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Introduction

JEFF GOODWIN AND JAMES M. JASPER

The circumstances create the need, and the need, when it is great enough, creates the circumstances.

—José Saramago

There is currently a good deal of theoretical turmoil among analysts of social movements. For some time the field has been roughly divided between a dominant, structural approach that emphasizes economic resources, political structures, formal organizations, and social networks and a cultural or constructionist tradition, drawn partly from symbolic interactionism, which focuses on frames, identities, meanings, and emotions. The gaps and misunderstandings between the two sides—as well as the efforts to bridge these perspectives—closely parallel those in the discipline of sociology at large, with such approaches as Marxism or systems theory on the one hand and micro-sociological, constructionist approaches such as interactionism, pragmatism, and ethnomethodology on the other. This book aims to further the dialogue between the two approaches to social movements, but we think it has broader implications for social science as a whole as it struggles with issues such as culture, emotions, and agency.

The more structural school (dominant now for thirty years) is trying hard to synthesize existing knowledge about social movements—or to insist that such a synthesis has emerged by itself out of empirical research, despite conflicting theoretical frameworks. The structuralists, more often (but we think misleadingly) known as “political process” theorists, sometimes boast that their paradigm is simply the leading contender by virtue of its empirical findings, but others claim that we have passed into a post-paradigm phase in which there is considerable agreement on basic findings so that we need only to refine our models. To make

Culture Is Not Just in Your Head

FRANCESCA POLLETTA

Political process theorists have increasingly recognized the limitations of strict political opportunity models, in which the existence of political opportunities is the necessary and sufficient cause of mobilization. In particular, they have argued that identifying objective shifts in political alignments without probing how people make sense of those shifts is simply inadequate to understanding how and when mobilization occurs. Instead, they have argued for paying more attention to the cultural frameworks through which people evaluate political structures, perceive opportunities, and come to believe in their collective capacity to take advantage of those opportunities (see, *inter alia*, McAdam, 1994; Johnston and Klandermans, 1995a).

However, efforts to theorize the role of culture in mobilization have been hampered by a tendency to view (political) structures as noncultural. Like Goodwin and Jasper, I believe that we can usefully adopt a less anemic conception of culture than some political process analyses have done without making actors, interests, strategies, and resources simply figments of a culturalist imagination. Goodwin and Jasper's solution to what they call the "structuralist bias" of current approaches is to recognize activists' strategic abilities to recognize and create opportunities. Culture and strategy, they argue, matter more than structure. My solution is different. Structures are cultural (though not only cultural), I argue. The task is not to abandon an emphasis on "objective" political structures in favor of analysis of potential insurgents' "subjective" perceptions of political structure but to probe the (objective) resources and constraints generated by the cultural dimensions of political structures. To develop this argument, I critique formulations of the culture/structure relationship by leading political process theorists. I note that each author who figures in

my criticisms has also contributed to the analytical alternatives I endorse. This suggests that the problem lies less with particular people or approaches than with widely held but constricting understandings of culture. In the second part of the chapter I present several lines of investigation based on what I believe is a more fruitful approach.

CULTURE VERSUS STRUCTURE

Consider Doug McAdam's (1994) critique of political process theory, notable given his central role in developing that theory.¹ "The dominance, within the United States, of the 'resource mobilization' and 'political process' perspectives has privileged the political, organizational, and network/structural aspects of social movements while giving the more cultural or ideational dimensions of collective action short shrift" (36), McAdam argues. By implication, then, the "political, organizational, and network/structural aspects of social movements" are not cultural. McAdam goes on:

It is extremely hard to separate these objective shifts in political opportunities from the subjective processes of social construction and collective attribution that render them meaningful. . . . Given this linkage, the movement analyst has two tasks: accounting for the structural factors that have objectively strengthened the challenger's hand, and analyzing the processes by which the meaning and attributed significance of shifting political conditions is assessed. (1994:39)

McAdam distinguishes "objective" "structural" opportunities from the "subjective, cultural" framing of those opportunities. Culture mediates between objective political opportunities and objective mobilization, in this view; it does not create those opportunities (see also McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1996b:8; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 1997:158).

