How Social Movements Interact with Organizations and Fields: Protest, Institutions and Beyond

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Abstract: The literature addressing the interaction of social movements, organizations, and institutional change has flourished in the last twenty years. This chapter provides an overview of this literature and suggests areas for future development. We review the precursors of this scholarly area, how conflict within organizations can be viewed as a movement, and how movements affect individual organizations, fields of organizations, and institutions. Then, we discuss ways that movements influence organizations in ways not currently appreciated in the literature, such as how some movements by-pass conflict by recruiting elites. We suggest that scholars in this area expand their attention to include forms of political mobilization aside from the classical dynamic of challenger-incumbent confrontations.

Key words: organizations; social movements; institutions; organizational fields; strategic action fields; protest; boycotts; astroturfing; corporate activism; social activism

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Introduction

The study of social movements and the study of organizations and institutions have often been viewed as separate matters (Weber and King 2014). Movements are disruptive actors that often eschew the status quo and gravitate toward “contentious politics” (Tilly 1978; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2005). Organizations, in contrast, induce stability, and are seen as the cornerstones for institutional reproduction. Institutions are stable behavioral patterns that reflect the coordinated behavior of individuals and organizations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Scott 2001; Rojas 2013). It should not be surprising that the history of social movement research and organizational analysis have not overlapped much.

In the 1990s, social movement research, organizational analysis, and institutional theory began converging. Each area of research had stumbled into the other and bridges began to form between these scholarly communities. Empirically, scholars of social movements began to appreciate that protest doesn’t happen just in “the street.” Researchers in fields as diverse as management, education, public policy, and sociology focused on the fact that organizations were frequently targeted by social movements (e.g., Bartley 2007; King 2008; Rojas 2007; Binder 2002). Student activists might demand change in the college curriculum or “fair trade” activists might target corporations or feminists may move inside government as insider activists, reflecting the diversity of movement targets (Banaszak 2010).

Research on the feminist movement illustrates this dynamic well. Feminist organizations developed in ways to address the overall political environment as well as the internal political processes of organizations. Lee Ann Banaszak’s (1996) seminal study of women’s suffrage in the United States focuses on how differing electoral systems affected the growth and
development of women’s suffrage groups in the United States and Switzerland. Banaszak found that while resources and political opportunities mattered in both nations, it was the perceptions of each movement that shaped the movement. A second way that the feminist movement was affected by the political system was in terms of abeyance. Scholars have noted that the feminist movement sought collaborations with other movements in between the major phases of the movement (Taylor 1989). In contrast, other scholarship draws attention to the ways that feminists mobilize within organizations to promote equality. For example, Katzenstein’s multiple treatments of feminist led policy reform emphasize the “unobtrusive” nature of activism. By work with allies and out of the view of the public, reformers could institutionalize more women-friendly policies in religious and military institutions (e.g., Katzenstein 1990, 1999).

Social movement research and organizational analysis have pushed each other to revise and expand their theoretical frameworks. For social movement scholars, protest was no longer a simple issue of “call and response” where movements issue a call and wait to see how incumbents respond. Instead, social movement researchers realized that challengers and incumbents each belonged to a larger “organizational field” that created opportunities, permitted some claims while suppressing others, and acted as the environment for social movements (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2008; Fligstein and McAdam 2012). For corporate organizational scholars, it has become apparent that social movements increase the “cost of doing business” and seek to apply reputational or regulatory pressures on firms to change (Luders 2006; King 2008).

This chapter provides an overview of the new synthesis of social movement research and organizational analysis and to further provoke debate about how organizational research and movement theory should respond to each other. After this introduction, we quickly describe the “pre-history” of movement-organization studies and then explore the wave of scholarship in the
1990s and early 2000s that set the stage for the movement-organizations synthesis. Then, we summarize the current state of organizational theory, with an emphasis on institutionalism, and formulate a series of questions about how institutional theory might change in response to social movement research.

