References

Bennett, W. Lance. 2005. "Social Movements Beyond Borders: Understanding Two Eras of Transnational Activism." Pp. 203–226 in *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*, edited by D. della Porta and S. Tarrow. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Chesters, Graeme. 2004. "Global Complexity and Global Civil Society." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Non-Profit Organizations* 15:323–342.

Fox, Jonathan. 2002. "Assessing Binational Civil Society Coalitions: Lessons from the Mexico-U.S. Experience." Pp. 341–417 in *Cross-Border Dialogues: U.S.-Mexico Social Movement Networking*, edited by D. Brooks and J. Fox. La Jolla, CA: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California–San Diego.

McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. 2001. *Dynamics of Contention*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

McCarthy, John D. 1996. "Constraints and Opportunities in Adopting, Adapting and Inventing." Pp. 141–151 in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures and Cultural Framings*, edited by D. McAdam, J. McCarthy, and M. Zald. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, Jackie. 2005. "Building Bridges or Building Walls? Explaining Regionalization among Transnational Social Movement Organizations." *Mobilization* 10:251–270.

Smith, Jackie, Charles Chatfield, and Ron Pagnucco, eds. 1997. *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Smith, Jackie, and Tina Fetner. 2007. "Structural Approaches in the Study of Social Movements." In *Handbook of Social Movements: Social Movements Across Disciplines*, edited by B. Klandermans and C. Roggeband. New York: Springer.

Starhawk. 2001. "Response to 'Manifest of Anti-capitalist Youth against the World Social Forum.'" Electronic Communication.

Part VII

What Do Movements Do?

Introduction

If you are in a social movement, the most pressing question you face is: what is to be done? How do you choose tactics that will help your cause? How do you recruit more people, attract the news media, favorably impress decisionmakers? Tactical decisions are the real "stuff" of social movements. Yet, oddly, few scholars have taken a serious look at how these decisions are made, how or when protestors innovate in their tactics, or what the tradeoffs are between different kinds of tactics. Most of those who have written about issues like these have been practitioners rather than academics.

One reason scholars have avoided the question of tactical choice may be that movements have a hard enough time simply surviving. For researchers in the mobilization tradition, this was a serious accomplishment for movement organizations. As a result, they examined how these organizations raised funds, took advantage of tax laws, and recruited members. Similarly, process theorists concentrated on movements (workers, civil rights) that faced considerable repression from the state, so again simple survival was an accomplishment.

Scholars have also avoided questions of tactics because choices made in the heat of conflict are hard to explain in a rigorous fashion. Much depends on the instincts of movement leaders, who themselves may not always be able to explain why they made one choice rather than another. Decisions are sometimes made fast, and it may be difficult to reconstruct the process later—when being interviewed by researchers, for instance.

Tactical choices are usually made during the course of interaction with other decision-makers: with one's opponents, of course, but also with the police, the media, legislators, potential allies, and many others. To take just one example: before many rallies or marches in the U.S. today, leaders negotiate with the police over where they will go, what they will do, how many will be arrested, and so on. Leaders must also make tactical choices with regard to their own followers: how to placate disaffected factions, how to keep members coming back to future events, how to increase the membership. As a result, any given action will probably be designed for several different audiences at the same time. An action that satisfies one may not please another.

Civil Society Civil society refers to the sphere of association and conversation which falls outside the direct control of the state and other authorities. Civil society encompasses the dialogues and interactions through which political views are formed and through which groups come to understand their interests vis-à-vis those of other groups and the state. Civil society includes voluntary associations, friendship networks, religious groups, independent newspapers, and the like. Social movements generally emerge out of civil society and often attempt to expand it, and movements are themselves an important component of civil society.

In regard to their opponents, protestors hope to change behavior through persuasion or intimidation, and to undermine their opponents' credibility with the public, media, and the state. With state agencies, protestors hope to change laws, policies, regulatory practices, administrative rules,

Repertoires of Protest What do protestors do to further their cause? In any given society, there are a handful of routine ways in which people protest. In modern Western societies, for example, most social movements choose from a surprisingly small number of tactics, especially petitions, demonstrations, marches, vigils, and sit-ins (and similar forms of civil disobedience). This is our "repertoire of protest." Widespread knowledge of one or more of these routines both facilitates protest and constrains the tactical options available. At the same time, expectations about what protestors are likely to do may also help authorities contain or suppress protestors. A repertoire is learned, shared, and occasionally modified. Innovative forms of protest are not easy to invent, even when they would seem to be helpful or necessary. According to Charles Tilly, who first coined the term, a repertoire is shaped by a society's sense of justice (which a tactic must appeal to or at least not violate), the daily routines and social organization of the population (a tactic should fit with these), their prior experience with collective action (so they have the know-how), and the patterns and forms of repression they are likely to face (which a good tactic will minimize). Tactics endure because they are relatively successful and/or deeply meaningful to people.

and to avoid repression. In the courts protestors typically strive to have unfavorable laws struck down. With both courts and police, they hope for tolerance of their own protests. Social movements seek to use the news media to spread their message, and sometimes to undermine their opponents. Protestors may also approach professional groups, such as engineers, to change their standards. They may seek allies in other protest groups. And from the public at large, they may hope for sympathy, contributions, changes in awareness. Finally, they even have goals for their own members: personal transformations and continued fervor for the cause. In other words, movements have a lot of goals to balance in their tactics.

