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Mobilizing Technologies for Collective Action

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Activists are at the core of most collective action. Sometimes they act alone, but often they seek to draw others into collective action. This chapter is about how a committed and highly motivated activist (or small group of activists) tries to mobilize collective action by a larger group of interested, but less committed and motivated people. It closely examines the choices activists face and the consequences of those choices. We argue that the problems involved in getting other people to support collective action directly affect the kinds of goals activists pursue and the tactics they choose.

The processes we analyze arise in social movements, charitable causes, some kinds of politics, and voluntarism. This is the collective action sector: parents volunteer time in their children's schools and lobby their school boards for more money; some march in the streets for civil rights, and others walk door to door for the Heart Fund; people hold neighborhood fairs and national telethons. Of course, there are important differences between protest actions and voluntarism, but we should not permit these differences to obscure their similarities.

Movement activists and nonmovement volunteers often arise from the same cultures and subcultures and draw on a set of shared knowledge about collective action. This cultural knowledge base will be a pervasive theme in our analysis. Although the theme is general, our empirical examples will be drawn from white middle-class activists in the United States in the late twentieth century. This group has been the backbone of many social change movements and charities. But we do *not* choose them because of their role in "the sixties." We are more interested in understanding participation during "normal times," when most people are busy with their jobs, families, and ordinary routines. The sixties represent a different, if not unique, kind of historical period, one in which a population collectively

develops the belief that change is necessary and possible and experiences a heightened level of mobilization. During such periods, people almost mobilize themselves. Activists are busy trying to keep up with the masses rather than prodding them to action (see Oliver 1989a for a theoretical analysis of such periods). In such times of excitement, many of the fundamental processes and relationships described in this chapter should hold, but the overall higher level of mobilization would also make the texture of action very different from the descriptions we paint.

COLLECTIVE ACTION AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEM

This chapter concerns what people *do* in social movements, not *why* they join. We define activists as people who care enough about some issue that they are prepared to incur significant costs and act to achieve their goals, and we take their existence as a given.[1] Each activist is defined with respect to a specific issue and might well be a nonactivist on other issues. We assume that people can and do care about *collective* goals and act on them as if they were personal benefits. We take the goals as subjectively determined and often linked to important elements of people's self-identities. This assumption is in line with virtually all available empirical evidence about collective action participants.

Even though activists are highly motivated and willing to spend their own time and money on an issue, they have to worry about costs and benefits, about whether the resources they begin with are enough to accomplish their goals. Because they incur real costs and sacrifices through their actions, they must consider whether their sacrifices will make a significant difference in the things they care about.

Sometimes activists have sufficient time and money of their own to accomplish their goal and may not try to mobilize others. Social movement scholars often ignore these kinds of cadre actions when they think about social movements, even though they are actually a very important part of any movement. Here, however, we assume that the activists do not start with enough resources and must spend time and money on mobilization and organization, hoping that this investment will attract enough time or money from others to accomplish the goal.

We also assume that *non*activists will *not* contribute unless explicitly

1. For the record, however, we do *not* believe that instrumentalist cost/benefit considerations explain activist commitment. In general, we believe that activist commitment comes from the creation of an activist identity through a progressive socialization process involving the creation of solidary ties (see Oliver 1983, 1984; McAdam 1986; John Wilson 1973).

asked by an activist or implicitly "asked" by an event (usually generated by an activist) that presents an occasion for decision making (Collins 1981). Nonactivists never initiate action. They may respond to opportunities created by activists, but it is not certain that they will contribute.

The most important thing to understand about nonactivist contributions is that they are *small*: a ten-dollar contribution to the Sierra Fund; a call to a member of Congress; an hour on an informational picket line. Because it is so small, each contribution produces only a small difference in the outcome, most often a difference so small that it is technically "unnoticeable" (see Olson 1965). The *cost* of the contribution, though large enough to be technically noticeable to the contributor, is also typically small enough to range from trivial to minor. Often the largest components of the cost are the ancillary details that affect the convenience or comfort involved in making the contribution. Is a preaddressed envelope provided? Is it raining? Are one's friends participating? Even when the cost is very small, however, a cost-benefit calculus would say that contributing is not worthwhile since the cost is compared to an even smaller increase in benefit. Mobilizing nonactivist contributions is thus always plagued by the noticeability problem.

On the other hand, the very fact that the cost of a contribution is low means that it can often be overcome by other incentives, such as wanting to feel good about oneself or not wanting to argue with an acquaintance. Furthermore, because the contribution is not very consequential for either its costs or its benefits, the person is not likely to spend much time thinking about the decision or worrying about whether it is the best or most reasonable decision given his resources and values. In short, nonactivist contributions tend to be "flaky": they are not strongly determined by consistent principles but are highly subject to the impact of a wide variety of extraneous and idiosyncratic factors.

To simplify matters, we conceive the population of nonactivists as composed of three subgroups: those with zero, low, and high probabilities of contributing. The zero-probability group contains people who oppose the collective goal or who are decidedly indifferent to it. Their behavior is well determined: they will *not* contribute.

