consequences which will follow if the collective attempt to reconstitute social action is successful. The beliefs on which collective behavior is based (we shall call them *generalized beliefs*) are thus akin to magical beliefs" (Smelser, 1962: 8).

Movement participation is thus based on a set of unrealistic beliefs that together function as a reassuring myth of the movement's power to resolve the stressful situations confronting movement members. Movement participants, we are told, "endow themselves . . . with enormous power. . . . Because of this exaggerated potency, adherents often see unlimited bliss in the future if only the reforms are adopted. For if they are adopted, they argue, the basis for threat, frustration, and discomfort will disappear" (Smelser, 1962: 117). The message is clear: if the generalized beliefs on which the movement is based represent an inaccurate assessment of the political realities confronting the movement, it is only because they function on a *psychological* rather than a *political* level. The same can be said for the movement as a whole.

WEAKNESSES OF THE CLASSICAL MODEL

The classical model has not been without its critics (Aya, 1979; Currie and Skolnick, 1970; Gamson, 1975; Jenkins and Perrow, 1977; McCarthy and Zald, 1973; Oberschall, 1973; Rogin, 1967; Rule and Tilly, 1975; Schwartz, 1976; C. Tilly et al., 1975; Wilson and Orum, 1976). In general, I agree with the wide-ranging criticisms advanced in these works. The critique offered here, however, is limited to a discussion of the three general tenets discussed in the previous section.

Social Movements as a Response to Strain

The first proposition, that social movements are a reaction to system strain, is problematic because of the implicit assertion that there exists a simple one-to-one correspondence between strain and collective protest.[5] We are asked to believe that social movements occur as an inexorable response to a certain level of strain in society. But since widespread social insurgency is only an occasional phenomenon, we must conclude that system strain is also an aberrant social condition. The image is that of a normally stable social system disrupted only on occasion by the level of strain presumed to produce social insurgency. However, as others have argued, this view of society would appear to overstate the extent to which the social world is normally free of strain. The following passage by John Wilson represents an important corrective to the imagery of the classical model. "The lesson to be learned for the purposes of studying social movements is that since societies are rarely stable, in equilibrium, or without strain because change is constant, the forces which have the potential of producing social movements are always present in some degree. No great upheavals are needed to bring about the conditions conducive to the rise of social movements because certain tensions seem to be endemic to society" (Wilson, 1973: 55). If, as Wilson argues, the structural antecedents of social insurgency are "always present in some degree," then it becomes impossible to rely on them to explain the occurrence of what is a highly variable social phenomenon.[6] At best, system strain is a necessary, but insufficient, cause of social movements.

Test #1

What is missing in the classical model is any discussion of the larger political context in which social insurgency occurs. Movements do not emerge in a vacuum. Rather, they are profoundly shaped by a wide range of environmental factors that condition both the objective possibilities for successful protest as well as the popular perception of insurgent prospects.

Both factors, as we will see, are important in the emergence of organized protest activity. Together they comprise what Leites and Wolf have termed "cost push" factors in the generation of a social movement (1970: 28). By overlooking these factors, classical theorists are guilty of suggesting that the absence of social insurgency is a simple product of low levels of strain and discontent in society. This ignores the distinct possibility that movements may die aborning, or not arise at all, because of repression or rational calculations based on the imbalance of power between insurgents and their opponents. As Schattschneider reminds us, "People are not likely to start a fight if they are certain that they are going to be severely penalized for their effort. In this situation repression may assume the guise of a false unanimity" (1960: 8).

In short, the insistence that strain is the root cause of social movements has resulted in an overly mechanistic model that conceives of social movements as the result of a fixed and linear process rather than as the interplay of both "cost push" and "demand pull" factors. In John Wilson's view, the classical model "is based on the assumption that circumstances establish predispositions in people who are in turn drawn toward certain outcomes—more specifically, that structural conditions 'push' people into protest groups. But social movements are not a simple knee-jerk response to social conditions" (1973: 90). Wilson is right. Social movements are not simply a "knee-jerk response" to system strain. Rather they emerge and develop as a product of the ongoing interaction of organized contenders within a shifting politico-economic environment. In Chapter 3 this theme will be developed more fully. For now, the important point is that social movements are not, as the classical theorists contend, only the product of factors endemic to the aggrieved population (alienation, dissonance, etc.). The characteristics and actions of opponents and allies, as well as those of movement groups, must be taken into consideration in accounting for any specific social movement. Insofar as classical theorists have failed to do so, they have diminished the utility of their model.

Individual Discontent as the Proximate Cause of Social Movements

While system strain, however defined, is seen by classical theorists as the structural cause of social movements, the motive force behind social insurgency remains some form of individual discontent. This atomistic focus is problematic on a number of counts.

Perhaps the most glaring weakness of this second proposition is the assertion that movement participants are distinguished from the average citizen by some abnormal psychological profile. In extreme versions of the model, nothing less than severe pathological traits are ascribed to movement participants (Hoffer, 1951; Lang and Lang, 1961: 275–89; Le Bon, 1960; McCormack, 1957). While perhaps effective as a means of discrediting one's political enemies, such formulations are less convincing as scientific accounts of social insurgency.[7] Maurice Pinard summarizes a number of objections to these models:

problem w/ atomistic assumption

> we do not see how such political movements could recruit a disproportionately large number of people characterized by pathological personality traits. For one thing, deep psychological traits are not necessarily translated into political beliefs, and the connections of these two with political action is not as simple as is often implied. Moreover, people affected by these traits are relatively few in the general population. . . . If such a movement were to draw only on such people, it would be small indeed and very marginal (Pinard, 1971: 225).[8]

By other accounts, movement participants are not so much distinguished by personal pathology as social marginality. This is the case with status inconsistents who, by virtue of their discrepant rankings on a number of status dimensions, are held to be poorly integrated into society. (1) Similarly, mass society theorists attribute movement participation to the "uprooted and atomized sections of the population" (Kornhauser, 1959: 47). However, impressive empirical evidence exists that seriously challenges the assumption of individual malintegration. Especially significant are the many studies that have actually found movement participants to be better integrated into their communities than nonparticipants. Two examples will serve to illustrate the point. A study of the personal characteristics of participants in a right wing group in the early 1960s showed members to have higher rates of organizational participation, as well as higher incomes, levels of education, and occupational prestige, than a comparable national sample (Wolfinger et al., 1964: 267–75). In a finding more relevant to this study, Anthony Orum discovered participation in black student-protest activity to be highly correlated with integration into the college community (1972: 48–50).[9]

evidence contradicts marginality and isolated

The lack of supportive evidence is not the only empirical weakness associated with the claim that movement participants are social isolates. Indeed, attempts to document the more general proposition that participation in social insurgency is the product of particular psychological factors have traditionally foundered on a host of empirical/methodological deficiencies. (2) For one thing, classical theorists have frequently inferred the presence of the presumed psychological state (alienation, dissonance, anxiety) from objective, rather than subjective, data. Thus, after comparing income, education, and occupational levels for whites and nonwhites, Geschwender concludes that, as an explanation for the emergence of the civil rights movement, " 'the Status Inconsistency Hypothesis' . . . is consistent with the data examined" (1971c: 40). His conclusion is empirically unwarranted, however. Wilson explains why:

Status inconsistency is intended to describe the processes and product of social interactions in which perceptions, impressions, and responses to these play an important part in influencing attitudes. Underlying the whole model is a motivational scheme in which the perception of certain attitudes helps produce certain outcomes. And yet nowhere is data presented on these motivations. Despite the fact that the model contains crucial social-psychological variables, reliance is made exclusively on objective indexes of inconsistency (John Wilson, 1973: 80).

(2)

not aggregate [illegible]

[illegible]

More damning is the consistent failure of classical theorists to document an aggregate increase in the psychological condition they are attempting to measure. The various versions of the classical model rely for their explanatory power on just such an increase. The claim is that social movements arise *only* when a certain level of psychological strain or discontent is present. This threshold can be conceived either as an increase in the proportion of the aggrieved population "suffering" the specified psychological state, or as an increase in the intensity of the psychological stress associated with the condition. Either way, a demonstrated increase in the presumed causal condition remains a basic requirement of any reasonable test of the model. Unfortunately, this "basic requirement" has been almost universally ignored.[10] In summarizing the findings of relative deprivation studies, a proponent of the model has remarked: "practically all of these studies fail to measure [RD] relative deprivation . . . over a period of time" (Abeles, 1976: 123). Instead, the usual approach has been to measure the degree of relative deprivation (or any of the subjective states deemed significant) in a specified population at a given point in time. On the basis of this analysis, the conclusion is drawn that relative deprivation is causally related to the protest activity of the population in question. But nowhere have we been shown data reporting comparable levels of relative deprivation *over time*.[11] That a certain proportion of the population is judged to be relatively deprived (or alienated, status inconsistent, etc.) at any point in time is hardly surprising. Indeed, it is likely that the incidence of these psychological conditions is relatively constant over time. If so, reliance on them to account for social insurgency is problematic indeed.

(3)

Finally, classical theorists have generally been remiss in failing to measure the incidence of these psychological conditions among ~~comparable~~ samples of movement participants *and* nonparticipants. Geschwender, for example, in the study discussed above, based his support for the status inconsistency hypothesis on aggregate data for the entire nonwhite population of the United States. Such data, however, are inadequate to test the theory. Insofar as movement involvement is held to stem from status inconsistency, a comparison of the proportion of status inconsistents among movement participants *and nonparticipants* is required to assess the explanatory worth of the model. If we were provided with such a breakdown, we might very well find that the proportions were not significantly different. This was the case in one study that serves as a significant exception to the methodological weakness under discussion here. In his study of protest activity among black college students, Orum divided his sample into participants and nonparticipants and then compared the two groups on a variety of background variables. On the basis of this analysis, Orum concluded that: the "theory . . . of rising expectations, received no support in our data. Finally, the . . . interpretation, that the civil rights movement arose largely as a means of expressing the discontent of middle-class Negroes, who feel relatively deprived, was not confirmed" (1972: 45).

Orum's findings also illustrate what is perhaps the most serious, yet least acknowledged, weakness associated with the assertion that movements are a product of particular states of mind. While models based on personal pathology or social marginality have come under increasing fire, the same atomistic focus survives intact in less extreme formulations of the classical model. Geschwender illustrates this focus: "He [the Negro in America] is not experiencing as rapid a rate of occupational mobility as he feels he is entitled to. He is not receiving the economic rewards which he feels he has earned. As a result, he is becoming increasingly status inconsistent . . . He feels relatively deprived and unjustly so. Therefore, he revolts in order to correct the situation" (1971c: 42).

(4)

how do ind.

aggregate

Social movements are thus viewed as emergent collections of discontented *individuals*. But to adopt this perspective requires that we ignore a fact that, on the surface, would appear to be obvious: social movements are *collective* phenomena. Obvious or not, classical ~~theorists are~~ guilty of failing to explain the collective basis of social insurgency. They offer no explanation of how individual psychological discontent is transformed into organized collective action. Rule and Tilly make the same point when they criticize Davies' variant of the classical model for treating "as automatic precisely what is most problematic about the development of revolutions: the transition from uncoordinated individual dissatisfactions to collective assaults on the holders of power" (1975: 50).

Quite simply, social movements would appear to be collective phenomena arising first among those segments of the aggrieved population that are sufficiently organized and possessed of the resources needed to sustain a protest campaign. Isolated individuals do not emerge, band together, and form movement groups. Rather, as numerous studies attest, it is within established interactional networks that social movements develop (Cameron, 1974; Freeman, 1973; Morris, 1979; Pinard, 1971; Shorter and

Tilly, 1974; C. Tilly et al., 1975). According to Shorter and Tilly, "individuals are not magically mobilized for participation in some group enterprise, regardless how angry, sullen, hostile or frustrated they may feel. Their aggression may be channeled to collective ends only through the coordinating, directing functions of an organization, be it formal or informal" (1974: 38).

Social Movements Represent a Psychological Rather than a Political Phenomenon

By claiming that the motive force behind movement participation is supplied by the disturbing effect of particular "states of mind," classical theorists are arguing that the proximate cause of social insurgency is psychological rather than political. Indeed, we are really being told that the movement as a whole is properly viewed as a psychological rather than a political phenomenon. Social movements are seen as collective attempts to manage or resolve the psychological tensions produced by system strain. In contrast, "ordinary," or institutionalized politics, is generally interpreted as rational group-action in pursuit of a substantive political goal. The contrast is clearly visible in the relationship that is presumed to exist, in each case, between the problem or strain to be resolved and the means taken to resolve it.

In the case of institutionalized politics, a straightforward relationship between the problem and the means of redress is assumed. If, for example, a government contract vital to the economic well-being of an area were terminated, we would expect the representatives of the affected constituency to initiate efforts to prevent the anticipated recession. Moreover, our interpretation of these efforts would, in most cases, be straightforward. In addition to ensuring their political survival, the elected officials of the region are simply trying to provide their constituents with jobs.

