

"Initiator" and "Spin-off"
Movements: Diffusion
Processes in Protest Cycles

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OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS the study of social movements and collective action has been something of a growth industry in American social science. Spurred, in part, by the turbulence of the 1960s, scholars in a variety of disciplines—principally sociology and political science—turned their attention to the study of social movements and revolutions. This dramatic increase in research attention was accompanied by something of a paradigm shift in the field, with the new generation of scholars rejecting the then dominant collective behavior approach in favor of the newer resource mobilization and political process perspectives.

Meanwhile in Europe a similar renaissance in social movement studies was initiated in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the appearance of the first writings in the "new social movements" tradition. The emergence of an active community of European movement scholars also fostered international discourse among

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those interested in the dynamics of collective action. These various developments have resulted in a remarkable proliferation of work in the field. Contemporary scholars are now blessed with a profusion of theory and empirical research on social movements, revolutions, and collective action. Reflecting on these materials, I have no doubt but that our knowledge and understanding of collective action dynamics has moved far beyond where it was in the early 1970s.

At the same time, the persistence of certain conceptual and methodological conventions in the field continues, in my view, to obscure several simple truths that have long been obvious to activists. These "truths" include the following four propositions. First, social movements are not discrete entities, akin to organizations. Second, social movements are normally inseparable from the broader, ideologically coherent "movement families" (Della Porta and Rucht, 1991) in which they are embedded. Third, as Sidney Tarrow (1983, 1989) has long argued, it is the rise and fall of these "families" or cycles of protest that we should be trying to explain. Fourth, most social movements are caused by other social movements and the tactical, organizational, and ideological tools they afford later struggles.

Again, these propositions might seem obvious, but they do not accord easily with the prevailing conceptual and methodological canons in the field. In particular, the conception of the social movement as the fundamental "unit of analysis," combined with the methodological dominance of the case study approach, has resulted in a highly static view of collective action that privileges structure over process and single movements over cycles of protest. This highly truncated "movement-centric" view of collective action helps explain the excessive attention traditionally accorded the question of movement emergence. If, in fact, movements are discrete phenomena, independent of one another, then the central challenge confronting the researcher is accounting for the unique mix of factors or processes that brought each into being.

If we take seriously the "truths" noted above, our conceptual and methodological approach to the study of collective action would, of necessity, change. First, following Tarrow, we would want to shift our focus of attention from discrete social movements to the broader "movement families" or "cycles of protest" in which they are typically embedded. Second, in emphasizing

the relationships between ideologically and temporally proximate movements, we would need to supplement the traditional case study approach with those methods expressly designed to assess the extent and nature of links between social groups. Such methods might include network analysis, diffusion studies, and the comparative case approach. Finally, we would want to reconceptualize the question of movement emergence. Instead of conceiving of all movements as independent entities whose emergence reflects unique internal dynamics, we might want to distinguish between two broad classes of movements whose origins reflect very different social processes. The first category consists of those rare, but exceedingly important, *initiator movements* that signal or otherwise set in motion an identifiable protest cycle. Historical examples of such movements would include Solidarity in Poland and the American civil rights movement. The second and more "populous" category of movements includes those *spin-off movements* that in varying degrees, draw their impetus and inspiration from the original initiator movement.

Distinguishing between these two classes of movements has important implications for the study of movement emergence. In effect, the single question of movement emergence is replaced by two separate queries: 1) What specific factors and processes account for the emergence of initiator movements? and 2) What are the processes—diffusion, contagion, etc.—by which initiator movements give rise to broader cycles of protest and the specific spin-off struggles that define the cycle?

In this paper I will take up both of these questions. Specifically, I want to briefly sketch a model of initiator movements and draw on the diffusion and network literatures to outline a perspective on the relationship of initiator movements to cycles of protest. Throughout I will seek to illustrate the main tenets of the argument by reference to the American civil rights movement and the myriad spin-off struggles it helped spawn.