The high-probability group comprises people who do attach a significant positive value to the collective good and are willing to make small contributions to it. These individuals have an interesting dynamic. They can be said to be motivated by "purposive incentives" (James Wilson 1973)—that is, by the incentive of feeling like the right kind of person who contributes to the right collective goods (see Oliver and Furman 1990). Making these contributions often reaffirms a central self-identity such as radical,

conservative, feminist, or socially conscious humanist. The strong positive feeling they have about making the contribution easily exceeds its cost.

The problem is that this kind of person is frequently asked to make contributions and cannot respond positively to *all* these requests without making large sacrifices. For all their self-identity as people who care about collective goods, these nonactivists are not willing to give all their money away to good causes. Nor are they willing to give up all their leisure time and reduce their commitments to their jobs or families. If they were, they'd be activists. Thus, the high-probability group must choose among requests for their small contributions, and their choices will be underdetermined and unpredictable.

Finally, the low-probability group supports the goal but has no strong identity with it. Normally they are classic free riders. Deterred by the noticeability problem, they will usually not contribute. But because they nominally support the goal and the cost of contributing is low, even small incentives for giving, such as persuasive or personal appeals or recent news events, can tip the balance.

Activists face two key uncertainty problems in mobilizing nonactivists. First, they often lack sufficient information to sort a population accurately into the zero-, low-, and high-probability groups. Second, even among the high-probability group, they rarely know exactly who will contribute to a given appeal, so that mobilization usually involves wasted effort. Uncertainty and incomplete information are central problems for activists trying to mobilize others and central to a theory of mobilization.

The fact is that activists rarely know in advance how a mobilization will turn out. The decisions of nonactivists are so underdetermined that it may be impossible accurately to predict even the aggregate outcome from a large population with a known proportion of high contributors. For the activist, this adds up to potential frustration if contributions are much lower than anticipated. The activists, who care deeply, know that other people also support the issue. They often find it hard to understand why all these supporters are not contributing.

Many common features of mobilization are best understood as ways to manage or contain this uncertainty. But there are always surprises, and the ultimate success of a movement campaign often is due more to luck or the ability to react quickly than to planning. This does not mean that activists give up planning. Quite the contrary. Real activists spend much of their time planning events, making predictions about consequences, and, if they are wise and experienced, making contingency plans for a wide range of possible results of their efforts.

Knowledge and Technology

Activists cannot just throw abstract time and money at a goal, nor can they abstractly mobilize others' time and money: they have to pursue a specific course of action. They must choose from among those actions they know how to do and perceive as options. Thus, knowledge is central to the matter of how activists act. Although we are putting a slightly different theoretical slant on the data, it is well established empirically that the existing state of knowledge sharply constrains collective actions, and the discovery or invention of a new way of doing things can suddenly alter activists' choices (see James Wilson 1973; John Wilson 1973; Tilly 1978; McAdam 1983; Marwell and Oliver 1984; Oliver 1989a for related arguments).

Useful knowledge about how to do collective action comes in packages we call *action technologies*—sets of knowledge about how to do a particular action and what its consequences are likely to be. The word *technology* is important, because it connotes knowledge that may not be generally available. We use the term *technology* in the anthropological or cultural sense, in which everyone has some technological knowledge. We do not mean that technologies are held only by experts. We do assert, however, with what we believe is strong empirical support, that *some* kinds of technologies found in social movements *are* held only by experts, and we discuss the significance of this pattern when it holds.

For analytic purposes we distinguish between two types of action technologies. *Production technologies* are sets of knowledge about ways of achieving goals, such as lobbying, demonstrations, strikes, or attending a public hearing. *Mobilization technologies* are sets of knowledge about ways of accumulating the resources (such as time and money) necessary for production technologies. The distinction between production and mobilization is useful analytically even when the two are confounded in practice. We will show how and why the available mobilization technologies can often constrain the possible production technologies available to a cultural group.

Most collective action theory takes the goal toward which these technologies are directed as a given (e.g., Olson 1965; Oberschall 1973; Oliver, Marwell, and Teixeira 1985), but this is very misleading. Activists are usually committed to something more broad and diffuse than a specific policy goal. They are committed to world peace, women's rights, ending racism, or helping the homeless. Even a goal like "achieving quality education at Crestwood Elementary School" is actually rather diffuse. We can use the term *collective issue* for each of these goals, precisely because it is

broad and ill defined.[2] For any collective issue, there are a large number of more specific goals that concerned activists would consider relevant, such as passing a pay equity bill or requiring the arrest of spouse abusers. Some of these goals are themselves broad and subsume a variety of even more proximate goals, such as reducing the weight of seniority in determining pay equity. Everyone who cares about the issue might consider most of these goals worthwhile, but there might be disagreement about priorities. For other goals, there may be disagreement about whether they are worthwhile, useless, or even counterproductive. Feminists have disagreed in the past about protective legislation and in the present about whether maternity leave should be different from paternity leave and whether divorce laws should be gender-neutral.