This formulation, in which culture is located in insurgents' framing efforts, seems to make sense. But it reflects a deeper opposition between structure and culture that has proven unhelpful in sociological analysis generally (Sewell, 1992; Hays, 1994), and in social movement analysis in particular. In scholarship on movements, the opposition takes the following form. Political opportunities are seen as structural, not cultural; activists' capacity to take advantage of those opportunities is cultural (though only in part cultural, because it depends also on the prior structural networks that make people available to participate). The contrasts underpinning this conception of culture's role in mobilization are listed in table 7.1.

TABLE 7.1
Conceptions of Culture and Structure in
Recent Political Process Analyses

Culture	Political Structure
1. subjective	1. objective
2. malleable	2. durable
3. enables protest	3. constrains protest
4. mobilized by the powerless to challenge structure	4. monopolized by the powerful to maintain power

So, cultural processes shape potential challengers' perceptions of objective opportunities (contrast no. 1); culture is malleable whereas structure, by definition, refers to relations that are beyond the control of individual actors (no. 2); political structures and processes make possible the expression of preexisting grievances and identities, they do not constitute them (no. 3); and cultural processes shape the actions of insurgents, not those of institutional political actors (no. 4).

Two confusions lie behind these claims, neither specific to the authors I have named and neither restricted to the analysis of social movements. First, since "structure" is counterposed both to "agency" and to "culture," the latter two are often implicitly aligned (see also Hays, 1994, on the point). Culture becomes agency. The result is that culture is made overly subjectivist and voluntarist; the ways in which culture constrains are obscured. This is evident in McAdam's argument that "expanding political opportunities. . . offer insurgents a certain objective 'structural potential' for collective action. Mediating between opportunity and action are people and the subjective meanings they attach to their situations" (1982:48; see also McAdam, 1994, 1996; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1996b). In other words, structural opportunities are "given," are beyond actors' control; actors' strategic cultural construction of those opportunities turn them into an impetus to action. So culture constrains action only insofar as it impedes actors' capacity to perceive the system's objective vulnerability.² The second confusion is between culture as a sphere of activity and target of protest and culture as a dimension of all structures and practices, including political ones. Political process theorists—and sympathetic critics—have tended to miss the latter. So, William Gamson and David S. Meyer argue, "Opportunity has a strong cultural component and we miss something important when we limit our attention to variance in political institutions and the relationships among political actors" (1996:279), implying that these are noncultural. Gamson and Meyer's typology of factors generating political opportunities relies on a "cultural

(society)—institutional (state)’ axis, again suggesting that state institutions are noncultural. So “cultural factors or processes” are contrasted both with structure, which is given, not interpreted, and with political institutions and developments, which are noncultural.³

We can conceptualize culture differently. Think of it as the symbiotic dimension of all structures, institutions, and practices (political, economic, educational, etc.). Symbols are signs that have meaning and significance through their interrelations; the pattern of those relations is culture. Culture is thus patterned and patterning; it is enabling as well as constraining; and it is observable in linguistic practices, institutional rules, and social rituals rather than existing only in people’s heads. This conception of culture puts us in a better position to grasp conceptually and empirically the generation of cultural but “objective” opportunities—objective in the sense of prior to insurgents’ interpretive activities (in contrast to claims 1 and 4); to grasp culture’s durable character (in contrast to claim 2); and to identify political institutions’ and processes’ role in constituting grievances, identities, and goals (in contrast to claim 3). Let me develop these points.

CULTURE AND OPPORTUNITY

Culture plays an important role in creating political opportunities, and not just in the subjective perceptions of insurgents. As Gansson and Meyer (1996) point out, differing political opportunity structures reflect not just different political systems, for example limits on the executive branch and a system of checks and balances, but also different public conceptions of the proper scope and role of the state. “State policies are not only technical solutions to material problems of control or resource extraction,” Roger Friedland and Robert Alford argue in the same vein. “They are rooted in changing conceptions of what the state is, what it can and should do” (1991:238). Such conceptions extend to state-makers and managers who, like challengers, are suspended in webs of meaning (Goodwin, 1994). In explaining the rise of the civil rights movement, John Skrentny (1998) shows that the American government’s post-war sensitivity to charges of racism before a world audience was a function of the prior institutionalization of a transnational culture of human rights. The structural opportunity for activists was the superpowers’ Cold War competition for influence in the developing nations, but that competition was shaped by nations’ obligation, new since World War II, to adhere to human rights standards to claim status as a world leader.

