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Social Movements and the Institutionalization of Dissent in America

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter explores how social movements have influenced institutional politics—with particular reference to dissent—in America. The chapter looks at the process of political institutionalization offered by the American political system to various claimants. It considers how American politics helped perpetrate inclusion and influence, and how historic movements have responded to those opportunities. It then describes four distinct social movements in America: feminism and women's rights, civil rights and abolition of slavery, labor movement, and environmentalism. It argues that these movements are not self-contained and insular, but interconnected in the way they affect one another, American political institutions, and other social movement challenges. It also discusses five interrelated ways through which the process of institutionalization takes place: individuals, ideas, laws, new bureaucratic institutions, and formal recognition as nongovernmental organizations. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the ongoing development of social movements as a recurrent feature in American politics.

Keywords: social movements, institutional politics, dissent, America, feminism, women's rights, civil rights, abolition, labor movement, environmentalism

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THE protest tradition in America seems set in stone—quite literally. Off to one side of the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Mall now features a statue of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, inscribed with memorable words from a speech he delivered to an historic rally from the steps of the Memorial. The architecture of the monuments surrounding the Mall implies a similar permanence in American political life, one that misses the consequences and contingencies that characterize the impact of social movements in American life. There is some irony in the enshrinement of King in the pantheon of American heroes. He was a movement leader, not an elected official, who was subject to federal surveillance and harassment during the significant public part of his life, jailed dozens of times, and pilloried by mainstream politicians. Designing and placing the statue was contentious politically, with arguments about the image, the sculpture, and the quotations; the resulting monument, revised several times, reflected compromise (Rothstein 2011). Yet, the statue on the Mall necessarily implies a formal recognition of the importance of the civil rights struggle that belies the contingency of movement influence on the development of American politics and political institutions. Once established on the Mall, however, at least one version of King's legacy becomes a feature of American politics and culture that subsequent social movement leaders try to navigate. The contingencies resulting from contentious politics have consequences. (In this way, the monument is much like the laws, institutions, and policies that confront new challengers; Orren and Skowronek 2004.)

Activists on both the left and right have claimed King's mantle as moral conscience and prod of American politics, even while promoting policies at odds with those of the civil rights leader. But it's not only King's legacy they claim. Social movement activists in America portray themselves as inheritors of a tradition that values citizen activism, and dates back to the American Revolution, including dramatic events like the Boston (p. 564) Tea Party and Shays's Rebellion. Recently, that same Mall has been the site of large rallies protesting taxation under the rubric of the "Tea Party." Some protesters brandished the Gadsden Flag ("Don't tread on me"), designed 250 years earlier to symbolize the unity of the American colonies in opposition to Britain. Others donned colonial costumes topped by tri-cornered hats, meant to evoke the romance of imagined histories of revolt and institution building. And opposing movements that advocate contrary policies also assembled on the Mall, focusing their ire on those Tea Partiers.

Of course, the Tea Partiers and their opponents were hardly alone in assembling on the Mall to make claims on the federal government. Protests in Washington, rallies on the Mall, and social movements more generally, have become a staple of American politics and culture, and managing them has become routine for authorities (Barber 2004; Kryder 2007; McCarthy, McPhail, and Smith 1996; Meyer 2014; Meyer and Tarrow 1998). The basic repertoire of the social movement is widely diffused across causes and constituencies in American politics such that any day's news features stories of protest actions. Such protests are often sponsored by well-established groups in interest politics in Washington, DC—and across the United States.

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Protest movements in America are neither new nor unusual. It's particularly important to understand their role in not only making America at the outset, but also the periodic influence of powerful protest movements on the development of the American state. The shape of protest politics in America reflects the distinct set of institutions and processes that structure more mainstream politics. The movements that grew to challenge institutional politics in earlier eras have sometimes produced reforms that structure the opportunities subsequent movements face.

The social movements that have emerged in America reflect both the issues of the moment and the structure of American political institutions, both of which affect each movement's emergence, growth, and development. And social movements have transformed not only a range of policy areas in America, but also the nature of American political institutions in ways that structure subsequent challenges. Social movements then, do not operate wholly outside the polity, but instigate, reflect, amplify, or dampen institutional politics. In order to make sense of this "coevolution" (Oliver and Myers 2003), we consider the process of political institutionalization that the American political system offers to diverse claimants, a process that changes both the institutions and their challengers, albeit not symmetrically. We begin by describing the routes to inclusion and influence offered by American politics, and the ways in which historic movements have responded to those opportunities over time. We next consider four distinct American social movements, ones concerned with women's rights, civil rights, labor, and the environment, showing how the struggle for inclusion necessitates strategic choices, political transformation, and ongoing satisficing, that is, settling for less, but not the abandonment of social movement politics. We note that these movements are not self-contained and insular, but intersect and affect not only with American political institutions, but also each other—and other social movement challenges. We conclude with thoughts about the ongoing development of movements in America.

(p. 565) Political Opportunities, the Constitution and the Institutionalization of Dissent

Scholars of social movements emphasize how the context in which movements emerge influences their claims, origins, strategies of influence, and ultimate trajectories (Eisinger 1973; Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; Kitschelt 1986; Meyer 2004; Tarrow 1998). The political opportunity structure refers to the institutions, rules, and existing and potential relationships with allies and opponents that dissidents face. At the most general level, more open institutions invite cooperation, compromise, and conciliation; less accessible political institutions discourage protest movements generally, leading to apparent quiescence or confrontational and disruptive protest campaigns that are generally short-lived. The United States established a mix of relative political openness and slow policy

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responsiveness that virtually ensured the almost continual emergence of social movements that can affect change.

As veterans of a long and difficult war of national independence fought against a distant king, and as leaders of a decentralized confederation of colonies often threatened by insurgent campaigns, the founders were wary of tyrannies imposed by both monarchs and masses. They sought to develop a system that would offer sufficient openness and opportunities for influence to keep dissatisfied constituencies engaged in conventional politics and tied to mainstream institutions. But they also wanted to craft a system that would limit the influence of majorities on policies, producing a government that would be *less responsive* to popular movements. They succeeded in unexpected ways, even as the resulting Constitution, a product of political disputes and contention, made a state even harder to use than Madison intended (Robertson 2005). Nonetheless, Madison vigorously promoted the new Constitution, and clearly explains the way it was supposed to work in *the Federalist Papers*, particularly numbers 10 and 51 (Dahl 1956).

To prevent the development of permanent factions, Madison imagined a large republic which would include diverse and divided interests. Constituencies would need to cooperate with others to form temporary majorities, and to compete with others for influence on public policy. To invite political participation, the first Constitutional system offered broad male suffrage and frequent elections for both federal representatives and state governments. It’s hard to think that many present in Philadelphia envisioned the franchise being extended to black men, immigrants from southern Europe, or women (Ritter 2006), but the basic principle of welcoming, more or less, routine participation from broad sectors of the populace, remained consistent.