It must be recognized that specific goals, production technologies, and mobilization technologies are chosen together, as packages. An activist's selection of a particular goal within a broad issue domain is always based in part on her knowledge of a production technology that she believes has a chance of achieving that goal. Similarly, her choice of a production technology usually depends on her knowledge of a mobilization technology that she thinks can provide the required resources. Without doing violence to its common use, we may use the term *strategy* for the whole package of a goal, a production technology, and a mobilization technology. The strategy package is limited by constraints on each of its elements. Constraints on or choices about mobilizing translate directly into constraints on goals and tactics.

The production technology also defines the amount and kind of resources that need to be mobilized. We have previously shown the importance of the form of the "production function" (Oliver, Marwell, and Teixeira 1985) relating inputs of resources to outputs of the collective goal. On the low end, it matters whether there is some threshold level of contributions that must be achieved before the collective action can have a positive effect. If so, there is both a risk of wasting activist and nonactivist resources on an action that accomplishes nothing and a bandwagon effect once the threshold is exceeded. On the high end, it matters whether the function has some saturation point beyond which contributions are less worthwhile. Collective actions oriented toward well-defined goals are usually closed-ended. Mobilizations of money, especially by professionalized organizations seeking to justify their permanent existence, are often

2. This is very similar to McCarthy and Zald's (1977) definition of a social movement as a set of preferences. We have argued elsewhere (Marwell and Oliver 1984; Oliver 1989a) that social movements should be viewed as sets of actions, not as attitudes, and thus need a term for the general attitude that a social movement is oriented toward.

for more open-ended goals like curing cancer, feeding the hungry, or achieving world peace.

Time and Money as Resources

A production issue that has received scant attention previously concerns the vast difference between time and money as resources for collective action. Resource mobilization theory and our own collective action theories have typically confounded the two, assuming that they are more or less interchangeable. But time and money have markedly different analytic properties.

Time is the ultimate resource for collective action. The entire collective action sector is labor-intensive. Incidental amounts of money may be needed for supplies and rents, but the basic production activities always involve people doing things. When money is raised for collective action, it is used mostly to buy time.[3] Thus, we need to understand time as a resource and the nature of the relation between time and money.

Analytically, time is not at all like money. Money is perfectly fungible; it doesn't matter from whom it comes or in what amounts. You can spend it on anything you want. If you have a thousand dollars, it doesn't matter whether one person contributed all of it or twenty people contributed fifty dollars or one thousand people contributed one dollar each. You can spend your thousand dollars on paper, hourly wages for labor, or long-distance telephone charges.

Time is very different. There really is no such thing as abstract time. It always matters *who* is participating, and a time contribution can never be physically removed from the giver. This has several consequences. First, different people have different skills, different acquaintances, different levels of status or influence. The performance of any job is affected by who does it, although, for example, the effect is smaller for envelope stuffing than for speech making. Second, given the finite nature of time, there is a true physical limit to how much time a person can spend on collective action. Third, in some technologies it is better if fewer people make larger contributions than if many make smaller contributions. Lobbying is an example. Effective lobbying requires getting to know people and establishing trust. One person working full time is much more effective than twenty working two hours a week. Creative intellectual tasks such as writing and research are best done by fewer people making larger contributions. Finally, the opposite holds in other technologies: in mass actions

3. This statement is particularly true for social movements, the subject of this book. There are charitable groups who use money more directly, but they are not our central focus here.

such as marches, petition signing, or voting, each person can make only the same small contribution, and what matters is how *many* have contributed. One person marching for a thousand hours is not the same as a thousand people marching for one hour.

Economists, and those influenced by economists, imagine that time and money are equivalent because you can pay people for their time. But, at least for collective action, they are wrong. The substitutability between time and money in collective action is highly constrained, and these constraints are a central force shaping the forms of collective action that are possible. Of course, volunteer labor can substitute for some paid services, as when volunteers save postage by delivering leaflets. And there are some jobs that can be done by either paid workers or volunteers, such as staffing phone banks.

The problem is that purchased time has to be in the form of jobs. On the demand side, the central work of most collective action requires long-term ongoing involvement and cumulative experience and knowledge, not occasional labor. On the supply side, most people want well-defined permanent full- or half-time jobs, not a couple of hours of work a week on an irregular basis. Although collective action often involves the sporadic need for low-skill activities that can be performed by either volunteers or hired help, within white middle-class circles, the promise of payment is often ineffective in finding someone to do the work. Donating your time to a worthy cause can be satisfying. Being offered a wage well below your regular wage to do a job with lower status than your regular job is an insult, not an inducement.

The ability to attract volunteers always signals the attractiveness and power of a cause, and for many kinds of participation payment would delegitimate the action. Even if one could mobilize a mass demonstration by offering to pay every participant twenty dollars, the fact of payment would destroy the demonstration's political impact. It is clear that canvassers would collect less money if the public were aware that they are paid.