Another example of the cultural dimensions of structural opportunities: Elections are often represented as key components of the political

opportunity structure, but whether elections “open” or “close” political opportunities surely has to do with whether elections have historically been catalysts to collective action, and whether there is an institutional “collective memory” of state-targeted protest. Something as ostensibly noncultural as a state’s repressive capacity reflects not only numbers of soldiers and guns but the strength of constitutional provisions for their use and traditions of military allegiance. In her discussion of protest policing, Donatella della Porta observes that while the West German police force viewed itself as a part of a normative order that accepted the rule of the law, the Italian police “since the creation of the Italian state had been accustomed to seeing itself as the *longa manus* of the executive power, and thus put preservation of law and order before the control of crime” (1996:83). These views in turn shaped the opportunities for different forms of protest. Charles Brockett likewise draws attention to the role that collective memories of state repression played in Salvadoran and Guatemalan elites’ calculation of the costs and benefits of repression:

Guatemalan elites considering violence only needed to refer to 1966–72 when over 10,000 innocents were murdered or to the 22-year reign of terror of Manuel Estrada Cabrera early in the century. Going further back in time, elites in both countries evaluating violence as an instrument of control could recall the coercion employed in converting peasant food-crop land to elite-owned coffee land beginning in the latter third of the nineteenth century, or they could go all the way back to the massive violence of the Conquest itself and the consequent coercion utilized to maintain colonial society. (1995:129–130)

Brockett quotes Ted Gurr approvingly: “Historical traditions of state terror . . . probably encourage elites to use terror irrespective of . . . structural factors” (130).

Note that these traditions, principles, codes, and arrangements cannot easily be “thought away” by insurgents. They are supra-individual and constrain individual action. But they are also symbolic; they are ways of ordering reality. By limiting the operation of culture to insurgents’ “subjective awareness,” their “perceptual” capacities (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1996b:8), political process theorists have obscured these potentially important and observable features of political systems. Note also that some of the above, for example, state officials’ ideological assumptions, may exercise only transient and/or weak influence on political opportunities. Others, such as state legitimacy (Oberschall, 1996), may have stronger effects and be less malleable, and still others, like conventions of political commemoration (Olick and Levy, 1997), may be somewhere in between. The durability/malleability of culture is variable

rather than definable a priori. Finally, all of these factors operate in the sphere of institutional politics. To take culture into account does not detract from a focus on political processes in generating opportunities. Rather, it simply recognizes the cultural dimensions of those processes. Curiously, cultural elements have often been included, though not labeled cultural, in political process theorists' enumeration of "objective" "structural" opportunities. For example, McAdam characterizes the early political process model—anticulturalist, by his own account—as attributing the timing of movements to the "shifting institutional structure and ideological disposition of those in power" (1996a:23).

In that last phrase, McAdam gets at some of what I am talking about. So why even bother distinguishing culture? How does a focus on the cultural dimensions of political structures contribute to our understanding of movement emergence? Structures, in Sewell's (1992) persuasive definition, are cultural schemas invested with and sustaining resources, in other words, schemas that reflect and reproduce unevenly distributed power (note that schemas and resources are equally important to the definition).⁴ This helps to explain structures' durability and their transformation. It is not that structures bring about their own mutation, not that they have agency, but that they are invested with meanings that provide resources for insurgents challenging those structures. People can "transpose schemas" from one setting to another, can turn the worker solidarity fostered by capitalist production, for example, into a force for radical action. Sewell's scheme also reveals, contrarily, overlooked cultural obstacles to protest. Activists' vocabularies of protest, the "master frames" (Snow and Benford, 1988) they have at their disposal, are shaped and limited by ostensibly noncultural political, economic, and legal structures.

Let me be more specific about what this kind of conceptualization, of structure as cultural (though not only cultural), does for our understanding of movement emergence. First, it suggests more careful attention to the cultural traditions, ideological principles, institutional memories, and political taboos that structure the behavior both of political elites and challengers. To study the comparative role of elections in facilitating insurgency, we should establish whether a well-known history of election-centered protest exists, memorialized in popular narratives, holidays, and other political rituals. In comparing levels of repressive capacity, we should note not only the number of guns and soldiers available to the government but also constitutional provisions and precedents (and prevailing interpretations of those provisions and precedents) for its use of force. The changing legitimacy rules for world leadership provide activists with differential opportunities to embarrass national governments into a more receptive or proactive stance. Again, all of these are

features of institutional politics; all are cultural; none exists just in insurgents' heads.