THE ORIGIN OF INITIATOR MOVEMENTS

So central to the study of social movements has been the question of emergence that it is fair to say that all of the so-called theories of social movements are really theories of movement emergence. The classic statements of collective behavior (Lang

and Lang 1961; Smelser 1962) fit this description. According to this perspective, movements develop as a collective response to the feelings of fear and anxiety that instances of rapid social change tend to engender. The initial formulation of the resource mobilization perspective (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977) was framed explicitly as an alternative to the collective behavior account of emergence. McCarthy and Zald rejected the latter's stress on grievances or discontent, arguing instead that it was an increase in the availability of the resources needed to wage collective action that triggered initial mobilization. The term "new social movement theory" has been applied to a disparate set of writings, but, at its core, most of the work in the tradition adheres to a distinctive and shared account of movement emergence (Melucci 1980; Touraine 1981), emphasizing the developing material and ideological contradictions in late capitalist society as the root cause of the "new" movements. Finally, the political process model is also seen by its proponents (McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1983; Tilly 1978) as, first and foremost, an explanation of the rise of a social movement. Specifically, movements are held to emerge in response to the confluence of three factors: expanding political opportunities, established organizations, and the development of certain shared cognitions legitimating and motivating protest activity.

As different as these various accounts of movement emergence are, they do have one thing in common. None of them rests on a view of movements as developmentally dependent on one another. Instead, all of them are framed as universal explanations of social movements. The implication is that all movements arise independently of one another, while at the same time conforming to the general causal sequence embodied in the theory. This dubious set of assumptions is no less true of the political process model that I have long espoused. In proposing my specific version of the theory, I specified no scope conditions for the model's applicability. The suggestion was clear: the emergence of each and every movement—or at least every political movement—was expected to conform to the developmental dynamics specified in the model.

It should be clear from the introduction to this paper that I no longer subscribe to this view. At the same time, it will perhaps come as no surprise that I think the political process model affords the most convincing explanation of the origins of initiator movements. The model has been described in great detail elsewhere

(McAdam 1982), so a highly abbreviated sketch will suffice here. Specifically, the model stresses the confluence of three factors in shaping the chances of movement emergence. The first is the level of organization within the aggrieved population; the second, the collective assessment of the prospects for successful insurgency within that same population; and third, an increase in the vulnerability or receptivity of the broader political system to challenge by the group in question. The first factor can be conceived of as the degree of "organizational readiness" within the community; the second as the level of "insurgent consciousness" among the movement's mass base; and the third as an expansion in the "political opportunities" available to the group.

While all three factors are seen as necessary to the process, it is the last factor—political opportunities—that is clearly the analytic key to understanding movement emergence. Initiator movements are not so much willed into being through effective mobilization as they are born of broad demographic, economic, and political changes that destabilize existing power relations and grant to insurgents increased leverage with which to press their claims. Whether or not this leverage is exercised may depend on the organizational and ideational resources available to insurgents, but, in the absence of "expanding political opportunities" it matters little how resource-rich the aggrieved group is.

In attributing ultimate causal significance to "expanding political opportunities," I am, by extension, also locating the roots of protest cycles and entire "movement families" in the kinds of broad-social change processes—migrations, wars, fiscal crises, political realignments, etc.—whose links to collective action have been stressed by a good many researchers (Goldstone 1991; McAdam 1982; Skocpol 1979; Tilly 1978). But here again these processes have been used to explain the rise of a single movement or revolution rather than a protest cycle per se. Therefore the question that must be answered is, What are the specific links between these broad change processes and the protest cycle? How do these broad historical trends serve to set in motion a heightened period of political unrest? They do so through the mediating effects of an initiator movement.

Two different dynamics can be identified in this regard. Expanding political opportunities can facilitate collective action either by seriously undermining the stability of an entire political system or

by increasing the political leverage of a single challenging group. Either way, the result is apt to be a generalized protest cycle, but the dynamics by which it unfolds and the ultimate consequences that follow from it are hypothesized to be quite different. Let us take a closer look at each of these separate cases.

Generalized Regime Crises

Though they may disagree on the specific mix of factors that precipitate the crisis, all recent theorists of revolution (Arjomand 1988; Goldstone 1991; Skocpol 1979) attribute the development of a true "revolutionary situation" to the destabilizing effects of precisely the kinds of broad change processes identified earlier. For Skocpol, periods of revolutionary turmoil are typically set in motion by military losses and the fiscal overextension of the state. For Goldstone, the key precipitant is population pressure and the constraints it places on the regime's ability to distribute the material benefits on which its ruling coalition rests.

