COLLECTIVE ACTION & CONTENTIOUS POLITICS OUTLINE

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CROWD THEORY

- Crowds are transformative, suppressing individual rationality and engendering a collective "mental unity" forged by linking every participants unconscious mind
- Crowd behavior diffuses via a sort of collective hypnosis, and crowd members are capable of acts of both barbarism and heroism

Gustave LeBon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1895)

1. **The mental unity of crowds**
    a. Crowds vs. groups: a crowd is distinguished from an agglomeration of individuals by virtue of its transformative character and its accordance with the "law of the mental unity of crowds:" "Whoever be the individuals that compose it, however like or unlike be their mode of life...the fact that they have been transformed into a crowd puts them in possession of a sort of collective mind which makes them feel, think, and act in a manner quite different from that in which each individual of them would… in a state of isolation"
    b. The irrationality and hypnosis crowds: Individuals within crowds cease to behave rationally (as they do in isolation, where they exhibit diverse natural intellectual endowments), and fall under a state of collective hypnosis: their common, primitive unconscious urges take over, perhaps because of the "magnetic influence of the crowd," as the unconscious mind becomes "collective property," and every "sentiment and act is contagious," or under the control of the hypnotizer (perhaps a group leader)
    c. The barbarism or heroism of crowds: As the primitive unconscious homogenizes what would otherwise be a diverse collection of individuals, individuals begin to garner a sense of "invincibility" out of the sheer size of the crowd and yield to "instincts which they would have to restrain" if they were acting alone.

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i. This allows individuals within crowds to act as "barbarians," or creatures acting on instinct, capable of both malevolent violence as well as enthusiastic acts of heroism

Clark McPhail, *The Myth of the Maddening Crowd* (1991)

1. **Critiques of Crowd Theory**
    a. <u>Most crowd participants aren't anonymous:</u> Its assumption that most crowd participants are anonymous is empirically fallacious: crowds are often comprised of family members, friends, or acquaintances
    b. <u>Crowd participants rarely lose their rational capabilities:</u> Human beings faced by problematic situations rarely lose control of their wits, and even Le Bon's notion of a sense invincibility induced by numeric power shows rational calculation on the part of crowd members
    c. <u>Its mechanisms are tautological:</u> the outcome to be explained - extraordinary crowd behavior - is tautologically listed as empirical support for the mechanisms of suggestibility and contagion
    d. <u>It misunderstands hypnosis and suggestibility:</u> Research finds that in hypnosis "the individual must tell himself/herself to do what is suggested if the suggestion is to have an impact"
    e. <u>It is unclear what its dependent variable is,</u> in the sense that crowd theory is fairly vague over the outcome or behaviors it seeks to explain

GRIEVANCE-BASED APPROACHES
* Draw from the literatures on social psychology and cognitive dissonance
* Individuals are mobilized into contentious collective action due to grievances
* Grievances emerge when individuals' expectations do not match their capabilities
* Grievances are relative – they emerge when individuals compare their social situation to other members of society
* Grievances are a source of contentious mobilization by converting frustration into aggression

Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (1970)

1. **Relative deprivation theory**
    a. <u>Relative deprivation defined:</u> "the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the "ought" and the "is" of collective value satisfaction, and that disposes men to violence"

i. Specifically, when "value expectations" - the basic goods and conditions of life which all people are entitled to - outflank "value capabilities" - the goods and conditions people think they can get - the risk of collective violence increases

b. <u>The frustration-aggression mechanism:</u> The psychological mechanism that converts relative deprivation to violent action is the "frustration-aggression relationship:" The greater the intensity of deprivation, the greater the potential for collective violence, for a frustrated individual will lash out at the attackable source of frustration

    i. Gurr even goes so far as to compare this mechanism to the law of gravity: "men who are frustrated have an innate disposition to do violence to its source in proportion to the intensity of their frustration"

2. **Three patterns of relative deprivation**

a. <u>Decremental deprivation:</u> Value expectations remain constant but value capabilities decrease with time, causing a frustrating divergence

b. <u>Aspirational deprivation:</u> Value expectations rise with time, but value capabilities remain constant, again causing a frustrating divergence

c. <u>Progressive deprivation:</u> Value expectations and value capabilities initially both increase monotonically, but whereas value expectations continue to rise value capabilities eventually level off and may even decrease

Stephen Brush, "Dynamics of Theory Change in the Social Sciences: Relative Deprivation and Collective Violence" (1996)

1. **Criticisms of relative deprivation that emerged with time**

a. <u>Inferring individual-level mechanisms from country-level statistics:</u> broad criticism that soon began to surface in the literature is that despite the frustration-aggression mechanism being at the individual-level, Gurr used aggregate, country-level measures of deprivation as measures of individual motivation. In fact, this was "widely regarded as the serious weakness of this theory"

b. <u>Material deprivation is not always a source of mobilization:</u> nalyses of the 1960s ghetto riots in the United States showed that blacks were more motivated to riot because of the perceived untrustworthiness of the police rather than because of a lack of social welfare program benefits

c. <u>Relative deprivation may be an ex-post justification for mobilization, rather than an explanatory mechanism:</u> Other studies from Latin America suggested that relative deprivation was "a partial result of the post-factum self-legitimation of successful revolutionary movements"

      d. <u>Relative deprivation is hard to measure:</u> several scholars noted how "the measurement of RD is indirect, unreliable, and the concept itself is hard to use"

Kelly Bergstrand, "The Mobilizing Power of Grievances" (2014)

