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Social Movements and Public Policy: Eggs, Chicken, and Theory

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There were all kinds of good reasons to oppose United States participation in the Vietnam war in 1965, and as the war escalated, opponents found increasingly good reasons to take to the streets to make their claims.¹ In July of 1965, Lyndon Johnson announced that he would intensify the U.S. commitment to South Vietnam, increasing its military presence by nearly 50,000 troops, necessitating more aggressive use of the military draft. The draft turned a distant issue,² the war in Vietnam, into a proximate one, and stoked the fledgling antiwar movement. The draft provided both a focus for the antiwar movement, as well as a sense of urgency on college campuses to do something to stop the war. The Johnson administration, probably not intentionally, aided activists who wanted to focus on the draft when, in October of 1965, Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach promised to investigate the antidraft movement, even as local Selective Service officials revoked the student exemptions of protesters against the war when they were arrested (De Benedetti 1990: 120-130).

The salience of the draft invigorated what had formerly been small pacifist and left organizations organizing the initial opposition to the war, flooding local chapters and national events with larger numbers of new activists than any of the organizations were prepared to handle (Gitlin 1980; Miller 1987). The draft allowed pacifists who normally reached small audiences to speak to much larger crowds, and groups like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), that expressed a broad commitment to comprehensive democratic change in the United States, to spread quickly to less elite college campuses (Heineman 1993). Resistance to the draft, often by the ritualized (and criminal) action of destroying a draft card, was a readily available tactic of expressing opposition to the war, physically accessible to millions of young men, a possibility that had to be confronted.

The rapid growth of the antiwar movement also created difficulties for those who would organize it. New recruits to organizations working against the war did not necessarily share commitments to pacifism or “participatory democracy.” The newly swollen anti-war organizations also provided a larger venue, as well as the prospects of higher payoffs, for internecine fights about ideology and tactics, effectively encouraging bitter sectarian disputes, as well as an internal social control problem for organizations concerned with managing their public face by constraining their expressed tactics and claims. Many organizations did not survive.

If rapid growth created problems for the antiwar movement, these were certainly no less than the problems it created for political authorities. The larger, more volatile, more public, and more diverse, antiwar movement made life more difficult for government seeking, minimally, domestic peace. In his memoirs, Richard Nixon (1978: 396-404) admits that the antiwar

protesters constrained his options in Vietnam, preempting the use—or the effective threat of using—nuclear weapons in Vietnam. One response to the antiwar movement was extending the franchise to 18 year-olds; another was instituting a draft lottery, before ultimately ending the draft.³

And the end of the draft, in 1972, following shortly on the heels of the ratification of the 26th amendment in the previous year, altered the political terrain dramatically for the antiwar movement. As electoral possibilities for organizing opened, organizers simultaneously lost some portion of the zealous new converts, terrified about their own lives even as they opposed the war. James Fallows (1981: 136) observes, “...the history of Vietnam demonstrated the difference between abstract and self-interested actions. Resistance to the war went up in proportion as the effects of the war (primarily, the draft) touched the children of influential families.” Although the antiwar movement may well have won (see Small 1988) as U.S. involvement in Vietnam ultimately ended, the pacifists lost their connections with movement politics, and broader claims about invigorated and genuine democracy, as expressed by SDS, mostly disappeared from American political life, or were reformulated in much more moderate terms as procedural reforms.

The example of the draft points up a range of connections between protest and policy; in this paper, I mean to provide a framework for understanding those broader connections. I begin with a focused review of the literatures on public policy and on social movements, identifying notable omissions and areas of commonality. Scholars of public policy, for example, often assign social movements a role in the agenda-setting process, although the mechanisms by which this occurs are rarely specified: something outside institutional politics affects the agenda within. Social movement scholars make analogous omissions. Although policy is almost routinely treated as one social movement outcome, the interaction of both substantive and symbolic changes in policy with the development of a challenging movement is undertheorized and understudied. Fundamentally, social movement scholars treat the policy process as a black box within the state, which movements may occasionally shake and upset into action, whereas policy scholars treat movements as undifferentiated and unitary actors who respond (or not) by disruption. But in their areas of central concern, scholars offer a much more nuanced recognition of complexity and contingency.

From the literature, I suggest that as analysts we would do well to focus on the connections at this point, in order to develop a broader understanding of the process, and stakes, of an increasingly common form of politics in democratic polities (see Meyer and Tarrow 1998). I then offer an integrated model which specifies multi-dimensional connections between social movements and public policy in democratic societies by recognizing the iterative development of both movements and policy. I conclude with a call for more focused research on the protest/policy connection.

