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Handwritten note at top: *in: STANFORD LYMAN, ED., Social Movements (NY: New York Univ. Press, 1995) © Stanford Lyman, 1995   Lawson, F-7*

Notes

1. Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, eds., *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 211–212.
2. Claus Offe, "Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics: Social Movements since the 1960s," in Charles Maier, ed., *Changing Boundaries of the Political* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 73.
3. It would be easy to fill several pages with recent books and especially articles that make a contribution to or are significantly influenced by new social movement discourse. And the list could be extended vastly by beginning from the mid-to-late 1960s, when the initial formulations of this perspective appear. Some recent relevant books include: Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Black Literature and Literary Theory* (New York: Methuen, 1984); Joan Cocks, *The Oppositional Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 1989); Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988); John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1986); and Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell, eds., *Feminism as Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
4. Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

7 Collective Protest: A Critique of Resource-Mobilization Theory*

Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, "resource mobilization" (RM) analysts have emphasized the importance of institutional continuities between conventional social life and collective protest.[1] There is much about this interpretation with which we agree. It is a corrective to some of the malintegration (MI) literature in which movements are portrayed as mindless eruptions lacking either coherence or continuity with organized social life. Nevertheless, we shall argue that RM analysts commit a reverse error. Their emphasis on the similarities between conventional and protest behavior has led them to understate the differences. They thus tend to "normalize" collective protest.

Blurring the distinction between normative and nonnormative forms of collective action is the most fundamental expression of this tendency, as if rule-conforming and rule-violating collective action are of a piece. To be sure, RM analysts are obviously aware that some forms of protest violate established norms, and are therefore illegitimate or illegal. Indeed, a good deal of their work deals with electrifying examples of defiance of normative structures. Nevertheless, in the course of examining the institutional continuities between permissible and prohibited modes of collective action, they often allow this distinction to disappear. But an exposition of the similarities between the structure of everyday

life and the structure of protest is not an explanation of why people sometimes live their everyday lives and other times join in collective defiance. And it is, of course, precisely this theoretical problem that is central to the MI analyses that RM disparage; it is nonnormative collective action – disorder and rebellion – that MI analysts want to explain.

Other problems in the RM literature are consistent with this normalizing tendency. Protest is often treated by RM analysts as more organized than it is, as if conventional modes of formal organization also typify the organizational forms taken by protest. And some RM analysts normalize the political impact of collective protest, as if the processes of influence set in motion by collective protest are no different than those set in motion by conventional political activities.

These criticisms, which are discussed in this chapter, do not detract from the generalization that institutional arrangements pattern both conventional and unconventional collective action. Still, the differences must be explained. And once the problem of explaining differences is brought back into view, the wholesale rejection of the MI tradition by RM analysts may be seen as premature.

NORMATIVE AND NONNORMATIVE COLLECTIVE ACTION

In his recent appraisal of theories of civil violence, Rule says RM analysts define violent action as "simply a phase in other forms of collective action, caused by the same forces that move people to other, 'normal' assertions of collective interest" (Rule, 1988, pp. 170–1). Thus the Tillys object to "sociological interpretations of protest, conflict, and violence that treat them as occurring outside of normal politics, or even *against* normal politics" (Tilly *et al.*, 1975, p. 240; emphasis in original). It is true, as the Tillys say, that protest is a form of politics. But does it really make sense to treat protest and violence as if they were simply "normal" politics? To do so is to ignore the powerful role of norms in the regulation of all social life, including relations of domination and subordination.

Ongoing struggles for power continually stimulate efforts by contenders to promulgate and enforce rules that either proscribe the use of specific political resources by their antagonists, or define conditions limiting their use (e.g., the conditions under which labor can be withheld in industrial conflict, or sexual access withheld in mating conflict). Thus conceived, rule-making is a strategy of power. Moreover, it is a strategy that creates new and lasting constraints on subsequent political action. Once objectified in a system of law, the rules forged by past power struggles continue to shape ongoing conflicts by constraining or enhancing the ability of actors to use whatever leverage their social circumstances yield them. That is why new power struggles often take the form of efforts to alter the parameters of the permissible by challenging or defying the legitimacy of prevailing norms themselves (Piven, 1981). Nevertheless, protest is indeed "outside of normal politics" and "against normal politics" in the sense that people break the rules defining permissible modes of political action. Of course, the distinction between normative and nonnormative is not always easy to draw because norms themselves are often ambiguous, and no more so than when they become the focus of conflict and renegotiation. Still, a riot is clearly not an electoral rally, and both the participants and the authorities know the difference.

There are several important ways in which some RM analysts direct attention away from rule-violations. One is to treat collective protest as if it were merely interest group politics, a proclivity that marks the work of McCarthy and Zald (1977; cf. also McCarthy, Wolfson, Baker, and Mosakowski, in press, on citizens organizing against drunk driving). Another is to conflate the normative and nonnormative. In his study of crowd behavior, McPhail (1991) not only conflates political gatherings (e.g., urban riots) with such other collective actions as sports and religious events, but does not consider it important to explain why the crowd which is the audience for a sports event is sometimes transformed into a riotous mob. Even Tilly, whose work shows appreciation of the distinctive features of protest, frequently lumps normative and nonnormative collective action together. His definition of "contention" covers all "common action that bears directly on the interests of some other acting groups," such

as collective violence ("that sort of contention in which some-one seizes or damages persons or objects"), and conventional political action, such as electoral rallies and campaigns (Tilly, 1986, pp. 381–2). His classification of contemporary forms of collective political action includes:

- Strikes
- Demonstrations
- Electoral rallies
- Public meetings
- Petition marches
- Planned insurrections
- Invasions of official assemblies
- Social movements
- Electoral campaigns (ibid., p. 393).