1. **Not all grievances are created equal: Two cognitive biases**
   a. <u>Loss aversion:</u> which "states that people find losses more aversive than they find comparable gains attractive"
   b. <u>Omission bias</u>: which is "a preference for harms caused by omissions over equal or lesser harms caused by actions"
2. **Empirical application: Vignette experiments**
   a. <u>The experiments and results:</u> Nearly 75% of her vignette study participants were women, and all were undergraduate sociology students at a university in the southwestern United States. Bergstrand finds that
      i. "Grievances involving a loss are perceived as more immoral, unjust, and important than grievances involving a gain."
      ii. "Loss-based grievances also generate stronger emotions, increase willingness to engage in activism, and produce perceptions of greater public support."
      iii. "Similarly, grievances resulting from a commission (action), as compared to an omission (inaction), are seen as more immoral, unjust, and important"

RATIONAL CHOICE APPROACHES

- Collective action is a phenomenon that needs to be explained rather than assumed to occur spontaneously, with a focus on the strategic microfoundations of collective action
- Individuals are instrumentally rational, seeking to further their material self-interest. Their preferences are treated as exogenous
- Individuals will contribute to collective enterprises when it furthers their self-interest, and are subject to incentives to free-ride that must be overcome

Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (1971)

1. **Why is collective action irrational most of the time?**
   a. <u>Individuals are instrumentally rational – they contribute to collective endeavors when it furthers their self-interest:</u>

       i. Appeals to emotion usually fail- even the state needs coercion: even the state cannot exclusively rely on "all of the emotional resources at its command" to "finance its most basic and vital activities," which necessitates the use of its coercive capacity to successfully foster collective action

      ii. Hence organizations seek to further the interests of their members: "Labor unions are expected to strive for higher wages and better working conditions … farm organizations are expected to strive for favorable legislation … cartels are expected to strive for higher prices …the corporation is expected to further the interests of its stockholders."

  b. In this context, a free-rider problem emerges: particularly in large organizations seeking to provide a public good to their members, the loss of support on the part of any one member will not noticeably increase the burden on other members. As a result, the "rational person" expects that his/her free-riding will not impact the organization's prospects for the successful provision of the public (non-rival and non-excludable) good, and hence all individuals have an incentive to free-ride

2. **How the free-rider problem can be mitigated/overcome**

  a. Mitigated: By organizing in smaller groups: Smaller organizations tend to overcome the free rider problem problem because each member knows that that the burden of provision is shared by only a few counterparts, and hence free-riding by any one member more substantially decreases the prospect of public good provision. Nevertheless, even in small groups comprised of instrumentally rational agents, there is a presumption that the collective action effort will lead to the sub-optimal supply of the public good.

  b. Overcome: By providing selective incentives: In the absence of coercion, then, a material "selective inducement" must be provided in order for individuals to act in their group interest. Usually, this is a material selective inducement, but Olson does not necessarily limit it to material incentives.

      i. Note that the motives of these first-movers, who are willing to bear a disproportionate share of the cost for collective action or to provide a selective incentive for others to join in the effort, are treated as exogenous

Samuel Popkin, *The Rational Peasant* (1979)

1. **Extending Olson (1971)'s framework to peasant collective action in Vietnam**

  a. Intense or shared grievances won't solve the collective action problem: "Collective action requires more than consensus or even intensity of need. It requires conditions under which peasants will find it in their individual

interests to allocate resources to their common interests and not be free riders"

- b. <u>The collective action problem can be resolved in other ways besides selective incentives:</u>
  - i. Because individuals contribute for reasons of ethic, conscience, or altruism
  - ii. Because it pays to contribute on a pure cost-benefit basis, in the absence of selective incentives
  - iii. Because it pays to contribute given that the contributions of others are contingent on one's own contribution
    1. When one's contribution influences others to contribute, it will have an important perceptible effect on the overall level of contributions
    2. When every little bit of contribution is seen as a crucial step in a long process
- c. <u>The importance of leadership:</u>
  - i. When a peasant makes his personal cost-benefit calculations about the expected returns on his own inputs, he is making subjective estimates of the credibility and capability o the organizer, "the political entrepreneur," to deliver.
  - ii. A would-be leader must convince a peasant that he is not going to take his money and run
  - iii. Effective leaders may provide only selective incentives; but by coordination of contributions, by manipulation of information, or by breaking up a large overall goal into numerous steps with critical thresholds, they may also elicit contributions not tied directly to selective incentives

Gerald Marwell and Pamela Oliver, *The Critical Mass in Collective Action* (1993)

1. **Critiques of Olson (1971)**
   - a. <u>Collective action is frequent:</u> If collective action occurs every day, then it is unlikely to be an irrational act
   - b. <u>Selective incentives do not solve the free-rider problem:</u> Because, after all, the provision of a selective incentive is itself a collective action problem subject to free-riding – who provides the selective incentive?
2. **Olson's Omitted Variable: Jointness of Supply**
   - a. <u>Jointness of supply:</u>
     - i. Olson assumed that the cost of providing public goods increases the more people consume them. That is, he assumed zero jointness of supply, where perfect jointness of supply means that the cost of

providing a good is unaffected by the number of people who consume it.

   ii. Yet for most classical types of public goods, like defense, the cost of provision has high jointness of supply – it does not cost more to supply the good if more people consume it.

  b. <u>With high jointness of supply, larger groups are better able to promote collective action:</u>

   i. Olson assumed that providing public goods to larger groups would cost more because of the lack of jointness of supply, and hence larger groups have no advantage (and are in fact at a disadvantage) in the provision of the good.

   ii. Yet if the cost of public good provision is unaffected by group size, larger groups are better able to provide the good: Why?