At the same time, the Founders designed a system that would be somewhat accessible to all of these diverse interests, but not very responsive to any of them. The popularly elected half-branch of government, the House of Representatives, would be balanced by a more stable and elite Senate, and further constrained by an executive and a judiciary. **(p. 566)** And even these popular elections, organized in single member districts, would put the critical balance point of each district roughly in its ideological center. Savvy voters would balance their own interests and ideals with their judgment about what a majority of voters might support. Once in Congress, legislators would make much the same calculation. Political parties, certainly not in the Founders’ original design, became an additional mechanism of political incorporation, as new constituencies, immigrants, former slaves, women, or youth, were potentially valuable resources to those seeking office. Their potential value would lead party activists to work to cultivate and co-opt movement activists, enlisting them in electoral pursuits. Further, Federalism, the division of power and responsibilities between the national government and state and local subgovernments, would also provide something of a firewall for the national government, allowing states to maintain policies that national majorities might find abhorrent. Slavery is surely the most salient example.

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Federalism can operate as a kind of shell game for activists, deflecting and misdirecting movement energy to arenas in which they are unlikely to be effective. Alternatively, the existence of multiple arenas for political action allows innovation and policy change from above or below, as states can respond to, or pressure, the federal government to embrace new policies. We will see cases in which innovation came from below, as when frontier states granted women suffrage decades before the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, and others in which civil rights activists could invite the federal government to pressure recalcitrant state governments to implement reforms in voting rights. But the federal design was not neutral, advantaging some constituencies, like employers, better positioned to pressure and manipulate state governments to their advantage (Robertson 2005; 2012).

The basic design was to invite organized groups with grievances to come into conventional politics, to participate in electoral campaigns, and to channel demands and conflict into government, rather than against it. Governance would be contested, slow, and often incoherent, with a strong bias toward stasis. The cases in the rest of the chapter illustrate how the development of movements reflects America's institutional design. First, advocates for change would have to work to build broad coalitions, including people and groups who didn't necessarily agree with them on everything. Such broad coalitions would be particularly vulnerable to faction themselves, as activists would divide not only over ultimate and proximate goals, but also about the best ways to achieve them. They would also divide over the definition of core issues. (Does concern for the environment mandate an opposition to war, for example?) And sympathetic responses from government would promote conflict within movement coalitions between hard-liners and those willing to compromise.

Second, the process of institutionalization would bring those able to work on incremental change into mainstream politics, including electoral campaigns and legislative lobbying, while pushing those unwilling to broker such compromises to the political margins, away from both institutional influence and more moderate movement allies. Relatively moderate voices in a movement would be incorporated, while radical fractions could be excluded and either atrophy, continue mobilizing on the margins, or be (p. 567) crushed, resulting in the eventual professionalization and consolidation of movements. Movements are thus defined by the periodic alliances of radical and moderate reformers that punctuate more routine politics (Meyer 2014). Their legacy is reflected in the inclusion of some of their ideas and personnel in mainstream politics, as well as in an expanding bureaucracy which formalizes and enforces some of those ideals, and which can provide opportunities for subsequent claimants.

Third, successful mobilization of one set of advocates was virtually sure to mobilize their opponents, who often appear in movement forms as well (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). In recent years, waves of mobilization on behalf of immigrant rights, for example, have met countervailing mobilization against immigration and sometimes immigrants. Controversy and protest about immigration, of course, is woven into the fabric of

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America. The simultaneous mobilization of countermovements has also been a recurrent feature in American life, one which also reflects the Founders' design and makes it even more difficult for either side to get what its advocates want.

As the cases below illustrate, elements of political movements can find reasonably secure niches in mainstream politics, and the process of institutionalization takes places through five interrelated ways: individuals, ideas, laws, new bureaucratic institutions, and formal recognition as non-governmental groups. First, individuals who come out of social movements can come into government, either through election to office or finding a position in the bureaucracy. Second, ideas proposed by a movement have been absorbed and often redefined by politicians and political parties. Third, legislation has been passed that addresses movement goals, providing avenues of legal recourse. Fourth, new bureaucratic agencies designed to address movement concerns have been created, which provide a formal niche within government to represent the claim or constituency. Growing bureaucracy responds to activist mobilization and growing government ambitions. Finally, movements themselves have professionalized and bureaucratized, becoming part of institutional politics as lobbying groups based in Washington, DC, and as organizational shepherds of government policies that relate to their cause. Importantly, gains at one stage of mobilization have affected the opportunities available at periods of subsequent mobilization by creating new options not previously available, and also limiting options by funneling claimants through these new channels.

This very rough template describes a general pattern of social movement challenges in American politics. Successful social movements work themselves into the political system, at best influencing, but not dictating, the policies of their greatest concern. The relative openness of governmental institutions provides challengers with a recurrent set of dilemmas about cooperation and compromise. Entering mainstream political institutions may position movement activists to exercise critical leverage on politics and policy, but only by accommodating to the basic institutional structure of power, which means making some kind of rough peace with restricted ambitions. To explore and illustrate how movements have shaped the development of American political institutions, and how they have in turn been sustained by it, we have selected four long-lived movements that have worked both inside and outside American political institutions, often at the same time.

(p. 568) Abolition and Civil Rights

The future of slavery was the most contentious political issue in the colonies in the run-up to the American Revolution; it threatened to undermine support for the war, for the Constitution, and ultimately threatened the survival of the United States (Bowen 1986). After the Constitution, slavery remained integral to the economy in the South, and a primary means of social organization and distinction in the rest of the nation. Long and divisive struggles resulted in institutional and policy changes in the American state's

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approach to race, with concerns about racial justice institutionalized in mainstream politics and institution.

Abolition was part of a transnational movement against slavery, and in America religious groups, like the Quakers, led it. They denounced slavery and opposed a Constitution that might allow it to continue. Of course, Southern slaveholders were wary about signing onto a Constitution that might end a practice at the root of the Southern economy and culture (Dumond 1961). Slow but measurable progress, including the end of the international slave trade and eradication of slavery in the Northern states (Berlin and Harris 2005) coincided with violent slave rebellions and continued slavery in the Southern states through the early 1830s (Greenberg 2003). In 1833, the American Anti-Slavery Society was founded and began fighting for total and immediate emancipation, while more moderate anti-slavery groups advocated gradual action, particularly ending the expansion of slavery (Stewart and Foner 1996).

The federal government could not resolve the conflict between abolitionists and slaveholders, and over time, it could not manage them. Both abolitionists and supporters of slavery were well represented in government, creating ongoing conflict and compromises that fed the conflict as the United States expanded. The admissions of new territories as states (free and slave), the Fugitive Slave Act (1850), the Kansas–Nebraska Act (1854), and the Dred Scott decision (1857) together demonstrated the government's incapacity to end slavery or to protect slaveholders from future threats (Robertson 2012). Advocates argued about federalism and states' rights, but the real conflict was about slavery. Escalating rhetoric, and sometimes action (see John Brown's raid in 1859), intensified the polarization of the issue. The Whig party collapsed, no small part due to regional divisions on slavery, and the Republican party developed as a vehicle for the abolitionists—among others. Southerners saw Abraham Lincoln's election to the presidency in 1860 as a proximate threat, and secession efforts grew even before he took office. Although political figures articulated additional causes for the war, the future of slavery in the Southern states was at the core of the conflict (Foner 2010).