Whichever theory one subscribes to—and it is not clear that they are necessarily incompatible—the effects are seen by all theorists as the same. The resulting pressures dramatically weaken the regime, thus encouraging collective action by *all* groups sufficiently well organized to contest the structuring of a new political order. Invariably, though, there is a discernible sequence by which the various parties to the revolutionary process mobilize. This raises a more general and important point. Our popular perceptions of revolutions distort two important features of the unfolding conflict. First, revolutions generally are not born as revolutions. Rather, it is the void created by the collapse of the old regime that transforms garden-variety collective action into revolutionary action. Second, use of the term *revolution* obscures the multiple movements that typically constitute a revolutionary coalition. Looking backward at revolutions through the distorting lens of the triumphant new order obscures the complex intermingling of groups within the revolution and the sequence in which these separate movements mobilized. Invariably, though, a close reading of history can identify a specific initiator movement that set the entire process in motion.

The Empowerment of a Single Challenger

The identification of an initiator movement is much easier in the case of those protest cycles that stem not from any fatal weakening of the ruling order but from events or processes that advantage a single challenging group. The reason is simple. The continuing strength and viability of the regime in such cases insures against the development of the kind of revolutionary situation that blurs the boundaries between challenging groups and obscures the specific origins of the crisis. In contrast to the confusion and boundary blurring that necessarily accompany the development of a revolutionary coalition, we know nonrevolutionary protest cycles by the sequential parade of ostensibly separate movements that constitute them.

The American protest cycle of the 1960s and early 1970s is a case in point. Set in motion by the civil rights movement, the cycle gave rise to nominally separate movements on behalf of women, Chicanos, gays, students, Native Americans, and farm workers, to name but a fraction of the struggles we associate with those years.

The differences between a revolutionary and nonrevolutionary cycle, however, are not as great as they might seem. The only real difference concerns the strength of the state and its ability to weather the cycle. But in both cases we see an initiator movement setting the cycle in motion, thereby encouraging subsequent mobilization by any number of other groups. The revolution may blur the distinctions between these groups and our reified conception of social movements may exaggerate them in the case of nonrevolutionary cycles, but the underlying dynamics are essentially the same. The cycle begins with the successful mobilization of a single group and then spreads to others. To understand the dynamics of this spread we need a theory that focuses not on the emergence of a single movement but on the kinds of structural linkages and diffusion processes that encourage mimetic mobilization by other groups.

DIFFUSION AND THE RISE OF DERIVATIVE MOVEMENTS

The appearance of a highly visible initiator movement significantly changes the dynamics of emergence for all groups who mobilize as

part of the broader protest cycle. This includes countermovements no less than the ideologically compatible "family" of movements with which the cycle tends to be identified. The assumption of independence and movement-specific causal factors is simply untenable in the case of spin-off movements. This becomes clear when we seek to account for the rise of such movements on the basis of the three explanatory factors emphasized in the political process model. The most glaring disjuncture between the theory and this class of movements concerns the importance attributed to expanding political opportunities.

Political Opportunities

If political opportunities are crucial to the emergence of initiator movements, they would appear to be largely irrelevant in the rise of spin-off movements. By expanding political opportunities I mean *changes in either the institutional features or informal political alignments of a given political system that significantly reduce the power disparity between a given challenging group and the state*. Given this definition, one would be hard-pressed to document a significant expansion in political opportunities in the case of all—or even most—spin-off movements. There is one general exception to this statement. This concerns the extraordinary expansion in opportunities that accompanies *any* revolutionary cycle. In the case of revolutions, the old regime is so crippled by initiator movements—or what Tarrow (1994) calls "early risers"—as to leave it vulnerable to challenge by *all* manner of "latecomers."

In the case of reform cycles, however, there is no necessary increase in system vulnerability as regards all subsequent spin-off movements. Take the case of the American reform cycle of the 1960s. Much as those on the Left came to believe that the American state was on the verge of collapse in the late 1960s, a cursory look at various measures of fiscal and political stability would seem to support the opposite conclusion. The state remained strong throughout the period and generally invulnerable to most of the movements that proliferated in those years.

The gay rights movement affords a good example. The so-called Stonewall riot of June 1969 is typically credited with giving birth to the movement (D'Emilio and Freedman 1988). The riot

developed when patrons of the Stonewall, a gay bar in Greenwich Village, fought back following a police raid on the premises. The movement developed quickly from that point, spawning a number of gay rights groups, but by the late 1970s had waned as an organized phenomenon.

It is hard to account for the rise of this movement on the basis of expanding political opportunities. It would be difficult to identify any specific change in the institutional features of the system that suddenly advantaged gays. Nor would it appear as if the movement benefited from any major political realignment during this era. In fact, the movement was preceded by a highly significant electoral realignment that can only be seen as disadvantageous to gays. I am referring, of course, to Richard Nixon's ascension to the White House in 1968, marking the end of a long period of liberal Democratic dominance in presidential politics. If anything, then, it would appear that the movement arose in a context of *contracting* political opportunities.