For these reasons, money cannot be easily converted into time when the technology requires many people making small contributions. Such technologies usually require the direct mobilization of volunteer time or the restructuring of many small tasks into larger ongoing jobs for which people can be paid regularly. On the other end of the continuum, it is very difficult for unpaid volunteers to handle the kinds of jobs that require large ongoing commitments. They can do it only if they do not have paid jobs occupying their time, and they can afford to be full-time volunteers only if they have alternate sources of support. Thus, there is a strong pull for the big jobs to be done by full-time paid staff.

The processes that lead nonactivists to participate and give time are usually different from those that elicit contributions of money. The nature of the costs that activists incur in mobilizing time on the one hand and money on the other differs, and it is usually difficult to do both at the same time with the same technology. (See Oliver and Furman 1990 for related arguments.) Thus, quite different technologies have been developed for the two tasks. Each available technology imposes constraints on strategies.

HOW MOBILIZING TECHNOLOGIES CONSTRAIN STRATEGIES

We turn now to a survey of the empirical terrain of currently available mobilizing technologies for white middle-class Americans, showing how each necessarily imposes constraints on the possibilities for action.

Mobilizing Money

The decision to rely on money as a resource propels activists into a world dominated by professionals, moderation, and ritual. McCarthy, Britt, and Wolfson (1990) show that most ways of raising money require tax-exempt status, which itself sharply constrains production technologies. Social movement and protest organizations find themselves constrained to act like charities. Apart from this very general (and very important) constraint, the specific technology chosen for fund-raising adds more constraints.

Regardless of the issue, be it conventional or radical, when white middle-class activists need to raise money, they do it in a small number of well-defined ways that fall into two groups. The first consists of highly professionalized technologies: large-donor fund-raising, seeking grants and contracts, direct mail solicitation, paid canvassing, and telemarketing. Payroll check-off plans, religious fund-raising, and the use of 900 numbers in phone solicitation belong in this group as well. In the second group are technologies that typically use volunteer labor. These include fairs, rummage and bake sales, brunches, car washes, walk- or runathons or other versions of the same idea, volunteer canvassing and telephoning, raffles, ad books, and selling items on commission. Also in this group are benefit concerts, fun runs or walks, and social events such as dances or dinners. The volunteer technologies are more diverse than the professional, and we may have missed a few, but the list is still short. People raise money for charities and social movements in virtually identical ways. Organizations may be radical or conservative at the level of ideology and program, but in their fund-raising approaches, they are more similar than different.

Professionalized Technologies. The professionalized technologies all involve a great deal of highly specialized information that is largely independent of the issue or goal. One may see evidence of this in the proliferation of for-profit consulting and marketing firms serving the nonprofit sector.[4]

The important analytic divide among professionalized technologies is whether contributions are solicited from a few large donors or from many small contributors. The former requires less overhead, but large contributors tend to exert control over what is done with their money. The technologies for getting money from many small contributors are more expensive, more risky, and more shaped by marketlike processes (McCarthy and Zald 1977), but they produce a pool of money with virtually no strings attached. All professionalized technologies seek to damp down uncertainty by creating a fund-raising system that provides a stable and reliable baseline income. One approach to reducing uncertainty is to employ a mixture of fund-raising techniques. But because these techniques are so specialized, this mixed approach can be used only by organizations large enough to have many professional employees with expertise in different specialities. Larger, older organizations are better able to do this, but none is immune from risk.

Large-donor fund-raising and seeking grants and contracts are similar techniques, differing primarily in whether the donor is a person or an organization (foundation, company, government agency) and whether a written proposal is required. These technologies have relatively low overhead. One person can handle them on a part-time basis, and a relatively high proportion of available time and money can be channeled into the group's program. Large-donor fund-raising can be performed by inexperienced activists if they are bold, and some organizations fund sketchy proposals from novices with interesting ideas. Nevertheless, most grants and large contributions go to activist groups employing professionals experienced with one or another technology.

Dependence on large donors usually forces activists to change strategies as elite concerns and resources shift. Even though it is very common for activists to have goals other than those they can sell in a proposal and to try to divert resources into their other goals, reporting and accounting procedures increasingly constrain them to do what the donor was willing to pay them to do. Thus, these technologies can support only goals and production technologies that appeal to wealthy individuals or organizations.

4. E.g., see the paid advertisements in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, "The Newspaper of the Non-Profit World."

The technologies that depend on small contributions have the opposite configuration. Small contributors wield essentially no control over the activists and their choice of strategies, but all technologies for obtaining small contributions involve high overhead costs.

Direct mail solicitation is an old technology that has been professionalized and elaborated by the computer revolution. The technology draws directly on advances in direct mail advertising. It is used by almost every kind of group—political movements on the right and left, pro- and anti-abortion groups, colleges, medical charities, organizations to save children in the third world. All the major social movement organizations use direct mail including NAACP, NOW, Sierra Club, SANE/Freeze, and so forth.

The key to direct mail success is a good list of high-probability contributors. Unselective mailings usually lose money. Larger well-established organizations have their own lucrative mailing operations, but smaller or new organizations must rely on someone else's list and thus usually contract their mailing out to for-profit firms working on commission. In the highly professional business of direct mail, the "rich get richer," and many of those who are getting rich are the professional mailers.