During the war and in its aftermath, government action dramatically altered the terms of the struggle for African American participation in American life. President Lincoln, under pressure from radical Republican abolitionists, issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 as a war measure, which freed only the slaves in the Confederate states, and not those in Union territories. The post-war Constitutional amendments (p. 569) were supposed to afford African American men full participation in American life (Levy 1998). Although federal efforts to enforce reconstruction and the administration of the South were relatively short-lived, the post-war amendments radically changed the constitutional nature of citizenship and political participation in the United States, serving as a mobilization resource not only for descendants of slaves, but also women and immigrants (Ritter 2006).

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Southern whites adopted a variety of strategies, both inside and outside government, to restore and maintain a racial hierarchy. Disgruntled Confederate veterans organized a racist movement, the Ku Klux Klan, which engaged in acts of terror to prevent former slaves from making demands about political and social inclusion (Chalmers 1987). The Klan would falter and then re-emerge several times in the ensuing decades, generally in response to the threat of activism on behalf of racial equality (e.g., McVeigh 2009; Cunningham 2012). At the same time, white Southerners also used state governments to maintain racial privilege by instituting Jim Crow laws, which segregated blacks from the mainstream of American life, ensuring residential, educational, and political isolation. The political exigencies of building a national electoral coalition encouraged even would-be reformers to allow Southern Democrats to maintain segregation in their states (Katznelson 2013).

Meanwhile, African American intellectuals sought to carry the cause of racial equality. Leading voices debated whether the best path forward was a moderate or revolutionary one. Booker T. Washington (1895) argued for self-improvement, primarily through education, and warned against political and legal action. By contrast, W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) criticized Washington's strategy as quiescence to political subjugation, and called instead for using all peaceful means to improve the African American lives. Du Bois would go on to help found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909 (Lewis 2009).

Before World War II, however, potential white allies in government largely ignored civil rights efforts. The New Deal coalition, headed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was built on solid Democratic support from the South, and that support was white and segregationist. President Roosevelt was loath to take positions that would threaten this coalition. Indeed, Roosevelt's position was hardly unique among American liberals and organized labor; it was left to Communists to take up the cause of racial justice during the 1930s.

Efforts to organize African American communities were scattered, diverse, and often not oriented toward mainstream politics. Black nationalist campaigns, such as Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa" campaign, mostly bypassed American political institutions and instead focused on building parallel economic and social institutions within black communities. More significant, however, particularly over the longer haul, was the NAACP's incremental legal strategy, based around a series of court cases advanced over decades, that made explicit use of the post-Civil War amendments (Kluger 1977). The NAACP first filed cases that accepted the basic premises of *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* (1896) that racial segregation was constitutional as long as blacks were provided access to equal, if separate, opportunities, essentially accepting the terms of mainstream politics and law. (p. 570) Focusing on education, the NAACP sued for the provision of equal facilities in public education, focusing on the training of lawyers. Plaintiffs were well-educated and sympathetic and fundamentally radical demands were couched as modest and conservative, gaining some legitimacy through the legal system.

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The coming of World War II and the resulting new world order dramatically changed the opportunities available for civil rights advocates. Domestically, the war economy accelerated the migration of large numbers of African Americans from rural areas in the South to Northern cities, where organizing was somewhat easier (McAdam 1982). It also made the federal government more receptive. In 1941, Franklin Roosevelt issued an executive order establishing a Committee on Fair Employment Practices, a negotiated settlement to prevent a march on Washington organized by labor and civil rights leaders seeking access for blacks to jobs in the growing defense industry.

After the war, black veterans who had fought in segregated units were nonetheless exposed to a far wider universe, and were less willing to return to a Jim Crow South. Cold War politics encouraged political leaders in the United States to take notice of a broader international audience for the politics of race and discrimination in the United States—and to be more wary of a potential Communist threat at home. Even as the federal government made union organizing more difficult, it also took steps to diminish racial discrimination. President Truman notably issued an executive order desegregating the armed forces, framed in the context of increased political and military engagement abroad. The federal government also filed *amicus* briefs to support broader action against segregation from the courts (Dudziak 2001). Clearly, the international struggle for liberal democracy was one motivation for the Supreme Court in its *Brown* v. *Board of Education* ruling, which struck down racial segregation in public education in 1954. Note that all these government actions aimed to address civil rights came from the Supreme Court and presidents over the opposition of Congressional majorities.

Opportunistic organizers turned their efforts to issues on which they might make progress, adapting to signals from the government. Activists in the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation formed the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) during World War II, and shifted their efforts from opposing war to promoting civil rights—non-violently. The Highlander Folk School, once a critical resource for the labor movement, also shifted its focus to civil rights after the war, and ran activist training classes at its Nashville site. Rosa Parks, a veteran of the NAACP, attended one of those workshops in 1955, and read the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision, as well as literature about Gandhi and by Thoreau on civil disobedience (Morris 1984).

Departing Nashville, Rosa Parks returned to a Montgomery, Alabama where African Americans challenged segregation by employing the rhetoric surrounding national policy changes. When she refused to move to the back of a bus in deference to segregation, her community was already prepared to organize to support her. Impatient with the very limited improvements visible from court decisions, the civil rights movement began relying more heavily on civil disobedience and community action, forming new organizations to coordinate the efforts. The Montgomery Bus Boycott gave rise to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), led by Martin Luther King Jr. In (p. 571) response to the wave of sit-ins begun in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1960, SCLC supported the creation of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) as a more activist youth-oriented group (Levy 1998). Direct action tactics continued with

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the Freedom Rides in the summer of 1961, headed by the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) and joined by SNCC (Branch 1988). The period of mass mobilization concluded with marches throughout the first half of the 1960s, most notably the March on Washington in 1963 (Dierenfield 2008), which President John F. Kennedy had tried first to stop, and then to direct. Kennedy's assassination later that year also marked a critical opportunity for the movement, putting in place a president with the legislative skills and political commitment to press Congress to act.

As Congress considered the Civil Rights Act in 1964, SNCC commenced a voter registration effort in Mississippi known as Freedom Summer. President Lyndon Johnson, proclaiming that he was enacting Kennedy's agenda, successfully pressed the bill in Congress, which outlawed Jim Crow segregation, prohibited discrimination in public accommodations, employment, and education, and established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which could promote affirmative action, a policy established by Kennedy in an executive order (Levy 1998). In an effort to derail the legislation, opponents had added language prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender. This language would prove helpful to the re-emergence of the women's movement later in the decade.

Both activists and the administration focused increasingly on voter registration and mobilization, partly because Johnson hoped to replace the Southern voters he knew he would lose with African Americans (Milkis 2007). Johnson used federal forces to protect civil rights activists, and tried to coordinate and shape their efforts, although this became more difficult over time. Southern police and citizen violence against nonviolent activists, including arrests, dogs, beatings, and murders, generated worldwide attention and pressure on Washington, DC. Borrowing the rhetoric of the movement, President Lyndon Johnson invested fully in passing the Voting Rights Act in 1965, a watershed for the movement (Levy 1998; Milkis 2007).