In general, there would seem to be a certain illogic to the argument that a reform cycle improves the bargaining leverage of *all* organized contenders. On the contrary, the demands of the initiator and other early-riser movements would seem to preclude much leverage for the latecomers. Certainly the history of the American protest cycle of the 1960s can be interpreted in this way, with the civil rights and other early-riser movements—principally the student, antiwar, and women's movements—garnering the lion's share of attention and significant victories and the latecomers—gay rights, antinuclear, American Indian movement, etc.—never really able to generate the public attention and leverage necessary for success. I cannot be certain that my interpretation is correct. But it is at least consistent with a more general suspicion that not all spin-off movements are necessarily advantaged by their embedding in a larger reform cycle. Specifically, I think there is good reason to think that those movements that arise fairly late in a reform cycle are disadvantaged by the necessity of having to confront a state that is already preoccupied with the substantive demands and political pressures generated by the early risers.

Finally, in arguing against the idea that protest cycles invariably render the affected political system vulnerable to challenge by *all* participating movements, I have steered clear of that special category of spin-off movements for whom the opportunities

argument is clearly untenable. Here I have in mind those spin-off movements that develop in countries other than that of the initiator movement. The point is, despite our descriptive language (e.g., "the Italian protest cycle of the 1960s and 1970s"), protest cycles are not necessarily restricted by national boundaries. The generalized political turbulence that marked much of western Europe in 1847-48 is an obvious and instructive case in point. Most of the scholarly attention granted these years has been lavished on France and the Paris revolt of February 1848. But as Tarrow (1994: 61) notes, "No less French a historian than Halévy would later assert that 'the revolution of 1848 did not arise from the Parisian barricades but from the Swiss civil war.'" Preliminary findings from an ongoing study of the links between the American and German student New Left of the 1960s support a similar conclusion. The rise of the German student movement would appear to owe as much to events in the U.S. as substantive political shifts within Germany (McAdam and Rucht 1993).

These two examples further undermine the causal primacy previously assigned to expanding political opportunities. In what conceivable way could the rise of the American student New Left have reduced the power disparity between the West German state and German college students? Initiator movements may help to spawn later struggles, but the impetus for this process would appear to be cognitive or cultural rather than narrowly political. That is, at least in the case of reform cycles, initiator movements encourage the rise of latecomers not so much by granting other groups increased leverage with which to press their claims, but by setting in motion complex diffusion processes by which the ideological, tactical, and organizational "lessons" of the early risers are made available to subsequent challengers.

Level of Organization

Spin-off movements are no less dependent on some rudimentary form of organization than are initiator movements. Quite often, however, it is the early risers who supply the crucial organizational context within which later movements develop. The empirical literature is rife with examples of this sort. So the women's rights movement that arose in the United States in the 1840s developed within established abolitionist groups. In similar fashion, Evans

(1980) shows clearly that it was associational networks forged in the southern civil rights movement and the New Left more generally that gave rise to the women's liberation movement.

These examples serve merely to underscore the interdependence of movements that cluster in the same "family." Not only are such movements apt to lack any unique set of political opportunities, they are also likely, in the initial stages, to rely heavily on the organizational context and resources of earlier movements. This organizational or associational dependence makes sense in terms of the basic tenets of diffusion theory (Rogers 1983). Two tenets are especially relevant in this regard. First, diffusion tends to spread along the lines of established interpersonal communication. Second, "the higher the degree of social integration of potential adopters, the more likely and the sooner they will become actual adopters" (Pinard 1971: 187). If we begin to think of initiator movements as sources of new cultural items and latecomers as adopters of same, then these tenets help explain why spin-off movements are apt to develop within early risers or in groups with close ties to the early risers. The close ties increase the likelihood of diffusion and the ultimate adoption of early riser ideas and tactics by later movements. This argument is consistent with the conclusion reached in the previous section. The rise of an initiator movement may bear the imprint of expanding political opportunities, but the spread of a reform cycle would seem to owe to cultural, rather than political, processes.

Insurgent Consciousness and Framing Processes

It should be clear by now that I see the fundamental impulse to mobilization in the case of spin-off movements as essentially cognitive/cultural. This makes the third factor stressed in the political process model, namely the level of "insurgent consciousness" present in a given population, especially germane to an understanding of the rise of spin-off movements and the full flowering of a reform cycle. But it is in the development of this consciousness among the latecomers that the imprint of the early risers is most clearly evident.