A similar conflation occurs in the survey essay on "social movements" prepared by McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald for Smelser's *Handbook of Sociology* where they define virtually all forms of collective action as "social movements" – from mass civil disobedience to "burial societies" and "PTAs" (McAdam *et al.*, 1988, p. 704).[2]

A still further expression of this normalizing tendency occurs when analysts focus on those aspects of protest that are normative and even ritualized (thereby illuminating the continuities between everyday institutional processes and collective protest), but then make much less of the non-normative aspects (thereby obscuring the discontinuities between everyday institutional process and collective protest). Here, for example, is Tilly's characterization of preindustrial food riots:

> If we ignore the intimate relation of the food riot to the politics of the old regime, we shall neglect the coherent political action the riot represents. Far from being impulsive, hopeless reactions to hunger, bread riots and other struggles over the food supply took a small number of relatively well-defined forms . . . . The work of the crowd embodied a critique of the authorities, was often directed consciously at the authorities, and commonly consisted of the crowd's taking precisely those measures its members thought the authorities had failed their own responsi-

bility to take – inventorying grain in private hands, setting a price, and so on (Tilly, 1975, p. 386).

But as this description makes clear, humble villagers did not just act in the traditional role of the authorities; they usurped their powers. Surely this feature of their action demands explanation.[3] Yet even when Tilly and his collaborators provide such dramatic examples of defiance, it is the socially patterned character of such protest events that commands their theoretical attention.

Finally, consistent with their predisposition to think of collective violence as "normal politics," some RM analysts characteristically deemphasize violence by protestors and instead single-out violence by the authorities. On the basis of their historical studies, the Tillys claim that most

> collective violence will ordinarily grow out of some prior collective action which is not intrinsically violent: a meeting, a ceremony, a strike . . . . To an important degree, the damage to objects and, especially, to persons consisted of elite reactions to the claims made by ordinary people: troops, police, and thugs acting under instructions from owners and officials attacked demonstrators, strikers, and squatters (Tilly *et al.*, 1975, pp. 49, 288).

Similarly, Snyder and Tilly (1972, p. 526) conclude that "Where governments have substantial force at their disposal, in fact, these specialists ordinarily do the major part of the damaging and seizing which constitutes the collective violence". This leads to the generalization that "collective violence should rise and fall with the nonviolent political activity" (ibid., p. 527). Granted that government is the main perpetrator of violence, this does not warrant the implication that people themselves do not engage in various forms of nonnormative collective action, including violence against persons and property. And if that is so, then governmental repression should also rise and fall partly in reflection of the amount of defiant behavior in which protestors themselves engage.

THE PACE AND TIMING OF COLLECTIVE PROTEST

A critical reason for calling attention to these normalizing tendencies is that they invalidate much of the work by RM analysts that deals with the prerequisites of protest – with the conditions under which people are led to defend or advance their interests by taking defiant actions that violate rules and risk great reprisals. We first criticize the grounds on which RM analysts have rejected traditional MI explanations of protest origins; then we show that the RM explanation, which emphasizes socially structured opportunities for protest, is inadequate.

Grievances and Protest

One insignia of RM work is the argument that there is little or no relationship between variations in relative deprivation and the pace and timing of collective protest. Oberschall asserts that "Grievances and disaffection are a fairly permanent and recurring feature of the historical landscape" (Oberschall, 1978, p. 298), suggesting a "constancy of discontent" (McAdam *et al.*, 1988), which in turn justifies shifting "from a *strong* assumption about the centrality of deprivation and grievance to a *weak* one" in explanations of collective protest (McCarthy and Zald, 1977, p. 1215; emphasis in original). It is largely on this ground that RM analysts claim to have won the debate with MI analysts: "Useless Durkheim," Tilly says (1981: Chapter 4).[4]

The empirical basis for this claim rests in no small degree on the widely-accepted evidence presented by Tilly and his collaborators, especially their time-series studies of the relationship between "breakdown" variables, such as intensified hardship or rapid urbanization, and the pace and timing of collective protest. However, MI analysts do not claim that breakdown is a necessary precondition of normative forms of group action. What they emphasize instead is that breakdown is a precondition of collective protest and violence, of riot and rebellion. Any effort to test breakdown theories must therefore employ a dependent variable in which normative and nonnormative forms of collective action are disaggregated, which Tilly and his collaborators do not do.

In effect, the MI tradition is being dismissed for an argument it never made.

Shorter and Tilly's study of strike frequencies in France illustrates this problem. They claim that strike rates correlate with good times, and not with economic downturns, thus presumably invalidating the hardship variant of the relative deprivation version of the MI tradition. However, strikes were legal in France beginning in 1865 (Tilly *et al.*, 1975, p. 73), and thus for the entire 1865–1965 period of the Shorter and Tilly study. Or at least Shorter and Tilly do not separate out legal strikes from strikes that include illegal activity (e.g., violence and sabotage initiated by workers, or other strike actions that violate government regulations, or "wildcat strikes" in violation of union contracts). Taken as a whole, this corpus of research does not answer the question of the conditions under which ordinary people do in fact resort to violence or defiance, and the findings cannot therefore be taken to refute the MI perspective.

We quickly acknowledge that time-series studies that distinguish between normative and nonnormative action will be more difficult to conduct. Not only is the distinction itself sometimes elusive, but norms change over time, in part as the result of successive challenges that produce new balances of power, reflected in new structures of rules. Forms of collective action impermissible in one period may be permissible in another, or the reverse. Moreover, caution has to be exercised in aggregating collective actions that occur in different institutional contexts, simply because different norms may apply, as when land occupations by urban squatters acquire tacit legitimacy while factory takeovers usually do not.

This problem and the obfuscation it creates is worsened by the fact that normative collective action occurs much more frequently than nonnormative action, and perhaps more so in the modern period with the granting of political rights and the vast increase in permissible forms of conflict. The sheer quantity of conventional political action overwhelms the more irregular and episodic incidents of unconventional protest. Electoral rallies occur with great frequency, for example, but riots are infrequent. For this reason, unless normative and nonnormative forms are disaggregated, the conventional will overwhelm the unconventional, thus blotting

out any possible relationship between "breakdown" and collective protest. The point is that collective violence and defiance must be operationalized in ways that are true to the MI argument, however difficult that may be, if the relevance of MI ideas to the origins of collective violence and defiance is to be fairly tested.