Second, whereas political process models, like their resource mobilization forebears, take collective actors as given, albeit unmobilized, this approach directs our attention to the state's role in their mobilization and, indeed, in their very constitution. For example, sudden and draconian state policies may supply the "moral shock" (Jasper, 1997) that compels people to participate who before didn't see themselves as having much stake in the issue in question. The Supreme Court's 1986 *Bowers v. Hardwick* decision upholding a Georgia antisodomy statute, in the context of government unresponsiveness to the AIDS crisis, led to militant and oppositional AIDS activism (Gould, 2001). Or, quite the opposite, state actors may deliberately encourage protest. The National Organization for Women was formed after a meeting of state-appointed members of Commissions on the Status of Women. They were encouraged also by federal officials from the Equal Opportunity Commission (Skrentny, forthcoming; Costain, 1992). Finally, state policies may help to create new social categories that later become the basis for mobilization. The identity of "Hispanic" did not exist in the United States before President Nixon proclaimed a National Hispanic Heritage Week in 1969 and a variety of government agencies began to use the term for classification purposes; since then, people of Latin American descent living in the United States have mobilized around it (Oboler, 1995). In his study of nineteenth-century British contention, Charles Tilly (1998b) attributes the eclipse of local identities like spinner, neighbor, or tenant of a particular landlord by broader ones such as "citizen" and "worker" to the increasing salience of the national state in people's lives. Rather than appeal to a powerful patron or unleash their rage directly on the object of their dissatisfaction, claims makers increasingly made public demonstrations of their numbers and commitment to bid for participation in a national polity. Contrary to the assumption that only weakened states supply opportunities for insurgency, these cases suggest that strong states may do so, and indeed, may help to create collective actors. Rather than seeing political structures, states, and actors as separate from the insurgents who confront them, this perspective sees mobilization potential in their linkages (for a similar perspective, see McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001).

Studying the cultural dimensions of political structures can improve explanations for the emergence of protest in a third way, by helping to account for the resonance of particular collective action frames. For example, to understand the currency of an "individual rights" frame versus a "human rights" frame, or versus a class-based frame, one would have to understand the legal and political traditions, systems, and rules through which those terms have become meaningful. When Sidney Tarrow

(1996b:50) observes that "the French labor movement embraced an associational 'vocabulary' that reflected the loi le Chapelier, while American movements developed a vocabulary of 'rights' that reflected the importance of the law in American institutions and practice," he points to that kind of inquiry. In a similar vein, Anthony Marx (1998) shows that whereas in the United States and South Africa the legal institutionalization of racial privilege generated severe and pervasive inequality and provided the basis for black mobilization and rights claims, in Brazil the absence of legalized racial categories, agencies, and statistics impeded black mobilization. The point is that separating the spheres of "politics" and "culture" and treating only the latter as the source of mobilizing meanings obscures those meanings' relations to, and in some cases sources in, political structures, institutions, processes, and macrohistorical changes. But this is precisely what we need to get at: how the "master frames" that shape and constrain movement idioms themselves emerge and are transformed through contention inside and outside institutional politics.

Of course, movements invent new ideas and popularize concepts—of gender, work, politics, speech, etc. How do they do that? In the case of novel rights formulations, legal scholars have argued that rights' polyvalence—their containment of multiple and subversive meanings—allows people to claim and mobilize around rights that have yet to be recognized or enforced by legal authorities (Minow, 1990; Hunt, 1990; McCann, 1994; Schneider, 1986; Villmoare, 1985). But if novel rights formulations are always possible, then under what circumstances are they likely to be advanced by challengers and to resonate with a broader public (whether or not such claims are authorized by legal authorities)? The culturalist accounts that predominate have focused on cultural impediments to novel rights claims, for example, the "public/private" dichotomy that marginalizes a variety of claims, and the opposition of sexual difference to sexual equality (Scott, 1988). We should also be asking about the political and organizational circumstances in which rights innovation is likely to occur. In my research on the Southern civil rights movement (Polletta, 2000), I identified three such circumstances: in settings where social institutions (legal, religious, familial, economic) enjoy relative autonomy; where organizers are at some remove from state and movement centers of power; and during periods of interorganizational movement competition.