Policy/Protest: A First Look

The initial example of U.S. policy on conscription puts in high relief a large number of connections between protest and policy, expressed over a period of only about 7 years. The policy, increasing the yield of young men for the military by conscription, at once creates not

only a grievance, but also a constituency that feels that grievance most intensely: draft-eligible young men and their families. The policy of conscription became a provisional target for the antiwar movement (“Stop the Draft, End the War”), and its administration provided a series of sites at which to launch protests (draft boards), as well as a series of tactics (burning draft cards, defacing files). The nature of American draft policy gave antiwar organizations a vehicle for servicing their constituents: draft counseling. It also forced young men to confront the policy concretely as well as abstractly, making personal decisions about their own draft status and strategies (e.g., whether or not to pursue “conscientious objector” status). Both opposition to the draft in general, and concern about one’s individual fate, pushed young men—and those who cared about them—into the full range of American political institutions, including the Selective Service bureaucracy, local draft boards, the courts, and electoral campaigns. The high stakes of the draft for young men gave the antiwar movement an urgency and a capacity for growth that is difficult to imagine for a foreign war fought without reluctant—to say the least—American conscripts. And the policy gave government a ready, albeit illegal, means for trying to control opposition to the war and enforce social discipline.⁴

What is more, opposition to the draft, in conjunction with the broader movement against the American part in the Vietnam war, has affected all sorts of policies since. Although draft registration of young men was restored in 1980, the U.S. has relied on a volunteer military force since Vietnam, at least partly because of the antiwar movement (Fallows 1981). More generally, the political fallout of the antiwar movement has served to constrain U.S. foreign policy since that time. The so-called “Vietnam Syndrome” led to a reluctance to commit ground troops abroad unless the United States deployed overwhelming force and could reasonably expect to win and exit within a reasonably short time period (Weinberger 1990).

Ending the draft also changed a range of personnel practices within the military, which now had to manage employees who had the option of quitting. Absent a draft, policy makers and administrators must focus on the quality of life for military personnel, including devoting far more attention to recruiting, as well as issues of compensation, housing, child care, and career advancement for service people. Some period of service in the military, formerly nearly universal part of the lives of young American men, is now an experience confined to a relatively small portion of the populace. Work in the military became a job (or career) chosen by service people rather than an obligation borne by all young men. Perceived adverse consequences of this change in the polity and in the military led a group of neo-liberals (most of whom had not performed military service) to make a case for reinstating some form of the draft (e.g. Fallows 1981). The effect of the antiwar movement’s efforts against the draft, however, led cautious politicians to reframe new policy options as a broader “national service” program, including all sorts of non-military activities, then to make sure that such a program was not compulsory, then to scale it back and underfund it (see Waldman 1996).

I do not mean to belabor this example so much as to point out the range of mutual influences of policy and protest. The major point is that to understand these relationships we need to take a broad interpretation of connections that allows for complex and iterative interactions, rather than discrete outcomes or origins, and to consider a longer period of time in seeking patterns of influence.

Extant Theory: Mutual Recognition and Neglect

Scholars concerned with public policy OR with social movements often recognize the importance of the other phenomena in their subject of interest, but do not generally go beyond that recognition. There is some irony in these reciprocal omissions, as some of the central work on movements in the 1960s and 1970s was focused on the policy payoff of social protest mobilization. Michael Lipsky's (1970) work vindicated protest as a political strategy for people who were poorly positioned to represent their interests by conventional means. Lipsky's central point was that protest sometimes worked. Similarly, Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward's work has addressed very directly the connection between government policy toward poor people and their response. In Regulating the Poor, Piven and Cloward (1971) argued that welfare spending was essentially an effort by government to maintain social peace, policy directed to prevent protest.

In Poor People's Movements, they examined the relationship from the other side, using extended treatments of four historical cases to show that disruptive protest was the best means available poor people to influence government policy on their behalf—because, as they had pointed out earlier, welfare spending was a way to buy quiescence. They claimed that in times of electoral uncertainty, politicians could respond to disruption through policy concessions to groups represented in some fashion by the protesters. They framed their analysis as prescription to organizers in clear and sharp terms, chastising organizers who failed to learn from the past that organization building “blunted or curbed the disruptive force which lower-class people were sometimes able to mobilize” (Piven and Cloward 1977: xxii). Although Piven and Cloward's work spurred a great deal of debate, primarily about the accuracy of their claims about poor people and welfare, there was much less in the way of careful examination of their premises of how protest worked to influence policy, or the extent to which their claims about poor peoples' movements were applicable to the social protest efforts of the non-poor, who are responsible for mobilizing most of the major social movements in the advanced industrialized states over the past three decades (Meyer and Tarrow 1998).