Afforded ostensible access to the ballot, the movement split on goals and tactics. One faction invested fully in taking advantage of electoral opportunities, while others demanded more structural changes in American life than mainstream politics could provide (Robnett 2003). The Black Power faction of the movement, represented most visibly by the Northern urban Black Panthers, was dramatic and relatively short-lived. Separatist rhetoric and the explicit justification of political violence alienated more supporters than it attracted. Perhaps more significantly, federal police agencies used espionage, surveillance, and violence to destroy this faction of the movement (Cunningham 2004). By the middle of the 1970s, the radical wing of the movement had been dissipated and marginalized, while the institutional wing established a permanent presence in Washington and across the United States.

Ultimately, the schisms that followed from passage of the Voting Rights Act came to characterize much of American politics. As President Johnson predicted, aligning the national Democrats with the cause of civil rights helped speed the movement of white (p. 572) Southerners to the Republican party, turning what had once been the solid

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(Democratic South) into the base of the Republican party. The establishment of federal agencies focused on civil rights became a focal point of both political activism and political mobilization. Meanwhile, there is reason to believe that within the civil rights movement, both enthusiasts and skeptics about the impact of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts were right.

The civil rights movement illustrates several of our themes. First, it rose and fell with respect to sympathetic political allies willing to pursue similar goals within mainstream institutions, altering strategy to reflect available opportunities. Second, it expanded and contracted in response to the collaboration or competition with other progressive movements like those representing women and labor. Third, it fractured into moderate and radical flanks, as more moderate organizations like the NAACP professionalized and working with the government for incremental gains, unlike short-lived radical organizations like the Black Panthers. Finally, the movement made serious institutional inroads, placing African Americans, and, indeed, movement veterans, into office. In addition to personnel, the movement encouraged the federal government to build institutions, like the EEOC, devoted to the enforcement of racial equality, which have survived, even in the absence of presidential support. Such gains, though consequential, are hardly irreversible. In a characteristic irony of American politics, the EEOC was chaired in the early 1980s by Clarence Thomas who, as a Supreme Court justice, would vote to strike down critical sections of the Voting Rights Act in *Shelby County* v. *Holder*.

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The Women’s Movement and Feminism

The Declaration of Independence’s bold assertion of the equality of men was not quite universal, and the exclusion of women was hardly unusual or controversial at the time. Indeed, in the years following the Declaration, several states that had allowed women to vote codified access to the ballot and explicitly excluded them. The ratified Constitution made no mention of gender in setting out the terms of apportionment or the qualifications for office; women were understood as a dependent population. From the start, women argued for access to institutional politics not only for its sake, but also to influence policy on other issues, including slavery in the nineteenth century and temperance, war, and social policy in the twentieth. Women staged events outside political institutions, including meetings and parades, to build a platform for access to institutions and influence. The women’s movement’s initial goal was to secure formal inclusion for women as individuals in both civil society and institutional politics.

Women began organizing for access to education in the early 1800s, making gains first in elementary education, and later through the founding and accreditation of women’s colleges (Flexner and Fitzpatrick 1996). Abolition efforts provided both the cause and the organizations for women’s political mobilization before the Civil War. Working through advocacy, associationalism, and direct action, women participated (p. 573) in the abolition movement, and formed independent anti-slavery organizations. The emerging women’s movement extended the abolitionist ideal of equality to women, and used anti-slavery meetings to argue for women’s rights. Once in motion on one set of issues, activists quickly saw connections to others, although debates about priorities were continual. Abolition activists worried that putting women’s rights on the agenda would undermine the abolitionist cause, by dividing efforts and provoking opposition (DuBois 1978). This constraint, along with the exclusion of women’s leadership in some anti-slavery events like the 1840 London World Anti-Slavery Convention (Stanton et al. 1969), ultimately encouraged women’s rights proponents to develop a distinct movement.

In July 1848 Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott were among the organizers of the Seneca Falls Convention, where participants signed a Declaration of Sentiments, a set of resolutions calling for, among other things, property and voting rights and equal status and treatment of women (Ritter 2006; Stanton et al. 1969). This first concerted effort to initiate a broader women’s movement marked the beginning of “first wave feminism” (DuBois 1978). Invoking the Declaration of Independence, activists worked to tie women’s rights to an image of America’s founding political values, which they interpreted as liberal and individualistic (McDonagh 2009). Abolition efforts drove the women’s movement through the Civil War because “the movement’s strongest, most reliable, and most visible support came from abolitionist ranks” (DuBois 1978: 51). Women did not get explicit attention to gender equality in the post-war amendments, but those amendments were critical to the character of subsequent mobilization, and activists

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used the language of rights to press for women's suffrage, framed so that they could pursue their own political interests independently through the political process (Flexner and Fitzpatrick 1996).

Activists were able to turn the obstacles of federalism into opportunities, winning the right to vote first in the territory of Wyoming in 1869, and in the following years, in several frontier states. To demonstrate their exclusion from the polls, first Victoria Woodhull (1872) and then Belva Lockwood (1884, 1888) launched (unsuccessful) campaigns for the presidency. Meanwhile, women's suffrage activists toured the frontier to speak about the vote. New organizations developed to coordinate such campaigns. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), saw women as society's moral guardians, and fought for suffrage as a tool to pass Prohibition and protect what activists saw as women's traditional domain of home and family (Giele 1995). In contrast, the more radical National American Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) promoted suffrage as a matter of universal human rights. NAWSA activists fought for women's inclusion in mainstream political and sought new public roles for women on a broad range of issues.

Both the moralism of the WCTU and the democratic ambitions of the NAWSA were visible in the Progressive movement, which built a broad coalition in the early 1900s (Milkis and Mileur 1999). Progressives pushed for strong government action on a number of issues, and suffrage activists worked within the movement to connect the vote to the broader Progressive agenda. Women played leading roles in the Progressive movement, and although leaders came from elite backgrounds, they pushed for benefits to far less advantaged constituencies (Skocpol and Ritter 1991). Margaret Sanger led a (p. 574) campaign for access to birth control, defined at least partly as a women's issue (Matthews 2003). Jane Addams (2012) saw suffrage as closely linked to a litany of social and political campaigns about urban reform, public education, and transparent governance that her settlement house movement addressed more directly. Addams and Carrie Chapman Catt also founded the Women's Peace Party, which grew into the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, to press for international cooperation to promote social welfare and end war. Women demanded the right to vote on the premise that their participation would lead to different policies. Although Progressives pushed for national action, they found significant success in forging favored policies, such as pensions, public services, government transparency, and regulation of businesses, at the state and local level.

Although Theodore Roosevelt, first as president and then as presidential candidate, exemplified the Progressive cause, his 1912 Bull Moose run for the presidency delivered the election to a Democrat, Woodrow Wilson, who also embraced many Progressive plans. Wilson ran for re-election in 1916 on the promise to keep the United States out of war. He tried to harness the power of those women's organizations into his campaign by attending the NAWSA's annual convention to suggest a suffrage plan. America's entry into World War I after Wilson's re-election put suffrage on the back burner for Wilson and NAWSA, which suspended its suffrage activism in deference to its ally. Meanwhile, the National Women's Party (NWP), led by Alice Paul, responded to what it saw as betrayal. The NWP

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continued to oppose American participation in the war and intensified its own suffrage efforts by employing more radical tactics, including suffrage parades, picketing the White House, and hunger strikes.