    1. Fewer individuals are needed to contribute to the good; hence the proportion of contributors can be lower while still supplying the good

    2. Larger groups tend to be more heterogeneous, and hence it is more likely that a subset of individuals "are interested and resourceful enough to provide the good"

Elinor Ostrom, "A Behavioral Approach to the Rational Choice Theory of Collective Action" (1997)

1. **Modifications of Olson (1971)'s framework**

  a. <u>Incorporating the findings of psychologists and behavioral economists</u>, while still remaining true to the rational choice perspective

  b. <u>Incorporating experimental evidence:</u> "Our evolutionary heritage has hardwired us to be boundedly self-seeking at the same time that we are capable of learning heuristics and norms, such as reciprocity, that help achieve successful collective action"

  c. <u>Individuals are not perfectly rational – they are boundedly rational:</u> "Our evolutionary heritage has hardwired us to be boundedly self-seeking at the same time that we are capable of learning heuristics and norms, such as reciprocity, that help achieve successful collective action"

2. **Experimental evidence on collective action**

  a. <u>Face-to-face contact matters:</u> laboratory experiments consistently find that individuals who are "allowed to communicate face to face" in iterated games are better able to cooperate with one another. Why?

   i. In part by "increasing trust,"

   ii. In part by "adding values to the subjective payoff structure,"

   iii. In part by reinforcing "prior normative values,"

iv. But most importantly by reinforcing norms of reciprocity
  b. <u>Individuals construct third-party enforcement mechanisms:</u> field experiments have highlighted that participants often collaborate to restructure rules and construct third-party enforcement mechanisms so as to alter the payoff structures of individuals and incentivize collective action

Timur Kuran, *Private Truths, Public Lies* (1995)

1. **Activists as First Movers**
   a. <u>First movers, not selective incentives, solve the collective action problem:</u>
      i. "There can be no Olsonian incentives until someone is already active," and that Olson presupposes "that the potential beneficiaries of a movement can easily, if not costlessly, communicate"
      ii. some individuals "have unusually intense wants on particular matters," but unlike Olson's materially-driven first-movers, these "activists" are driven by "extraordinarily great expressive needs"
2. **Preference falsification and revolutionary bandwagons**
   a. <u>The dual structure of preferences:</u>
      i. Private preferences are the sincere beliefs in support or against a given polity or political regime. They are individual-specific and tend not to be socially constructed – that is, they are exogenous to society
      ii. Public preferences are the beliefs that individuals publicly share in support or against a given polity or political regime. They are interdependent, and hence subject to social construction – that is, they are endogenous to society
   b. <u>The revolutionary threshold:</u>
      i. Public preferences incorporate a "revolutionary threshold," namely the level of public opposition of the government "at which [an individual] will abandon the government for the opposition." This is conceptualized as the numeric proportion of the population that is opposed to the regime
   c. <u>The revolutionary bandwagon:</u> In some situations where the "threshold sequence" of individuals is incrementally ordered, small changes in the revolutionary threshold of even a single individual (as when they have "an unpleasant encounter at some government ministry") can engender a "revolutionary bandwagon," tipping the system towards contentious collective action
   d. <u>Implications: Small events, big effects:</u> even if most individuals remain instrumental cost-benefit calculators, collective action need not arise out of a common or even individual purposive effort (as in Olson's "selective incentive" framework), but may equally emerge when relatively unplanned

and "small events" interact with a society's distribution of public preferences to generate "large outcomes" that are unpredictable ex-ante

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION THEORY

- Are largely responding to Olson (1971)'s study of the difficulties inherent in overcoming the collective action problem, embracing the assumption that individuals are instrumentally rational
- Emphasize the importance of mobilizing resources – particularly money and labor – in a world of resource scarcity
- Borrow strongly from organizational theory, incorporating the language of "social movement industries" and "social movement sectors"

John McCarthy and Mayer Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory" (1977)

1. **Three critical aspects of collective action:**
   a. <u>The aggregation of resources</u>, particularly money and labor
   b. <u>Organizational infrastructures,</u> particularly hierarchical social movement organizations, capable of aggregating resources
   c. <u>Costs and rewards</u>, and particularly how shifting cost and reward structures explain individual and organizational involvement in collective action
2. **The social movement universe**
   a. <u>The social movement:</u> "A set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society"
   b. <u>The social movement organization:</u> "A complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals"
   c. <u>The social movement industry:</u> "All social movement organizations that have as their goal the attainment of the broadest preferences of a social movement"
   d. <u>The social movement sector:</u> "All social movement industries in a society no matter to which social movement they are attached"
3. **The dynamics of collective action**
   a. <u>Contributors to social movements need not be direct beneficiaries:</u> he individuals who often contribute resources to support the foregoing organizational infrastructures are not always direct beneficiaries: They may be "conscience constituents," who contribute money or labor to a movement but do not stand to benefit directly

b. Social movement organizations compete over the support of "conscience constituents:" because conscience constituents and their resource endowments are limited, social movement organizations and industries compete with one another for access to said resources

c. Successful movement organizations professionalize and bureaucratize: Yet this does not necessarily engender the reification of the movement organization: Professional staff can always employ "workers with discretionary time at their disposal" to "develop transitory teams" to maintain the flexible responsiveness of the organization to shifting social context