A second and equally fatal source of confounding results from a criticism we made earlier – the failure to distinguish between violence initiated by protestors, and violence initiated by the authorities. The MI tradition seeks to predict violence by the former, not violence by the latter. Consider Lodhi and Tilly's time-series analysis of collective violence in France between 1830 and 1960 which has generally been accepted as puncturing MI explanations by showing that the pace and timing of collective violence does not increase with "the rate at which social ties are being dissolved" through urbanization (Lodhi and Tilly, 1973, p. 316). Their dependent variable includes "771 incidents of collective violence occurring in France from 1830 to 1860, consisting of every event involving at least one group of 50 persons or more in which some person or object was seized or damaged over resistance" (ibid., p. 305). But Lodhi and Tilly do not go into "the nature of the actions" that comprise their "grand totals of collective violence," limiting themselves instead to "aggregate levels . . . of collective violence" (ibid., p. 305) measured by "the number killed, wounded or arrested" (ibid., pp. 298–9). And these data, they say, "measure, in effect, how rigorously police and troops put down protests and demonstrations" (ibid., p. 306). The same problem arises in the Snyder and Tilly time-series study on hardship and collective violence in France during the same years. Again, the dependent variable is "the extent of governmental repression" (Snyder and Tilly, 1972, p. 520), indicated by the number of killings and arrests by the authorities. The question, then, is what is being measured? Is it resort to violence by ordinary people, or is it violence inflicted by the authorities? But this question cannot be answered because the dependent variable is clearly not an uncontaminated measure of the extent to which people themselves initiated violence prior to governmental responses.

In sum, given both the failure to disaggregate normative and nonnormative collective action, and the failure to distinguish between the perpetrators of violence, none of these studies can be taken as refuting the MI tradition. Hardship and dislocation may yet be shown to correlate with what Kerbo (1982; cf. also Kerbo and Shaffer, 1986) calls "movements of crisis." Moreover, malintegration ideas are now enjoying a certain renaissance among some RM analysts. What seems to be provoking this shift is the contradiction between the theoretical dismissal of the breakdown tradition, on the one hand, and the empirical descriptions of the actual conditions preceding protest episodes that RM analysts themselves describe, on the other. RM accounts almost always begin by identifying precisely the sorts of antecedent conditions to which MI analysts attribute stress. These conditions – far from being recurrent, permanent, and ubiquitous, as RM analysts usually insist – are often awesome, new, and fearsome. For example, preindustrial food rioters, land squatters, and machine smashers were reacting to social and economic forces of such transforming scale as to threaten the destruction of their way of life. And perhaps for just this reason, some RM analysts are now breaking ranks over this issue. Thus there is a growing tendency in the RM literature to reintroduce such terms as "intensified grievances" and "suddenly imposed grievances" (Walsh, 1981), together with renaming traditional such concepts as legitimacy and delegitimacy with terms like "cognitive liberation" (McAdam, 1982) and "ideological anger" (Exum, 1985, p. 14).

Lateral Integration and Protest

We come now to the RM quarrel with the social disorganization strand in the MI tradition. RM analysts claim that protest is normal because it grows out of everyday social organization that creates collective capacities. Tilly takes this argument to its logical extreme. Following White's use of the term "catnet" to define "organization" – that is, the degree of organization depends on the extent to which categories of people (e.g., blacks) are bound together by internal networks (e.g., religious) – Tilly argues that the more categories are laced with networks, the more they can "in principle, mobilize" (Tilly, 1978, p. 64). Hence one of the RM school's

most fundamental causal propositions: "The greater the density of social organization, the more likely that social movement activity will develop" (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1988, p. 703).

But even as social integration is exalted in explanation of protest, so too is its absence. Sometimes protest is attributed to the fact that people are integrated in the social order, and sometimes to the fact that they are not. On the one hand, if social categories of people lack a "veritable lattice work" of internal networks (ibid., p. 711), their "infrastructure deficits" impede mobilization (McCarthy, 1987). On the other hand, multiple group memberships impose role obligations, thus raising the costs of participation in movements. Consequently, McCarthy and Zald (1973) direct attention to the disproportionate participation in the movements of the 1960s by persons with few social ties, or what are called the "biographically available": students and "autonomous" professionals, for example. Students in particular are singled out because their pre-existing ties to the social order are no longer binding, nor have they formed new and enduring ties. Thus students could be drawn to the Freedom Summer project during the civil rights movement because they were "remarkably free of personal constraints that might have inhibited participation" (McAdam, 1986, p. 83). Much the same point could be made for ghetto rioters who were predominantly young and at best loosely involved in the usual array of marital, occupational, and related roles.

The proposition that the probability of protest varies directly with the degree of lateral integration is badly flawed for a another reason: although collective defiance is episodic and infrequent, the lateral integration requisite to protest is ubiquitous. By not seeing this, RM analysts end by using a double standard in evaluating the MI tradition. On the one hand, they fault MI analysts for failing to concede that grievances do not necessarily lead to protest. Thus the Tillys accuse relative deprivation analysts of using a constant to explain a variation, since they give in to

[T]he temptation . . . to ignore the places, times, and populations in which nothing happened. When conflict is at issue, why waste time writing the history of harmony? The simple

answer: an explanation of protest, rebellion, or collective violence that cannot account for its absence is no explanation at all; an explanation based only on cases where something happened is quite likely to attribute importance to conditions which are actually quite common in cases where nothing happened. That is the characteristic defect of many theories being bandied about today which treat rebellion as a consequence of frustrated rising expectations without specifying how often (or under what conditions) rising expectations are frustrated without rebellion (Tilly *et al.*, 1975, p. 12).

On the other hand, RM analysts also use a constant to explain a variation, since they too "ignore the places, times, and populations in which nothing happened." Tilly (1986) has culled four centuries of French history for episodes of collective protest, but he has not told us about those that should have erupted but did not. Here is a population of people; they had sufficient solidarity to act on their grievances, and protest might not have been met with outright repression; nevertheless, they remained inert. Surely such occasions were numerous. But the opposite impression is conveyed when these four centuries of French protests, or a century of protests in Italy, Germany, and France (Tilly *et al.*, 1975), are compressed between the covers of a single book. Gamson's (1975) study of "challenging groups" in American suffers from the same defect. He tells us about those groups who protested, but not about those who could have but did not.