**Precursors of the Movement and Organizations Research**

An important precursor to the literature on social movements and organizations is Marxist scholarship that focuses on worker mobilization and revolutionary uprisings. Even though the literature on movements and organizations addresses many types of firms, the Marxist analysis of workers in firms provided a number of insights about movements’ relationships to economic institutions. A key argument of Marx and Engels was that latent class interests would be transformed into concrete revolutionary activity once workers were concentrated in manufacturing firms. Engels’ analysis of strikes, for example, explicitly noted that labor resistance emerged in England once machines were introduced, which encouraged unionism (Engels 1845: ch. 10). In Marx and Engel's account, actual revolutionary activity required shared beliefs, which could be fostered through constant contact such as we see in labor intensive manufacturing. Marxist analysis solidified the view that worker mobilization would precede the institutional transformation of capitalism.

In American sociology, conflict theorists, many of whom were decidedly neo-Marxist, carried on the tradition of studying mobilization and institutional change. Scholars viewed revolt or resistance to organizational authorities as manifestations of this mobilization. The most well known example might be Alvin Gouldner's (1954) *Wildcat Strike: A Study in Worker Management Relationships*, which examined why a gypsum plant experienced a worker revolt.
He observed that workers and managers jointly develop a dense web of informal relationships and norms. The daily life of the mining facility is defined both by the formal rules of the organization and the negotiated, informal order. In Gouldner's account, a strike occurred when new managers ignored, or actively violated, the informal order. Thus, the new managers inadvertently triggered a movement within their organization by violating worker's expectations.

Michael Burawoy (1979) further developed the organizational conflict perspective by offering a theory of how managers obtain consent from workers. Burawoy's argument is that capitalist firms offer polices that "gamify" work and thus reduce dissent, disruption and shirking. If workers believe they have opportunities for promotion by performing the game well, they participate in the system rather than challenge it. Scholars of labor unions have continued this tradition, although notably they have observed the decline of unions as a form of activism within companies (e.g., Rosenfeld 2014; Clawson and Clawson 1999). Outside of the Marxist tradition, scholars approached disruption with the tools of social movement research, such as Goldstone and Useem’s studies of prison revolts (e.g., Goldstone and Useem 1999; Useem and Goldstone 2002).

**Contacts between Movement Theory and Organizational Analysis**

From the 1970s to the 1990s, a series of studies made a conscious and overt effort to link social movement research and organizational analysis and go beyond the observation that organizations are sites of worker mobilization. Social movement scholars made the jump into organizational analysis when they observed two processes that required more theoretical and empirical work. First, organizations are ubiquitous in recruiting participation in movements. When scholars examined the way that individuals chose to participate in a social movement,
formal advocacy organizations were often the conduit. Snow, Zurcher and Eklund-Olsen's (1980) early study of college student participation in protest finds that religious groups frequently recruited students for protest. Schussman and Soule (2005) further explore this in a cross-movement context. McAdam and Paulsen (1983) provide evidence that recruitment to high risk activism was correlated with ties to social movement organizations. Later Munson (2009) shows that involvement in radical "pro-life" movements was initiated as individuals were attracted to organizations that provided social opportunities with friends. Radicalization came as a consequence of participating regularly in a radical organization.

At the same time, other scholars explored the organizations that sponsor and manage activism and in the process developed the influential resource mobilization perspective. McCarthy and Zald (1977) present the view that movements can only emerge and flourish if they have the backing of formal advocacy groups who provide money, legal advice, and logistical support. They analogize social movements to industries in which social movement organizations compete with one another, just as firms would, for resources. The argument is important for two reasons. First, it draws attention to the fact that social movement participation isn't merely a matter of intention or grievances. Movements need an infrastructure. Second, McCarthy and Zald draw attention to the vast world of non-profits, interest groups, social clubs, media groups, and legal organizations that constitute the social movement sector.