With respect to the first situation, one of the ways in which activists may develop resonant rights claims is by combining rights discourse with other normative languages, say religion or the obligations of family life. Such transposition is probably especially useful in countering the individualist and state-dependent biases of conventional rights discourse. It is

more likely where institutional spheres—religion, politics, the family—enjoy some autonomy. By contrast, in a society characterized by a high level of "mimetic" or "coercive isomorphism" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991b), where organizations adapt their structures and mandates to those of other organizations, it is more difficult for people to challenge one institution by adopting standards or warrants from another. Activists who are distant from national centers of state and movement power are better able to do that work of transposition, to combine standard rights formulations with locally resonant justificatory rhetorics. Numerous scholars have argued that decentralized movement structures encourage tactical and ideological experimentation as activists adapt agendas to the needs, aspirations, and skills of local people (Gerlach and Hine, 1970; Flacks, 1988:chap. 5; Robnett, 1997). Indeed, organizers' dispersal in indifferent or hostile political terrains often forces them to be ecumenical in their appeals. For example, the debates about anticommunism and fellow-traveling that galvanized the early national leaders of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) had little meaning for new left activists in Austin, Texas (Rossinow, 1998). However, SDS chapters' autonomy allowed Austin activists to draw on ideological currents that were foreign or unappealing to new leftists in New York, Chicago, or Ann Arbor, chiefly a populist-inflected liberalism and a social gospel tradition. In the Southern civil rights movement, organizers from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) found that those most willing to court certain repression by attempting to register to vote were not middle-class residents but sharecroppers and domestic workers. They were often illiterate and were officially deemed "unqualified" for political participation. SNCC workers began to call for rights for "the unqualified," a formula that proved powerfully mobilizing and spurred a broader challenge to conventional criteria of political representation (Polletta, 2000).

In addition to the relative autonomy of institutional arenas and organizers' distance from national centers of state and movement power, a third condition may facilitate ideological innovation generally and novel rights claims specifically: interorganizational competition. Movement groups' jockeying for money, allies, members, public attention, and legitimacy may lead them to concentrate on distinctive goals, tactics (Zald and McCarthy, 1980), frames (Benford, 1993), or constituencies. Organizations may carve new movement niches by claiming to speak for people who have not yet been spoken for, and because Americans tend to formulate identity claims in terms of rights, this process may generate novel rights formulations. Consider the movement group advocating for bisexual or transgendered people in relation to the gay and lesbian rights or women's movements. By asserting the "rights" of this until-now unrecognized group, activists invoke a nonradical liberal discourse; they are only ask-

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ing that transgendered and bisexual people be treated like everyone else. At the same time, by drawing attention to the fact that this group's needs palpably cannot be met by the rights claims being advanced by mainstream movement organizations, they are challenging rights' alleged universalism.⁵ "Deaf" activists (who distinguish themselves from mainstream deaf activists by the capital "D") demand rights but refuse the label of "disabled." Likening deafness instead to ethnicity, they call for reforms that would accommodate the needs of deaf people rather than forcing them to conform to hearing society. Such demands are radical in their implications—challenging the line between "difference" and "disability"—if conventional in their formulation. When SNCC workers asserted the rights of the unqualified, they were demanding that the rights of citizenship be extended to those who had been disqualified by a system that denied them basic education and were questioning more broadly what counted as political expertise. In each of these cases, conventional rights claims were expanded to encompass the needs of people as yet unrecognized by those claims—and unrepresented by existing movement organizations. For activists representing a marginalized subgroup, it makes little sense to forward claims in an altogether new lexicon or to operate entirely independently of the mainstream movement, which has resources and political clout that it does not. Deaf activists, for example, have been unwilling to "cut [themselves] off from the larger, savvy, wealthier disability lobby" (Dohnick, 1993:43). Instead they have forwarded rights claims that are radical simply because they expose the normative assumptions built into ostensibly universalistic rights.

None of these conditions for ideological innovation can be described as noncultural. For example, the institutional autonomy that gives activists the resources for integrating normative discourses is a result of broad cultural understandings. Mosques played a crucial role in Kuwaiti opposition to Iraqi occupation because of their long-standing and "morally unassailable" authority to challenge the state (Tetreault, 1993:278; see also Polletta, 1999a). What is important in the approach I am advocating, rather, is that it concentrates on the conditions in which the dynamic in question is likely to operate, whether the dynamic is individual participation, the generation of resonant frames, or insurgents' perception of opportunities.