At the level of cognition and affect, collective action depends on two socially shared and constructed perceptions; that some aspect of life is a) illegitimate, and b) subject to change through group

(as opposed to individual) action. In a previous work (McAdam 1982) I used the term "cognitive liberation" to refer to the development of these twin perceptions. Dave Snow and various of his colleagues (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988, 1992) employ the twin concepts of "framing" and "frame alignment processes" to describe the kinds of strategic activities in which organizers engage in order to develop an insurgent consciousness. Movements, note Snow and Benford (1988: 198), are "actively engaged in the production of meaning for participants. . . . They frame, or assign meaning to and interpret, relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents." Finally, Gansson (1992) has sought to extend the framing concept by distinguishing between what he sees as the three principal components of any "collective action frame." Gansson labels these three components a) injustice frames, b) agency frames, and c) identity frames. Injustice frames define some aspect of life not simply as illegitimate but as affectively intolerable. Agency frames offer an account of how the group can effect change in the offending condition(s). And the identity frame offers the group an altered—often dramatically so—collective vision of itself.

The relevance of these conceptual tools for an understanding of spin-off movements and protest cycles comes from recognizing that the presence of a highly visible initiator movement makes the "framing work" of all later struggles much easier. To put the matter succinctly, among the most important impetuses to the development of a protest cycle is the diffusion and creative adaptation by latecomers of the ideas of the early risers. Snow and Benford (1992) advance a highly compatible argument in their work on "master protest frames." Two of their hypotheses are worth noting here. First, they argue that "associated with the emergence of a cycle of protest is the development or construction of an innovative master frame" (1992: 143). Second, they hypothesize that "movements that surface early in a cycle of protest are likely to function as progenitors of master frames that provide the ideational and interpretive anchoring for subsequent movements within the cycle" (1992: 144).

A cursory examination of the empirical literature on various protest cycles suggests that Snow and Benford are correct on both counts. Two examples will serve to illustrate these hypotheses. The first of these examples concerns the revolutions of 1988–91

that marked the end of communist rule throughout Eastern Europe. Animating this revolutionary cycle was what might be termed a "democracy/market economy" master frame. First developed in Poland, this frame stressed the importance of democratic governance, free markets, and the elimination of Party privilege as the keys to national renewal and rebirth.

The U.S. reform cycle of the 1960s and early 1970s also betrays the imprint of a dominant master frame. This was the "civil rights frame" first articulated by black activists during the heyday of the southern civil rights struggle. In short order, however, the frame was adapted by the majority of groups associated with the sixties' protest cycle. This would include students, gays, farm workers, feminists, the handicapped, and Native Americans. Nor did the frame lose all resonance with the end of the protest cycle. On the contrary, its imprint is clearly evident in a good many contemporary movements, including the animal rights crusade and the pro-life movement.

The case of the U.S. reform cycle of the 1960s and early 1970s will also help to illustrate the limits of the latecomers' cultural dependence on the early risers. In arguing that initiator movements have a culturally catalytic effect on later struggles, I am not claiming that the latter are mere adopters of the ideas of the early risers. Instead I want to underscore the role of latecomers as *creative adapters and interpreters of the cultural "lessons" of the early risers*. A cursory reading of the historical literature suggests wide variability in how closely spin-off movements adhere to the ideas of the initiator movement. In some cases latecomers borrow liberally from the broad cultural template associated with the early risers. More often, however, spin-off movements draw only the broadest inspiration from a given initiator movement, over time fashioning ideologies and specific cultural practices distinct from the movement(s) that set them in motion. Among the factors shaping variation in the cultural distinctiveness of latecomers is the extent to which the movement has access to a latent activist tradition or history of struggle that can serve as another "tool kit" into which the new generation of activists can dip for inspiration.

Here the important work of Rupp and Taylor (1987) on the continuities between earlier feminist organizing and the emergence—or reemergence—of the U.S. women's movement in the 1960s is relevant. At first glance, the kind of continuities that Rupp and

Taylor document in their work would seem to undermine the very notion of initiator and spin-off movements. If certain enduring struggles ebb and flow over time, how can later periods of intense activity be characterized as "spin-offs" of other contemporary struggles?