The women's movement won two substantial victories through the ratification of Constitutional amendments at the end of the war: Prohibition (Eighteenth Amendment) and suffrage (Nineteenth Amendment) (Szymanski 2003). This marked a watershed for the women's movement and a period of reconfiguration. When suffrage finally came, more than seventy years after the Seneca Falls Convention, NAWSA transformed itself into the League of Women Voters, which worked to ensure informed voter participation and clean elections; it continues to this day, fully institutionalized and devoted to making the system work rather than making broad claims on matters of policy. In contrast, the NWP turned in on itself after suffrage, maintaining a radical identity that was shared by only a very small group of supporters (Rupp and Taylor 1987). The NWP promoted an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) as a next step for women, and was largely absent from the mainstream political debate from 1920 until the emergence of the second wave of feminism in the 1960s. Between the 1920s and 1960s, roughly sixty women were elected to the House of Representatives (Flexner and Fitzpatrick 1996) and the more radical activists of the National Women's Party continued to introduce and lobby (unsuccessfully) for the ERA (Rupp and Taylor 1987; Ferree and Hess 1994).

The absence of effective advocacy at the national level was visible in the way that the New Deal, the great national social policy expansion of the 1930s, actually reinforced existing gender roles—even as Frances Perkins became the first woman in the Cabinet when President Roosevelt appointed her to be Secretary of Labor. The Social Security (p. 575) Act of 1935, for example, tied pensions to work, which meant that few women would qualify for retirement support on their own. Meanwhile, Aid to Dependent Children was framed as a policy that would allow women to raise children in their homes without paid employment (Mettler 1998; Ritter 2006). Activists continued to work on increasing women's access to American political and civic life, focusing on issues like jury service (McCammon 2012; Ritter 2006). Increased demand for labor and public service more generally during World War II provided opportunities for women to increase their presence in civic life, opportunities that were curtailed when soldiers returned home and the country demobilized. A forced retreat from civic and economic life was not universally welcomed.

The "second wave" of feminism emerged in the 1960s to address a broader range of socio-cultural inequalities highlighted by the role strain felt by women trying to balance traditional expectations of women with educational, political, and economic advances (Costain 1994; Giele 1995). The language of the Civil Rights Act afforded women rhetoric and recourse for organizing against discrimination. The movement was also animated by activists schooled in other movements, including Betty Friedan, who came out of the labor movement, and women from the civil rights and suffrage movements who were frustrated with sexist treatment from male leaders (Freeman 1975). Friedan's (1963) *Feminine Mystique* described the alienation and frustration middle-class women felt in

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empty suburban lives—the sort of life Friedan herself never lived—and proved to be a touchstone for the mobilization of relatively advantaged white women (Meyer and Rohlinger 2012). She then used the book to start the National Organization for Women, which promoted the establishment of diverse state and local branches that reflected local concerns. This second wave comprised a broad range of activities and ultimate goals, ranging from the wholesale remaking of patriarchal society to affording individual women access to positions of power; activists were far more successful on the latter. Activists sought to inform women how sexist power structures influenced their personal and political lives and they worked to fight economic and educational inequality, secure reproductive freedoms, and change social attitudes regarding motherhood, careers, and sexuality (Freedman 2002).

The more formal branch of the movement succeeded in winning protection against employment discrimination and inclusion in affirmative action (through the 1963 Equal Pay Act and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which were targeted to African Americans); equal access to school athletics (through Title IX of the 1972 Higher Education Amendments Act); and abortion law reform through both state legislatures and the US Supreme Court (*Roe* v. *Wade* 1973) (Berkeley 1999; Giele 1995), emulating a civil rights movement strategy. The movement invoked the state to protect some of women's interests. Activists seeking to end violence against women forged alliances with conservative legislators to make it easier to prosecute and punish rapists (Gornick and Meyer 1998). Women burrowed into politics and into the bureaucracy, maintaining or finding feminist consciousness, and pursuing equality in less visible ways (Banaszak 2010). These more formalized routes allowed second-wave feminism to capitalize on the positional advantage afforded by the institutionalization of first-wave feminism. Additionally, less measurable attitude (p. 576) changes were achieved through the informal consciousness-raising branch spearheaded by feminist writers and the establishment of campus-based women's studies programs (Giele 1995; Ferree and Hess 1994).

Starting in the late 1970s counter-mobilization arose in response to the increased influence of the women's movement. This push-back resulted in the defeat of ERA and continued legislative restrictions and militant action against abortion rights (Berkeley 1999; Mansbridge 1986). Thus, the institutionalization of the women's movement resulted in the rise of reactive extra-institutional mobilization. Although this marked an important change for second-wave feminism, individual women continued to make progress advancing within political and social institutions (Duggan and Hunter 2006). Of course, such progress was most visible—and most valuable—for relatively advantaged women, mostly middle-class and affluent, and disproportionately white (Strolovitch 2007).

Many of the women's and feminist organizations of the second wave remain active in American politics, cultivating a base of support and weighing in on matters of policy, including reproductive rights and issues not normally considered feminist, like opposition to war or protection of the environment (Meyer and Whittier 1994; Sawyers and Meyer 1999). Activists continue to work on so-called women's issues as well, such as fighting against discrimination in the military. But the feminist movement is more fragmented and

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less visible in the mainstream of American politics, partly because the concerns that initially supported mobilization have changed radically. Working to ensure the access of individual women to positions of power in government or business is less salient to most potential activists than broader demands like workplace discrimination or suffrage. Therefore, the institutionalization of the women's movement has led it to fracture, atrophy, and spill over into other movements, as women's rights activists often moved to formal politics or to other causes.

The women's movement illustrates several important ways that the development and institutionalization of movements affected America's political development. First, we see that as the movement developed, some of its key organizations professionalized and developed into stable, and often more moderate, presences on the political landscape. This is most evident in the transformation of NAWSA from the radical alternative to the WCTU to a moderate ally of President Wilson, and finally to its current incarnation as the League of Women Voters. Second, the very significant achievements of the movement were dwarfed by its larger ambitions. These achievements were the result of a broad coalition that included not only a wide range of women's groups, but also a rotating collection of organizations advocating for various progressive causes. Organizations fractured off or professionalized with the achievement of incremental goals until only those most committed to the larger ambitions remained, but lacked the necessary political clout that a large and diverse coalition provides. Third, the rhetoric of inclusion was adapted by the state, and even institutionalized in both women's visible presence in appointed and elected office—and in leadership roles in education and the economy, and in the creation of laws and policies that promoted gender equality more broadly.

(p. 577) Working People and the Labor Movement

American workers have faced an uphill struggle in organizing effectively to represent their rights, frustrated particularly by the federal structure and the ongoing and divisive politics of race (Goldfield 1997; Katznelson 2013; Orren 1991; Robertson 2000). The story of organizing labor is one in which activists have prospected for influence through efforts targeted at employers, political parties, and state and national government, employing a range of strategies that depended on the target. Broad-based political campaigns have succeeded only in moments of crisis, when workers have been able to forge alliances with other constituencies. Efforts directed at state governments have met occasional success under similar circumstances, but have been frustrated by employers' successful efforts to emphasize (and exaggerate) their mobility. And campaigns directed against employers have depended upon the regulation and protection of the federal government. Advantages for working people have shifted with the relative strength of their allies in mainstream politics. Recurrent efforts to revive and radicalize American labor have been

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short-lived and confined, with a secular downward trend in unionization and the prospects of working people.