This illogic pervades the RM literature. Wilson and Orum claim that "conventional psychological theories," such as relative deprivation, do not explain the ghetto riots of the 1960s, and that instead "social bonds . . . i.e., friendship networks, drew many people to become active participants" (Wilson and Orum, 1976, p. 198), but they do not wonder why riots before the 1960s were so rare or why there have been so few since, despite pervasive friendship bonds in both periods. Similarly, McAdam, McCarthy and Zald suggest that the concentration of students in institutions of higher education has created the "organizational potential for chronic student movements . . . even if [the student movement of

the 1960s] has presently waned" (McAdam *et al.*, 1988, p. 712). The student movement certainly did wane; it has turned out to be anything but chronic. Most of the time most people try to make their ordinary lives, not to make history (Flacks, 1988).

RM analysts are led away from this problem because they overstate the structural requisites of protest. To be sure, people have to be related to one another: some sense of common identity; some sense of shared definitions of grievances and antagonists; some ability to communicate; and so on. But these requisites do not depend on the dense and enduring lateral relationships posited by the RM school. On this point, Oberschall agrees: "collective protest actions . . . are possible even in a state of disorganization . . . the minimum requirements for collective disturbances are shared sentiments of collective repression and common targets of oppression" (Oberschall, 1973, p. 133). Consequently, some forms of protest are more or less universally available. Arson, whether in the fields of the preindustrial world or in the streets of the urbanized world, requires technological rather than organizational resources, and not much of the former, either. Riots require little more by way of organization than numbers, propinquity, and some communication. Most patterns of human settlement, whether the preindustrial village or modern metropolis, supply these structural requirements. In fact, the movements of the 1960s and 1970s often mobilized people who were previously only weakly or fleetingly related to one another, whether students activists, or direct action participants in the peace and environmental struggles. And the ghetto rioters may not have been riff-raff, but neither were they drawn from the highly integrated sectors of the black community.

Moreover, the minimal structural requirements for protest are likely to be available even during the periods of rapid social change to which Durkheimians attribute breakdown and collective disorder. In this sense, RM analysts may have overstated breakdown ideas, as if what is meant is the total shredding of the social fabric, making it akin to complete atomization. Durkheim spoke of the way the suicide rate varies with degrees of cohesion (rural vs. urban; married vs. single, widowed, and divorced, and so forth). Bonds are strong, moderate, or weak; whether Durkheim also meant to suggest that bonds can disappear altogether is debatable. But whatever Durkheim intended, the point is that total atomization, if it ever exists, is at most a fleeting phenomenon: where there are human beings, there are networks. Because people are averse to being alone, they construct relationships, even under the most disorganized conditions, and they do so rapidly. In short, lateral integration, however fragile, is ubiquitous, thus making opportunities for protest ubiquitous.

These observations also suggest that the generalization that the forms of protest change as societies change is overstated, and for the same reason: the requisite degree of lateral integration is overstated. The Tillys claim that urbanization and industrialization caused the small-scale, localistic, and diffuse modes of pre-industrial collective protest to give way to largescale, associational, and specialized forms. Thus, from the eighteenth

> to the nineteenth century either in Europe or America, we discover significant further changes in the prevailing forms of contentious gatherings. We notice the food riot, machine breaking, invasions of common fields, and their companion forms of collective action peaking and then disappearing. We find the demonstration, the strike, the election rally, the public meeting, and allied forms of action taking on more and more prominence (Tilly, 1981, p. 99).

The main generalization follows: "The organizational revolution reorganized violence" (Tilly *et al.*, 1975, p. 49).

However, since at least some forms of protest only require minimal integration, these protest forms display remarkable continuity. "The riot," for example, "is the characteristic and ever-recurring form of popular protest" (Rude, 1964, p. 6). More generally, preindustrial food riots, grain seizures, land invasions, and machine smashing have rough parallels in the modern period with urban riots, mob looting, squatting, sitdowns, sit-ins, rent strikes, and industrial sabotage. This suggests that Tilly's argument that repertoires of protest change as societies change – old forms out, new forms in – needs qualification. Even as changing modes of social organization bring into being new forms of protest, certain

persisting features of social organization facilitate continuities in other protest forms.

Finally, the predictive value of lateral integration is weakened because the same structural capacities provide people with more than one way of reacting to their lot in life. The factors to which RM analysts attribute various forms of contention – interests, organization, mobilization – are also associated with the rise of religious movements, for example, or of organized racketeering. Consider the social bonds of friendship: Wilson and Orum (1976) attribute ghetto riots to them; and Ianni (1974) notes that blacks, lacking the ethnic/familial solidarities that make the Italian Mafia possible, nevertheless developed a Black Mafia because of friendship solidarities forged in street gangs and prisons. And perhaps there is even an interactive effect between crime and protest: the rise and spread of organized networks of drug entrepreneurship and consumption may help explain the low level of protest in the black ghettos since the 1960s. In other words, social integration does not dictate that people will seek solutions to felt grievances in politics at all, whether by conventional or unconventional means.

In general, then, *organizational capacity does not predict anything* – except that the violation of rules *might* take collective form and, if collective, that it *might* take political form.[5] We have elsewhere referred to this as the problem of "indeterminacy" – that given objective conditions, such as structural opportunity, do not necessarily determine given behavioral outcomes (Cloward and Piven, 1979, p. 654, and 1989). Plainly, the question of the correlates of the pace and timing of collective protest remains open.

Vertical Integration and Protest

People who are organized laterally are also typically connected to other groups vertically. But hierarchical bonds usually constrain collective protest, and that is still another reason why lateral integration does not predict protest. Tocqueville (1955) noted that it was only with the weakening of ties between nobility and peasantry that the French Revolution became possible. Moore subsequently analyzed variations in the "institutional links binding peasant society to the upper classes," and argued that weaker linkages were more conducive to peasant revolution (Moore, 1966, pp. 477–8). Oberschall also follows this line of thinking by suggesting that protest potential is enhanced when societies are "segmented" so that lower-stratum collectivities have "few links and bonds" to higher stratum groups – for example, where landlords are absentee, or when forms of colonial rule generate "few links between colonizer and colonized," or in self-contained farm-belts that are "cut-off from the power centers . . . except for market relations." By contrast, Oberschall continues, if there are strong "vertical social and political bonds between upper and lower classes, mobilization into protest movements among the lower classes is not likely to take place" (Oberschall, 1973, pp. 119–20).[6]

Because hierarchical integration is more the rule than the exception, the important problem is to identify the conditions under which its constraining influence weakens. On this point, the ideas of MI analysts may be relevant. Vertically-integrated institutions probably only become settings for protest under exceptional conditions – when grievances intensify, or when linkages weaken.