In point of fact, I think the perspective sketched here is highly compatible with the idea of continuities. Consistent with Rupp and Taylor's argument, my view is that enduring movements such as feminism never really die, but rather are characterized by periods of relative activity and inactivity. Moreover, I am increasingly persuaded that movement leaders and organizations are most critical to the struggle not during the peak of a protest cycle, but rather during what Rupp and Taylor term the "doldrums." During the "lean years" career activists and the formal organizations and informal networks they maintain serve a critically important "keeper of the flame" function. That is, they serve to maintain and nourish a tradition of activism, making it available to a new generation of activists during the next protest cycle.

Thus the perspective sketched here in no way diminishes or denies the importance of the kind of continuities noted by Rupp and Taylor. It only argues that these continuities, while safeguarding a tradition of struggle, cannot account for the timing and extent of the next wave of mobilization. So, for example, the emergence of the women's liberation movement cannot be explained on the basis of the continuities detailed by Rupp and Taylor in their book. As Evans (1980) convincingly demonstrates, the development of this specific spin-off movement owed primarily to the kind of network linkages and diffusion dynamics under discussion here. What the continuities did, however, was provide 1960s feminists with a rich history of struggle that ultimately reduced their cultural dependence on the civil rights movement and other early risers in the sixties' reform cycle. While feminists—especially radical feminists—were attuned to the ideological, tactical, and organizational lessons of the New Left, they also soon rediscovered and sought to adapt the sedimented layers of a rich tradition of feminist struggle to the contemporary movement.

Diffusion, Network Ties, and the Attribution of Similarity

My attempt to apply the political process model to spin-off movements tells us much about their dependence on an initiator movement. Specifically, spin-off movements often develop within the formal organizations or associational networks of an earlier movement, while also appropriating and adapting elements of its collective action frame. But this tells us little about the *process* by which these borrowings take place. I turn to these dynamics of process in this section, emphasizing three concepts in turn: *diffusion*, *network proximity*, and the *attribution of similarity*.

1. *Diffusion* The relevance of the diffusion literature to the study of protest cycles would seem to be obvious. At one level initiator movements are nothing more than clusters of new cultural items—new cognitive frames, behavioral routines, organizational forms, tactical repertoires, etc.—subject to the same diffusion dynamics as other innovations. Yet the movement literature has been distinguished by the virtual absence of any explicit application of diffusion theory.

To be sure, early theorizing emphasized the role of "contagion" in the spread of collective behavior (Tarde 1903). Later work in the collective behavior tradition proposed various mechanisms, including suggestibility, circular reasoning, and simple imitation, to account for the mimetic quality of much collective action. All of these approaches, however, betray a psychological bias and are guilty of ascribing to social movements (and all other forms of collective behavior) the status of a unique behavioral phenomenon governed by sociological processes distinct from "normal" behavior.

Diffusion theory makes no such assumption, nor does it depend upon any implicit notion of the irrationality of the crowd to account for the spread of collective action. Instead, the diffusion of the ideational and material elements of a given movement are thought to reflect normal learning and influence processes as mediated by the network structures of everyday social life.

2. *Network Ties* Despite the lack of explicit attention to the diffusion literature, much of the recent work on the emergence and spread of collective action can be readily interpreted in terms of diffusion theory. The oft-noted role of existing organizations

or associational networks in the emergence of collective action is entirely consistent with the stress in the diffusion literature on the importance of strong, established networks of communication as a precondition for diffusion (Freeman 1973; Kriesi 1988; McAdam 1982; Morris 1984; Oberschall 1973; Zurcher and Kirkpatrick 1976). Empirical accounts of the growth of various movements also fit with the importance attributed to "weak bridging ties" in the diffusion literature. Numerous studies have shown that movements typically spread by means of diffuse networks of weak bridging ties or die for lack of such ties (Jackson et al. 1960; McAdam 1988; Oppenheimer 1989).

In short, there is a marked convergence in the empirical literatures on diffusion and the emergence and spread of collective action. Indeed, these two literatures tell the same story: the likelihood and extent of both diffusion and collective action is conditioned by the network properties of the subject population. The chances of either occurring would seem to be greatest in communities having both a dense network of internal ties as well as an extensive system of weak bridging ties to other social and/or geographic units. This confluence of strong internal ties and weak bridging ties is, thus, one of the conditions that facilitates the development of a protest cycle. Groups with direct links to the initiating movement are especially likely to be early risers in the cycle and then to provide additional points of network contact for other groups who, in turn, provide access for still more groups. This pattern helps explain the accelerating speed at which protest cycles tend to develop. As more groups mobilize, more and more of the overall population is exposed to the behavioral, ideational, and material innovations associated with the cycle. As a result, ever more diverse population segments are likely to be drawn into the cycle.