As a result of this complexity, scholars have usually dealt with strategy and tactics by trying to make them a structural issue. Charles Tilly developed the concept of a repertoire of collective action to explain the range of tactics available to protestors in any given society in a particular period. Most social movements in that society will then draw on the same repertoire, because it is largely structurally determined. But this concept says little about how any given leader applies the existing repertoire: why a march rather than a letter-writing campaign?; why wait a week before responding to your opponents' actions rather than acting immediately?; why choose one cultural frame rather than another for a speech?

But Tilly's instincts are solid: protestors adapt their tactics to their resources, opportunities, and daily life. James Scott (1985, 1990) has described what resistance looks like in slave and peasant societies, where there is close surveillance and few legal and political freedoms. He calls these tactics "weapons of the weak." Only with industrialization and urbanization did protestors have newspapers and (later) television at their disposal. Workers lived and worked more closely together, so planning and coordination were easier than they had been for peasants. Large numbers of people could be mobilized. A broad range of tactics—from the formation of national organizations to mass rallies—became available to movements in industrial society which had not been to peasants.

Protestors in different societies face different political structures within which they must operate, even controlling for level of economic development. In an article that helped define the process approach, Herbert Kitschelt (1986) argued that antinuclear protestors in Europe and the United States chose different strategies because their countries contained different kinds of political machinery. French protestors could not bring lawsuits as their American counterparts did, in part because they lacked the grounds on which to sue. French political parties are also less open to new grassroots issues, compared to American parties, and so French antinuclear protestors could not

Free Spaces Most efforts at change face resistance or repression, so it is often helpful to have a safe setting in which to meet, exchange ideas, and make plans—a space sheltered from the prying eyes of opponents and authorities. Churches played this important role in the U.S. civil rights movement, although schools, recreational facilities, and other organizations can also function as free spaces. The most influential free space of the twentieth century was, ironically, a prison. On Robben Island, in the bay off Cape Town, hundreds of South African political prisoners were put together, isolated from outside networks but permitted to converse freely with one another. As Mandela biographer Anthony Sampson puts it, "It was like a protracted course in a remote left-wing university."

work through the electoral system either. As a result, they took to the streets more quickly than the Americans did, forced to work outside the system because that system lacked openings for input.

Our first reading is by one of the greatest community organizers of the twentieth century, Saul Alinsky. His tactical principles are not unlike those of theorists of war: try to take your opponents by surprise, try to make them think you are more powerful than you are. Try to use tactics your own followers enjoy and are familiar with. The idea of keeping the pressure on is important, because you never know where and when your opponent will be vulnerable or will make a blunder. The greater the pressure, the greater the chance you will trip them up. Alinsky also recognizes that it is usually necessary to portray your enemy as an utter villain, a real flesh-and-blood person who can be blamed, not an abstract principle. This can lead to strong emotions and polarization. Alinsky's rules are quite general, but they can be helpful reminders to social movement leaders.

If tactical choice is a difficult topic to model rigorously, that of tactical innovation is even more so. In describing civil-rights sit-ins, Aldon Morris exemplifies the resource-mobilization approach to tactics. He is not so much concerned with the origins of this tactic, nor the strategic thinking behind its use. Rather, he is concerned to show the indigenous organizations and social networks through which it rapidly spread, primarily arguing against a view of protest as spontaneous eruptions. In this excerpt Morris also touches on another important issue: the emergence of "movement centers" with resources, social ties (especially preachers and NAACP activists), and regular meetings (usually at churches). Other theorists have called these "free spaces," places relatively free from surveillance where oppositional ideas and tactics can develop.

Mary Bernstein examines the use of identity claims as a form of strategy, inserting culture into a political process framework. She contrasts "identity deployment" that emphasizes the differences between a group and the majority with those that emphasize the similarities. The major determinants of which kind of identity rhetoric a group will favor are the group's political interactions with their opponents and with the state, as well as the group's own organizational structure. In the process tradition, her concentration is on external audiences, who may favor very different messages from the ones movement members prefer.