All of this may seem so obvious as to fail to merit such extensive attention. The important point is that classical theorists deny this straightforward link between problem and action when it comes to social movements. In fact, in some versions of the model, there is no logical connection whatsoever. Mass society theory provides us with such an example. According to proponents of the model, widespread isolation is the basic structural problem, or "strain," underlying social insurgency. The social movement is an attempt to resolve this problem, but it is, at best, an indirect attempt. To illustrate the point, let us return to our hypothetical example. Suppose, in addition to the institutionalized efforts of the area's elected officials, a protest movement emerged among workers who had lost their jobs as a result of the contract termination. How should we interpret their actions? Surely the workers are also engaged in instrumental political action designed to insure their means of livelihood. Not so, according to the mass society theorists. Quite apart from the movement's stated politico-economic goals, the primary motivation for participation remains psychological. Kornhauser is explicit on this point: "mass movements appeal to the unemployed on psychological . . . grounds, as ways of overcoming feelings of anxiety and futility, and of finding new solidarity and forms of activity" (1959: 167). Clearly, the functions ascribed to movements by Kornhauser are universal. That is, all movements offer their members a sense of community and an escape from the tensions engendered by social isolation. In this sense, movements are interchangeable. Following Kornhauser, the unemployed workers could as easily have solved their "problems" by joining a fundamentalist religious group as by engaging in political protest. The implication is clear: the political content of the movement is little more than a convenient justification for what is at root a psychological phenomenon.

We have thus come full circle. I began the chapter by raising the issue of the relationship between the pluralist view of the American political system and the classical model of social movements. At the heart of the issue was the puzzling question of how to account for social movements in the face of the open, responsive political system described by the pluralists. Why would any group engaged in rational political action ignore the benefits of this system in favor of noninstitutionalized forms of protest? The classical theorists have provided an answer to this question: movement participants are not engaged in rational political action. Instead, the rewards they seek are primarily psychological in nature. The logic is straightforward. Social movements represent an entirely different behavioral dynamic than ordinary political activity. The pluralist model, with its emphasis on compromise and rational bargaining, provides a convenient explanation for the latter. Social movements, on the other hand, are better left, in Gamson's paraphrase of the classical position, to "the social psychologist whose intellectual tools prepare him to better understand the irrational" (1975: 133).

This distinction, however, raises serious questions about the accuracy of the classical model. It suggests, for example, that we need not take seriously the political goals of the movement. The substantive demands voiced by participants are more accurately viewed as epiphenomenal since the movement is, at root, a vehicle by which members resolve or manage their interpsychic conflicts. According to Kornhauser: "Mass movements are not looking for pragmatic solutions to economic or any other kind of problem. If they were so oriented, their emotional fervor and chiliastic zeal . . . would not characterize the psychological tone of these movements. In order to account for this tone, we must look beyond economic interests to more deep-seated psychological tendencies" (1959: 163).

And what of the participants in these movements? Are they aware of the "true" motivation behind their involvement? If not, how can we account for these periodic exercises in mass delusion? If, on the other hand, it is argued that they are aware, what explanation is there for their conscious rhetorical distortion of the "true" nature of the movement? Smelser offers the following explanation: "The striking feature of the protest movement is what Freud observed: it permits the expression of impulses that are normally repressed. . . . The efforts—sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious—of leaders and adherents of a movement to create issues, to provoke authorities . . . would seem to be in part efforts to 'arrange' reality so as to 'justify' the expression of normally forbidden impulses in a setting which makes them appear less reprehensible to the participants" (Smelser, 1973: 317).

The ideological implication of Smelser's account is none too flattering. At the same time, however, adherence to such a position makes it extremely difficult to explain the substantive impact social movements have had historically. If movement participants are motivated only by the desire to express "normally forbidden impulses," or to manage "feelings of anxiety and futility," then we would hardly expect social movements to be effective as social change vehicles. In fact, however, movements are, and always have been, an important impetus to sociopolitical change. The American colonists defeated the British on the strength of an organized insurgent movement. Mao, Lenin, Khomeini, and Castro all came to power as a result of similar movements. An incumbent president, Lyndon Johnson, was forced from office and this country's policy on Vietnam altered as a result of the antiwar movement. And through the collective protest efforts of blacks, the South's elaborate system of Jim Crow racism was dismantled in a matter of a decade. Are we to conclude that such significant historical processes were simply the unintended byproducts of a collective attempt at tension management? The argument is neither theoretically nor empirically convincing.

In summary, classical theorists posit a distinction between ordinary political behavior and social movements that is here regarded as false. At root, this distinction is based on an implicit acceptance of the pluralist model of the American political system. Michael Rogin has cut to the heart of the matter: "Having denied the importance of a problem of power, pluralists do not treat mass movements as rational forms of organization by constituencies that lack power. . . . since the pluralists stress that power is shared in a pluralist democracy, movements that do not accept the normal political techniques of that society must be dangerous and irrational" (Rogin, 1967: 272–73). By assuming that all groups are capable of exercising influence through institutionalized means, the pluralists have

made of social movements a behavioral phenomenon requiring "special" explanation. The classical theorists have, in turn, obliged with a host of such explanations based on any number of social psychological determinants. If, however, one rejects the pluralist model in favor of either an elite or Marxist view of power in America, the distinction between rational politics and social movements disappears.

– Bring SM explanation back into politics – rather than requiring special explanation

2 Resource Mobilization
A Deficient Alternative

Elite theories of the American political system offer an implicit account of social movements considerably different from the one sketched in Chapter 1 (Bachrach and Baratz, 1973: 51–64; Domhoff, 1970; Mills, 1959; Prewitt and Stone, 1973). Such theories rest on the assumption that groups in society differ markedly in the amount of political power they wield. There may exist a political arena in America but it is not the teeming convention hall depicted by the pluralists, but rather a restricted club reserved for the wealthy and powerful. Only those with sufficient political capital need apply. Lacking such capital, most groups in American society have virtually no bargaining power with which to advance their collective interests. Instead, by virtue of their disproportionate control over the political arena, powerful groups are generally able to exclude the powerless with little fear of political reprisal.

Social movements, in this view, are not a form of irrational behavior but rather a tactical response to the harsh realities of a closed and coercive political system. Viewed in this light, the distinction between movement behavior and institutionalized politics disappears. Both should be seen as rational attempts to pursue collective interests. Differences in behavior between movement participants and institutionalized political actors are attributable, not to the cognitive or psychological inadequacies of the former, but to the different strategic problems confronting each.

