

Sociology 280
Social Movements
Spring 2007
TTH 10:30 - 11:50 ELIOT 317
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What is a social movement? Under what economic, social and political conditions do they typically arise? Is it more beneficial for social movement activists to focus their energy on developing stable organizational centers and strong alliances with elites who work "within the system" rather than on mobilizing protests? Are social movements *really* becoming transnational? The goal of this course is to answer these and other questions by introducing you to classical sociological theories and current sociological research on social movements. Through a review of case studies of various movements (e.g., principally, the civil rights movement, but also women's liberation, anti-war, environmentalism, and transnational human rights activism), we will identify key analytical questions and research strategies for studying factors that influence a social movement's emergence, tactics, and ability to achieve its goals. Among the perspectives reviewed will be classical approaches (collective behavior, Marxism) as well as more recent perspectives that focus on resource mobilization, political opportunities, networks, the media, and "new" social movements.

Requirements: Active and full participation in conference, and 3 papers as well as two peer editing reports. Your written work will examine a set of social movement organizations in light of course readings and library research. Written assignments begin with two short 4-5 page papers and culminate with a longer final paper (roughly 15 pages in length). You will also be asked to submit two reports, one a self-evaluation of your own research paper draft, the other a reader's response evaluating a partner's research paper on a related topic. Dates and topics are provided below, and supplementary information will be distributed in class before each paper is due.

The following books can be purchased through the College bookstore:

Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*
Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*
Armstrong, Elizabeth, *Forging Gay Identities*

Recommended:

Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*

To minimize cost, the bookstore has tried to order affordable used copies. Copies of these books and other readings have also been placed on reserve in the library.

Please note that most journal articles are available through JSTOR or Project Muse. These two web-based journal article archives are linked to the Reed College Library web page (<http://simeon.library.reed.edu/>). Note: to minimize time waiting for reserve material as well as paper wastage, only one paper copy of electronically available articles will be made available outside my office.

Reading Assignments
Part I
Contrasting approaches to the civil rights movement' emergence

Week 1 Introduction

Tuesday Introduction

Thursday Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, Introduction plus Chapters 1-3

In-class discussion of the readings and your homework

Homework exercise:

1. How does Morris define the Southern civil rights movement (SCRM)? What does he think is unusual or puzzling about its first decade, ending in 1963? Why did he choose to study the SCRM during this era and why the "South" (versus the entire country or the North)?
- 2 What main types of "formal" organizations were involved in starting the Civil Rights Movement, according to Morris' account? Make a chart listing them and defining their traits and the functions they served. Be sure to define "bureaucratic" organization.
3. Choose a particular civic organization that Morris argues is central to the Civil Rights movement, explain when it arose, what its ties were to the black community and its institutions, the origins of its leadership and membership, its organizational structure, what it sought to change, and what protest tactics it used.
4. What role did the US government play in the origins of the SCRM?
5. Review approaches that were introduced in Introduction to Sociology. Which theorist seems most important to Morris' argument? How would Marx versus Weber explain this movement's emergence? Summarize Morris's basic thesis in 4 sentences and be prepared to defend, debate and discuss your thesis on his thesis.

Please write out answers to these questions in your notebook. I may collect notebooks to review what you are gleaning from the course readings.

Week 2 The case for *indigenous* organizations: The church & its role in generating the civil rights movement

Tuesday Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, Chapters 4-6

Thursday Morris, Chapters 7, 9 (reserve)

Week 3 The case against *formal organizations*

Marx and many other socialists argued that the state under capitalism is a direct, immediate instrument of bourgeois class interests. Only the threat of a radical revolution forces state elites to preserve the capitalist order by making improvements in the living conditions of the dispossessed. Can riots and spontaneous acts of insurgency achieve more for dispossessed groups than forming non-violent reform-oriented social movement organizations? What argument do Piven and Cloward make against the kinds of groups Morris believes led the fight? Why are they in favor of violent and radical forms of mobilization politically rational for powerless groups? Why do they believe such protests get you further than working "within the system"? Explain the 'iron law of oligarchy' (formulated by Michels). How do P & C apply it to social movement organizations? In other words, why are they convinced that reformist social movements are destined to be less effective than radical forms of mobilization?