CULTURE AND STRUCTURE IN ONGOING MOVEMENTS

Such an approach should help us to understand more than movement emergence. We still do not know much about how activists select among

strategic options, allocate resources, and set agendas, for example. A classically rationalist formulation, in which movement leaders adjudicate among competing options by rationally assessing their potential to further such instrumental tasks as winning allies, avoiding repression, and sustaining rank and file enthusiasm (Barkan, 1979; Kitschelt, 1986; McAdam, 1983; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1988; McCarthy and Zald, 1977), has been unappealing to scholars who point to activists' normative commitments. Strategies, tactics, and organizational forms are not only means to other ends but are also ends in themselves, ways of communicating something important about those who use or participate in them (Jasper, 1997). Gary Downey (1986) writes that the antinuclear Clamshell Alliance saw itself not only as the atomic-industrial establishment's opponent, dedicated to stopping nuclear power, but also as its "opposite," seeking to eradicate domination within its own operation. Activists accordingly sought to balance an ideological "egalitarian" commitment with an "instrumental" one.

But this perspective errs in restricting culture or ideology to the self-conscious normative statements of activists. Bureaucratic forms of organization symbolize just as much as collectivist ones do. All organizations, like all strategies and tactics, have symbolic associations. Elisabeth Clemens (1997) points out that certain associational forms are seen as "appropriate" for women, or appropriate for working-class people, or appropriate for explicitly political claims making. Activists are not entirely constrained by such repertoires; on the contrary, they can combine forms creatively. Thus Clemens shows how women activists barred from formal politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries drew on alternative associational forms—the club, parlor meeting, and charitable society—to become a major force for social reform. But Clemens's account also suggests that we examine the conditions under which the normative assessments of particular organizational forms or tactics change and the consequences for activists' strategic choices. Along those lines, Rebecca Bordt (1997) has examined the process by which collectivist organizations became normative among radical feminist activists in the 1970s. While the pressures exerted by funders, professional agencies, and government to adopt conventional hierarchical and bureaucratic structures continued strong during this period, feminists setting up collectives also operated in an "alternative environment" of feminist bookstores, therapists, health centers, schools, food coops, foundations, and media—all providing support for collectivist ideals. The result was that collectives took on "a rule-like status" (Bordt, 1997:146); collectivism became feminism. By pointing out that organizations operate in multiple environments, some of which may support and, indeed, require nonconventional forms, Bordt gets at

one of the conditions for the institutionalization of new organizational forms.

Based on research on the Southern civil rights movement, I have argued that even earlier, the collectivist forms described by Borst had shifted from being seen as "black" to being seen as "white" by radical black activists (Polletta, 1997, 2002). As a result, and at a time when their counterparts in the new left were eagerly abolishing national offices and insisting on consensus-based decision making, black activists implemented more centralized and bureaucratic procedures. Procedures that had previously been seen as instrumental were now viewed as ideological, self-indulgent, and white. Each of these studies probes the cultural templates that structure strategic decision making but also inquires into the processes by which such templates come into being and the conditions responsible for their influence and change. They help us to better understand the variable character of what is strategic.⁶

CONCLUSION

I have argued for taking fuller account of the cultural dimensions of political structures in explaining movement emergence. Doing so requires more than recognizing insurgents' creative capacities for interpreting political conditions in new ways. A tendency to conflate culture with agency has made it difficult for sociologists to grasp objective (rather than only subjective), enduring (rather than transient), and constraining (rather than only enabling) aspects of culture and made it difficult for them to see culture operating within political institutions as well as outside them.

Political actors, processes, and institutions are important in accounting for the emergence of protest, previous research suggests. And we can assume that insurgents are on the lookout for opportunities to have political impact. My view is similar to political opportunity theorists' in these two respects. But I would add, first, that the list of possible political opportunities should be expanded to include constitutional provisions for the use of political power, collective memories, and other cultural norms. Second, political actors, institutions, and processes not only provide opportunities for already-constituted collective actors but in some cases help to bring them into being. Third, political institutions shape the mobilizing frames available to activists. If the first point suggests that activists have more resources at their disposal than conventional accounts would allow them, the third suggests that they are more constrained.