Prior to the advent of the RM school, the black church, with its "other-worldly" oriented clergy who were dominated by white influentials, was thought to divert people from political action, as indeed it did. RM analysts have since rehabilitated the black church by arguing that it provided a crucial nexus for the civil rights mobilization, and indeed it also did that. The same point can be made for the Catholic church in Latin America whose centuries-long alliance with the landed oligarchies has only recently begun to give way. And a similar shift of the church's role also occurred in Poland. It was probably constituency discontent that forced the shift to "activist" theologies by the black church in the South, and by the Catholic churches in Latin America and Poland. Otherwise, church leaders risked the loss of legitimacy in the eyes of parishioners. Similarly, the shift by white Protestant fundamentalist clergy in the United States from a theological doctrine prescribing the separation of religion and politics to one calling for secular political protest in the name of maintaining religious values (e.g., civil disobedience at abortion clinics) may reflect, at least in part, rising discontent

among many parishioners in the face of threats to their traditional way of life raised by greater cultural permissiveness (Ginsberg, 1989; Piven, 1984).

Electoral institutions also illustrate the dual effects of institutional integration. The ideology of democratic political rights, by emphasizing the availability of legitimate avenues for the redress of grievances, delegitimizes protest; and the dense relationships generated by electoral politics also divert people from protest. However, rising popular discontent sometimes sets in motion a process that, at least temporarily, transforms electoral politics itself. For instance, when deteriorating economic circumstances produce voter volatility, the short term concerns of political leaders with re-election may lead them to cope with unstable majorities by symbolically identifying with the grievances of discontented groups, thus fueling anger and legitimating protest (Piven and Cloward, 1977, p. 18).

In many situations, protest only becomes possible when vertical controls weaken owing to large scale processes of social change. In the 1930s, the craft unions associated with the dominant American Federation of Labor issued charters to industrial workers who were clamoring for unions, but the AF of L oligarchs were less than enthusiastic in welcoming their new constituents. Given their level of discontent and their loose ties to the AF of L, industrial workers broke free, and strike waves followed. A similar process occurred in company unions that had been established to inhibit protest, particularly in the steel industry. And only as strikes escalated did a few enterprising union leaders, sensing the possibilities of the moment, create "organizing committees" to form industrial unions (Piven and Cloward, 1977, p. 153). On this point, Hobsbawm agrees: "Mass union organization, in the US of the 1930s as in all analogous 'explosions' of labor unionism with which I am familiar, was the *result* of worker mobilization and not its cause" (Hobsbawm, 1978; emphasis in original). Another example of breakout is provided by the postwar drives by public employees for the right to unionize and strike, which occurred only after the historically close ties between civil service associations and local political parties had weakened (Piven, 1969). And the postwar black protest movement was not

imaginable until the modernization of the plantation system led to mass evictions of blacks from the land and from a system of semi-feudal controls (Oberschall, 1973; Piven and Cloward, 1977).[7] In short, *breakdown is often prerequisite to breakout.* Perhaps Durkheim is not so useless after all.

NORMALIZING PROTEST ORGANIZATION

Some among the Durkheimians tend to think of collective protest as purposeless disorder. RM analysts think it has purpose, and that its purpose is political – the effort to exercise power in contests with other groups. In this large sense, protest is "normal" because politics is normal, as we would agree. However, in recasting collective protest as politics, RM analysts have both normalized the organizational forms typically associated with protest, especially with lower-stratum protest, and they have normalized the political processes generated by protest.

Both of these tendencies appear in Tilly's work, and are linked to his understanding of historical change as progress. Thus, in the preindustrial world, the possibility of exerting influence depended on "the willingness of [challenging groups] to inflict and endure harm," but the "grant of legality [to many previously proscribed forms of political action] lowers the group's costs of mobilization and collective action" (Tilly, 1978, p. 167). Consequently, what now "tells more" than inflicting and enduring harm is "the group's capacity to organize, accumulate resources, and form alliances," especially within the electoral system (Tilly *et al.*, 1975, p. 285). The implication is that ordinary people can now form organizations to pursue their goals through normal politics.

This conclusion strikes us as altogether too sweeping. True, with the granting of legality, the risk of repression no longer inhibits many forms of mobilization. At the same time, however, legalization increases the costs of mobilization because it imposes additional resource requirements. Tilly himself implies as much in his discussion of the way legalization transformed strikes: elements of "standardization," "routinization," and "bureaucratization" were introduced, and

"spontaneity" declined (Tilly, 1978, p. 161). Moreover, legalization also "muzzles" or "encapsulates" strike power (Piven and Cloward, 1977, pp. 155–75), as McCammon reminds us in her update of the way U.S. labor relations law "severely crippled, if not negated," the power of the strike (McCammon, 1990, p. 225). In other words, to use conventional methods of influence effectively, people must be able to muster the resources both to organize bureaucratically and to overcome the influence of other groups in regular political contests. Those resources, Tilly says, are "the economist's factors of production: land, labor, capital, and perhaps technical expertise as well" (Tilly, 1978, p. 69). By these criteria, however, lower-stratum challengers are obviously left with serious resource deficits (Piven, 1963).

RM analysts have tried to solve this problem in two ways, and each fails. One has been to treat formal organization as if it compensates for lack of political resources. Unfortunately for lower-stratum groups, organization is a pale substitute for resources. Gamson's check list of what it takes for a group to become "combat ready" shows why. Since the antagonists are bureaucratically organized, challengers must create parallel organizations with three characteristics: (1) a constitution; (2) an internal division between officers, committees, and rank and file; and (3) a formal membership list. In addition, it is important that there be sufficient centralized authority to quell factionalism in the group or, if the group is more decentralized, some other mechanism to control internal dissension. "Each of these variables – bureaucracy, centralization of power, and [limited] factionalism – make a contribution to success. . . . There are, then, definite advantages for a challenging group, inevitably engaged in conflict with an organized antagonist, to organize itself for facility in political combat" (Gamson, 1975, p. 108).