3. *Attribution of Similarity* To this point, I have merely applied the basic tenets of diffusion theory to the phenomenon of the protest cycle. Spin-off movements are conceived of as adopters or, more accurately, adapters of some subset of the innovations associated with the early risers. Moreover, following diffusion theory, we can expect the likelihood and timing of adoption to be mediated by the strength of the ties linking a potential adopter to an early riser.

But while network proximity may dispose a group to mobilize, it hardly guarantees that they will do so. What we lack to this

point is any sense of the social psychological processes that trigger the adoption process. Here I draw upon the recent work of David Strang and John Meyer (1992) on cross-national diffusion of policy innovations. Strang and Meyer argue that in such cases diffusion is keyed by a process of social construction in which the adopters define both themselves and the situation they face as essentially similar to that of the innovators. In turn, this fundamental "attribution of similarity" makes the actions and ideas of the innovator relevant to the adopter. Thus in identifying themselves ("identity frame") and the problem at hand ("injustice frame") with that of the initiator movement, latecomers set the stage for a more general diffusion process by which any number of cultural elements may be borrowed from the original movement.

The American protest cycle of the 1960s and 1970s affords numerous examples of this fundamental identification of latecomers with the movement that triggered the cycle: the civil rights struggle. Indeed, it would be fair to say that the oppression of blacks came to serve as the standard and model by which other groups sought to understand their own situations. For some groups the analogy was straightforward. In particular, other nonwhite minorities such as Hispanics and Native Americans found it relatively easy to map their plights and demands onto those offered by black activists. For other groups, the analogy demanded more in the way of creative framing. Drawing upon their experiences as civil rights workers, early radical feminists tentatively voiced comparisons between their situation and that of southern blacks. The first to do so were Casey Hayden and Mary King, two field secretaries for the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. Writing in 1966, Hayden and King argued that, just like blacks, women

seem to be caught up in a common-law caste system that operates, sometimes subtly, forcing them to work around or outside hierarchical structures of power which exclude them. Women seem to be placed in the same position of assumed subordination in personal situations too. (Hayden and King, 1966: 36)

In later years the comparison of women to blacks was starkly captured in the movement saying "Women are the niggers of the world" and has remained a staple of American feminist thought to the present.

Perhaps the most surprising and consequential effort to appro-

prate the model of black oppression was that made by student activists of the period. Most observers date the beginnings of the student movement to the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley in the fall of 1964. What has never been fully appreciated is the extent to which the Berkeley movement was fueled by a strong identification of the students with southern blacks. At the height of the movement its acknowledged leader, Mario Savio, gave explicit voice to this identification.

Last summer I went to Mississippi to join the struggle there for civil rights. This fall I am engaged in another phase of the *same* struggle, this time at Berkeley. The two battlefields may seem quite different to some observers, but this is not the case. The *same* rights are at stake in both places—the right to participate as citizens in democratic society and the right to due process of law. Further, it is a struggle against the *same* enemy. In Mississippi an autocratic and powerful minority rules, through organized violence, to suppress the vast, virtually powerless majority. In California, the privileged minority manipulates the University bureaucracy to suppress the student's political expression. (Quoted in McAdam 1988: 168–69; emphasis added)

These last two cases—women's liberation and the student movement—are important not merely as illustrations of the close identification of spin-off with initiator movements but also for the important function they ascribe to bridging ties in helping to cement this identification. A disproportionate number of the pioneering activists in both movements had been active in the civil rights struggle. These links insured that the pioneers were aware of movement ideas and that they had also been exposed to a process of socialization in which longtime civil rights workers encouraged them to see the connections between the plight of blacks and "the sources of oppression in [their] own lives."

Direct ties are important, then, for the role they play in helping to encourage the kind of fundamental identification of latecomers with early risers that is necessary for diffusion to take place. This does not mean that identification is impossible in the absence of direct ties. Especially in the later stages of a cycle, groups lacking any real connection to an established movement may well mobilize. By that point the general model or template for organizing

is so generally available that the process of adoption often takes on a more diffuse character. Early in a cycle, however, direct ties would appear to be highly correlated with the timing and extent of mobilization.