J. Craig Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements" (1983)

1. **The five assumptions of resource mobilization theory**
   a. Actors are rational and strategic: "Movement actions are rational, adaptive responses to the costs and rewards of different lines of action"
   b. Institutionalized conflicts of interests prevail in society: "The basic goals of movements are defined by conflicts of interests built into institutionalized power relations"
   c. Grievances are not enough to explain collective action: "grievances generated by such conflicts are sufficiently ever-present that the formation of movements depends on changes in resources, group organization, and opportunities for collective action"
   d. Hierarchical organizations are better able to promote collective action: "Centralized, formally structured movement organizations are more typical of modern social movements and more effective at mobilizing resources and mounting sustained challenges than decentralized, informal movement structures"
   e. The success of social movements depends on strategic interactions: "the success of movements is largely determined by strategic factors and the political processes in which they become enmeshed"
2. **A critique of resource mobilization theory**
   a. Ignoring micro-level processes: resource mobilization tends to ignore microlevel processes or to treat them "as simplifying assumptions for a larger- scale analysis"
   b. Many social movements are not professional organizations relying on mobilizing external resources: most of the 1960s social movements in the United States "were not professional [social movement organizations] and did not rely on external resources for their crucial victories. Contributors of external resources were largely reactive, not initiatory, and were not

consistently beneficial." Indeed, "decentralized movements have continued to emerge"

  c. <u>It ignores moral or purposive incentives to contribute:</u> by appropriating Olson's focus on material resources and selective incentives, this approach "ignores the prominence of moral or purposive incentives" which are often highlighted by movement constituents as determinitive of their support

  d. <u>Needs to incorporate a social psychology of mobilization:</u> resource mobilization theorists could also benefit from incorporating a more sophisticated "social psychology of mobilization," which suggests that said scholars may have swung the pendulum too far from collective psychology towards instrumental rationality and material resource allocation

NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORIES
- Influenced by the worldwide rise of new-leftist movements in the 1960s and 1970s
- Posited that these new social movements were qualitatively distinct from previous social movements studied heavily by resource mobilization theorists
- New social movements do not mobilize on the basis of class or material interests, but on the basis of identity and post-materialist values

Ronald Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (1990)

1. **The structural shift to post-materialist values**
  a. <u>The structural shift prompting the value shift:</u> "In the takeoff phase of industrial revolution, economic growth was the central problem. Post-materialists have become increasingly numerous in recent decades, and they place less emphasis on economic growth and more emphasis on the noneconomic quality of life. Their support for environmentalism reflects this concern"
  b. <u>Differences between the old and the new left:</u>
  c. "The Old Left viewed both growth and technological progress as fundamentally good and progressive; the New Left is suspicious of both."
  d. "The Old Left had a working-class social base; the New Left has a predominantly middle-class base"
  e. This causes a cleavage with the Materialist Left, for "it is not unambiguously clear that the environmentalist and antiwar movements will enhance their top priorities - economic and physical security"
2. **The necessary ingredient for mobilization: Cognitive mobilization**
  a. <u>Cognitive mobilization:</u> the "development of the political skills that are needed to cope with the politics of a large-scale society" - measured by the

degree to which an individual is informed about politics and eager to discuss political matters frequently

3. **Empirical findings using the World Values Survey**
4. <u>Post-materialism + cognitive mobilization=support for new left:</u> amongst postmaterialists that possess high levels of cognitive mobilization, support for the Right and Center is significantly lower, and "they give their backing to New Politics parties, and to ecology parties in particular"
5. <u>Post-materialism is the most significant explanatory factor for participation in the new left:</u> the "materialist-postmaterialist dichotomy is the strongest predictor of participation in both the ecology movement and the antiwar movement, even when controlling for age, education, political ideology, and religion"

Claus Offe, "New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics" (1985)

1. **What's new: beyond materialism, politicizing the private and the cultural**
    a. <u>Politicizing civil society:</u> The politics of new social movements seeks to politicize the institutions of civil society in ways that are not constrained by the channels of the representative-bureaucratic political institutions, and therefore to reconstitute a civil society that is no longer dependent upon ever more regulation, control, and intervention"
    b. <u>A libertarian focus on autonomy and identity:</u> New social movements mobilized around the values of "autonomy and identity" and against the old values of "manipulation, control, dependence, bureaucratization," and regulation
        i. In contrast to the old left, where "policy decisions were made in functional terms of growth and efficiency; capitalism as a growth machine was complemented by organized labor as a distribution and social-security machine; and political conflict was mediated through party competition and de-emphasized political participation"
    c. <u>They take economic prosperity for granted:</u> All new social movements take economic prosperity for granted and do not advocate for radical revolution, and their mobilizing values can be understood as a "selective radicalization of "modern values," not as comprehensive rejection of these values"
    d. <u>Their composition is different:</u> Most new social movements are comprised of three groups:
        i. The non-commodified middle class (such as students and housewives, or those not fully incorporated within the labor market)
        ii. Elements of the old middle class
        iii. People fully outside the labor market or in a peripheral position

Alberto Mellucci, "A Strange Kind of Newness: What's "New" in New Social Movements?" (1994)

1. **What's new: A cultural orientation**
   a. The cultural orientation of new social movements: an orientation between the private sphere and the public sphere - and their ability to transform themselves into "a message broadcast to society conveying symbolic forms and relational patterns that cast light on. . . a system of meanings that runs counter to the sense that the apparatuses seek to impose on individual and collective events"
   b. The function of new social movements: new social movements "function for the rest of society as a specific kind of medium, the chief function of which is to reveal what a system does not say of itself, the kernel of silence, of violence, or of arbitrary power that dominant codes always comprise. Movements are media that speak through action"
2. **The structural transformation prompting this shift**
   a. A shift in the source of power from control of material goods to control of information: The source of power and domination in postindustrial societies is no longer the distributional control of material goods - it is the control of information and, with it, the "ability to inform," that is, "to give form" as "access to knowledge becomes the terrain where new forms of power, discrimination, and conflict come into being"
   b. The disorienting rise of the information age: a growing mass of ever-flowing and ever-changing instant knowledge, engendering what Castells calls "timeless time" and "the space of flows," disorients individuals and consequently spurs them to turn to "the search for identity, the quest for self that addresses the fundamental regions of human action: the body, the emotions, the dimensions of experience irreducible to instrumental rationality" emphasized by the resource mobilization approach