Gamson bases these conclusions on his study of 53 "challengers" in American history between 1800 and 1945, all of which were formally-organized groups existing, on average, for eight years. Two-fifths of them were occupationally-based, mainly unions; one-third were assorted "reform groups," including abolitionists, political parties, civil rights organizations, and peace groups; another fifth were socialist groups,

such as the International Workingmen's Association; and the remainder were rightwing or nativist groups, such as the German–American Bund (ibid., p. 20).

Protest actions that were not sponsored by formally organized groups did not turn up in the sample.[8] "Perhaps that tells us something," Gamson says, thereby implying that collective protest episodes are always sponsored by organizations.[9] But even the most casual perusal of collective action events – whether the ghetto riots in the American cities of the 1960s, or the mass demonstrations in Eastern Europe, or the food riots in Latin America – makes clear how dubious that thesis is, and especially how dubious it is for the kinds of collective protest and disorder that are of concern to Durkheimians. (Of course, formal organizations do often come to be associated with protest events in various ways, sometimes because outside observers erroneously attribute these events to pre-existing formal organizations, and sometimes because protests stimulate the emergence of organizations by "social movement entrepreneurs", who are then given credit retroactively for the protests.)

Protest is also depicted as overorganized in a good many RM case studies. The rise of movements is signified by organizational paraphernalia, such as the formation of social movement organizations with leaders who make demands and call for demonstrations or lobbying. In the absence of these manifestations, RM analysts often do not recognize the existence of movements. Thus the two major recent RM accounts of the civil rights movement barely touch on riots: Morris (1984) does not mention them (except for a brief reference to the riot in Birmingham), and McAdam (1982) ignores the question of why they occurred. Similarly, in the recent survey of the social movement literature by McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1988), riots are mentioned only once, nor do many other modes of disruptive protest figure much in their survey. Their discussion of "social movement organizations" ranges across such issues as inclusivity and exclusivity, federation and chapter structures, and competition within social movement "industries", which exert pressure for "product differentiation." The "professional social movement organization" is singled out; in "pure" form, it's distinguishing characteristic is that it "communicates with

adherents or members through the mails or the mass media" (McAdam *et al.*, 1988, pp. 716–18).

These portrayals may well have validity for groups with the resources to construct enduring formal organizations, and with still further resources that can be converted into political power. But can those with few resources form influential organizations successfully? Indeed, do they even have the resources to form stable formal organizations, influential or not? Lower-stratum groups often act as though they think so, and do their best to adopt constitutions, elect officers, divide responsibilities among committees, compile membership lists, hold conventions, seek alliances, and garner external financial and expert resources. But such formal organizations cannot be wished into existence; it takes resources to create them, and especially to sustain them. Labor organizations solve this problem with mechanisms to coerce membership and contributions – such as the union shop and dues check-off – but lower-stratum groups typically lack the capacity to coerce participation. Consequently, efforts by lower-income people to build formal organizations generally fail, as the most cursory reading of the history of poor people's organizations reveals. Naison's account of tenant organizing in New York City during the 1930s ends by noting that the city-wide structure that coordinated local tenant organizations "proved fragile":

> Never did City-Wide's fund-raising produce over one thousand dollars per year. . . . The slum tenants . . . lacked the resources to subsidize it, or the political skills and inclinations to build the kind of stable organizations that could give City-Wide real permanence. City-Wide survived on the politically-motivated idealism and skills of underemployed professionals, both of which were vulnerable to shifts in political climate and improvements in the economy (Naison, 1986, p. 127).

The same point can be made for welfare rights organizing in the 1960s: the National Welfare Rights Organization only lasted about five years because local groups throughout the country could not sustain themselves once external resources from the anti-poverty program, such as organizers drawn from the ranks of Vista Volunteers, began to contract. A

serious defect of Gamson's sample is that the vast number of failed organization-building episodes by lower-stratum people is not represented, since most such efforts never resulted in fully formed organizations, or the resulting organizations were so puny and short-lived that they were not available to be sampled. Had there been a way to sample these episodes, Gamson might not have been so quick to advance a formal organization prescription, especially for lower-stratum groups. In short, the resources necessary to develop permanent mass-based bureaucratic organizations are not equally distributed in the class structure. The preoccupation with formal organization thus inadvertently contributes to the class bias in the work of RM analysts which has been remarked upon by Kerbo (1982).

RM analysts have also tried to solve the problem of lower-stratum resource deficits by emphasizing the importance of coalition politics in which "third parties" make up for resource deficiencies.[10] Here the problem is not so much that lower-stratum groups lack resources to form stable organizations, but that their organizations, even when formed, command few of the kinds of resources that can be converted into regular political influence. Organization, in short, is not necessarily a source of power.

The role of third parties in making up for the lack of political influence by lower-statum groups was highlighted by Lipsky in his analysis of the 1963–4 New York City rent strike (Lipsky, 1968, 1970). He concluded that the essence of the politics of protest is "showmanship" or "noise" in which leaders curry sympathy and support from potential "reference public." His findings, which have been widely accepted, are summarized by the Tillys:

> Lipsky makes a strong case that the strike movement owed what success it had (which was not enormous) to the fact that dramatic protests activated powerful third parties who then put pressure on responsible authorities to respond to the grievances of the protestors (Tilly *et al.*, 1975, p. 294).