As early as 1778, skilled American workers, such as journeymen printers, house carpenters, and sailors, began organizing into temporary craft-based associations for higher wages (Foner 1965); by 1810, permanent craft unions represented skilled workers in the major cities, but strikes often failed and courts were unsympathetic to the practice of collective bargaining. The trade unions that survived these challenges dissolved in the economic depression between 1819 and 1822, but began organizing again with a focus on enacting a ten-hour work day, forming the first national labor federation, the National Trades' Union, in 1834. Labor organizing followed the same boom-and-bust cycles of the economy, with unions growing with national economic prosperity and disintegrating during times of economic depression. After the end of the Civil War and through the second half of the nineteenth century, labor unions developed an increasingly national and more inclusive focus, illustrated by the founding of the National Labor Union. They started pushing for an eight-hour working day, and working to include women and African Americans in its efforts; the movement collapsed in 1872 (Foner 1947), and employers dominated both political parties.

The Knights of Labor began organizing locally in secret assemblies in 1869 before holding the first General Assembly in 1878. The organization worked hard to unite producers across different jobs, including unskilled laborers, and continued the campaign for an eight-hour working day (Guerin 1979; Voss 1993). However, this inclusive strategy and resulting rapid expansion undermined the group's stability, as they never succeeded in balancing the perception of competing needs between skilled and unskilled workers, and alternative organizational models developed. One, exemplified by Samuel Gompers, was based on a business model, negotiating on behalf of skilled workers. Gompers also (p. 578) sat on the executive board of a union group organized along these lines, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions, which competed with the Knights for membership and prominence, and also endorsed the eight-hour day.

In support of that demand, a convention organized by the Federation called for a general strike across the nation on May 1, 1888. Activists with a wide variety of perspectives, including socialists and anarchists, poured into the project, generating large demonstrations across America's major cities, the largest in Chicago, where an estimated 80,000 workers participated. Both local and private police protected strikebreakers, and attacked strikers who tried to confront them. In response, labor activists called for additional strikes and rallies (Green 2006). At a much smaller rally at Haymarket Square, someone rolled a homemade bomb at police who were breaking up the assembly; police opened fire on the crowd and both police and demonstrators were killed. The Chicago police used the Haymarket affair to crack down on labor organizing more generally, making organizing, particularly for more inclusive approaches, even more difficult. The Haymarket Affair was perhaps the most dramatic instance of authorities using the threat of labor unrest to execute harsh repression. Meanwhile, Gompers's craft-based approach, exemplified by the American Federation of Labor, was able to survive this red scare, and

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negotiate contracts with employers; these successes stood in stark contrast to the broader ambitions of the Knights, which disappeared (Voss 1993). There would, however, be subsequent challenges to the business model of organizing.

The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) emerged in 1905 proclaiming a goal of creating “One Big Union” and of industrial unionism (Foner 1965. The IWW espoused broader reform goals, more militant rhetoric, and more disruptive activist tactics than the AFL, and until 1917, they organized previously unorganized workers among immigrant, migrant, and unemployed populations and forced modifications in AFL ideology. Both employers and governments attacked the more radical unions with private and public police, accusing organizers of treason. The IWW and other industry unions opposed US entry into World War I, which led to both legal repression and political marginalization. The AFL unions were more successful in attracting members and funds and out-organized the IWW, as did Communist-backed unions, siphoning off an important segment of the IWW’s intended members (Guerin 1979).

Workers’ efforts to engage government on their behalf were most successful when they forged alliances with Progressive reformers who had other reasons to support greater regulation of business (Milkis and Mileur 1999). In New York, for example, the tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911 united Progressives and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union to support legislation that limited workers’ hours. Progressive efforts also included the elimination of child labor and the regulation of meat production. Frances Perkins, a social worker who organized around the Triangle Fire, moved into government service, starting in state government. (It’s worth noting that the Supreme Court limited the extent of state-level Progressive legislation until the New Deal; Robertson 2000.) She was Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s first Secretary of Labor, and then followed Roosevelt to Washington in 1933 to serve in the same job at the national level.

(p. 579) When Roosevelt took office in 1933, he brought not only Perkins with him, but also other Progressive reformers as well as the more labor-friendly policies he had used in New York. As the federal government showed more receptivity, organized labor worked to exercise influence through mainstream politics, including electoral campaigns (Galenson 1960). The New Deal represented a significant break from the past, as Roosevelt created the basis of a welfare state and set political terms that aided (and channeled) organized labor’s efforts to represent its interests politically (Amenta 2000). In the crisis atmosphere of the Depression, under significant pressure from organized labor (and others), Roosevelt’s New Deal established the welfare of working people as a legitimate concern of the national government; substantive reforms included a minimum wage, regulations on maximum hours, and the right to organize and engage in collective bargaining (Sloane and Witney 1997; Zieger 1994). Additionally, the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, and with it the establishment of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), gave labor unions a direct channel through which to file cases of unfair labor practices, and a focal point in the federal government (Galeson 1960). These

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significant achievements, however, were largely targeted at white working men (Katznelson 2005).

In 1935 a faction within the AFL led by John L. Lewis revived an industrial union approach and organized unskilled labor, soon growing into the Congress of Industrial Organizations (Galenson 1960). The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) grew in influence within the AFL, whose leaders regarded it as a threat. In 1936, the AFL suspended the membership of ten industrial unions; by 1938, the CIO had grown into a rival labor federation (Guerin 1979). The CIO was particularly strong in the automobile, brewery, men's clothing, fur, and flat glass industries and sought more active political engagement through more confrontational tactics. Despite their disagreements, the broader coalition created by the AFL and CIO cooperated to lobby the national government on various issues, such as the Fair Labor Standards Act and the Sherman Anti-Trust Act in the late 1930s, and both unions grew in membership and power after 1935 (Galenson 1960).

The end of World War II marked a new era in American politics. The GI Bill offered reasonably generous benefits, including access to education, to veterans (Mettler 2005), affording many white men opportunities to advance in careers without labor. It also saw intensified anti-Communism as the Cold War started. In 1947 Congress passed the Taft–Hartley Act, over President Harry Truman's veto, which restricted union organizing rights, strikes, boycotts, picketing, allowed states to implement "right-to-work" laws by banning "closed shops," and prevented trade union politicization (Guerin 1979). Although Truman had opposed Taft–Hartley, he embraced anti-Communism, helping to produce rifts within organized labor, and leading to the purge of many labor leaders; labor thus faced more difficult rules and a harsher climate for organizing. Appointees to the NLRB were hardly reliable supporters of labor, such that the institutional niches that unions had cultivated were now sometimes hostile.