Given the assumptions of the pluralist model, social psychological theories were required to explain the phenomenon of social movements. By contrast, elite models dictate a more political/organizational view of social movements. Specifically, the dynamic of interest is the process by which powerless groups attempt to mobilize sufficient political strength to bargain successfully with established polity members.

Consistent with this focus is the resource mobilization model. McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977) were the first to use the term explicitly, but elements of the model are evident in the work of others (Aveni, 1977; Breton and Breton, 1969; Handler, 1978; Jenkins, 1975; Jenkins and Perrow, 1977; Leites and Wolf, 1970; Oberschall, 1973; James Q. Wilson, 1973).[1] Although these authors exhibit considerable theoretical variation, taken collectively, their work seems to embody two key tenets.[2]

First, the aggregate level of strain or discontent, which classical theorists presume to be of ultimate causal significance, is seen by proponents of the resource mobilization model as an insufficient cause of social movements. The claim is that discontent is more or less constant over time and thus inadequate as a full explanation of social movements: "rather than focusing on fluctuations in discontent to account for the emergence of insurgency, it seems more fruitful to assume that grievances are relatively constant and pervasive" (Jenkins and Perrow, 1977: 266).

What varies, "giving rise to insurgency, is the amount of social resources available to unorganized but aggrieved groups, making it possible to launch an organized demand for change" (Jenkins and Perrow, 1977: 250). At the most fundamental level, then, the generation of insurgency develops not from an aggregate rise in discontent but from a significant increase in the level of resources available to support collective protest activity. This basic scenario, however, leaves two crucial questions unanswered. First, what is the source of this "significant increase" in resources, and second, what determines that these resources will necessarily be employed in the service of insurgent aims? The second question will be discussed in more detail later. For now, it is enough simply to make the obvious point that resources do not dictate their use, people do. All too often however, a nonproblematic link between resources and insurgency is implied in the mobilization perspective.

On the source of the increased resources, some proponents of the model are vague, merely asserting that such an increase is essential to the generation of insurgency. The closest thing in the mobilization literature to a specific answer to the "source" question is that variations in the availability of resources are the product of shifting patterns of elite largess.

It is here that the imprint of elite theory on the mobilization perspective is perhaps most evident. Elite theorists depict society as characterized by a marked disparity in power between some societal elite, however defined, and the mass of ordinary citizens. The effect of this disparity is virtually to preclude most segments of society—especially the lower class—from any meaningful role in the exercise of political power. Consistent with this perspective, most proponents of the resource mobilization model reject the classical theorists' exclusive focus on the movement's mass base in favor of an analysis of the crucial role played by segments of the elite in the generation of insurgency. The claim seems to be that the movement's mass base, or "potential beneficiaries," to borrow a phrase from McCarthy and Zald, are too poor or politically powerless to generate a movement on their own: "one must realize that a negatively privileged minority is in a poor position to initiate a social protest movement through its own efforts alone" (Oberschall, 1973: 214). What is required is a healthy input of resources from some external "sponsor." Most frequently mentioned in this regard are church groups, foundations, organized labor, and the federal government. In short, most versions of the model contain an implicit assertion of powerlessness on the part of most segments of the population. Instead, the focus of research attention has been firmly fixed on powerful groups external to the movement's mass base, on the assumption that such groups are the crucial catalyst for social insurgency. Jenkins and Perrow have expressed these final two points nicely: "collective action is rarely a viable option because of lack of resources and the threat of repression. . . . When deprived groups do mobilize, it is due to the interjection of external resources" (1977: 251).

STRENGTHS OF THE MODEL

In general, the resource mobilization perspective can be seen as a reaction to the deficiencies of the classical model. As such, it is hard to overstate the powerful and positive impact that resource mobilization has had on the field of social movements. It has shifted the analytic focus of debate and research in such a way as to stimulate a rebirth of interest in a field that, under the dominance of the classical perspective, had become somewhat of an intellectual dead end.

More specifically, resource mobilization has proven to be a welcome departure from the earlier classical formulations for at least four reasons. First, and perhaps most important, the widespread acceptance of the perspective has served to redefine the basic ontological status of social movements within sociology. As noted earlier, social movements are seen, in the classical model, as psychological phenomena born of the efforts of discontented individuals to manage the interpsychic tensions endemic to their lives. By contrast, resource mobilization theorists describe social movements as collections of political actors dedicated to the advancement of their stated substantive goals. Thus, social movements are explicitly seen as political rather than psychological phenomena. In light of the myriad insurgent movements of the 1960s, as well as of a number of contemporary protest efforts, this shift seems clearly warranted.

Second, in describing social movements as a political phenomenon, resource mobilization theorists have attributed rationality to movement participants. The hints of pathology and irrationality implicit in the classical formulations have been replaced by the explicit assertion that movement behavior is informed by as much rationality as other forms of social action. In short, the resource mobilization perspective relies on no unique behavioral dynamic to explain collective protest. Social movements may be distinct from institutionalized political action, but this distinction owes more to the respective political positions of the groups involved than it does to any characteristic psychological profile of the individuals involved.[3]

Third, resource mobilization theorists have improved on the classical model by broadening the scope of their analysis to take account of the effect of external groups on the development of the movement. This is in contrast to the various classical theories which attribute sole causal importance to the aggregate level of discontent within the aggrieved population. This latter focus betrays a simplistic "demand-pull" view of social movements (Leites and Wolf, 1970). In contrast, Leites and Wolf stress the significance of "cost-push" factors in the generation of social insurgency. They explain the distinction as follows: "the hearts-and-minds analysis [classical model] focuses principal attention on the preferences, attitudes, and sympathies of the populace (demand), to the neglect of the opportunities and costs required to indulge these preferences" (1970: 29). According to most resource mobilization theorists, these "opportunities and costs" are, in large measure, structured by groups external to the movement. Accordingly, these groups command far more research attention in this perspective than in the classical model.

Finally, proponents of the resource mobilization model have alerted researchers to a seemingly obvious fact that has, nonetheless, been virtually ignored by classical theorists. While not necessarily synonymous with organizations, social movements would nonetheless seem to be dependent on some combination of formal and informal groups for their persistence and success. Movement groups, no less than other types of organizations, require a steady input of resources to survive over time. The ignorance of this fact by classical theorists reflects their failure to take seriously the movement as an ongoing political phenomenon. As long as the movement is seen as little more than a cathartic expression of the pent-up tensions of movement participants, no serious analysis of the resource requirements of movement organizations is required. By according legitimacy to a more explicitly organizational view of movements, resource mobilization theorists have redressed the long-standing neglect of this important topic and opened up a crucial area for further study.