Nelson Pichardo, "New Social Movements: A Critical Review" (1997)

1. **A critique of the new social movement approach**
   a. It ignores right-wing movements: New social movement theorists ignore the emergence of contemporary right-wing movements. Thus "the NSM paradigm describes (at best) only a portion of the social movement universe"
   b. Not all new social movements are anti-institutional: Many, like the German Green Party, crystallize into political parties
   c. Most participants are direct beneficiaries, not conscience constituents: Studies of the environmental movements reveal that "many of their

constituents are geographically bound communities that are being directly affected by the negative externalities of industrial growth"

d. New social movements are not as diverse in composition as new social movement theorists posit: NSMs do not draw significantly from outside the white middle class," and minority communities have rarely participated

e. Its claims are usually untested empirically: New social movement theorists' contention that these movements are responding to state intrusion is difficult to prove empirically and is hitherto untested

f. It exaggerates the discontinuity between the old and new left: Tarrow contends that there exist continuities between contemporary social movements and those of the past; In fact, "those who posit the newness of contemporary social movements have simply mistaken an early phase of movement development for a new historical stage of collective action"

g. It ignores new social movements that emergence in societies that have yet to undergo a shift to postindustrialism: Similar new left movements to those in Europe emerged in regions that have yet to undergo a shift to a postindustrial society and economic affluence (such as Latin America), suggesting that both of these structural factors are not preconditions for their emergence

THE POLITICAL PROCESS APPROACH
- Is a natural outgrowth/extension, and partial critique, of the resource mobilization approach
- It seeks to combine several forms of collective action – from peaceful social movements during normal politics to rebellions and revolutions – under the label of "contentious politics" to showcase similarities in mechanisms and causal processes
- It focuses particularly on the "structure of political opportunities" to explicate the timing of contentious collective action
- It focuses particularly on the concept of "repertoires of contention" to explicate the means by which collective action occurs

Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (1982)

1. **Expanded political opportunities and the civil rights movement**
   a. The structure of political opportunities and mobilization:
       i. Broad socioeconomic changes can engender fissures or transformations in the existing polity, producing a political opportunity for collective action.

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      ii. At the same time, these same socioeconomic changes can bolster indigenous organizational strength, endowing social movement activists with the capabilities to exploit a political opportunity.

      iii. The combination of these two factors can produce "cognitive liberation," or a series of cognitive cues to social actors suggesting that the political system is vulnerable to challenge. This, in turn, can spark the development of a social movement.

  b. <u>The emergence of new political opportunities for mobilization:</u> McAdam focused on the expanding opportunities for African Americans in the American South.

      i. Particularly critical was the mass migration of African Americans to northern cities, which meant that the electorates in northern regions changed.

      ii. Northern politicians quickly realized that they needed to cultivate the African American vote to get elected, and they thus paid more attention to the issues that African Americans cared about.

      iii. This, in turn, created a political opportunity for blacks in the South.

Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (1979)

1. **An example of how the structure of political opportunities spurs mobilization**

  a. <u>An unintentional embrace of the political process approach:</u> Skocpol argues that revolutions are qualitatively distinct from social movements, so she does not engage with the emergent political process approach. However, her theory is an excellent illustration of how the expansion of political opportunities may engender mobilization

  b. <u>The political opportunity: International pressure + state-elite conflict</u>

      i. International pressure: the exogenous shock that destabilizes a regime comes from "international military and economic competition between states at different levels of modernization that created destabilizing pressures"

          1. 18th-century France faced military competition from more advanced Britain

          2. czarist Russia was "overwhelmed by German military might"

          3. China faced a long series of imperialist invasions from Japan and European powers

      ii. State-elite conflict: Because the state (contra Moore 1966) can achieve relative autonomy from society, the pressures brought by international military and economic competition "could trigger a political crisis" whereby state officials and political elites become divided

      iii. Revolution: International pressure combined with state-elite conflict provides the necessary political opportunity to "precipitate a revolution," assuming that peasants have the necessary organizational structures, either at the village level or at the national party level, to mobilize

Herbert Kitschelt, "Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest" (1986)

1. **An institutionalist understanding of political opportunities**
   a. <u>The empirical context:</u> a study of the anti-nuclear power movements in France, Sweden, the United States, and Germany
   b. <u>The argument:</u> what explains the variance in these movements' strategies and outcomes on energy problems is the specific configuration of state institutions within each country
   c. <u>Factors shaping the political opportunity structure:</u>
      i. The number of political parties (more parties=more opportunity)
      ii. The capacity of legislatures to develop and control policies independently of the executive (more legislative autonomy= more opportunity)
      iii. Patterns of intermediation between interest groups and the executive branch (more intermediation= more opportunity)
   d. <u>Examples: Sweden vs. France</u>
      i. In Sweden: Open political input structures and strong political output structures characterize the Swedish state. Consequently, the anti-nuclear power movement was assimilated within state institutions and was able to achieve significant changes in energy policy
      ii. In France: Political input structures were closed, prompting the anti-nuclear movement to engage in a series of extra-institutional, confrontational protests.

Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement* (1998)

1. **What is contentious politics?**
   a. <u>Definition of contentious politics:</u> Collective action becomes contentious when it is used by people who lack regular access to institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities."
2. **What are social movements?**
   a. <u>The four constitutive properties of social movements</u>
      i. They are spurred by collective challenges

        ii. They exhibit a common purpose

       iii. They foster solidarity and collective identity

       iv. They sustain contentious politics

   b. <u>Why do social movements leverage contentious collective action?</u> "Contentious collective action is the basis of social movements, not because they are always violent or extreme, but because it is the main and often only recourse that ordinary people possess against better-equipped opponents or powerful states."