Since the 1950s, there has been a relatively steady pattern of declining union membership and political influence, with the negative effects of legislative restrictions and (p. 580) corporate lobbying and influence negatively affecting union participation (Goldfield 1987). Bad publicity resulting from corruption in the unions also hurt unionization efforts (Galenson 1960). Signaling a trend of union contraction, the AFL and CIO merged in 1955 to form the AFL-CIO, which retained options of both craft and industrial-style organization (Guerin 1979). Gradual and continual labor decline has been punctuated by dramatic events, such as President Ronald Reagan's immediate firing of striking air traffic controllers and disbanding the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Union. The increased globalization of production has enhanced the bargaining power of employers who can credibly threaten to move production, which has led to a particularly sharp decline in private sector unionization. Meanwhile, organized labor has continued to try new strategies to spur a labor revival, again turning to try to organize low-wage workers. Despite dramatic campaigns and occasional victories, both public and private sector unionism have declined, while states have implanted policies designed to

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undermine labor power even further. Most recently, citing fiscal pressures from the Great Recession, conservative governors have pressed for an end to collective bargaining for government employees, particularly teachers.

Like other American movements, labor rose and fell with respect to the presence of sympathetic political allies, particularly President Franklin Roosevelt, willing to institutionalize its ideas and responds to its interests. Second, it expanded its coalition by incorporating other mobilized groups like women and African Americans and diverse labor sectors, though this inclusiveness often resulted in conflict. Third, it included moderate and radical flanks, as moderate organizations like the AFL-CIO professionalized, focusing on representing their members more than a broader working class, and negotiating stable contracts with employers. Radical organizations like the IWW that advocated broader reform were marginalized. Fourth, the movement became institutionalized as politicians adopted its rhetoric, legislation like the National Labor Relations Act was passed, the organizational form of the union itself grew to represent that of institutional politics, and bureaucracies like the NLRB were created in its name. However, the NLRB has become an example of how early gains can create both new opportunities and new constraints, in this case based on whether a president sympathetic to the labor movement has appointed a sympathetic director as head of the bureau. Under the pressures of austerity, the labor movement can no longer count on the Democratic party as an ally, and has sought to forge alliances with new constituencies, including immigrants.

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Environmentalism

The environmental movement grew beyond the efforts of scattered writers and hikers into a major political force through alliances with elected officials, particularly President Theodore Roosevelt, who styled himself as an environmentalist and was quite comfortable using the federal government to create and protect public lands and to regulate business. Beginning with Roosevelt, the federal government established a management (p. 581) regime enforced with more or less vigor depending upon political will. Until near the end of the twentieth century, environmental groups enjoyed alliances with elected officials in both major political parties, but in recent years the movement has become increasingly identified with the Democratic party. At the same time, environmental agendas have extended beyond public lands and business regulation to include the negotiation of international regimes to address climate change.

In the middle 1800s, Transcendentalist writers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau made moral as well as aesthetic claims about the intrinsic value of the natural environment and called for conservation (Kline 2007). The foundation for strong government action, however, came later, in 1891 when President Benjamin Harrison signed the Twenty-fourth Amendment to the General Appropriations Act, which gave the president authority to establish national forests (Rothman 2000). This action was taken in the context of other congressional initiatives to establish anti-trust enforcement powers and civil service reforms, essentially fundamental Progressive policies. At about the same time, naturalist writer John Muir, who had unsuccessfully campaigned for a national park in the Sierra Mountains (protected from grazing), founded the Sierra Club to coordinate political efforts. The club enjoyed early support from wealthy, powerful, and educated donors, who typified the early conservation movement.

Environmentalists found a powerful ally in President Theodore Roosevelt, who enlarged the national forests from 43 million to 172 million acres and pressured Congress into creating fifty-one national wildlife refuges (Kline 2007). He also oversaw the establishment of the United States Forest Service, expanded the State and National Park and Forest systems, and created both bird and game reserves, creating a substantial bureaucracy committed to managing public lands (Benson 2003). For Roosevelt, this was all part of a larger effort to develop a vigorous federal government that would supersede state politics, regulate business, and project a forceful presence abroad.

Roosevelt’s successors displayed substantially less commitment to the environment, and established environmental activist groups often came into conflict with government over development plans, as both commerce and employment trumped environmental protection. The Sierra Club, for example, unsuccessfully lobbied to stop the building of the Hetch Hetchy Dam in 1923 (Righter 2005). Franklin Roosevelt retooled conservation efforts into New Deal economic recovery programs in labor and development projects, building dams and creating jobs through programs like the Civilian Conservation Corps, which hired young men to cut trails and clean parks (Maher 2008). Through the 1940s,

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conservation efforts remained concentrated in the government, which often framed policies in concert with a business-oriented strategy of infrastructure development (Rothman 2000).

Beginning in the 1950s, the federal government turned to anti-pollution efforts, framed as a public health concern, intensifying regulation of pesticides and other toxic discharges into the air and water. Amplifying government efforts, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, published first as a series of long articles in *The New Yorker,* and then as a best-selling book in 1962, drew public attention to pollution generally, and pesticides in particular. Carson, who worked as a writer for the Forest Service, demonstrates the (p. 582) importance of government in promoting ostensibly independent political action (Meyer and Rohlinger 2012). Large environmental organizations developed in Washington, DC, encouraged by support in government, representing a new phase of extra-institutional professionalization and cooperation with institutional politics.

In 1969, a Democratic senator from Wisconsin, Gaylord Nelson, dedicated a substantial portion of his staff's time to organize a national series of events to commemorate Earth Day. Nelson, who had accompanied President John F. Kennedy years earlier on a conservation tour, worked to piggyback on a United Nations environmental event. Senator Nelson tried to create extra-governmental pressure for government action. On April 22, 1970, more than 2,000 campuses and communities organized events, including a demonstration of one million people in New York City (Lewis 1990). At the grassroots level, local groups grew to work on a wide range of environmental issues, including conservation, recycling, and lobbying for regulation. Federal government support coincided with new activism and President Richard Nixon signed an executive order creating the Environmental Protection Agency in the fall of 1970, when the revised Clean Air Act and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) were passed. The EPA managed environmental protection under those laws, and its purview expanded with further legislation throughout the 1970s, including the Water Pollution Control Act in 1972, the Endangered Species Act in 1973, the Safe Drinking Water Act in 1974, the Toxic Substances Control Act in 1976, expansions to the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts in 1977, and the Superfund Act in 1980 (Shabecoff 2003). In this way, federal legislation provided many institutional pathways for environmentalists to exercise influence, including testimony at public hearings, litigation, and political lobbying.

Numerous environmental campaigns developed, some oriented to local concerns while others focused on national legislation. A movement against nuclear power, for example, included both national lobbying groups and numerous local campaigns against the siting of particular nuclear reactors throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Kitschelt 1986). Thus, activists used conventional political tactics, litigation, and protest tactics including demonstrations and civil disobedience directed at all branches of government and at all points of the federal structure.