The other critical work on movements and policies, also from this period, William Gamson's Strategy of Social Protest, focused on the organizational attributes that correlated with success. Gamson identified 53 representative “challenging groups” that attempted to exercise influence in the United States between 1800-1945, then assessed their political fate. He was particularly concerned with whether that group received formal recognition as a legitimate actor in American politics (“acceptance”) and with whether it had won some portion of its claims on policy (“new advantages”), using a sampling frame of 15 years after the peak of its challenge. Predictably, Gamson's methodology raised a number of critical questions about how to define and measure success—and to his credit, Gamson reprinted some of the ensuing debates in the second edition of his book. More to the point, for our purposes, the work treated policy as an outcome and output, but didn't examine the process by which protest translated (or did not translate) into influence, focusing instead on the sorts of organizational resources, structures, claims, and tactics that were likely to be associated with success.

Although these critical works in the 1970s opened up an important area for research, few of the critical questions identified were pursued systematically in the ensuing decades. Scholars

of social movements addressed the context and outcomes of political mobilization, but public policy was treated as a relatively minor part of the structure of political opportunities that might spur social movements. From the social movement side, policy is often treated as an outcome of mobilization, and changes in policy are traced back to find the influence of movements. Nonetheless, the policy process is often treated as a black box, described without nuance and contingency. Indeed, in his important recent book on the influence of social movements, Thomas Rochon (1998) contends that a focus on policy explores only one arena of social movement influence (the other is cultural change), and generally one that is less permeable to movement influence.

Students of public policy have recognized a place for social movements in the policy process, but it is a relatively small place. There is a generic pattern in which social movements are recognized as exogenous political factors that can affect some part of the policy process, most notably, agenda-setting (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Kingdon 1984) or the construction of social problems, “target constituencies,” and policy alternatives (e.g., Schneider and Ingram 1997). Rarely, however, does the analysis go beyond this, or does it address the mechanisms by which movements affect the policy process. Nonetheless, drawing from the literatures on policy and movements, we can establish a framework for understanding relationships between policy and movements.

Movements and Policy: First Premises

We can start by establishing first premises by starting with what we know about public policy and about movements. I will begin with public policy:

First, the policy process does not rigidly follow any of the linear frameworks offered in textbooks, and innovation and change can come from a wide variety of sources. Rational actor models, although useful heuristics, do not describe the way the policy-making process actually takes place, which is as a battle among various actors seeking to please distinct constituencies. Policy disputes include not only struggles about the relative influence of the range of interested parties, but also the definition of particular conditions as problematic and amenable to purposive intervention by government, the range of tools legitimately used by government, and the ultimate objectives of any policy intervention (Stone 1997).

Second, the modal pattern of policy in any particular area is one of stasis, although not one of satisfaction. Policies are maintained by policy monopolies, that is, a network of groups and individuals, operating inside and outside of government, linked by their mutual recognition as legitimate actors concerned with a particular set of policies.⁵ Members of this monopoly include elected officials, administrators in the bureaucracy, and activists in established interest organizations. Conflict among these actors plays out, generally, in a stalemate that allows only incremental reforms in the policy area. Efforts at reform launched from outside these networks are, generally, easily ignored. Scores of policy monopolies operate with autonomy from one another, generally invisible to the larger body politic (Baumgartner and Jones 1993).

Third, opportunities for policy reform, or “open windows” in Kingdon’s (1984) terms, occur on schedules that only sometimes line up with the development of a social problem. Changes in politics, policy, or problems, as Kingdon (1984) can create an open window, but the

key element to focus on is the possible reconfiguration of a policy monopoly (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Policy reforms come from a change in the balance of political power within that monopoly, and those reforms can further alter the political balance, precipitating or frustrating subsequent reforms. Sometimes open windows pass—or are passed—without anyone doing anything that promotes change effectively. Such unexploited windows, or “missed opportunities,” (Sawyers and Meyer 1999) are significant even when largely unexploited, for subsequent chances for reform might not readily appear. Failure to effect some kind of reform can fortify the stasis within a policy monopoly. Witness, for example, Bill Clinton’s initial attempt to reform American health insurance.

Fourth, policies reflect, and then shape, dominant social constructions not only of problems, but persons associated with those problems (Ingram and Smith 1993; Schneider and Ingram 1997). By delineating certain actors as worthy, government legitimates political and social action on their behalf; importantly, it also enables those actors to mobilize on their own behalf. Of course, the reverse is also true: by identifying certain people as authors of their own misfortunes, government not only justifies official inaction (or punitive or paternalistic action), it also creates social, political, and psychological obstacles for their own mobilization.

The literature on social movements also establishes a few key points:

First, it helps to understand the distinct properties of a social movement. To begin, Tarrow (1998: 4) offers a concise and useful definition of movements as “collective challenges based on common purposes, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities.” Key points of this definition are worth emphasizing: a) the broad frame allows the inclusion of both institutionally-oriented and extra-institutional activity; b) a social movement is larger than any particular event, representing a challenge extended in time; and c) a movement operates in some kind of dynamic interaction with mainstream politics (see also Meyer 1990: 8).