3. **When does contentious politics arise?**

   a. <u>There are five common types of political opportunities that determine the timing of contention:</u>

        i. The opening of access to participation for new actors

        ii. Evidence of a political realignment within the polity

       iii. The appearance of influential allies both within and outside of the polity

       iv. Emerging splits within the elite

        v. A decline in the state's capacity or will to repress dissent

   b. <u>Examples:</u>

        i. When state capacity for repression declines, challengers find opportunities to advance their claims. When combined with high levels of perceived costs for inaction, opportunities produce episodes of contentious politics.

        ii. Workers are more likely to go on strike during economic booms than depressions. Prosperity increases employers' needs for labor just as tight labor markets reduce competition for jobs. As workers learn this, they place demands on employers.

William Gamson and David Meyer, "Framing Political Opportunity" (1996)

1. **Two temporal dimensions to political opportunity**

   a. <u>Stable dimension:</u> Includes Kitschelt (1986)'s focus on the "political regime" or constitutional structure, is deeply embedded within culture and existing institutions, and can therefore only be changed gradually or via a revolution.

   b. <u>Volatile dimension:</u> Includes changes in government policy, economic contingencies, and geopolitical crises.

2. **Two substantive dimensions to political opportunity**

   a. <u>Institutional dimension:</u> Once again, focused on the structure of the state, the distribution of resources, and other objective factors

b. <u>Cultural dimension:</u> Perceived quality-of life concerns, collective identity issues, and other cultural-semiotic factors that may serve as mobilizers for collective action
    i. Here, Gamson and Meyer act as a bridge to the "Frame Analysis" perspective on social movements: "Any opportunity unrecognized is no opportunity at all. There is a component of political opportunity involving the perception of possible change that is, above all else, a social construction." By defining people as potential agents of their own history, collective action frames help individuals identify and respond to shifts in the structure of political opportunity.

Jeff Goodwin and James Jasper, "Caught in a Winding, Snarling Vine" (1999)

1. **A critique of the concept of "political opportunity structures"**
    a. <u>The concept is tautological:</u> insofar as it means "the chance for people to act together," then political opportunity is built into the definition of a social movement.
    b. <u>The concept suffers from "conceptual stretching:"</u> Goodwin and Jasper argue that the concept of "political opportunity" has suffered from what Sartori (1970) would call "conceptual stretching" – it is so ill-defined that it is virtually impossible to discern what social phenomena to include or omit within this conceptual umbrella.
    c. <u>It has a perplexing structural bias:</u> despite the fact that the term "political opportunity" implies a temporary opening for action, most political opportunity theories have a perplexing structuralist bias, often focusing on stable characteristics of the state
    d. <u>Empirical evidence suggests that the opening of opportunities are not necessary for mobilization:</u> in line with Kurzman (1996)'s study of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, there are innumerable instances of social movement mobilization in contexts where political opportunities can only be described as contracting
        i. Via a case study of the Iranian Revolution, Kurzman argues that by several objective measures, the Iranian monarchy was not structurally vulnerable.
        ii. Yet Iranians appear to have perceived opportunities for successful protest, basing their perceptions on a shift in the opposition movement, not on a shift in the structural position of the state.
        iii. In the conflict between structural conditions and perceived opportunities, the structural conditions gave way.

iv. Kurzman concludes that if subjective perceptions can outweigh objective structures, then protest may not be predictable, even in principle.

Charles Tilly, *The Contentious French* (1986)

1. **What are repertoires of contention?**
    a. <u>A repertoire:</u> Repertoires are "alternative means of acting together in shared interests"
        i. The terminology of "repertoire" references the practices of jazz ensembles: Jazz musicians know the general rules of performance more or less well, and in any given performance they will vary their actions to meet the purpose at hand.
    b. <u>The duality of repertoires:</u> The repertoire is part cultural script, part strategic toolkit:
        i. The repertoire of contention, then, is partially a cultural script: a shared set of contentious collective actions that are learned and passed on from generation to generation.
        ii. Yet at the same time, it is also a tactical or strategic concept: a repertoire of contention is like a toolkit containing an array of possible strategies to challenge the authority of political elites or an oppressive regime.

Charles Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain* (1995)

1. **How does the repertoire of contention evolve?**
    a. <u>The old repertoire (pre-19th century):</u> Was both parochial and patronized. It was aimed at local officials and sought instant satiation and change. It sought to make a nuisance of someone who violated collective local norms.
        i. Examples: seizures of grain, kicking out tax collectors, marching to a public official's house, "donkeying" (putting someone backwards on a donkey and parading them around the village to humiliate them), and "rough music" (ceremonies taking place at night whereby villagers would bang pots and pans to wake someone up)
    b. <u>The new repertoire (19th century-present):</u> is cosmopolitan, modular, and autonomous. It is cosmopolitan in the sense that it addressed issues that spanned many communities rather than local grievances. It is modular in that it is easily transportable, reconfigurable, and diffusible from place to place. It is autonomous because it makes claims independent of local officials.

        i. Examples: Public demonstrations, mass meetings, and nation-wide revolutions

  c. <u>What caused the shift from the old to the new repertoire?</u>
        i. The centralization of the state increased the political advantage of groups that could convey their demands directly to Parliament.
        ii. Capitalization and commercialization undermined old patronage networks.
        iii. Population growth and urbanization advantaged actors who could create and manipulate assemblies and civic associations.