The positive contributions of these theorists are as significant as they are numerous. Indeed, the resource mobilization approach provides a solid theoretical point of departure for the alternative model outlined in the next chapter. In the final analysis, however, the approach would seem to raise nearly as many questions as it resolves.

WEAKNESSES OF THE MODEL

To some extent, the weaknesses of the various versions of the mobilization model stem not so much from flaws inherent in the general perspective as from a general deficiency in the movement literature. There is, in fact, no widely accepted typology, within the field, to differentiate the diverse phenomena encountered in the empirical literature. To theorize about social movements, then, is to address activities ranging from peyote cults on the one hand to revolutions on the other, with all manner of variations arrayed in between. Obviously, no theory—save perhaps the most general and therefore least useful—can adequately account for such a diverse range of phenomena. The failure to distinguish between these various behavioral forms has, in the view of one critic, "produced a field of study loosely joining phenomena so diverse as to defy explanation by any single theoretical framework. The desire for inclusiveness has had a high but hidden cost in theoretical specificity" (Traugott, 1978: 42).

What is needed are several theories specifically tailored to particular categories of action. Resource mobilization is such a theory: defensible when applied to a certain class of collective actions, inadequate as a general explanation of insurgency. The limits of the model's applicability stem from the failure of its proponents adequately to differentiate organized change efforts generated by excluded groups and by established polity members. Tilly (1978) and Gamson (1975) define *members* as groups possessing sufficient politico-economic resources to insure that their interests are routinely taken into account in decision-making processes. Excluded groups, or *challengers*, to use Gamson's term, are groups whose interests are routinely "organized out" of institutionalized political deliberations because of their lack of bargaining leverage. Because of this central difference, organized change efforts on the part of members and challengers are likely to differ in a number of crucial respects. Chief among these are the extensiveness of the changes sought, the change strategies employed, and the relationship of each to elite groups.

Change efforts generated by established polity members are likely to involve only limited reforms pursued exclusively through institutionalized channels. Moreover, because of the considerable bargaining power of the sponsoring group(s), as well as the limited goals sought, such efforts will usually receive considerable support from other polity members. In general, it is these kinds of "top-down" reform efforts that proponents of the mobilization perspective have used to illustrate their model. McCarthy and Zald illustrate the beneficial effects of elite support by reference to such organizations as The Citizens' Board of Inquiry into Hunger and Malnutrition in the United States, the National Council of Senior Citizens for Health Care through Social Security, Common Cause, and the various organizational offshoots of Ralph Nader's consumer-rights campaign (McCarthy and Zald, 1973: 21–22). In regard to such groups, the McCarthy-Zald version of the resource mobilization model affords a useful framework for analysis. The real question is whether it is defensible to call such groups social movements in the first place. Without discounting the significance of these phenomena, such groups would seem to resemble public interest lobbies (Common Cause) or formal interest groups (Sierra Club) rather than social movements. Certainly, their broad links to the centers of decision-making power and their heavy, if not exclusive, reliance on institutionalized change strategies mark them as different phenomena than social movements popularly conceived. The latter term I would reserve for those organized efforts, on the part of excluded groups, to promote or resist changes in the structure of society that involve recourse to noninstitutional forms of political participation. It is in regard to this class of collective actions that the above version of the resource mobilization model is found wanting. In particular, proponents of the model offer descriptions of (a) the relationship of elite groups to social movements, (b) the insurgent capabilities of excluded groups, (c) resources, and (d) the role of discontent in the generation of social insurgency that are regarded here as problematic when applied to the broad class of movements subsumed under the definition proposed above.

Elite Involvement in Social Movements

Proponents of the resource mobilization model suggest, by implication, that elite institutions provide insurgent groups with resources in the absence of indigenous pressure to do so. The movement's mass base, it will be recalled, is seen as virtually impotent as a result of its overwhelming poverty and political powerlessness. Incapable of exerting pressure on its own behalf, it must await facilitative action on the part of external sponsors. We are left to conclude that elite funding sources (foundations, government agencies, etc.) are willing, even aggressive, sponsors of social insurgency.

Given the examples proponents of the model have relied upon to illustrate the perspective, it is not surprising they have reached this conclusion. We would expect change efforts organized by established polity members often to benefit from elite involvement. In the first place, the traditional political resources mobilized by such efforts are enough to insure the receptivity of elite groups. This is not to say that all components of the elite will aggressively support such efforts, only that the political wherewithall they command grants them routine access to centers of power normally closed to challengers. Second, insofar as these are elite-generated reform efforts, they pose no threat to the established structure of polity membership. Finally, the more enlightened members of the elite are likely to recognize that such efforts function ultimately to strengthen, rather than challenge, the status quo. Not only are they likely to diffuse indigenous discontent by assuring the public that "something is being done" about the problem in question, but they also serve to confine change efforts to institutionalized channels, thus preserving member control of the process. When viewed in this light, top-down reform efforts may be seen by members as necessary societal tinkering to prevent major political disruption. For all these reasons, then, various components of the elite may choose to support member-generated reform activities. When we move, however, to a discussion of insurgent efforts initiated by excluded groups, the accuracy of this version of the mobilization perspective must be increasingly questioned.

As defined earlier, *all* social movements pose a threat to existing institutional arrangements in society. The basis of this threat is only partially a function of the substantive goals of the movement. Indeed, the stated aims of a movement are often no more radical than those embodied in elite-sponsored reform efforts. What marks social movements as inherently threatening is their implicit challenge to the established structure of polity membership and their willingness to bypass institutionalized political channels. Emerging, as they do, among excluded groups, social movements embody an implicit demand for more influence in political decision-making. This raises the spectre of a restructuring of polity membership, a prospect that is anathema to all components of the elite. When this demand is coupled with a departure from "proper channels," the threat is magnified all the more. For it is within such channels that the power disparity between members and challengers is greatest. In effect, "proper channels" afford members the means to monitor and control any substantive threat to their interests. Moreover, they are able to do so without recourse to more costly control strategies (i.e., violence) that might call the legitimacy of their actions into question. Accordingly, deviation from these channels renders the contol of insurgent challenges both costlier and more difficult.