Direct mail contributors may be called members, but they exert little or no control over the organization, except indirectly through refusing to give more money. In some cases they may have a strong identification with their organization and may gain a sense of participation and satisfaction in loyally contributing when asked. These loyal contributors provide the large direct mail organizations with a relatively stable funding source that permits them to hire large staffs and pursue long-term strategies. In the social movement sector, direct mail as a mobilizing technology tends to be most compatible with national lobbying and public education as production technologies. Both can be conducted by professional staffs in national offices. Some of the strongest direct mail organizations also have active local chapters, and among many of these, the local chapter receives a share of the money given by contributors in its area. But national offices cannot create or sustain chapters, which depend on the entirely different dynamics of voluntarism (Oliver and Furman 1990).

Less depersonalized is paid door-to-door canvassing for social movement organizations, a complex technology that was invented in 1973 by Mark Anderson, the founder of Citizens for a Better Environment. It was an explicit application of the technology of door-to-door encyclopedia sales to organizations seeking to benefit the public. The key innovations are organizational: setting up the canvass as a year-round full-time occupation, paying the canvassers a commission or bonus for the money they raise, and firing canvassers who fail to collect a specified minimum amount

of money every day. Canvassing diffused through environmental and consumer movement organizations to the peace movement and other groups (Oliver 1989b).

Because canvassing unselectively targets every household in its geographic area, it is very inefficient and costly. It succeeds at all only because a person on the doorstep is much more persuasive and has a much higher probability of obtaining a contribution than does an impersonal piece of junk mail. Its cost is also somewhat compensated for by the fact that it can find new high-probability contributors. Canvasses are often linked with direct mail or telemarketing operations, which can take advantage of these new contacts. Paid canvassing has not spread into the charitable sector, partly because it is considered unethical and partly because it is so financially inefficient. In spite of its extremely high overhead (which often approached 100 percent by the late 1980s), however, it can support a large cadre of trained grass-roots organizers. Canvassers not only solicit money and tell people about the organization's goals and activities but ask them about their needs and concerns and reactions to the organization. Canvassing organizations have often been able to mobilize simple mass actions like postcard mailings, and canvassers have sometimes acted as organizers of local groups to participate in demonstrations or direct action campaigns. Canvassers are trained in exactly the skills needed for electoral canvassing, so that political candidates often "borrow" them.[5] Thus canvassing combines mobilization and production. This can be clearly seen in one variant, in which professional community organizers support themselves by canvassing part time.

Telemarketing is exploding everywhere in the nonprofit sector. Most telephone solicitation uses lists of high-probability contributors, although some issues with mass appeal can be sold to the general population. Some telephone solicitors are volunteers, but these are usually for short-term annual drives. Most are paid, and telemarketing is increasingly performed by specialized for-profit businesses that sell their services on commission to nonprofit organizations. Telephone solicitors sell almost anything including Citizens Action–type environmental groups, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, peace initiatives, and religious causes, along with every conceivable variety of charitable and political cause, from conservative to radical.

Our analytic framework makes the reason for the telemarketing boom transparent. It is much less costly than door-to-door canvassing but has almost the same appeal of a real person making the request. Telemarketing can be either selective or unselective and thus can be tailored to an issue. Exotic causes can be sold to specialized lists; those with broader appeal (like Mothers Against Drunk Driving) can be marketed to the general population. The telemarketing business is booming, and the only cloud on the horizon is increasing consumer resistance as many people are coming to define calls at home as an invasion of privacy.

5. Because tax-deductible organizations cannot be involved in electoral politics, lending out canvassers requires laying them off so that someone else can hire them.

We can only briefly mention the three other professionalized fund-raising approaches. There is a long-standing tradition in virtually every organized religion of soliciting offerings or requiring tithes, which has reached an apex of professionalism with televangelism. Although not directly raised by activists, the money derived from religious offerings supports many kinds of collective actions including charitable groups, community organizing, and certain political causes and issues, such as anti-abortion groups, peace groups, anticommunist groups, the Sanctuary movement, and certain political candidates.

The United Way raises money for a wide variety of charitable causes through payroll deductions. For existing charities, obtaining a share of the United Way budget is a form of large-donor fund-raising, since it involves writing an application to a governing board. In a few locales, more politicized groups have fought for and won the right to have alternative funds listed as options on payroll deduction forms. Once they have won the right to be on a form, the member organizations of a fund obtain money for relatively little cost, as long as they can successfully negotiate agreements about how to divide it up.

The newest professionalized technology, 900 numbers, appeared while we were preparing this chapter, and we do not know all its implications. Widespread advertising induces the public to call a 900 number; the call itself automatically entails a charge, and an additional contribution, to be included in the caller's telephone bill, is solicited. It appears to be a technology for the large well-funded national organizations.