PROTEST CYCLES AND THE DIFFUSION OF ACTION REPERTOIRES

The perspective sketched here on diffusion and the rise of spin-off movements is relevant not only to an understanding of protest cycles but also to the emergence and spread of what Tilly has called "repertoires of contention." Repertoires are the learned forms of collective action by which actors seek to press or resist claims by other actors. In short, they are the tactics groups employ in their struggles with one another. Moreover, as Tilly notes in his piece for this volume, these tactical forms tend to be fairly restricted at any given moment within a particular society. He writes:

Repertoires are learned cultural creations, but they do not descend from abstract philosophy or take shape as a result of political propaganda; they emerge from struggle. People learn to break windows in protest, attack pilloried prisoners, tear down dishonored houses, stage public marches, petition, hold formal meetings, organize special-interest associations. At any particular point in history, however, they learn only a rather small number of alternative ways to act collectively. (p. 25)

Drawing on the perspective sketched here, Tilly's remarks can be extended in two important ways. The pace of the "cultural creation" he speaks of tends to be most rapid during cycles of protest. Indeed, we often know a protest cycle by the innovative tactical forms to which it gives rise. Second, the learning of these repertoires tends to conform to the diffusion dynamics sketched above. Let me elaborate on each of these points, beginning with the second.

As noted above, the identification of a latecomer with an early riser tends to key a more thoroughgoing diffusion process in which the latecomer is receptive to all manner of innovations associated with the initiator movement. These may include new organizational forms, collective action frames, material cultural items,

and, most important from our point of view, innovative tactical forms. From the point of view of the latecomer, the adoption of these repertoires is entirely consistent with their generalized identification with the early riser. Having defined themselves and their situation as essentially similar to that of another movement, the decision to make use of the other's tactics makes both expressive and instrumental sense.

The instrumental logic underlying the adoption should be clear. If the latecomers see themselves as confronting the same underlying problem as the early risers, it only makes sense that they would employ the same means for remedying the problem as the initiator movement, especially if the latter's use of the repertoire(s) has been defined as successful.

The expressive function of the adoption of tactical forms has rarely, if ever, been acknowledged, but is no less important in helping to account for the rapid spread and signature quality of novel repertoires during a protest cycle. Especially during the early stages of a cycle, the tactical choices made by challenging groups express their identification with the earliest of risers and signal a more inclusive and broader definition of the emerging struggle. In retrospect, scholars may see a cycle—especially a reform cycle—as a cluster of 6, 7, 8 . . . n discrete movements, but this view almost invariably distorts the perspective shared by participants at the time. In their view, they are but a part of a broad and rapidly expanding political-cultural community fighting the same fight on a number of related fronts. And a significant part of what links and defines these various groups as a coherent community is their reliance on the same tactical forms.

This mix of expressive and instrumental motives largely accounts for the close association of certain repertoires with particular cycles. So, for example, we know the European revolts of 1847–48 by the widespread use of the barricade; the American protest cycle of the 1960s by its signature tactic, the sit-in; and the Velvet Revolutions of 1988–89 by the rapid spread of mass demonstrations in countries that previously had lacked even the semblance of a public. Repertoires, then, are properly viewed as among the key cultural innovations whose diffusion gives the protest cycle its characteristic shape and momentum. In this sense they are also indispensable to our understanding of the rise of spin-off movements.

CONCLUSION

I am now in a position to translate these various ideas into a fairly simple model of reform cycles. First and foremost, a reform cycle depends on the emergence and subsequent development of a highly prominent and apparently successful initiator movement. The presence of such a movement sets up the minimum condition necessary for diffusion. Whether or not diffusion takes place, however, depends more on the strength of the structural ties linking the movement to other groups in society than to the prominence or success it attains. To the extent that the movement remains isolated from other population segments, it is not apt to encourage the rise of the spin-off movements that constitute a reform cycle. On the other hand, should the movement succeed in forging ties to other groups, we can expect some subset of these groups to mobilize and, in turn, to encourage another round of mimetic mobilization by still more groups.

The importance of these ties is only partly informational. Obviously, such ties make available to potential adopters the various innovations—collective action frames, new organizational forms, new tactics, etc.—emanating from the movement. However, access to new ideas or other innovations means little if one attaches no salience or relevance to them. The real significance of these ties, then, stems from the role they play in encouraging the fundamental "attribution of similarity" so crucial to the diffusion process. Direct contact with the initiator movement helps to cement a basic identification that keys a thoroughgoing process of diffusion by which the ideational, organizational, and, most relevant for us, tactical "lessons" of the "borning struggle" are adapted for use by subsequent movements.

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