Mark Traugott, *The Insurgent Barricade* (2010)

1. **An example of part of the French contentious repertoire: The barricade**
   a. <u>The evolution in the uses of the barricade:</u>
      i. The barricade first emerged in 1588, and was used by the Parisian bourgeoisie to prevent the masses from sacking their neighborhoods.
      ii. By the 18th-19th centuries, it was used by the Parisian masses to challenge state authority and attempt revolution
      iii. By the 20th century, the barricade had become a symbol of discontent as its military advantages evaporated
   b. <u>The functions of the barricade in the 18th-19th centuries:</u> The function of the barricade isn't just to protect those who build and defend it. Indeed, alongside the manifest functions of barricades exist others that might be termed latent because they generally escape the conscious awareness of participants and analysts alike:
      i. Barricades challenged the legitimacy of the regime in power, delimit the lines of cleavage in society, and define the identity of insurgent groups.
      ii. Barricades helped to mobilize the local crowd and to identify new recruits via the spectacle of barricade construction.
      iii. Barricades allowed insurgents manning the barricade to control passage and, in so doing, to attempt to recruit individuals and to poll the local population.
   c. <u>The functions of the barricade into the 20th century:</u> With time, the barricade's military advantages steadily diminished, particularly in light of the French army's willingness to employ artillery to put down domestic uprisings. Yet use of the barricade continued well into the 20th century in the 1968 Events of May. This is because:
      i. The barricade's function was now purely symbolic – a proxy for the desire to effect radical political change. Via popular culture – such as

poetry, engravings, and paintings – the barricade became the mythical symbol of protest.

FRAME ANALYSIS PERSPECTIVES
- These perspectives continue to the cultural turn of the New Social Movement theorists
- They focus on how cognitive frames can be leveraged by social movement activists to induce participation
- They seek to explain not just how frames allow individuals to mobilize, but how frames allow individuals to interpret (and derive meaning from) collective action

Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis* **(1974)**

1. **Frames and framing**
   a. <u>Frames:</u> are schemata assign meaning to and interpret relevant events in ways that are intended to promote social action
   b. <u>Framing:</u> comprises the cognitive and phenomenological processes whereby actors assign meaning to their particular social situation and symbolic interactions
      i. In the case of social movements: "Framing" is what social movement activists do: They create frames that are meant to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists.

David Snow and Robert Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization" (1988)

1. **The potency and functions of framing**
   a. <u>Factors shaping the mobilizing potency of framing:</u>
      i. "The robustness, completeness, and thoroughness of the framing effort"
      ii. "The internal structure of the larger belief system with which the movement seeks to affect some kind of cognitive/ideational alignment"
      iii. "The relevance of the frame to the life world of the participants"
2. **The core tasks of framing**
   a. <u>Diagnostic framing:</u> A diagnosis of some event or aspect of social life as problematic and in need of alteration

b. <u>Prognostic framing:</u> A proposed solution to the diagnosed problem that specifies what needs to be done

c. <u>Motivational framing:</u> A call to arms or rationale for engaging in ameliorative or corrective action

Francesca Polletta, *It Was Like a Fever* (2006)

1. **Framing in the moment: the US student sit-in movement in the early 1960s**
    a. <u>Sit-ins were perceived as spontaneous:</u> , Polletta uncovers the extent to which these efforts were perceived to be unplanned, impulsive, and spontaneous: "It was like a fever: Everyone wanted to go"
    b. <u>The "spontaneous" frame was both public and used in private correspondence:</u> While it is true that activists may tell such stories of fever-like spontaneous mobilization for strategic reasons, Polletta uncovers private correspondence between student activists that also referenced spontaneity.
    c. <u>Frames employ a narrative logic of story-telling that helps individuals interpret confusing events:</u> such forms of story-telling, underplaying the organizational/strategic dimensions of mobilization and emphasizing the magical, fever-like spontaneity of protests, "assimilate confusing events into familiar frameworks while recognizing that things are no longer as they were and we are no longer who we were"

William Sewell, "Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille" (1996)

1. **Retrospective framing: the siege of the Bastille and the French Revolution**
    a. <u>Eventful history:</u> Eventful history is one punctured by events where the actions of individuals produce long-term transformations of social structures
    b. <u>Framing eventful history:</u> It is almost never self-evident to participants in eventful history that a social structural transformation has occurred – an event has to be framed as such, usually retrospectively. Collective action, and particularly revolutionary collective action, is "invented" *ex-post*
    c. <u>Empirical example: The taking of the Bastille and the 1789 French Revolution</u>
        i. When in July of 1789 a mob stormed Paris' Bastille – a fortress where the monarchy stored arms and gunpowder - and in so doing killed several French troops and paraded their decapitated heads on spears, the National Assembly was understandably reticent to associate itself with the act of contention.

ii. Yet when this action prompted the French King to withdraw his troops from Paris on July 14th, suddenly it became useful to reconstruct the storming of the Bastille as an act of the people's sovereign will

iii. "Only when it became clear that the taking of the Bastille had forced the king to yield effective power to the national Assembly could the acts of the Parisian people be viewed as a revolution"

1. Symbolic interpretation and reinterpretation via framing, in short, is a constitutive part of any event. By "inventing revolution" at the Bastille, Parisians equally invented the concept of the modern social revolution.

Robert Benford, "An Insider's Critique of the Social Movement Framing Perspective" (1997)

1. **A critique of frame analysis**
   a. Too much focus on concepts, too little focus on empirical testing: The majority of social movement framing scholars have focused on concept-formation and have consequently neglected systematic empirical testing of theoretical propositions
   b. The neglect of "negative" cases: The majority of social movement framing scholars have focused on concept-formation and have consequently neglected systematic empirical testing of theoretical propositions
   c. Reifing "frames" as objects: Framing scholars have often treated "frames" as if they were physical objects or "things," rather than dynamic processes of social construction, negotiation, contestation, and transformation. In short, social movement scholars have focused much on "frames" and not enough on acts of "framing."
   d. A disproportionate focus on elite action: Framing scholars have focused disproportionately on the actions of elites, thereby neglecting the interpretive processes undertaken by rank-and-file participants, recruits, and bystanders.