These observations carry with them the implicit conviction that elite involvement in social protest is not as willing as some resource mobilization theorists suggest. In the face of the substantive and strategic threats posed by movements, it is unlikely that polity members would act aggressively to promote insurgent challenges. Rather, elite involvement would seem to occur only as a response to the threat posed by the generation of a mass-based social movement. When faced with such an indigenous challenge, members manifest a wide range of responses depending on the degree to which the movement threatens their interests. If the threat is severe enough, the various components of the elite may well be turned into a unified opposition intent on suppressing the movement by whatever means necessary. However, even in the case of less threatening movements, member response typically consists of a two-pronged strategy that combines attempts to contain the more threatening aspects of the movement with efforts to exploit the emerging conflict in a fashion consistent with the members' own political interests. Given this typical response to insurgency, elite involvement in social movements is not likely to benefit insurgents. Here again, we find ourselves at odds with the central thrust of certain versions of the mobilization perspective.

To judge from the writing of some of the model's proponents, we would be justified in concluding that elite involvement in social protest generally has the effect of facilitating insurgency. McCarthy and Zald, for instance, seek to explain the full flowering of protest activity in the 1960s largely on the basis of an increase in available funding opportunities on the part of external support groups (1973). Similarly, Jenkins and Perrow argue that the key to success in the farm workers movement was the "massive outpouring of support, especially from liberals and organized labor" (1977: 264). That elite involvement may prove beneficial for certain movements, or at various times in the case of others, may well be true. Resource mobilization theorists are not to be faulted for pointing to such instances. They are open to criticism, however, for failing to place these examples in the context of the broader range of possible outcomes of elite/movement interaction.

What is overlooked is the distinct possibility that elite involvement in social protest may more often contribute to the demise of a movement than to its success. Nor is this only true in the case of radical movements that "succeed" in uniting all components of the elite in open opposition to the movement. Even in the case of moderate reform movements, ostensibly supportive elite/movement linkages are likely to prove detrimental to insurgency in the long run. This is so for at least three reasons. The first concerns the control granted elite groups as a result of resources supplied to the movement.

In a provocative article, Adrian Aveni has described support linkages between movement organizations and elite groups as a type of exchange relationship (1977).[4] This view is consistent with the one advanced here. If they are to survive over time, movement organizations, no less than other types of organizations, must routinize resource input as a hedge against the uncertainties of the environment they confront (Allen, 1974). The establishment of elite linkages is one way of doing this.[5] At the same time, however, the establishment of such linkages grants considerable leverage to groups whose interests are clearly distinct from those of insurgents. Like all exchange relationships, then, elite/movement linkages reflect a trade-off between benefits obtained and costs incurred. "Costs," in this case, refer to the efforts that must be expended by insurgents to balance the conflicting demands of movement goals with the interests of their elite benefactors. Should either be overemphasized, the movement organization runs the distinct risk of cooptation on the one hand or dissolution on the other.

Co-optation can occur either in advance of elite support, as the organization seeks to modify its operation in such a way as to make itself "acceptable" to elite sponsors, or after receipt of support, as a condition of continued backing. Perhaps the most damaging outcome of co-optation is the channeling of potentially disruptive protest into institutionalized channels. In such instances, elite support is offered as an inducement to insurgents to pursue movement goals through normal political means. If successful, such efforts usually have the effect of rendering the movement impotent by confining it to the forms of "participation without power" (Alford and Friedland, 1975) that prompted insurgents to abandon "normal" political channels in the first place.

Ultimately, of course, the determination of whether resource benefits outweigh the substantive modifications required for receipt of support depends on the particular circumstances of the exchange as well as on the political bias of the observer. At the very least, it should be obvious that such linkages involve the distinct possibility that movement organizations will cease to be an effective force for social change and instead become little more than an appendage of the sponsoring organization. As Jenkins puts it: "Given the instability of the resources supporting such organizations and their high level of dependence on economic and political elites, such organizations are virtual chameleons, changing tactics and programs to suit the whims of their sponsors and, in many cases, functioning as a cooptative mechanism for siphoning off movement leadership into more moderate, less disruptive reform efforts" (Jenkins, 1981: 135).

If co-optation results from an overemphasis on the cultivation or retention of elite support, neglect of that same goal can have equally disastrous consequences. "Irresponsible actions" (as adjudged by the standards of the sponsoring institution) can readily lead to the disaffection of elite sponsors and the ultimate withdrawal of support. Summarizing the results of his study of a New York-based, government-supported community action organization, Helfgot provides a vivid example of this danger: "From the MFY [Mobilization for Youth] experience it appears that government-sponsored social change efforts may be permitted to exist only as long as they remain ineffectual. Once a potential for change in power relationships becomes manifest, support is quickly revoked" (1974: 490). Donovan's account of the federal government's War on Poverty program includes a similar example of funding cutbacks for a local OEO-sponsored group that came to be seen as too "radical" by program administrators (1973: 85–87). These examples illustrate the special danger inherent in the establishment of elite ties. Cultivation of such links is likely to divert energies from the alternative sources of support that would serve as a hedge against the vagaries of elite sponsorship. Moreover, having established and structured their operation on the basis of those same links, insurgents will be unlikely to feel motivated to seek additional sources of support. Thus, the cultivation of elite linkages frequently results in the development of an exclusive dependence on external support. Dependence, even on the most lucrative and seemingly stable funding source, leaves the organization in a highly vulnerable position should that support be withdrawn. And given the latent conflict of interest that defines challenger/member relations, the withdrawal of elite support must always be counted a distinct possibility.

In light of the twin dangers of co-optation and the withdrawal of elite support, the assessment, by various mobilization theorists, of the effect of elite involvement on the development of social movements must be seen as overly optimistic. That movement organizations require a routinized flow of resources is beyond question. That elite groups may provide a nonproblematic source of such support in rare instances is also acknowledged. At the same time, the cultivation of external support linkages carries with it enormous risks that tend to be underemphasized or ignored by resource mobilization theorists.

The Importance of the Mass Base

A second major weakness of the resource mobilization model concerns the consistent failure by many of its proponents to acknowledge the political capabilities of the movement's mass base. If, in its account of the generation of social insurgency, the model grants too much importance to elite institutions, it grants too little to the aggrieved population. Indeed, these two aspects of the model are clearly linked. The importance of elite support is magnified, in the resource mobilization model, by the political impotence ascribed to the mass base. In effect, we are told, without such support social movements are highly unlikely. In the words of Jenkins and Perrow: "discontent is ever-present for deprived groups, but . . . collective action is rarely a viable option because of lack of resources and the threat of repression. . . . When deprived groups do mobilize, it is due to the interjection of external resources" (1977: 251). Their conclusion is clear: in the case of deprived groups, the aggrieved population is usually incapable of generating a social movement on its own.