Second, it helps to remember that movements are not unitary actors. Although it is a grammatical convenience to speak of “the” movement or “a” movement, social movements are comprised of coalitions of actors, acting on some element of shared goals, and competing for prominence in defining claims and tactics. To understand the influence of a social movement, we need to track a range of actors operating in a variety of venues over some period of time (Meyer and Rochon 1997).

Third, because the process of staging a large challenging movement entails building networks and coalitions among groups and individuals who do not always act in concert, it’s important to consider the circumstances in which diverse actors are likely to work together. In the last few decades, scholars of social movements have increasingly focused on the circumstances under which movements emerge or fade. The focus on context, or “political opportunity structure,” highlights the relationships among mainstream politics, public policy, and protest politics (see, e.g., McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1978).

Fourth, openings from government can provoke or preempt protest, depending upon the positioning of a particular constituency. The premise on which such analysis is based is that the prominence of particular issues, coalitions, and tactics in a social movement is largely influenced by the prospects for those issues and constituencies within mainstream politics. The initial framing of political opportunity theory postulated that the relationship between systemic openings and extra-institutional protest was curvilinear (e.g. Eisinger 1973; Tilly 1978). Groups

that can achieve their goals without protest politics will do so; groups that have little prospect for influence regardless of their tactics are unlikely to mobilize. Thus, government action to bring some constituencies into the polity and respond to their claims can spur protest, while the same pattern can dampen the prospects for protest for other constituency.⁶

Fifth, social movement organizations work not only to achieve policy reforms, but also to support themselves (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Piven and Cloward 1977; Wilson 1995). Organizers prospect for issues and tactics mindful of two distinct audiences: authorities and supporters. One is a target for influence, another a source of support and resources. The audiences place conflicting pressures on groups. To the extent that groups can cooperate on goals and tactics, they maximize their influence with policymakers; to the extent that they can differentiate themselves from other groups, each can carve out an advantaged niche for cultivating support (Zald and McCarthy 1987).

Sixth, cooperation and differentiation among groups within a movement coalition changes over time, at least partly a function of resources. When public attention to an issue is growing, and resources are relatively readily available, groups are more likely to cooperate, and groups without a primary interest in an issue area are likely to develop one.⁷ In looking at the nuclear freeze movement, for example, a range of groups, ranging from community associations to churches to service organizations, expressed a newfound interest in nuclear weapons and foreign policy issues. When public interest wanes, however, groups are more likely to differentiate, pursuing different elements of connected issues, or abandoning movement issues altogether. Coalition dynamics thus accelerate and accentuate the dynamics of a cycle of protest (Meyer and Imig 1993; Tarrow 1998).

Seventh, particularly in liberal polities, social movement activists can build institutions for pursuing their claims over a long period of time. Organizations forged during the peak of social mobilization generally survive, even if at the expense of the movements that gave rise to them (Piven and Cloward 1977; Wilson 1995). At the same time, those organizations provide an infrastructure for subsequent mobilization (Meyer and Whittier 1994; Minkoff 1995).

Activists can also find or build safe spaces within mainstream institutions, including political institutions. Mary Katzenstein (1998) describes such safe spaces as habitats, noting that women following on the second wave of the feminist movement in the 1970s, established habitats in particularly unlikely places, including the Roman Catholic Church and the U.S. military. In addition to being safe places for particular ideas or constituencies, such habitats can also serve as venues to promote particular policies (e.g., Clemens 1997; Hansen 1991). One effect of the civil rights movement, for example, was the establishment of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which served as an habitat not only for African-Americans, but, subsequently, also for other ethnic minorities and for women (Burstein 1985; Minkoff 1995). The establishment of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in 1963, partly as a response to the peace movement (Meyer 1993), and the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970, partly a response to the growing environmental movement (Switzer 2001), have also sometimes provided habitats for individuals concerned with moderation in the arms race or in environmental despoilation. The degree to which these institutions have legitimately represented the interests and ideas of the movements which gave rise to them has been cause of debate, and merits more systematic research.

Eighth, the time during which a social movement can capture the political imagination of a large number of mainstream actors, including elected officials and the mass media, is limited, and it is useful to think about the process of decline in terms of coalitions. During a movement's peak, many actors identify with a particular identity or set of claims. Importantly, this link stretches to unite actors in mainstream politics with those engaged in extra-institutional politics. As this peak passes, a large number of actors members of this broad coalition drop out in different ways, with the largest number leaving the issue for another more urgent or promising, or take a break from political activity altogether. Some groups and individuals abandon the compromises necessary for coalition work or interchange with mainstream politics in favor of articulating their own claims more sharply and strongly. Others leave the broader goals and extra-institutional tactics of social movements to focus instead on incremental gains within mainstream political institutions (Sawyers and Meyer 1999). Taken together, this process of decline comprises political institutionalization (Meyer and Tarrow 1998), as the polity and members of a social movement implicitly negotiate a more routinized and less disruptive relationship, one that can be maintained over a long period of time.