Since then, scholars have spent considerable amounts of time investigating the organizational field of movement organizations. Early examples include Bearman and Everett's (1993) social network analysis of Washington, DC area activist organizations and Carrol and Ratner’s (1996) study of activists that move across organizations. Bearman and Everett use newspaper data to study how organizations were connected to each other and how that changed
over time. Using rally sponsorship data to operationalize connections, the analysis showed the ebb and flow of the social movement sector. Carrol and Ratner's study of Vancouver activists showed individuals move from one social movement organization to another during the course of their lives. Some types of organizations, such as unions and peace organizations, were frequently mentioned by participants, serving as the hubs in the larger organizational network. More recently, Soule and King (2006) and Jung, King, and Soule (2014) demonstrate that social movement sectors evolve as a result of competition and collaboration between organizations pursuing similar or related causes. Similarly, there is a tradition of work that examines the ecological contexts of movement organizations, such as how the density of movement fields affects the entry and exit of organizations and the spread of tactics (e.g., Minkoff 1997, see King and Soule 2008 for a review).

**Movements in Organizations and Movements Targeting Organizations**

This section explains how organizational scholars developed an interest in movements and how that affected theories of organizational and institutional change. Early efforts to import social movement theory to the study of organizations sought to understand how mobilization efforts inside and outside companies may influence certain types of institutional change. Frequently, scholars would use the term “movement-like” to point out the analogical reasoning of this argument, as when we see Strang and Jung (2005) describe collective efforts to lead bank reform. One starting point for seeing the growing interest in social movement theory is a 1994 article by Davis and Thompson about shareholders in publically traded companies. Stakeholders in firms would often pursue their interests in ways that were highly analogous to what “street protest” movements did – challenge policy, create counter-groups, and recruit allies in the media.
More recently, organizational scholars have adopted a social movement lens to study how other organizational stakeholders, including many traditional movement organizations, have sought to change corporate practices and policies. Environmental, feminist, human rights, and civil rights organizations have always targeted corporations in addition to governments in seeking to institute broader social change (Soule 2009). For example, consider that sit-ins and boycotts in the segregationist South often directly targeted local businesses in an effort to put economic pressure on cities to change (Luders 2004). Boycotts and protests are core tactics that movements still use when targeting companies (King and Soule 2007; King 2008). Such tactics are effective inasmuch as they create threats against companies’ reputations and trigger actions to protect their public images (e.g., McDonnell and King 2013; Bartley and Child 2014; McDonnell, King, and Soule 2015). Moreover, tactics like protests serve as effective information signals that amplify perceptions of risk (Vasi and King 2012; Model, Soule, and King 2016). Thus, even if a boycott or protest has no discernible impact on sales revenue or short-term profitability, it may still disrupt a company’s ability to acquire and maintain its reputation and status position.

The analogy between political protest and intra-organizational disruption has been extended to many types of groups. Organizational scholars commonly look at educational institutions because they frequently experience internal disruption (Binder 2002, Rojas 2007). Students protest colleges for numerous reasons, including because they want more racial or gender equality or more environmentally friendly policies. Conservative movements also target universities as well, often demanding an end to affirmative action policies. Often, universities reflect broader political trends. When movements arise in society, they frequently find defenders
and recruits from within the ranks of universities and many movements try to institutionalize movement demands within universities (Rojas 2012).

Universities are also the site of primarily "internal" movements that are driven by academics. Neil Gross' (2002) analysis of heterodox philosophers is an excellent example. Gross argues that philosophy was dominated and controlled for decades by "analytic" philosophy, a group of philosophers who strive for linguistic precision and the use of symbolic logic and mathematics. "Heterodox" philosophers, who hail from a wide range of schools such as pragmatism, Continental philosophy, feminism, or Marxism, were excluded from positions of leadership and rarely received the same professional rewards as analytic philosophers. Eventually, heterodox philosophy mobilized and challenged the analytic mainstream. Not only did heterodox philosophers develop a grievance and collective identity, they employed many of the same tactics that "street movements" use, such as staging a protest at a meeting of the American Philosophical Association and creating their own movement organizations.