Professionalized technologies raise large amounts of money, but all impose severe constraints on collective action. To be tax-deductible, and virtually all are, they must file for 401-3-c status and promise not to be disruptive or to seek to influence elections or legislation. Large-donor fund-raising depends on the whims of the wealthy or powerful. Direct mail and telephone solicitation are subject to the vagaries of market processes and are increasingly controlled by for-profit firms. Canvasses require extraordinarily high overhead and can remain solvent only by strictly enforcing daily quotas of money to be raised.

Professionalized technologies tend to be designed to raise as much money as possible on an indefinite time horizon. They require open-ended

strategies with diffuse and long-term goals that are unlikely to be immediately realized. Goal displacement is ubiquitous, in that the top priority of paid staffs becomes ensuring that the organization has a stable funding source. Each type of professionalized fund-raising approach calls for a different kind of specialist and a different kind of organization. Once these are in place, an organization is committed to a particular type of mobilizing technology and cannot easily change it. Thus, in ongoing organizations, the mobilizing technology is usually taken as a given, and new goals and production technologies are chosen in large measure for their compatibility with the way the organization raises money.

Volunteer Fund-Raising. The list of fund-raising methods that use volunteer labor is longer and more diverse, but it is still short. Although successful new technologies rapidly diffuse, people rarely invent whole new ones. They use existing technologies, perhaps adapting or modifying them a little. People easily recognize the basic technologies and the principle of modifying them. If someone asks you to buy a frozen pizza for world peace, you know what they mean, even if it sounds a bit bizarre. Once you've filled out a pledge card for a runathon or bike-athon, you understand the idea. Now we have bowl-athons and hop-athons, cartwheel-athons and, probably, sing-athons.

All these technologies have the same general structure. Core activists spend resources to create some event with well-defined roles that can be played by volunteer participants. The activists spend more resources mobilizing nonactivist participants for these roles. Nonactivists then pay to participate in the event. After expenses for rents, insurance, and so on are deducted, the profits are used to fund the collective action. Activists keep expenses low, partly by soliciting in-kind donations of food, raffle prizes, or whatever else is needed, so that there is little risk of losing much money. The volunteer participants get involved in the organization and actually do something that helps achieve the group's goals. Although even in this sector there are professionals who run fund-raising events on commission, all-volunteer events are still common.

Activists pick a particular technology the first time because they have learned of it elsewhere and think it is feasible. They usually encounter inefficiencies or make mistakes, but if the event basically works, the activists are motivated to build on that experience and use the same technology again. Organizations tend to ritualize their fund-raising events, holding annual fairs or raffles, for example. Ritualized events are much less costly, because the activists can draw on their own experience or the codified experience of their predecessors. Volunteers and customers are easier to

mobilize because they already understand the event and the roles they are to play.

In contrast with the professionalized fund-raising technologies, these volunteer-based technologies raise relatively little money and sometimes require a large expenditure of volunteer labor. Whereas the professionalized technologies often gross millions of dollars, the volunteer technologies gross in the thousands of dollars and sometimes much less. To some extent, this comparison is unfair, since the professionalized technologies are ongoing year-round operations, and the volunteer-based fund-raiser is a single event. But the groups involved usually consider the amount they raise adequate. Organizations that do not have paid staff, or whose staff is supported by a grant or another organization, do not need much money. What they usually need more of is time.

Mobilizing Time

Collective action always requires the mobilization of time. In professionalized collective action, money is mobilized from nonactivists to pay activists to do the collective action. Here we discuss the technologies for mobilizing participation by nonactivist volunteers in activities like attending meetings, marching in demonstrations, circulating petitions, or helping with fund-raisers.

Technologies for mobilizing time from nonactivist volunteers are much less professionalized and much less well defined and elaborated than those for mobilizing money. Although the term *technology* comfortably fits fund-raising, it is awkward when applied to inducing people to participate because the knowledge involved is more diffuse and less specialized. But it is knowledge nonetheless, or at least shared cultural understandings about who can ask other people to do something under what circumstances. In this section, we attempt to subject the obvious to analysis.

Limited and Open Requests for Participation. Being asked to spend two hours attending a protest demonstration or working at a school fair may sound the same as being asked to attend a two-hour organizational meeting: both involve two hours and apparently differ only in people's taste for one kind of activity versus another. But attending a meeting, especially an organizational meeting, implies a willingness to attend future meetings and to participate in the group's projects. That is, it is tantamount to becoming an activist on the issue in question and implicitly involves a much greater time commitment—a commitment that is of uncertain extent and indefinite duration.

For this reason, a lot of the technological knowledge about mobiliz-

ing volunteer time is about organizing and dividing labor and structuring events and jobs so that people can be invited to participate in well-defined and limited ways. The technology of direct action organizing provides information about how to create well-defined dramatic protest actions that can accomplish a goal in an exciting way and leave participants wanting to do more. The general technology of voluntary fund-raising events involves subdividing jobs into well-defined units like organizing the food concession or bringing six dozen cookies to a bake sale. A technology often used in the charitable sector but only occasionally used in social movements involves creating long-term jobs that involve only a few hours a week, such as calling for Jewish charities for three hours every Tuesday night or being on call for the rape crisis center three nights a month. Many people who are unwilling to make the major short-term open-ended commitment that activism entails are quite willing to make a long-term commitment to a well-defined task. They also are aware that failing to keep their commitment will cause a noticeable problem for the event or the organization's mission.