The political impotence ascribed to these deprived groups stems, presumably, from two factors. First, as Jenkins and Perrow assert, such groups lack the organizational resources needed to generate and sustain social insurgency. Second, these groups are handicapped by their lack of such traditional political resources as votes, money for campaign contributions, etc. Lacking these conventional political resources, deprived groups are unable to exert the leverage that would enable them to bargain effectively in institutional forums. However, in regard to both these factors, the claims of the resource mobilization theorists are found wanting.

I suggest that, except for the most deprived segments of society, aggrieved groups possess the ability to exert significant political leverage on their own behalf and certain indigenous resources facilitative of organized social protest.

In a bargaining context we can distinguish, following Wilson, between negative and positive inducements (1961). The latter involve the offer of desired rewards—money, votes, etc.—as an inducement to engage in specified political actions. It is only in regard to this class of inducements that many groups find themselves handicapped. This statement is in no way intended to minimize that handicap. Indeed, if, as Gamson notes, "the central difference among political actors is captured by the idea of being inside or outside of the polity," it is the lack of positive inducements that usually serves to exclude groups from the polity (1975: 140).

As significant a handicap as this is, it need not confine a group to the state of political impotence suggested by some mobilization theorists. There is always the matter of negative inducements. Negative inducements entail "the withdrawal of a crucial contribution on which others depend" (Piven and Cloward, 1979: 24). The strike represents the classic example of a negative inducement. Workers seek to compel an employer to grant concessions by refusing to perform some function essential to the employer's business. Similarly, the illegal occupation of nuclear facilities are attempts to compel increased official responsiveness to insurgent demands through the creation of negative inducements. In such cases the "crucial contribution" being withheld by protesters is nothing less than "business as usual" for the site in question.

Negative inducements, then, involve the creation of a situation that is disruptive of the normal functioning of society and antithetical to the interests of the group's opponents. Mass demonstrations, boycotts, riots, selective buying campaigns, sit-ins—all are examples of actions designed, in Wilson's phrase, to "create or assemble resources for bargaining" (1961: 292). In essence, what insurgents are seeking in such instances is the ability to disrupt their opponent's interests to such an extent that the cessation of the offending tactic becomes a sufficient inducement to grant concessions. There are, of course, limits to the effectiveness of the "politics of protest," as Wilson, Lipsky, and Piven and Cloward remind us (Lipsky, 1970 [see especially chap. 7]; Piven and Cloward, 1979: 24–25; Wilson, 1961: 293–302). No doubt the ability of deprived groups to bargain effectively is limited by their necessary reliance on negative inducements. Nonetheless, in characterizing the majority of such groups as politically impotent, resource mobilization theorists are to be faulted for their failure to acknowledge the power inherent in disruptive tactics. Even the most deprived groups possess a greater potential for the successful exercise of political leverage than they have been given credit for in most versions of this perspective. The fact that these groups fail to exercise this potential much of the time is more often attributable to their shared perception of powerlessness than to any inherent impotence on their part.

Proponents of the model have also undervalued the political capabilities of the mass base by overlooking the crucial importance of indigenous resources. In some cases the claim is direct: deprived segments of the population simply lack the resources to generate and sustain social insurgency. The Jenkins/Perrow quotation at the beginning of this section is a representative expression of this point of view. In other formulations, it is not so much the existence as the necessity of indigenous resources that is questioned. McCarthy and Zald champion this latter viewpoint: "in the classical model the membership base provides money, voluntary manpower, and leadership. Modern movements can increasingly find these resources outside of self-interested memberships concerned with personally held grievances" (1973: 17–18). The claim is that external sponsorship of social protest has rendered the traditional contributions of the mass base unnecessary. To accept this claim, however, would be to accept, as well, the proposition rejected earlier in the chapter: that elite institutions actively seek to generate social insurgency, even in the absence of indigenous protest activity. In contrast, I have argued that elite involvement in social protest is generally reactive, occurring only as a response to pressures generated by a mass-based social movement.

This still leaves unanswered the more basic question of whether, in fact, deprived groups possess sufficient resources to generate a social movement in the first place. That there may exist some collective poverty level below which deprived groups are simply incapable of organizing is, of course, a real possibility. However, even the most cursory review of the empirical literature will convince the reader that the practical effect of this hypothetical level is to prohibit only the most deprived of groups from organizing. Indeed, one of my intentions in this book is to document the indigenous origins of an insurgent challenge that developed among a group—the southern black population—that by any standards would have to be adjudged deprived.

What the black movement shares in common with many other insurgent challenges is the existence of an indigenous organizational network in which it developed. The empirical literature does not lack for other examples. In his landmark analysis of Quebec's Social Credit party, Maurice Pinard has demonstrated the mobilizing effects of a wide variety of intermediate groups (1971: see especially chap. 11). Studying "Nationalism in Tropical Africa," Coleman has noted that "in some instances, kinship associations and separatist religious groups have been the antecedents of nationalist organizations; in others they have provided the principal organizational bases of the latter" (1954: 408). Finally, in regard to French strike activity in the period from 1830 to 1968, Shorter and Tilly observe that the scale and intensity of such activity "depend closely on the prior organization of the workers in the setting, on the availability of a structure which identifies, accumulates and communicates grievances on the one hand, and facilitates collective action on the other" (1974: 284).

If many analysts have identified indigenous social networks as the source of much insurgent activity, they have differed in the functions they ascribe to these organizational bases. Some stress the importance of these existent organizations as a communications network; others as a source of leaders; still others as an interactional network out of which an ideology and a plan of action can emerge. As conceived here, the indigenous organizations of an aggrieved population serve all these functions and then some. In effect, these networks function as the organizational locus of a variety of resources supportive of insurgency. In the next chapter these resources will be discussed in greater detail. For now the important point to note is that the existent organizations of all but the most deprived groups represent an important source of resources that, when mobilized for political purposes, has been proven capable of generating organized insurgency.

The Definition of Resources

Another serious deficiency of the mobilization perspective stems from the ways in which proponents of the model have defined the concept of resources. Actually, in some cases, the concept is never defined, leaving the reader to puzzle over the precise criteria for distinguishing what is from what is not a resource. However, even when explicit definitions have been proposed, they have generally proved to be only marginally more useful than no definition at all. Oberschall, for instance, has described resources as "anything from material resources—jobs, income, savings, and the right to material goods and services—to nonmaterial resources—authority, moral commitment, trust, friendship, skills, habits of industry, and so on" (1973: 28). For McCarthy and Zald, resources "can include legitimacy, money, facilities, and labor" (1977: 1220).