Of course, universities are also frequently targeted by outsiders. Rojas (2007), for example, examines how Black power activists in the 1960s enrolled in colleges so they could mobilize students and demand reform. Binder examines a similar process in the 1980s and 1990s, when multiculturalists demanded that K-12 schools include Afrocentric materials in their courses. Binder and Wood's (2013) most recent work shows the ways that national conservative organizations sponsor and promote right wing activist on campus. Other examples include the targeting of universities by the anti-apartheid activists (Soule 1997) and the spread of recycling programs on campuses (Lounsbury 2001).

Increasingly, management scholars identify movements as the impetus for the origin of innovative practices that subsequently diffuse (e.g., Strang and Soule 1998; Soule, Swaminathan,
and Tihanyi 2015; Briscoe and Safford 2008) and the emergence of new markets (Hiatt, Sine, and Tolbert 2009; Sine and Lee 2009). Inasmuch as disruption is a necessary component to any sort of institutional change (Seo and Creed 2002), “movement-like” collective action frequently underlies such disruptive sparks. Thus, movements aren’t “outsiders” in industries. They are often key actors in the development of organizations and markets.

**A First Synthesis: Movements as Political Process**

These varied studies suggested that there needed to be a more systematic account of how movements and organizations interact to trigger institutional changes. The first attempt might be called a "political process" model. In this view, social movements are one important actor, among many, that constitute an organization's regulatory environment. Thus, movements could affect organizations by changing public opinion, lobbying the state, and shaping the norms and systems of governance that moderate organizations’ actions.

A more thorough review of institutional theory can be found in Scott (2001), Rojas (2013), and Greenwood et al. (2008), but we outline the major points here. First, organizations must, in some way, satisfy the demands made by actors in the environment (Stinchcombe 1965, Meyer and Rowan 1977). Some scholarship suggests that organizations do genuinely attempt to satisfy their audiences (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) while others suggest that compliance is ritualistic (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Regardless, institutional scholars tend to agree that organizations must satisfy certain environmental demands to retain their legitimacy. Second, the environment's demands are translated into specific patterns of behavior that are often viewed as the legitimate way to for an organization to behave. Thus, a lot of institutional research is not only about organizational environments, but also about how individuals, and larger collectives,
develop rules for behavior and how these rules spread throughout various sectors of society (Bxoenbaum and Jonsson 2008).

Social movements have a natural place in institutional theory if we consider them as mediators within the institutional environment (Schneiberg and Soule 2005). Social movements spur innovations, some of which might be picked up by organizations and later become institutionalized (Lounsbury 2001). Activists try to change public opinion, which influences organizations (Gamson and Mogdiliani 1989; Walker 2014). And they spend a great deal of time lobbying the state, which allows them to impose regulations on their targets (Walker and Rea 2014). The net result is that social movements play a role in creating, imposing, and rewriting the regulations, both formal and informal, that govern organizations.

In a series of articles, Schneiberg and collaborators discuss how social movements have shaped the American insurance and agricultural industries (Schneiberg and Soule 2005). They discuss how farmer's groups and local constituencies encouraged municipalities to regulate various industries. Political challenges required states, both locally and nationally, to intervene in the economy and create new rules which can be used by both economic incumbents and their challengers. Later, Schneiberg and Soule (2005) offer a "multi-level" model of how movements affect industries. Their model depicts movement challenges as happening at multiple "levels" of society. This important in the history of insurance and farming regulation because the responses of the Federal government and states varied a great deal and the sequencing of regulation is important to knowing its history. The way the Federal government reacted to these movements depended on how states regulated farming and insurance.

This analysis combines two insights about movements and organizations. First, there is no "single" institutional environment or political order (Soule 2009; Rojas 2010). Organizational
environments have "layers" or "segments." Each part of the environment has its own dynamics and we can only understand the impact of a movement after investigating these different sub-environments. Movements vary in how much influence they have in each level, but each level has its own distinct process.

Second, the process is dynamic and results in periodic "resettlements." Movement actors disrupt existing regulations of industry, which then leads to public attention and a re-articulation of the rules of the game. Movements are actors who trigger cycles of political disruption and reconstruction. Recently, McDonnell et al. (2015) described the “political opportunity structure” of corporations in just this way. Opportunities evolve as organizations initially respond to the demands of movement activists by attempting to placate them with symbolic gestures, which creates new pathways for influence and change within the organizations.