Tuesday Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, "Introduction," Chapters 1, 4

Thursday

Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, chapter 10

Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, Introduction to the Paperback Edition as well as pp. 229-258

Consider these questions while doing your reading for Thursday:

1. What is Piven and Cloward's argument or hypothesis about organization and protest?
2. What are the structural prerequisites of protest as given by Piven and Cloward? What is it that they argue "structures" protest?
3. How does their analysis of the role of power in protest waves compare to the model of three-dimensional domination that Morris proposed with his theory of the "tri-partite system of domination"?
4. Compare Morris' to Piven and Cloward's approach to the Birmingham movement. Consider Piven and Cloward's assertion on page 36 "that protesters win, if they win at all, what historical circumstances has already made ready to be conceded." Can you think of examples or counter-examples regarding your movement? Would Morris agree with this argument?

Week 4 Resource mobilization theory: The strong case *in favor of organizations*

Are social movements a product of longstanding protest traditions, decades-long organizing efforts and preexisting institutional processes? Resource mobilization theories challenge perspectives that assume a short-term focus on spontaneous protests (a la Piven & Cloward). They contend that movements result only after a dominated group develops a skilled leadership, a financial and organizational base, and effective strategies of mobilization that can be easily disseminated through established networks.

Tuesday

Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, Chapter 11

McCarthy and Zald, *Resource Mobilization Theory and Social Movements: A Partial Theory* (available through J-STOR)

McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency* (reserve), Chapters 1-2

Thursday McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency* (reserve), Chapter 3-4

Recommended: J. Craig Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements" (available through J-STOR)

Paper 1, due in class

Week 5 The Political Process model

Define the "political opportunity" problems as opposed to the "resource mobilization" problems your movement faced. Draw a causal diagram of each approach to the civil rights movement's emergence. Explain how each relevant perspective might be applied to explain the strategies your social movement used, and their success or failure.

McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency* (reserve)

Tuesday Chapter 5

Thursday Chapters 6-7

Week 6 Recruitment processes

Tuesday McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency* (reserve)
Chapters 8-9

Thursday Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long? African-American Women In The Struggle For Civil Rights*, pp. 3-7 (in "Introduction"), pp. 12-23 (in Chapter 1), Chapters 3, 6

Bridge leaders, gender and grassroots recruitment

Piven and Cloward criticize social movement organizations for devoting attention to organizational self-maintenance and leadership recruitment, rather than maximizing disruptive protests. Yet the civil rights movement was highly effective at both attracting the support of small, informal groups and maximizing disruptive protest by using grassroots strikes. How did it accomplish this difficult task? Mancur Olson in *Logic of Collective Action* challenged pluralist as well as Marxist theories of mobilization when he argued: "self-interested individuals will consistently fail to achieve their common or group interest (1965: 2)." He believed that movements to achieve highly desirable collective goals such as clean air or good schools will typically fail unless they develop a strategy for overcoming the "free rider" problem." Robnett argues that the free rider problem and similar obstacles were overcome through bridge leaders, most of whom were women who were denied positions of formal leadership and have been written out of histories of the movement.

Week 7 Race, class, gender and recruitment to high risk activism

Tuesday, Robnett, *How Long?* pp. 23-35 (in Chapter 1), 7, 8,

Thursday Wrap up part I and start Part II

Snow and Benford, "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest," chapter 6, *Frontiers in social movement theory*, edited by Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller.

In class exercise: Bring in texts from your case study and explain how they exemplify the main collective action frames from different points in the cycle of the movement

Paper 2 due Wednesday

Week 8 Spring Break

Part II Cultural constructions

Week 9 Gay & Lesbian rights

Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950-1994*

Tuesday Chapters 1-3

Wednesday Paper conferences, begin

Thursday Chapters 4-6

Friday Paper conferences, conclude

Week 10

Tuesday Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, chapters 7-8

Thursday Mary Bernstein, "Celebration and Suppression: The Strategic Uses of Identity by the Lesbian and Gay Movement" *American Journal of Sociology* (available through JSTOR)

Week 11 Social movements in authoritarian settings and transnationalism

Tuesday:

Mara Loveman, "High-Risk Collective Action" **JSTOR**

Kurt Schock, "People Power" **JSTOR**

Thursday: Margaret Keck, "Social Equity and Environmental Politics in Brazil" **JSTOR**

Gal, "Bartok's Funeral" **JSTOR**

Week 12

Tuesday Mystery readings

Thursday no class

Week 13

Final paper peer-editing

Tuesday: authors' presentation of reports

Thursday: readers' presentation of response reports

Final Paper due Tuesday May 8 by 12 noon