Technologies for Communicating the Request. If activists are to mobilize volunteer participants, they have to invite them to participate, most commonly by explicitly asking for their cooperation, although sometimes by creating a visible event that by its existence invites others to participate. After deciding what to ask participants to do, activists must decide whom to ask and how to ask them. There is technology and cultural knowledge implicit in this decision, even if sometimes it is so mundane that one is essentially naming the obvious. But let's work through the possibilities anyway. The first is to contact personally and ask for help unselectively from all available nonactivists or a random sample of them. This approach is so expensive and inefficient that it is almost never used for requesting time contributions for anything more demanding than signing a petition. Its use represents an absence of technological knowledge in extremely uninformed novice activists, or it can reflect desperation after the more usual approaches have failed. It is, however, a useful baseline against which technologies for mobilizing volunteers can be measured.

The second choice, and the first real technology, is to ask the people you have some personal acquaintance with or those on some list of high-probability contributors, such as members of the organization sponsoring the action or people who live near the site of a proposed toxic waste dump. Those who are both acquaintances and high-probability contributors will have very high probabilities of agreeing to contribute and are always the starting point for this technology. If this group does not provide enough contributors, the next choice between other acquaintances and other high-

probability contributors varies a great deal depending on the nature of the issue, the subculture of the activist and potential participants, and the social organization of the two groups.

Mobilizing time requires being willing to ask people to do things and knowing something about the people you are trying to mobilize. The personal link is very important. It is easier to ask a friend for help than a stranger. It is considered legitimate in most white middle-class circles to ask for participation from a stranger whose interest in an issue can be taken as publicly known, although even here there are etiquette barriers. Strangers cannot politely be asked to do things that would violate stereotyped gender roles, for example. Strangers also find it relatively easy to provide excuses for refusing the request.

This technology, "ask the people you know or who you know are interested," is efficient but inherently limited. It is so efficient that we can safely predict that if the pool of activists' acquaintances or known high-probability contributors will yield enough participation for the production technology, all mobilization efforts will be limited to these groups. But it is limited, because it ignores everyone who is not already known to the activists, either personally or by virtue of being on the high-probability list. And one's friends tend to become exhausted by repeated requests.

A second technology activists commonly use for large marches and demonstrations is federated mobilization. This involves personally approaching the leaders of existing organizations, who are persuaded to solicit the participation of their members. For example, many actions in the civil rights movement were coordinated this way through black churches (Morris 1984). Although the principle is not difficult to understand, federated mobilization is not part of the general cultural knowledge of nonactivists; it is usually something people learn through experience. Federated mobilization expands the scope of mobilization, but it depends on the cooperation of other leaders and reaches only those who are members of the contacted organizations.

An example of a highly specialized form of federated mobilization is the technology for organizing a large demonstration. Demonstration initiators negotiate with established organizations to form an ad hoc sponsoring coalition. A compromise platform and speakers' list is drawn up. The coalition partners take responsibility for getting their own members to attend and, sometimes, for trying to bring in other participants. If the march is national, coordinators in each locale make arrangements for group transportation. The initiators take responsibility for general publicity, obtaining permits, training marshals, and the host of other details that are part of the contemporary technology of demonstrations.

Direct or federated, most mobilization of time involves contacting people

already known—"preexisting channels of communication." Only personal contact through an established social relation has a high probability of obtaining a nonactivist's contribution of time. The obvious constraint imposed by this technology is that it is very difficult to transcend existing social relations and forge new ones.

Activists often try to escape this constraint through written communication in an appropriate mass medium. The possibility of doing this is part of the common culture, and naive activists often try it. What those who lack technological knowledge do not know is that this approach usually fails. Written communications from unknown others have very low credibility. Credible publicity most often comes from objective news stories, so activists attend classes to learn how to write press releases that will get printed or stage media events that will attract television reporters.

More specialized impersonal media sometimes successfully mobilize volunteers. These include mass media public service announcements about upcoming events of presumed general interest, "volunteers needed" columns or bulletin boards utilizing much the same format as help-wanted advertisements for paid jobs, and newsletters or memos sent to members of an organization with a known interest in the issue. These impersonal mass communications can sometimes pull in new participants who are not known to the original activists. The response rate to these approaches is always very low, but even a low response can provide a significant cadre of workers, especially when prior organization creates well-defined roles to fill. These approaches depend upon prior organization and communication channels and a shared cultural understanding of the concept of volunteering for a common cause or attending a public event.

It is worth stressing that these impersonal channels occasionally strike an unexpectedly responsive chord. Publicity can sometimes lead people generally to start talking among themselves about an event and the issues involved. Occasionally, these conversations snowball and lead to a widespread collective understanding that whole networks of people will participate. The problem for the activists is that they cannot create these conditions or even know in advance whether they exist. Thus, when this happens, activists are usually caught off guard and are overwhelmed with the unexpected numbers of participants who strain their plans and resources.