From this perspective, social movements and organizations jointly create their institutional environments, as well as being constrained by them once new practices or systems emerge. Tim Bartley (2007) and others (e.g., Campbell 2007; Brammer, Jackson, and Matten 2012; Vogel 2010) have argued that social movements play a large role in the construction of transnational systems of private regulation, which have in some cases replaced governmental regulation. Businesses and activists have collaborated to set up nongovernmental certification systems, like the Forest Stewardship Council or Fair Trade branding, that brand firms as being pro-environmental or pro-human rights. These systems, scholars argue, institutionalize global norms about good business practice and sanction firms that do not abide by them. Bartley (2007) argues that the path to institutionalizing global norms around corporate social responsibility has been marked by contestation and conflict between social movements and corporations. Social
movements, again, are seen as the agitators for the shifts in the institutional environment in which organizations operate.

**A Second Synthesis: Fields and Resettlements**

This section investigates a related point of view called "field theory" that attempts to present an integrated view of both movements and organizations. Field theory synthesizes various literatures on institutions, states, and organizations, including those cited in this chapter. But unlike political process theory, field theory draws heavily from Bourdieu’s (1977) conceptualization of society as stratified by class positions and differential access to capital. Field theory begins with a "meso-level" description of society as layered by fields: populations of organizations and other actors that jockey for positions of control and influence, internal status orders, and rules for interaction. Fields are shaped by periodic disruptions and "resettlements." Those without status or power will come to view the current state of affairs as illegitimate and gather the resources needed to challenge those with power. Successful mobilization can destabilize power holders and can force a "resettlement,” which are accompanied by changes in the rules and distribution of resources.

Although the concept of fields has disseminated broadly through Bourdieusian work or institutional theoretical research on organizational fields, the concept entered the social movement literature through *The Dynamics of Contention* by Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly (2003). The book’s principle argument was that the rise and decline of social movements depends on the push and pull of states and their challengers through various mechanisms and processes. The process of challenging states required that actors delegitimize existing policies, acquire the resources for challenge and then interact with the state through
various channels such as voting, lobbying, protest, or even violent revolution. This cycle of de
delegitimization, framing, mobilization, and resettlement, though critiqued by scholars as being too focused on the state and being too casual in its description of particular mechanisms, suggested that movements instigated new episodes of contention, which ultimately led to the reordering of states.

Fligstein and McAdam (2012) extended these ideas to produce a more general theory of strategic action fields. This text builds on the basic ideas of *The Dynamics of Contention* in three ways. First, and most importantly, the cycle of challenge and resettlement is thought to occur in many fields, not just politics. Strategic framing, resource mobilization, and protest occur in many domains of social life. Second, they draw attention to the multiplicity of fields and their connections. Thus, a disruption in one field could "spillover" into other social domains. Industries are fields, but the organizations that make up an industry are also fields. Struggles over defining the “rules of the game” occur both within and between organizations. Of course, certain fields and organizations that merit additional attention. The state, for example, wields disproportionate influence because of its monopoly of violence and its role as a regulator. Within fields, there are accreditors that are influential because they award symbolic capital to ordinary organizations.

Field theory sensitizes scholars to the strategic interactions that take place between movements, organizations, and other actors. Shifts in broader societal norms result from these interactions. Consider, for example, recent research on the strategic interaction of social movements and corporations (Bartley and Child 2014; King 2008; Soule and King 2006; McDonnell and King 2013; King and McDonnell 2015), which emphasizes how field position – status orders and reputation rankings – shapes the dynamics and outcomes of these interactions.
Activists often target high status corporations precisely because they know these firms will be susceptible to the reputational threats imposed by negative media attention related to boycotts or protests. Furthermore, high status firms that concede to activists’ demands has a broader impact on a field’s norms and practices than is true of changes made by less visible companies. Activists are able to turn the strengths of the powerful into vulnerabilities that create ripples of change throughout the entire field. For empirical tests of these ideas, see Wang and Soule (2012, 2015) and Jung et al (2015).