What we know about movements and with policy suggests that this process of political institutionalization is appropriate focus for research on their interconnections. Both substantively and processurally, institutionalization describes the ways in which changes in policy can be managed without provoking movement response, and the ways in which movement actors are either included in the policy process as legitimate actors, or effectively dismissed from mainstream political relevance.

The central points, established in distinct literatures on policy and movements, enable us to build a fuller synthetic approach to understanding the connections between movements and policy. Indeed, this connection provides a sort of diagnostic of the process of democracy in advanced liberal states. I now turn to the sorts of influences that movements and policies can affect on each other.

Policy and Movements: A Taxonomy of Effects

Policy, the actions of government, can do a large number of things to influence the development of social movements.

First, policies can directly affect the permeability of the political arena, by making voting easier or harder, by mandating citizen participation in hearings (or not) by including a range of actors as legitimate in the polity, government actions create openings or closings that affect the attractiveness of protest and social mobilization as a strategy. Peter Eisinger's (1973) insight on the curvilinear nature of political opportunities emphasized that people are unlikely to protest when they believe they have more direct, and less risky or costly, means to exercise influence on policy (see also Tilly 1978; Meyer 1993). By opening institutional venues for participation broadly can diminish the attractiveness and likelihood of protest as a political strategy. At the other end of the curve, repression can raise the costs and risks of protest to the extent that few people are willing to broker them in pursuit of political influence that appears unlikely. Of course, some individuals less concerned with the politics of their acts than with witness or actualizing some vision of justice, may take extraordinary actions regardless of the risks or to

particular constituencies, but it only occasionally that such dramatic actions spread to a broader public and create what we think of as a social movement, and those circumstances are to a large degree influenced by exogenous factors. Importantly, openings are frequently not equally available to all constituencies, and states can enable or exclude particular constituencies, creating categories of actors such that opportunity is raced, classed, and gendered, by public policy (e.g., McAdam 1982; Costain 1992; McCammon et al. 2001; Banaszak 1996). Policy thus creates constituencies and the terrain on which strategies are made.

Along the same lines, government action can advantage certain strategies of political organization. McCarthy, Britt, and Wolfson (1991), for example, show that American tax law encourages activist citizens to form non-profit groups, and government policy mandates certain elements of the organizational structure and allowable tactics that those groups will employ (also see Minkoff 1995). Changes in the laws regulating the funding of American elections in the 1970s, for example, encouraged groups to adapt certain forms of organization and to embrace particular tactics, including direct mail fundraising and campaign contributions (Berry 1989). By surveillance, repression, and harsh criminal penalties, government can also foreclose particular tactics. Federal and state enforcement of civil and criminal penalties on anti-abortion demonstrators who blocked clinics, mostly shut down peaceful clinic protests during the early 1990s, even as some anti-abortion activists adapted more violent and disruptive tactics (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). In effect, public policies about participation can channel advocates to adapt particular tactics, organizational forms, and even claims.

Policy also creates causes or grievances. Social movements express concerns about something that government is doing—or not doing. We can think of some kind of regular stasis, a time at which most people are content to express their concerns about policy through institutional politics or not at all. Changes in policy, or changes in exogenous conditions that seem to mandate a change in policy, provide the concerns which drive people into mobilization (Meyer 2002). Importantly, the concerns can take root because of articulated policy reforms or because of changes in policy implementation that suddenly make some policies more salient. The example of the draft makes this point clearly, but we can also think about policies on a range of other areas as well, ranging from zoning hazardous waste disposal to conducting a military action abroad.

The framing of policies also creates constituencies, which can be organized along a variety of lines. At once, constituencies can be united by belief or ideology, supporting some kinds of programs and not others. Any policy area potentially mobilizes constituencies on either side of a given policy, depending upon the salience of the issue. Nuclear power development in the United States, for example, as moved dramatically on the public agenda, depending upon a variety of factors, including the price of gas and reporting on the last nuclear power accident. Constituencies can also be united more directly by a policy that identifies certain persons as included or stigmatized. Social security, for example, which pays benefits to older Americans, unites a large number of people as recipients with a common interest. If not for the program, such people might be more commonly mobilized (or not) on the basis of other affiliations. And people can be demobilized and disempowered by the construction of policy as well (Banaszak 1996; Mettler 1998).