Although I have taken structuralists to task for missing the cultural dimensions of politics, I have also urged proponents of a culturalist

approach to specify the conditions in which people are likely to see themselves as members of an aggrieved group, in which activists are likely to perceive new opportunities for insurgency, and in which they are able to develop novel yet resonant formulations. Probing insurgents' subjective assessments of objective structures wouldn't get us very far in that task. Luckily, our analyses of culture need not be so limited.

NOTES

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1. Political process theorists have used the term "structure" in two ways: to describe a configuration of political institutions ("political opportunity structure") and to describe those political institutions, arrangements, and processes that distinguish one political context from another (in comparative studies of movement emergence) or that change in some crucial fashion (in longitudinal studies of movement emergence). My objections are to the latter use of the term "structure." With respect to the former, political process theorists now more commonly refer to "process" and "opportunities" than to a "political opportunity structure" (see, e.g., Tarrow, 1998b:77).

2. In recent work, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly talk not about opportunities but about "opportunity spirals," which involve the "perception of significant environmental uncertainty on the part of state and non-state elites and challengers alike" (2001:97). The question remains, however, when such perceptions are likely. On the other hand, by showing how the collective identities that operate in routine political contention shape bids for recognition on the part of challenging groups, the authors effectively theorize the cultural continuities between institutional politics and protest. In their recent work, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly also advance an understanding of culture that is neither purely subjectivist nor limited to the perceptions of challengers. See also Tilly (1995b).

3. Elsewhere, McAdam (1994) outlines a set of "cultural opportunities"—sudden disasters like Three Mile Island—that spur public opposition to a broader condition, or events, like the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, that demonstrate system vulnerability. But his distinction between structural and cultural opportunities is not accompanied by any discussion of their relationship, leaving the impression that there is none and that structural opportunities are noncultural.

4. John Hall proposes a model of "cultural structuralism, in which social 'structural' arrangements of power and of practices are infused with cultural bases, if culture is understood, not as necessarily holistic, but as diverse configurations of institutionalized meanings, recipes, and material objects that may be differently drawn on by various actors within the same social arena or society" (1992:278).

5. On transgendered activists' rights claims making, see the websites of the following organizations: It's Time, America (www.itgender.net/ita/), Transgender

SBD / FFLCH / USF

Menace (www.apocalypse.org/pub/ismenace/), and The International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy, Inc. (www.abmall.com/ichlep/). See especially, Jessica Xavier, "TS Feminism and TG Politicization" (www.tgender.net/ita/library/); and Sarah DePalma, "1995 Editorial on HRCF and ENDA" (www.tgender.net/ita/library/). On bisexual activism, see Tucker (1995); and BiNet U.S.A. (www.binetusa.org).

6. For good recommendations on how to integrate structuralist and culturalist perspectives in the study of formal movement organizations, see Minkoff (2001).

8

The Poststructuralist Consensus in Social Movement Theory

CHARLES KURZMAN

I ask you to overlook the barbs and outrage of part I of this volume. I urge you to ignore both sides' claims of victimization: the "hegemonic" grip of the "winding, snarling vine" of structuralism (Goodwin and Jasper, hereafter "Jaswin," chapter 1), or the AMA-like monopolistic tendencies of the antistructuralists (Tilly, chapter 2). I propose that the debate boils down to this:

Jaswin decries the structuralist bias in social movement theory; leading figures deny that there is a structuralist bias in social movement theory. For example, Jaswin quote Tarrow (1994:17) sounding structuralist: "The main argument of this study is that people join in social movements in response to political opportunities." Tarrow's response (chapter 3) denies that this "snippet" represents the "main argument" of the book and offers a counter-quotation that downplays political opportunity structures. Jaswin identify Tilly as one of the perpetrators of structuralism; Tilly responds that he is not now, nor has he ever been, a structuralist—at least by Jaswin's definition—nor is any "active participant in the debate" (chapter 2). Jaswin quote Gansson and Meyer's (1996) critique of political opportunity structures, reproaching leading figures for "[not treating] it seriously." Meyer's response reiterates and elaborates the critique but quotes leading figures as agreeing with him (chapter 4).

Will nobody defend structuralism? Koopmans offers a backhanded defense, arguing that structures may play a role—sometimes, in cross-national comparisons, if movements choose to obey (chapter 5). Only Polletta (chapter 7) comes out to defend structuralism, at least a cultural structuralism.

In my view, then, the disagreements hide a near-consensus: structural-