Professional Organizing. There is not room here to provide any serious analysis of professional organizing, but we can indicate where it fits in the picture. An organizer creates an organization (formal or informal), a structure within which others can participate as activists or

nonactivists. Although there are many volunteer organizers, there are also many paid professional organizers, who principally organize labor unions or community groups. Once a formal organization exists, a person may keep the title "organizer" for the job of organizational maintenance. Many books and schools teach the subject. The concept of technology clearly fits this arena, and there are a number of competing theories and ideologies of organizing. The usual theory is that the professional organizer has no goals of his own but rather seeks to learn people's interests and concerns and helps them define their own goals. Various schools of organizing differ in the extent to which they believe organizers need to raise the consciousness of people and give them new ways of understanding what their interests are.

Organizers spend much of their time fostering or creating new social relations so that the effective personalized technologies for mobilization can transcend initial social barriers. They also transfer technology and teach people how to raise money or create structures that can effectively use volunteer time. Depending on their orientation, they may also spend a great deal of time in "political education," talking to people with the goal of persuading them to reinterpret their circumstances and interests.

The ideology of organizing sharply distinguishes the organizer from indigenous leaders, asserting that leaders should make policy and organizers help to execute policy. But, in fact, organizers and paid staff often function as leaders, and when indigenous leaders are strong, they can conflict with the staff. Professional organizers usually create organizations that depend on the continuing presence of paid staff, although in some instances the paid staff members are indigenous to the group, and outside organizers leave the scene. Thus, professionally organized groups are propelled into the world of fund-raising and its constraints.

CONCLUSIONS

Our central thesis is that technologies for mobilizing resources impose tight constraints on the forms of action that are possible. Once a person or group is using one technology, it is not easy to switch to another. Groups that are structured to raise money are not well structured to mobilize volunteers, and vice versa. Raising money through direct mail tends to concentrate power in a central national office; raising money through canvassing creates large cadres of canvassers in local areas who must be managed and motivated. Volunteers mobilized for a protest demonstration are not usually available for fund-raising.

Within technologies, activists talk the language of this chapter. Profes-

sional activists worry about mailing lists, market saturation, labor costs, and the mass appeal of issues and programs. Volunteer activists try to think up new attractive events or execute the ritualized ones well. They mobilize through the people they know: the same people go to the same events, and they exchange the currency of mutual obligation—I went to your event, so you come to mine.

This is not the stuff of transcendent social change, not the stuff of revolution or upheaval. This is the world as it looks most of the time, in the nonturbulent troughs in a protest cycle (Tarrow 1989). As far as we can tell, the volunteer world looks about the same as it always has in relatively quiet times. The walkathons are fairly new, but fairs and sales and benefit concerts have been around for years. Cultural information passes readily between protest or social change organizations and charitable organizations. Actions are organized primarily through preexisting social networks. Much activity is cyclical and ritualized, and most innovation takes the form of applying old models to new circumstances or making small changes in existing models.

On the professional side, however, there are enormous differences between the present and the past. There have always been some paid activists (see Oliver 1983 for a review), but the past thirty years have seen a proliferation of professionalized technologies and professional activists. For the individuals involved, the pull into professional activism is (or at least was initially) an ideological commitment to social change and a self-identity as an activist. But the technologies have clearly taken on lives of their own and have seemingly become virtual ends in themselves, especially for the private firms serving the sector.

We do not want in any way to imply that professionalized mobilization has replaced spontaneous grass-roots mobilization. Our arguments have made it clear that we do not think professionalized mobilizations can create grass-roots mobilizations of volunteers, because mobilizing money is usually inconsistent with mobilizing action. But the processes through which new actions emerge are still in place and operating, although we seem to be in a quiet period. It is nevertheless worth asking whether these professionalized organizations will prove to be irrelevant to grass-roots mobilization, supportive of it, or competitive with it.

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12

Consensus Movements, Conflict Movements, and the Cooptation of Civic and State Infrastructures

John D. McCarthy and

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Much recent work on social movements has demonstrated how collective action emerges from and is shaped by preexisting patterns of social relations among the adherents of social movements. The leaders of social movement organizations often direct their efforts at gaining access to, or "coopting," these civic and political infrastructures, which were originally created for other purposes. In this chapter, we develop a distinction between consensus movements and conflict movements as a means of achieving a better understanding of the conditions that favor or discourage the success of cooptation efforts.

Conflict movements have long been the focus of most research and, as a consequence, the source of our major theoretical insights about the emergence, mobilization, and change of social movements in modern societies. Conflict movements—such as the labor movement, poor people's movements, the feminist movements, and the civil rights movement—are typically supported by minorities or slim majorities of populations and confront fundamental, organized opposition in attempting to bring about social change. *Consensus movements*, on the other hand, are those organized movements for change that find widespread support for their goals and

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