If the policy process is often the source of social protest mobilization, it is also the outcome. Immediately, social protest mobilization, in interaction with institutional politics, can produce increased expenditures or regulations in an established policy area, such as welfare spending or environmental regulation (e.g., Piven and Cloward 1971). Protest movements can also create new categories of policies, instituting payments or other benefits to a newly recognized political constituency (e.g., Amenta 1998; Amenta, Dunleavy, and Bernstein 1994) or regulation of a previously unregulated area (e.g., Switzer 2001).

Mobilization can affect policies that enable new actors to be present in the implementation and subsequent renegotiation of policies. Weed (1995), for example, shows how crime victims, by mobilizing for themselves, not only changed criminal justice policy, but ensured their own presence in negotiations for subsequent reforms in criminal justice policy. In other words, they won a place as established actors within the policy domain. Monitoring the implementation of policy affects the success and evaluation of that policy, and the subsequent mobilization by affected persons (Andrews 2001). The absence of mobilization from a recognized constituency can also have an effect on policy (Imig 1995; Sawyers and Meyer 1999). By altering the balance of power within a policy domain, organized interests can change outcomes—or not.

Seeing policy outputs as the outcomes of social movements is important, but movement effects are not limited to direct policy influence. Indeed, there is some dispute in the literature about how movements affect influence on the policy process. For Piven and Cloward (1977), the threat of social and political disruption, in the context of electoral uncertainty, leads policy makers to adopt reforms directed to re-establishing public order, and those reforms may include concessions to protesters. For Amenta (1998), movements' demands are mediated by political institutions; social unrest provides sympathetic legislators with an opportunity to enact their preferred programs. Burstein (1999) focuses on the specific mechanism of public opinion, arguing that elected officials in a democracy must, in some fashion, respond to public opinion, and social movements can influence policy by changing public opinion or by heightening the salience of a particular issue.

These observations all focus on fairly short term effects on policy. Others note that policy outcomes are only one dimension of social movement influences, and that movements can influence culture, values (Rochon 1998), organizations, subsequent social movements, and individual participants (Meyer and Whittier 1994). Even failing short-term influence on policy, by altering deeply-held values, or practices, in the larger society, movements alter the composition of the political environment in which policy will be made.

Toward a Broader Model

The listing and categorization of mutual effects in the previous section underscores the importance of studying the web of interactions between challengers and the policies they challenge. It does not, however, constitute a theory that can guide subsequent research. In this section, I take steps in that direction, again building on theory developed by scholars of social movements and scholars of public policy.

For heuristic purposes, it makes sense to start with policies as the precursor to protest, even as we must acknowledge that there is a bit of a chicken and egg question about whether policy precedes protest or vice versa. Clearly, at this point there is a reciprocal effect, and analysis can productive start with either source. At the same time, the existence of the modern state is a necessary precondition for the emergence of social movements (Tilly 1978; Tarrow 1998), and states necessarily are defined by the capacity to make and implement at least a minimal set of policies, particularly running a military to defend national borders, and taxing to support itself.

Most of the time, policy is supported by stalemate, rather than satisfaction, with key figures in the policy monopoly committed to working within institutional politics to achieve marginal reforms in the direction of their preferred ultimate policy. Advocates of progressive taxation, for example, work to include some elements of progressivity, while their opponents work to flatten the tax code in steps. Most of these debates and discussions are invisible to a larger audience, and routine participation in politics supports the range of advocates on both sides of the issue in their efforts to manage conflict. Elected officials and bureaucrats are linked, via formal and informal networks, to each other, and to a small set of engaged actors outside of government, including leaders of established interest groups, party activists, and independent experts, often in the academy. The broader general public is sufficiently satisfied, disinterested, or disaffected so as not to be a relevant factor in the day-to-day management of the policy area.

Although largely invisible, activists committed to some alternative vision of policy work, largely below government's radar, and mostly insulated from the political debate or public attention. Some of these groups are unsuccessful in repeated attempts to reach a broader audience by mounting series of campaigns that still fairly marginal. Others, when leaders judge circumstances unfavorable for mobilization, focus on preserving the organization and its values, worrying less about mobilization (e.g., Taylor 1989). In either case, they are disconnected from influence in mainstream politics, culture, or the policy process.

Threats to the stability of a policy monopoly, which might arise from political, policy, or other critical events (e.g., a foreign war; a nuclear reactor accident), create an opportunity for mobilization that can reach a broader audience, and for the potential renegotiation of the boundaries of the policy monopoly. Under such circumstances, political mobilization becomes more attractive to citizens because the pattern of institutional politics has changed. It may suddenly appear permeable to new claims (for example, civil rights for African-Americans) because of explicit articulated changes in policy or the presence of new actors in the policy monopoly, and this can spur mobilization that seems like it might be effective. Alternatively, the reconfiguration of a policy network, often signaled when the institutional losers go public for support (e.g., Meyer 1990), because institutional politics appears inadequate and citizen efforts appear necessary.