No doubt all the aforementioned items facilitate insurgency, but to define resources in such a vague, all-inclusive fashion is to rob the concept of much of its analytic utility. Indeed, the failure to propose an adequate operational definition of the concept has rendered the model's implicit account of movement emergence as untestable and simplistic as many of the classical formulations. It is ironic that mobilization theorists, having rightly criticized earlier models for their vagueness and ambiguity, are themselves open to criticism on the same counts. With regard to the classical model, Aya has expressed the key point nicely: "Not surprisingly . . . a look backward from the accomplished fact of revolution or revolt

turns up evidence of discontent among all manner of groups and individuals. But then so does a glance at routine social life in times of political continuity" (1979: 54). That is, by defining the various conceptions of discontent (alienation, normative ambiguity) in such vague fashion, classical theorists have virtually assured confirmation of their models. Who could fail to turn up evidence of "discontent" or "strain" in an analysis of the period preceding any social movement? In similar fashion, it would be exceedingly difficult, given the all-inclusive definitions quoted earlier, to find a social movement that was not preceded by *some* increase in *some* type of "resource." What ultimately casts doubt on such accounts are well-founded suspicions that the "resources" so identified are in no simple sense the cause of the movement and that similar increases in "resources" take place in periods of political quiescence as well as those of turbulence. Ostensibly hardheaded departures from the post-hoc fuzziness of many classical formulations, most versions of resource mobilization would seem to turn on a concept as vague and problematic as those—strain and discontent—underlying the classical theory.

The Collective Definition of Grievances

The final major weakness of the resource mobilization perspective concerns the hypothesized relationship between grievances and insurgency stressed by proponents of the model. In summarizing that relationship, McCarthy and Zald contrast it to the classical view of discontent or grievances:

> The ambiguous evidence of some of the deprivation/relative deprivation/generalized belief research has led us to search for a perspective and set of assumptions that lead to a deemphasis upon grievances. We want to move from a *strong* assumption about the centrality of deprivation and grievances to a *weak* one, which makes them a component, indeed *sometimes* a secondary component in the generation of social movements.
>
> We are willing to assume "that there is always enough discontent in any society to supply the grass-roots support for a movement . . ." (McCarthy and Zald, 1977: 1215).

In effect, proponents of the mobilization perspective are arguing that there is a constancy to grievances that seriously contradicts the causal significance assigned them by classical theorists. Inasmuch as movement activity fluctuates wildly over time, it is problematic to account for the generation of such activity on the basis of an aggregate level of discontent that, presumably, remains fairly constant. What must be questioned in this view is the simple assertion that discontent is an invariant property of social life. The problem would seem to stem from the failure to distinguish *objective* social conditions from their *subjective* perception. The former undoubtedly does supply a constant stimulus to insurgency. That is, there would apppear always to be sufficient inequality in the distribution of valued goods in society as to afford people an objective basis for organized protest activity. But the link between objective conditions and action is seldom straightforward.[6] As Edelman notes, "the same real conditions . . . may or may not be perceived as serious deprivations and may or may not be regarded as grounds for resistance and violence" (1971: 108). In short, what is absent from most versions of the mobilization perspective is any acknowledgment of the enormous potential for variability in the subjective meanings people attach to their "objective" situations.

The important implication of this argument is that segments of society may very well submit to oppressive conditions unless that oppression is collectively defined as both unjust and *subject to change*. In the absence of these necessary attributions, oppressive conditions are likely, even in the face of increased resources, to go unchallenged.

The crucial question, then, is: what set of circumstances is most likely to facilitate the transformation from hopeless submission to oppressive conditions to an aroused readiness to challenge those conditions? This question will be addressed in detail in the next chapter. For now, the less than satisfactory answer offered is that the individual's sophisticated capacity for attributing significance to diverse sets of events makes it possible that a wide variety, rather than a single set, of circumstances, could trigger this process of "cognitive liberation." Obviously, this answer is not without problems. Not the least of these are the methodological difficulties involved in any attempt to measure this transformation of consciousness. The creation of methodological problems, however, is hardly a rationale for ignoring the process. For, indeed, if the process is a slippery and troublesome one to address empirically, it is just as certainly crucial to any complete account of the generation of insurgency. The point is that neither "strain" nor some propitious combination of underlying grievances and newly mobilized resources create a social movement. People do, on the basis of some optimistic assessment of the prospects for successful insurgency weighed against the risks involved in each action. To the extent that resource mobilization theorists have failed to acknowledge this crucial intermediate process, their model is incomplete.

To summarize, I return to a point made earlier in the chapter: resource mobilization affords a useful perspective for analyzing organized reform efforts initiated by established polity members. It is less convincing, however, as an account of social movements. Part of the problem stems from the vagueness with which proponents of the model define the key concept of resources. That vagueness serves to limit the predictive utility of the model, even as it renders it virtually immune to testing.

Issue has also been taken with the claim, advanced by mobilization theorists, that discontent is constant and therefore of little significance in the generation of insurgency. This claim would appear to rest on the confusion of objective condition with subjective perception. Structural inequities may be constant, but the collective perception of the legitimacy *and* mutability of those conditions is likely to vary a great deal over time. By attributing a certain constancy to discontent, the model's proponents have glossed over a crucial process in the generation of insurgency: that of "cognitive liberation."

As important as these deficiencies are, however, the central criticism of the version of the mobilization perspective discussed here concerns the respective roles assigned elite groups and the movement's mass base in the generation of insurgency. In contrast to the implicit thrust of the mobilization argument, the various components of the elite would appear to share an abiding conservatism that does not predispose them to initiate any insurgent activity that might conceivably prove threatening to their interests. Accordingly, their involvement in insurgency is more likely to take the form of reaction to mass-based movements rather than the aggressive sponsorship of same. This latter statement carries with it the important conviction that not all excluded groups are as politically impotent as some resource mobilization accounts imply. That challengers face real disadvantages in their attempts to organize and that many insurgent efforts never surface as visible political phenomena is readily conceded. Nonetheless, the very fact that such attempts are made and, on occasion, carried out with considerable success suggest a greater capacity for insurgent action by excluded groups than is ordinarily acknowledged by proponents of the resource mobilization model. What is required, then, is another model specifically tailored to the class of insurgent challenges under discussion here.