Gay Seidman and Robert Brym look at the use of violent strategies by social movements and try to dispel some of the myths surrounding these. They point out that guerrilla warfare and terrorism are rational political responses to state violence and conflicts over territory, not the handiwork of psychopaths or religious fanantics, as the media often suggest—though religion may play an important role in political violence. Scholars as well as journalists, Seidman points out, are often hesitant to emphasize the rationality or achievements of political violence, in part because of their moral discomfort with it. In the case of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, this has led some

scholars to avoid discussing violence altogether and to portray the movement, misleadingly, as a nonviolent civil rights struggle like that in the United States. But political violence, like war, is routine politics by other means.

Javier Auyero, in the final excerpt of the section, emphasizes the connections between routine politics and protest strategies. By closely examining a protest in Argentina, Auyero shows how this protest grew out of the routine politics familiar to people with a specific local history. In so doing, Auyero also shows how political strategy is shaped by the biography of activists—by their experiences, memories, cultural understandings, and identities.

We should note, finally, that even though social movements are defined, in part, by their use of "extra-institutional" means to pursue political goals, protest can also take place *within* institutions. Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, in her book *Faithful and Fearless* (1998), looks at how feminists have worked within religious institutions to pursue gains for women. She focuses on the kinds of language feminists use, the rhetorical claims they make, but at the same time she precisely describes the settings in which they make these claims. She calls these feminists' "habitats" in the institutions they hope to change. "Free spaces" *outside* normal organizations, in other words, are not always necessary for movements to flourish; sometimes they can thrive *within* dominant institutions. Movement messages (in both words and actions) and the audiences they are aimed at remain the essence of what social movements do.

The choice of strategies and tactics is certainly an area in which additional research is needed. One limitation has been that most scholars have thought about movements as their unit of analysis: how each grows, operates, and affects the world around it. But tactical choices are made in close interaction with others in the same "field of conflict." Similarly, the internal structure of movements may affect their ability to innovate and choose the most effective courses of action.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do social movements in different societies and different periods of history have different repertoires of collective action available to them?
2. How and why do new tactics spread?
3. What roles do "movement centers" and other "free spaces" play in social movements?
4. In what ways can identity claims be seen as strategic?
5. Why do some movements use violence to obtain their objectives? Under what conditions do you think this is justifiable?
6. How are the strategies activists employ connected to more routine politics, and to activists' everyday lives?

23 Protest Tactics

Saul D. Alinsky

We will either find a way or make one.
— *Hannibal*

Tactics means doing what you can with what you have. Tactics are those consciously deliberate acts by which human beings live with each other and deal with the world around them. In the world of give and take, tactics is the art of how to take and how to give. Here our concern is with the tactic of taking; how the Have-Nots can take power away from the Haves.

For an elementary illustration of tactics, take parts of your face as the point of reference; your eyes, your ears, and your nose. First the eyes; if you have organized a vast, mass-based people's organization, you can parade it visibly before the enemy and openly show your power. Second the ears; if your organization is small in numbers, then do what Gideon did: conceal the members in the dark but raise a din and clamor that will make the listener believe that your organization numbers many more than it does. Third, the nose; if your organization is too tiny even for noise, stink up the place.

Weapons of the Weak Today, social movements are one common way in which people protest against something they fear or dislike. But organized movements are rare in many other kinds of societies, especially where those in power are likely to repress any organized efforts. In most agricultural societies, like those of feudal Europe, peasants or slaves have been watched carefully by landlords or overseers. In situations of close surveillance, people find other ways to resist. They may work very slowly or poorly when doing tasks for their lord or master. They may do the wrong thing and "play dumb" when confronted by their bosses. They may subtly sabotage a construction project. At night they may poach or pilfer from local elites. They also tell jokes or spread gossip about their superiors as a way of undermining their power. For thousands of years, slaves and serfs have used "weapons of the weak" like these to get back at those exploiting them. See Scott (1985).

Always remember the first rule of power tactics:

Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have.

The second rule is: *Never go outside the experience of your people.* When an action or tactic is outside the experience of the people, the result is confusion, fear, and retreat. It also means a collapse of communication, as we have noted.

The third rule is: *Wherever possible go outside of the experience of the enemy.* Here you want to cause confusion, fear, and retreat.

General William T. Sherman, whose name still causes a frenzied reaction throughout the South, provided a classic example of going outside the enemy's experience. Until Sherman, military tactics and strategies were based on standard patterns. All armies had fronts, rears, flanks, lines of communication, and lines of supply. Military campaigns were aimed at such standard objectives as rolling up the flanks of the enemy army or cutting the lines of supply or lines of communication, or moving around to attack from the rear. When Sherman cut loose on his famous March to the Sea, he had no front or rear lines of supplies or any other lines. He was on the loose and living on the land. The South, confronted with this new