In either case, the key change is in the composition of the relevant policy monopoly. Either by including new actors with extra-institutional ties, or by excluding established actors—who then seek movement ties, a change in the policy monopoly effectively changes the prospects for extra-institutional mobilization. During peak period of mobilization, connections between the margins and the mainstream define social movement politics. The positions and

criticisms of those on the margins no longer appear irrelevant and can reach a larger audience; and government policies, unusually visible and salient to a broad public, appear malleable.

Volatile social movement mobilization alters the calculations of institutionally-oriented actors. The presence of an active movement can make previous patterns of managing policy untenable, and make long-simmering ideas appear suddenly viable. At the same time, institutional actors need to address a broader audience, more frequently and with more detail, than is normally the case. Thus, during the period of anti-apartheid protests in Washington, DC, President Reagan was forced to explain and rearticulate his own policies toward South Africa far more than any of his predecessors, all of whom had managed essentially the same policy. Enhanced external scrutiny of policy, and of the policy-making process, can make more substantial reforms possible.

Social movements can then influence policy by altering the composition of a the relevant policy monopoly, by replacement, conversion, recreation, or reconfiguration. Replacement is the mechanism perhaps most fundamental to conventional democratic politics, throwing a rascal out and empowering an ally instead. The direct influence of movements in electoral campaigns is generally on the margins, but margins can matter.

The threat of that marginal influence is one factor that can lead to conversion. Exposing a recalcitrant legislator or administrator to the power of a movement's ideas—or, alternatively, the power of the idea's promoters, means altering the composition of a policy monopoly without replacement. It is not important, for the purpose of this analysis, to determine whether conversions, such as George Bush's decision to oppose abortion rights in 1980 or Jesse Jackson's decision to adopt a pro-choice position in 1983, come from opportunistic calculus or reflective soul-searching. In either case, the policy process and product are altered. Indeed, the calculator may be more likely to display the zeal of the newly converted, and perhaps to operate more effectively and strategically within institutional politics.

Creating a new policy monopoly, by opening a new policy area, is a third way to reconfigure, often radically, the balance of power on an issue area. In this regard, the creation of institutional habitats mentioned above, such as the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the Environmental Protection Agency, or the Department of Agriculture, means the permanent institutional presence of concerns that would previously be represented idiosyncratically, dependent upon the concerns and skills of elected officials. Political mobilization can encourage established policy makers to create these habitats, perhaps to institutionalize, perhaps to confine, but once established, they develop lives, constituencies, and concerns of their own. Jenness and Grattet (2001) show how the establishment of a new category of crime enabled new political actors to make other sorts of claims, quite apart from criminal justice.

Finally, political mobilization can reconfigure existing policy monopolies by establishing new actors within it. Weed's (1995) tale of the victim's right's movement shows how the newly institutionalized presence of actors formerly spectators in the courtroom changes what happens not only in the courtroom, but also in the legislatures. Similarly, Matthews' (1994) analysis of the feminist anti-rape movement shows how political mobilization by feminists against rape altered the content and implementation of policy, as well as establishing new institutions, rape crisis centers, which ultimately negotiated an alliance with local law enforcement agencies (also

see Gornick and Meyer 1999). Essentially, activists in both cases expanded the scope of a political conflict to alter the bias in the arena.

But changes in policy alter the conditions under which activists mobilize. As policymakers respond to social movements, the environment in which the movement makes claims--the "structure of political opportunities" in particular--changes, advantaging and foreclosing particular claimants and strategies of influence. Response from government to a movement includes not only narrowly defined policy outputs, but also rhetorical appropriation, official recognition of movement groups or individuals within a policy domain, and the placement of movement actors within elected or bureaucratic positions. Thus, feminists campaign against rape as the most threatening and egregious element of patriarchy was turned into a public safety effort. From eliminating oppression of women, activists and government established a working relationship, in Matthews's (1994) terms, with the goal of "managing" the problem of rape. At the same time, government's appropriation of the campaign against rape, its resources in controlling the image of the issue, and in enlisting and employing activists as service workers, made it more difficult for activists to mobilize.

The institutionalization of movement concerns can mean changed policies, if not what activists ask for; it also makes it harder for activists to mobilize on the same terms. Generally, organizers see their most visible policy demand, be it banning DDT, passing a Voting Rights Act or an Equal Rights Amendment, or freezing the nuclear arms race, as the leading edge in a broad movement to remake the world substantially. Institutionalization of concerns means, to varying degrees, settling for something less than that. Thus, appointees to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency learn to speak only of the first objective in the agency's name, and opponents of pollution learn to negotiate acceptable levels of contaminants. And feminists learn to rely on legislators who make it easier to convict and punish rapists, even if ignoring larger oppressions in society.