RECENT INTEGRATIVE, IDENTITY-FOCUSED PERSPECTIVES

- These approaches usually incorporate an eclectic mix of all the perspectives hitherto discussed, but they focus in particular on the mobilizational capacity of identity
- They are interested in exploring how political opportunities, interpretive frames, and resource mobilization allow individuals to overcome the collective action

problem, but they see the driver as being a semiotic one – the pull of collective identity

- They see contentious collective action as partially constitutive, as taking on a life of its own.

Mark Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (2002)

1. **How did the "seemingly impossible" collapse of the USSR become "inevitable"?**
   a. <u>From impossible to inevitable:</u> Beissinger asks how the "seemingly impossible" collapse of the Soviet Union quickly came "to be widely viewed as the seemingly inevitable."
   b. <u>The constitutive power of contentious events:</u> Leveraging qualitative event analysis, Beissinger posits that the study of events helps "us to understand the ways in which the politics of the possible shapes the politics of identity." This is particularly true when routines are broken up during a brief period of "thickened history," when events move so quickly that individuals have a difficult time making sense of them. This period of uncertainty offers ample possibilities for individuals to reshape their identities.
      i. "Events constitute moments of heightened contention when the choice between competing forms of identity must be made"
      ii. While identities can be instrumentally leveraged by activists as openings for contestation arise, it is their meaning-making potential that renders them effective mobilizational tools.
   c. <u>Contentious events are spurred by perceived openings of political opportunities:</u>
      i. The constitutive power of the event, which exposes the mutability of identity, is engendered by the transition from normal or "quiet" politics to contentious periods of "thickened history" politics which produces a "perceived opening of political opportunities" to contest the established political order

Deborah Yashar, *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America* (2005)

1. **The grievances behind indigenous group mobilization: Citizenship reform**
   a. <u>Towards neo-liberal citizenship:</u>
      i. Until recently, the comparatively high "equalization and universalization of citizenship" in the region allowed Latin American states to democratize "with no apparent ethnic hitches – no ethnic violence; and no challenges to carve up the nation-state."

      ii. Yet the historical reformulation of citizenship regimes from a corporatist model, which "advanced civil and social rights… alongside class-based forms of interest intermediation," to a neoliberal model, which "advanced civil and political rights alongside pluralist forms of interest intermediation," unwittingly threatened the community autonomy and land rights of indigenous groups

2. **The timing of mobilization: Political opportunities and resource mobilization**
    a. <u>The political opportunity:</u> For collective action to emerge, corporatist citizenship had to recede within an environment of increased political liberalization, which "legally and practically resulted in the freedom to organize"
    b. <u>Resource mobilization:</u> Additionally, what proved necessary were the resources and organizational infrastructure of transcommunity networks, which "provided links that [became] a basis for forging translocal (and subsequently transnational) indigenous identities and movements"

3. **The empirical application**
    a. Corporatist citizenship recedes + political liberalization + transcommunity networks = contentious collective action: Mexico, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Bolivia, the ground was fertile for indigenous collective action
       i. Where these factors were missing, as in Peru, indigenous organizing failed to evolve "beyond the local level"

4. **Why identity was crucially important**
    a. <u>Beyond political opportunities and resources:</u> While the presence of an organizational infrastructure had to coincide with the existence of political associational space in order for indigenous collective action to be viable, it was ultimately the semiotic salience of identity and community that brought indigenous peoples together.
       i. Indeed, the "*indigenous* character of the contemporary movements … extends beyond material concerns for land as a productive resource," and only a non-instrumentalist conception of ethnicity elucidates why "ethnic identities" were politicized instead of "material interests"

Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action in El Salvador* (2003)

1. **How identity and notions of justice explain high risk collective action**
    a. <u>The empirical context:</u> How do we make sense of the fact that "protest deepen[ed] to insurgency" despite "mounting repression" over the course of the Salvadoran Civil War?
    b. <u>The shortcomings of existing approaches:</u>

       i. Against political opportunity approaches: Contentious action increased despite mounting repression by the Salvadoran military – if anything, the structure of political opportunities was contracting

      ii. Against class/Marxist approaches: Material/class distinctions "did not map local residents neatly into the categories of insurgent and government supporters"

    iii. Against rational choice/Olsonian approaches: Insurgent provision of protection and access to land failed to mobilize individuals against the state

c. <u>Three non-instrumental factors that mobilize individuals in high risk situations:</u>

       i. Participation, which was valued "*per se*: to struggle for the realization of the reign of God was to live a life valuable to oneself and in the eyes of God despite its poverty, humiliations, and suffering"

      ii. Defiance, or the support of the insurgency as a means to assert "a claim to dignity and personhood"

    iii. Pleasure in agency, which "increased self-esteem and pride in self-determination [… via participation] not just in any intentional activity but in the course of making history, and not just any history but a history they perceived as more just"

d. <u>The constitutive power of contention:</u> These "moral commitments" embedded "in the new forms of community that had emerged during the course of the war," combined with the intrinsic, expressive value of collective action, bestowed "meaning through continued activism" upon the war's victims.

       i. In contrast to Olson's instrumentalism, the semiotic value of collective action "was not contingent on success or even on one's contributing to the likelihood of success"

      ii. Yet where collective action succeeded, it "reinforced insurgent values and norms… beliefs…and practices," fostering a new "collective identity" and cultural community that "together carried out challenging deeds and celebrated together their success"