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Initially, the more militant activists born out of the 1960s era protest tradition clashed with older conservation groups like the Sierra Club, the National Audubon Society, and the National Wildlife Federation. However, shared interests and objectives resulted in relatively quick reconciliation and cooperation (Shabecoff 2003). New nationally focused organizations with legislative and lobbying strategies, like the Natural Resource Defense Council and the League of Conservation Voters, formed, while older groups, like the Sierra Club and the National Audubon Society, refocused efforts on a Washington, DC-directed legal strategy. These organizations pressured the government to take a more aggressive stance on environmental issues, and monitored the implementation of 1970s era environmental legislation (Gottlieb 1993). These organizations developed professional identities and a large presence in Washington, DC, and mainstream politics. New organizations committed to direct action also developed, with radical activists engaging not only in symbolic civil disobedience against whalers or (p. 583) the construction of nuclear power plants, but also “monkeywrenching,” or economic sabotage through illegal action like tree-spiking and disabling vehicles (Gottlieb 1993).

Ronald Reagan’s election to the presidency in 1980 represented a push-back from business and the beginnings of more partisan environmental politics. Reagan’s first Interior Secretary, James Watt, was vigorously committed to dismantling federal environmental protections; his EPA administrator fought Congress to cut her own budget, firing and idling staff (Kline 2007; Rothman 2000). But the impact of President Reagan’s anti-environmental policies was constrained, not only by public opinion and mobilized action, but also by the institutional underpinnings of federal agencies that gave Congress grounds for oversight and information and allies within the bureaucracy.

The anti-environmental push-back, however, was firmly established within the Republican party, and environmental groups increasingly escalated their tactics, particularly in the face of stalled action on climate change. Radical groups like the Earth Liberation Front, employed direct-action tactics to include arson and setting incendiary devices under unoccupied SUVs at car dealerships (Taylor 1998), and were subject to federal surveillance and harsh prosecution in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. New groups, like 350.org, organized a divestment campaign from fossil fuel companies, mostly directed at college campuses. More moderate groups also escalated their efforts: in 2013 the Sierra Club endorsed civil disobedience for the first time in its long history; its director was arrested outside the White House.

Like movements on behalf of women and organized labor, the environmental movement made large inroads into the federal government with the Progressive movement. As with other movements, its influence crested and waned in response to the presence of sympathetic political allies willing to establish its ideas in government. Second, it pursued both institutional and extra-institutional strategies using tactics ranging from civil disobedience and large marches to lobbying and drafting legislation. Third, it fractured into moderate and radical flanks, as moderate organizations like the Sierra Club and the World Wildlife Fund professionalized, working with the government and business for incremental gains, and radical organizations like Earth First! advocated radical

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restructuring and aggressive tactics. Fourth, the movement became institutionalized as politicians carried some of its ideas. The creation of bureaucratic agencies charged with protecting the environment was an important resource for the movement, but one that could be countered when opponents were strategic and successful at the polls.

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Conclusion

Social movements have been a recurrent feature in American political life, and sometimes very consequential. The Constitution codified a plan for dealing with new constituencies and new issues by offering elements of political inclusion but weak and slow policy responsiveness. American political institutions have responded to some critical social movements at critical times, and those responses have altered not only policies, (p. 584) but the opportunities for subsequent mobilization on other issues. Our overview of four movements suggests recurrent patterns in the ways movements have navigated mainstream politics, but also how state responses have altered opportunities for both contemporaneous and later challengers.

First, it is critical to note that social movements do not operate completely outside of mainstream politics. Rather, movements in America respond to signals and support from authorities, including both elected officials and bureaucrats. Indeed, government action is often a critical precursor to an upturn in activism, as government actors try to mobilize popular support to reform policies. And social movements are increasingly part of mainstream politics. Many of their tactics—e.g. marches, rallies, petitions—have been adopted by political parties, politicians, and lobbying groups, and these tactics have become regulated, formulaic, and predictable, often as a result of advanced negotiations with bureaucratic authorities like police and politicians. Furthermore, social movement actors and organizations frequently pursue institutional political tactics like electioneering and lobbying.

Second, as movements develop, they draw up a range of organizations articulating a range of concerns, differing ideas about how to pursue them, and mobilizing a diversity of tactics. Although it is a grammatical convenience to speak of *the* civil rights movement or *the* environmental movement, social movements are generally diverse and often divided. The tendency to form broad, messy coalitions reflects the founders' design and complicates movement mobilization and facilitates institutionalization. All four movements contained a wide range of idealistic radicals and pragmatic moderates. Moderates were often ready to focus their efforts on incremental reforms, hoping to make broader gains in steps, and often pursuing institutional tactics and cooperating with government officials to develop policy. This led to fractioning as dissatisfied radical organizations broke away and escalated their tactics in the name of broader, arguably unattainable, goals. These radicals were then forced out to the margins, often losing public sympathy, and sometimes facing outright repression. Coalitions formed not only between radical hard-liners and professionalized moderates, but also with other progressive movements, sometimes contributing to abeyance in one movement while another enjoyed a particularly hospitable political climate. The diversity needed for an effective movement coalition means that social movements are virtually always

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vulnerable to defections and divisions, which make regional loyalties and racism particularly difficult obstacles for activists to navigate successfully.

The rather blurry boundaries that characterize most American movements mean that activism and organizations often spill across numerous issues. Here, for example, we've seen that organized labor, women, and environmentalists passed through and benefited from the broader Progressive movement, and that the politics of that movement limited what policymakers were willing or able to do. Franklin Roosevelt largely avoided confronting American racism in the interest of maintaining broad Democratic support. Thirty years later, facing a strong and diverse civil rights movement, Lyndon Johnson was forced to confront racism directly, and in doing so fractured the Democratic party's national coalition. Social movements foist difficult choices on political leaders, and those choices matter.

(p. 585) The American polity is permeable to social movement organizing and social movement claims, as ideas and individuals make their way into mainstream politics. Although activists never get all they want, sustained efforts can make serious institutional inroads into American institutions. Explicit discrimination against women or African Americans is anathema in contemporary political institutions, and both parties are careful to emphasize whatever demographic diversity they can. The federal government funds and staffs large bureaucracies committed to equal opportunity and environmental protection, and those institutions generally outlive even hostile presidential administrations. Such agencies provide both symbolic and practical resources to reformers. Laws from periods of responsiveness provide some hedge against policy retrenchment, and give activists a lever to engage government action through the courts when elected officials fail them. Movements also professionalize and bureaucratize, often sacrificing grassroots membership and mobilization in the service of sustaining a presence in institutional politics in Washington, DC, and throughout the country. And activists often move from advocacy outside of government to politics and administration within.

At the same time, other issues, however, have become explicitly partisan; certain movement ideas, for example, protecting abortion rights, affirmative action, and alternative energy, are endorsed by the Democratic party and disparaged by the Republicans. Movements and advocacy organizations working on such issues find it difficult to avoid electoral politics, and face countervailing movements working in the other party. Each side mobilizes support and raises money by emphasizing the threat of its counterpart. This all makes for a contentious politics and a government that has a very difficult time resolving any issue decisively. It's a commonplace among analysts to suggest that Madison and the founders wanted a federal government that would not be unduly responsive to popular pressures represented by social movements. There is no small irony in the realization that they got somewhat more than they might have imagined possible. The difficulty of moving policy in any direction means that social movements are likely to be critical players in America for some time to come.

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