Social movement coalitions respond to these changes, often by redefining themselves, their claims, and their allies. Policy reforms split movement coalitions, and fracture and demobilize movements. Because participating groups enter social movements with a range of goals, it is not surprising that they would view acceptable outcomes differently. Coalition dynamics are inherently unstable, as participants are constantly aware of the changing viability and value of particular alliances. In liberal polities, where political institutions are relatively permeable, coalitions are particularly fluid.

A very recent example illustrates this point. Whereas laboratory research on the human genome rarely gets much public attention or understanding, periodic decision windows offer an invitation for concerned groups to weigh in. The decision about whether to fund research on human stem cell lines revisits, and reconfigures, old coalitions from the abortion debate. Research scientists, absent en bloc from the abortion debate, weighed in heavily on the question of stem cell research, mobilizing in their behalf, victims of a range of diseases that might be treated with new scientific discoveries. Some portion of the anti-abortion movement, seeing research on discarded embryonic cells (or embryonic cell lines created to be research material) as disrespectful for life, threatened to mobilize if such research were legitimated.

Each side offered the threat of more substantial mobilization, something imaginable only if the policy outcome were sufficiently egregious. President George W. Bush sought to craft a

decision that, above all else, preempted this kind of mobilization. By responding to the concerns of all constituencies, the administration crafted a response intended to create an equilibrium point that made extra-institutional mobilization and continued vigorous opposition unattractive to each opposing side. It is not clear at this point if this effort was successful for the short term, but we have seen, immediately, activists on each side decrying the decision, even while announcing that it is acceptable—for now. The opting-in of some portion of each coalition is good news for the administration that wants to manage and institutionalize the issue. For the longer term, however, it is clear that the stability of this policy point is temporary. Scientific advances—or setbacks—will test the viability of the Bush compromise and reinvigorate—or fracture—movement coalitions on each side.

Conclusion: Thinking Dialogically

I started this paper with the intent of synthesizing the findings of scholars of policy and scholars of social movements, to draw close focus on the interchange between movement coalitions and the polity. The permeability of the polity to social movement actors and ideas makes participation in such movements a recurrent feature of democratic life. But while the role of social movements in contemporary democracy is well-established, the viability of particular movement coalitions can not be.

Changes in policy, particularly in the composition of policy monopoly, means the terrain on which social movements mobilize is constantly shifting. Opportunities for inclusion always threaten to undermine the urgency of particular claims or the perceived necessity of extra-institutional mobilization to make them. Government does not have to satisfy even the largest part of a movement coalition to make subsequent social mobilization much more difficult.

For elected officials, understanding this reality means the constant search for equilibrium points on policy to stabilize policy monopolies and to palliate political constituency, giving enough to quell disturbances, but not so much as to generate disruption from the other side. For activists, understanding this interaction means making hard calculations about the costs, as well as the benefits, of concessions on matters of policy and political conclusion. Realizing that the prospects for continued mobilization are limited, in no small part due to the dynamics of coalition politics, should help in considering the trade-offs inherent in cultivating institutionally oriented allies, recognizing better deals, and negotiating them.

And for analysts, the recognition of the ongoing interaction between social movements and policy makers means adopting an analytic focus that accepts a long time frame for mutual influence, and an iterative approach to the process of political institutionalization.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Deana Rohlinger for research assistance on this project.
2. The term, “distant issue” is from Dieter Rucht (2000), who uses it to refer to political issues that don’t directly affect those who mobilize for them.
3. De Benedetti (1990: 308) emphasizes that efforts to reform, then end, the draft were accelerated by implementation problems and inequities in the United States, and military discipline problems in the field, including increased “fragging” of officers by conscripts.
4. Of course, there are all kinds of additional “spillover” effects we could find (Meyer and Whittier 1994). By allowing student deferments, the draft encouraged thousands of young men to stay in college—or even graduate school, and others to marry and have children. Pressures on faculty to save the lives of their students may be the root of the much-maligned grade inflation on American college campuses.
5. Burstein (1991) refers to basically the same network as a “policy domain,” a term adopted by Jenness and Grattet (2001) and Sawyers and Meyer (1999). Hecló (1978) uses the term, “policy network.”
6. Middle-class constituencies, who mobilize on issues such as environmental protection or peace, appear most, are most likely to mobilize in response to bad news in policy, and exclusion from political decision-making, whereas constituencies that mobilize on the basis of some ascribed identity, such as race or gender, appear most likely to mobilize in response to inclusion (Meyer 2001).
7. Of course, the expansion of a movement coalition breeds the conditions for subsequent dissension within it, even about basic terms and goals (e.g., Benford 1993).

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