The synthesis of movement theory and organizational analysis offered by field theory has a number of strengths. First, it recognizes that disruption and challenge is not limited to states; rather conflict erupts between and within organizations over contestation of informal norms and access to power and resources. It provides a template for the generic social processes that might drive controversy in any social domain. Second, it suggests how social conflict and resettlements might reverberate through societies. Some change may be "top down" and imposed by states, while other change is transmitted from one field to the next. Third, field theory suggests that the structure of the field itself, including actors’ relative status position, influences how challenger battle incumbents.

**Beyond Field Theory**

In this section, we challenge the synthesis of movement theory and organizational analysis represented by political process models and field theory. We do not suggest that such approaches are wrong. Instead, we suggest that field theories and political process theory are incomplete descriptions of how movements and organizations interact because these theories are motivated by very specific historical examples.
Here, we make two arguments. First, field theory is predicated on the view that there is a clear distinction between incumbent and challengers, but, rather, we argue that there are many types of contentious politics and organized social change that do not clearly have incumbents and challengers. In many cases, movements seem to be guided by elites who occupy positions of authority and influence (Duffy, Binder, and Skrentny 2010). Often, they do not represent a marginal or excluded group, nor do they represent elites who are defending their status or position against challengers. There are movements that appear to be organized by elites and do not trigger contention. Thus, movements are not always well described as triggering a cycle of incumbent-challenger conflict. Moreover, many movements – especially “identity movements” – seem to be less oppositional. Field position is likely more varied than the incumbent-challenger dichotomy captures. Consider, for example, Heaney’s and Rojas’s (2014) study of the antiwar movement of the 2000s, which demonstrated that antiwar organizations with more complex, flexible identities were more successful at recruiting protest participants than organizations with “narrow” identities.

To motivate the first claim, we present examples of contentious behavior that do not emerge from a clear a dispute between incumbents and challengers. One important example is the rise of Buddhism and meditative practice in American social life (Kucinskas 2014b). Originally, the history of American Buddhism appears to be a classic case of challenger-incumbent interaction. The first Buddhists in America were members of a low status ethnic group and they created organizations that were designed to promote a religion that was actively rejected by mainstream religions. It was not uncommon for meditation, and related practices, to be framed as un-Christian and heretical. Later, American Buddhism has gained prominence in American life, partly through the legitimation efforts of academic elites who reformulated
Buddhist ideology so it could co-exist with Western scientific principles. "Mindfulness" is a personal practice that has been featured in mainstream media and has been adopted by major corporations, universities, and even the American military. This change in the status of American Buddhism occurred without the hallmarks of social change. There were no "meditation protests," there was little overt conflict between Christians and Buddhists, and there has been extremely little counter-movement backlash.

Second, both theories focus on the point of contact between movements and the organizations they target. This assumes that there is a direct point of contact between movements and organizations. Instead, there are important cases where movements actively avoid direct conflict with incumbents and choose to work in "parallel" with the mainstream – they “by-pass the state” and thus circumvent conflict (Rojas and Byrd 2014; Davis and Robinson 2012; Kucinskas 2014a). For that reason, it is important to consider how movements may influence organizations not by directly challenging them, or rallying support through the media, but by creating alternatives that expand the "menu of options" available to organizations. Increasingly, we see movements collaborating with incumbents (e.g., Duffy, Binder and Skrentny 2010; Kucinskas 2014a). Many LGBT activists also held prominent positions within the organizations they sought to change, thus tempering their radicalism and aligning their incentives to find “win-win” solutions (Meyerson and Scully 1995). We see this pattern repeated in today’s environmental movement, in which many former activists are taking positions in the corporate world and seeking more direct forms of intervention. And, as Mae McDonnell (2015) has illustrated, companies might also take activist positions that are highly aligned with the movements that once targeted them, embracing the change-oriented ideals of movements (see also, McDonnell, King, and Soule 2015; Briscoe, Chin, and Hambrick 2014).
The example of American Buddhism is a case of elites using their status to effectively avoid confrontation with the mainstream and use their social capital to legitimize new ideas. The case of corporate grass roots lobbying raises different issues (Walker 2014, see also Fisher 2006). Grass roots lobbying, sometimes known as “astroturfing,” refers to the practice of hiring a professional staff to mobilize people to protest on your behalf. For example, a firm that wants to build a manufacturing plant might mobilize protesters to signal that people might like the firm because of the jobs it brings. In some cases, astroturfing might be done to overcome opposition to the firm’s project. In other cases, it might be done in the absence of opposition as a form of reputation management and to influence people who have power over the firm, such as zoning boards or regulatory agencies.