None of this was true. The so-called "rent strike movement" consisted of a mere flurry of rent-withholding activity between November 1963 and March of the next year. The only sense in which the episode was "dramatic" is that Jesse Grey,

the citywide strike leader, knew how to attract press coverage with groundless announcements that thousands of buildings were about to go on strike, and by conducting tenement tours for sympathetic reporters who wrote stories deploring housing conditions. As a factual matter, no powerful third parties put pressure on anyone (Piven and Cloward, 1967).[11]

How then can people without conventional political resources exert influence? In our own work on unemployed and labor movements, rent strikes, welfare rights organizing, and the civil rights movement, we have tried to show that lower-stratum protestors have some possibility of influence – including mobilizing third party support – if their actions violate rules and disrupt the workings of an institution on which important groups depend.[12] When lower-stratum groups form organizations and employ conventional political strategies, they can easily be ignored. But institutional disruptions cannot so easily be ignored. Institutional disruptions provoke conflict; they arouse an array of "third parties," including important economic interests, and may even contribute to electoral dealignment and realignment. To restore institutional stability and to avoid worsening polarization, political leaders are forced to respond, whether with concessions or repression. To suppose that "normal" or conventional political strategies can have these effects is to underestimate the maldistribution of political resources and to trivialize the consequent realities of power.

Even when the resources are available to create them, formally organized groups are not likely to undertake disruptive protests. Gamson's formal organization prescription ignores the problems that disruptive or rule-breaking protests create for formal organizations. It is not that disruption and violence are never employed by formally organized groups; it is that, in general, organization constrains against such tactics. Protests can provoke severe repression which formal organizations will not usually risk (secret or underground organizations are better positioned in this respect). This is a point made by E. P. Thompson when he speaks of the English crowd's

capacity for swift direct action. To be of a crowd or a mob was another way of being anonymous, whereas to be a

member of a continuing organization was bound to expose one to detection and victimisation. The 18th century crowd well understood its capacities for action, and its own art of the possible. Its successes must be immediate, or not at all. It must destroy those machines, intimidate those employers or dealers, damage that mill . . . before troops come on the scene (Thompson, 1974, p. 401).

Scott puts the same point this way:

Mob action . . . may represent a popular tactical wisdom developed in conscious response to political constraints realistically faced. Spontaneity and a lack of formal organization then become an enabling mode of protest rather than a reflection of the slender political talents of popular classes (Scott, forthcoming).

And Oberschall again breaks with the main RM currents of thought to argue that "the degree of organization varies inversely with the magnitude of violence in confrontations" (Oberschall, 1973, p. 340).

Protest is also inhibited by constraints that result from the vertical integration upon which organizational maintenance by relatively resourceless groups often depends. Thus McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald claim that "a principal goal of [RM analysts] is understanding how emergent movement organizations seek to mobilize and routinize – frequently by tapping lucrative elite resources of support – the flow of resources, which ensures movement survival" (McAdam *et al.*, 1988, p. 697), without acknowledging that this dependency generally turns movement organizations away from protest. This is a problem we have tried to address in our own work (Piven and Cloward 1977, especially the Introduction to the paperback edition), but McAdam dismisses as "pessimistic" our conclusion that organization (in the sense of formal organization) tends to mitigate against disruptive tactics (McAdam, 1982, p. 54). Nevertheless, McAdam concludes his own discussion of these issues in words that could have been our own:

the establishment of formal organizations . . . sets in motion . . . the destructive forces of oligarchization, cooptation, and the dissolution of indigenous support . . . [all of which]

tames the movement by encouraging insurgents to pursue only those goals acceptable to external sponsors. . . . The long list of movements that have failed to negotiate these obstacles attests to the difficulties inherent in the effort (ibid., 1986, pp. 55–6).

NORMALIZING POLITICAL INFLUENCE

In democratic polities, whether protestors win or lose depends on the interaction between disruptive political tactics and electoral politics. However, the influence resulting from the interaction between institutional disruptions and the electoral system cannot be understood by the usual mode of analysis that focuses, as the Tillys do, on the forming of alliances (Tilly *et al.*, 1975, p. 285). Lower-stratum disruptive movements tend to emerge at junctures when larger societal changes generate political volatility and dealignment, and new political possibilities. On this point, we agree with the line of analysis in much RM literature that attributes protest from below in part to the opportunities generated by the fragmenting of elites and by realigning processes. Still, the impact of protest during these periods is not simply that it contributes to subsequent coalition building and realignment. What needs to be understood is that disruptive protest itself makes an important contribution to elite fragmentation and electoral dealignment. Indeed, we think the role of disruptive protest in helping to create political crises (or what we have called "dissensus politics") is the main source of political influence by lower stratum groups (Cloward and Piven, 1966, 1968; Piven and Cloward, 1967, 1977: Chapter 4; Piven and Cloward, 1988, Introduction).

The sharp contrast between our "dissensus politics" analysis and a good number of RM analyses can be illustrated by examining explanations of civil rights successes. For example, McAdam (1982, p. 221) correctly emphasizes that a "significant disruption of public order" was essential to insure federal responses to the civil rights movement. Despite this promising beginning (and despite its clear difference with Lipsky's "noise" and showmanship"), McAdam goes on to explain federal responses in the usual coalitional terms: protestors won because of the growing influence of the black vote coupled with the support of sympathetic northern white liberals. Something like this coalitional process did indeed happen. It was not more important, however, than the fact that the tactics of the civil rights movement helped cleave the Democratic party's north – south alliance. This alliance was already weakening owing to southern opposition to New Deal labor and social welfare policies, and owing to the expansion of the white middle class generated by economic modernization in the south during the postwar period. The result was to stimulate neopopulist movements and to revive the southern wing of the Republican party. Democratic leaders only tipped decisively toward supporting civil rights legislation when it became clear that black protests were also helping to swell the volume of southern white defections to the Republican party. With the white South alienated, it was finally in the interests of the national Democratic party to enfranchise blacks in an attempt to rebuild its shattered southern wing. For McAdam, however, the Democratic party's southern regional base was "a relatively small, politically expendable segment of the population" (McAdam, 1982, p. 215), which did not figure in the calculations of national Democratic party strategists. Of course, the South was not expendable and national Democratic party leaders knew it was not, which is why they resisted civil rights concessions for as long as they did. But civil rights protests – by activating northern liberals and the growing concentrations of black voters in the northern cities, *and especially by enlarging the tide of southern white defections* – changed the political calculus. Generally speaking, then, disruptive tactics force concessions, not by enlarging and consolidating coalitions, but by exacerbating electoral "dissensus" during periods when electoral divisions are already widening (Cloward and Piven, 1966, 1968; Piven and Cloward, 1967, 1977: Chapter 4; and Piven and Cloward, 1988, Introduction).

After two decades of work by analysts associated with the RM school, protest by lower-stratum people is as marginalized and deviant as it ever was. Despite a substantial volume of work on the civil rights movement, for example, we know

little more than we did before about the riot of 11 May 1963 in Birmingham – perhaps the single most important episode in the black movement to that date – or of the subsequent riots in which 169 were killed, 7000 wounded, and 40,000 arrested, except that the participants were not "riff-raff."

When RM analysts talk about these riots, they reveal the biases of a normalized, overorganized, and conventionalized conception of political protest. The riots are not so much analyzed as regretted. McAdam considers that Jacobs and Landau "accurately summed up the situation" when they explained that "neither SNCC nor any other group has found a form of political organization that can convert the energy of the slums into political power" (quoted in McAdam, 1982, p. 191). But if such efforts to organize the black lower-class had been undertaken – at least if they had been undertaken early enough and forcefully enough in the 1960s – there might have been no riots. As it was, the main role played by various social movement leaders during the rioting was to try to quell it, and RM analysts unfailingly approve. When riots broke out in Birmingham in June 1963, Morris says that civil rights leaders "hit the streets at once in order to persuade members of the black community not to engage in violence" so as to "save the agreement" with the economic elites of Birmingham. With the rioters subdued, "the agreement stood, and the planned exercise of "people power" had been successful" (Morris, 1984, p. 273). McAdam correctly notes that the early riots triggered a veritable northward stampede by movement leaders to establish organizational footholds in the ghetto as a means of regaining control over a movement that was slipping away from them" (McAdam, 1986, p. 191). And Oberschall expresses the same outlook when he concludes that "The single most important failure of the middle-class black and the civil rights organizations was their failure to mobilize and to organize the lower-class community" (Oberschall, 1973, p. 213).

So there we have it again. Like many malintegration analysts before them, resource mobilization analysts have also reduced lower-stratum protest politics to irrational and apolitical eruptions.

Notes

1. This contemporary development in the literature on protest follows a similar but much earlier development in the literature on property crime, or crimes against persons with income as the goal. Consider that Edwin H. Sutherland thought that "the processes which result in systematic criminal behavior are fundamentally the same in form as the processes which result in systematic lawful behavior" (Sutherland, 1939, p. 4), and thus that "criminal behavior is a part of human behavior, has much in common with non-criminal behavior, and must be explained within the same general framework as any other behavior" (Sutherland, 1947, p. 4). For a comparative analysis of these kindred but sequential theoretical perspectives in the study of crime and protest, see Piven and Cloward, "Crime and Protest: Discovery and Rediscovery," forthcoming.

2. Rule is quite critical of the work on collective behavior by Park (1921), and especially by Turner and Killian (1957) for failing "to distinguish between collective and 'normal' behavior" (Rule, 1988, p. 102). He also claims that the problem of distinguishing "collective behavior from the rest of social life" is one of two central questions with which he will be preoccupied in his book (ibid., p. 115). But in his extensive and sympathetic discussion of RM work, Rule does not note that RM analysts also blur this distinction.

3. Elsewhere, Tilly acknowledges this extraordinary normative violation: "The frequent borrowing – in parody or in earnest – of the authorities' normal forms of action ... often amounted to the crowd's almost literally taking the law into its own hands" (Tilly, 1981, p. 161). Nevertheless, it is the role of norms in shaping the modes of defiance, not the defiance of norms as such, that is emphasized.

4. This overall conclusion seems illogical even within the RM framework which postulates continuity between normal and defiant activity. It is well-established, for example, that worsening economic conditions lead to voting shifts, imperiling incumbents, and sometimes causing dramatic political realignments (cf., for example, Tufte, 1978). Since economic deterioration produces changes in conventional political behavior, the logic of the RM analysis would lead one to expect a similar correlation between worsening economic conditions and protest.

5. And even if people are in fact inclined to seek solutions to their problems through politics, variations in social integration may predict the forms of protest better than the incidence of it. For example, disciplined civil disobedience occurred more often in the South and rioting occurred almost exclusively in the North during the 1960s. A possible explanation is that northern ghettoes were less cohesive than southern black communities, making it more difficult to promote disciplined protest, especially in the face of provocations by the police.

6. On this point, see also Eric Wolf's (1969) discussion of the constraining effect of clan ties that crossed class lines in prerevolutionary China.

7. For further examples of this general point and the literature bearing on it, see Kerbo (1982, p. 652).

8. "In theory," Gamson says, "a collective behavior listing might have yielded a challenging group, in the absence of any other appropriate organizational listing, but this, in fact, never occurred. Thus, all of our final sample listings are organizations" (Gamson, 1975, p. 156).

9. Personal communication.

10. Morris (1984) has taken exception to this view in his discussion of the civil rights movement by summoning evidence of the substantial resources that the black community itself supplied, but his own data make clear that these internally-generated resources, including especially leadership resources, were contributed mainly by middle-class blacks.

11. The strike failed to rally significant third-party support because the organizers followed Gamson's prescription: they first built tenant committees. Then, together with tenant leaders, they tried to induce tenants to use the procedures for legal redress laid out by the housing agencies. They canvassed apartments for housing violations; filled out official forms; scheduled visits by building inspectors to record hazardous violations; checked that the inspectors actually filed these forms; arranged for rents to be placed in escrow; contacted lawyers, shepherded tenants through the courts, not once but over and over again in the face of delaying tactics by landlords. And for all of that, only a few victories were won. As tenants and organizers were increasingly overwhelmed and worn down by these procedures, the strike faltered and then collapsed, only a few months after it began (Piven and Cloward, 1967).

12. The essential importance of institutional disruptions for the exercise of political influence by resourceless groups is set out in Piven (1963), and in Cloward and Piven (1966). For theoretical elaborations and applications to particular social movements, see Piven and Cloward (1967 and 1977), and Cloward and Piven (1968). The role of disruption is debated in Gamson and Schmeidler (1984), and Cloward and Piven (1984).

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