One of Walker’s main findings about “grassroots for hire” organizations is that they tend to crowd out traditional activists and increase political inequality. His research suggests that protest, as understood by social scientists, isn’t always a tool of the challenger and there is now a form of protest that is sponsored by incumbents that helps incumbents. Traditionally, in social movement research, protest is usually not described as a form of push-back, except by counter-movements that wish to roll back a movement’s victories. These two examples illustrates the need to expand movement-organization beyond the model suggests by challenger-incumbent models.

Our second argument is that the dynamics between movements and organizations aren’t always characterized by the types of behaviors described in political process models or field theory, which shows movements as influencing organizations through regulation or media. Here, we provide examples of movements that affect organizational fields not by confronting organizations but by-passing them altogether.
We begin with an example of a movement that has failed to influence the mainstream and has decided to stop directly challenging older, more established organizations – creationism (Oberlin 2014). This movement has decided to develop its own institutions in parallel with its competitors. Throughout the 20th century, creationists have won some victories, but not enough to displace Darwinian biology in schools and universities. Instead, creationism has, at best, a circumscribed position in American society. In response to this situation, creationists have created their own institutions such as research institutes and, more importantly, a museum in Kentucky that is supposed to represent the creationist view in the most positive light. This museum not only entertains young people, but has carefully constructed exhibits that explain how fossils and other physical evidence can be made compatible with creationist theory. The museum itself stands as both a critique of mainstream biology and as a “free space” where movement sympathizers can gather and form a collective representation of what they believe in.

The literature on social movements is replete with examples of movements that choose to “by-pass” the state and other dominant organizations and instead build their own organizations that obviate the need work move within these institutions. In other words, activists may decide that working with elected officials, business leaders, and other elites may not be in their best interest and opt to organizations that promote the social practices and policies that they prefer. Many resemble the creationists who mobilized against the mainstream and failed. Scholars of Black Power have documented multiple cases where black nationalists failed to extract concessions from universities, such as creating Black Studies programs and colleges within predominantly white organizations, and then created their own free standing Black Studies colleges (Rojas and Byrd 2014). Many religious movements exhibit this pattern as well. Davis and Robinson (2012) survey a range of traditional religious movements, such as Israel’s Shas
and the Salvation Army, and notes that they often establish their own social services, such as schools, hospitals, and poverty support groups. These movements operated social services not only cultivate support among a target population, but they also allow the movement to grow and spread its ideas outside the state. In this manner, movements can grow and expand without directly challenging the state, which often triggers violent repression.

Perhaps the most interesting example of by-passing is when social movements decide to not even directly challenge incumbents at all and simply operate independently of the mainstream. One interesting example of this is the urban farming movement (White 2011). The black dominated movement argues that the food produced for urban populations is poor in quality and unreasonably expensive. They also argue that urban regions contain “food deserts” where residents would have to travel to find quality food. Urban farmers urge people to grow their own food and develop their own distribution channels. White documents the way these movement participants need to completely redevelop the supply chains that are taken for granted by customers. These institutions – food cooperatives – not only embody the ideology of the urban farming movement, but they encourage others to disassociate themselves from the mainstream for of food production.

**Expanding Field Theory and Political Process Model**

The various examples in the previous section show that the incumbent-challenger conflict does not capture the range of how movements and organizations interact. To describe the full spectrum of movement-organization interaction, one might start with the types of examples that motivated the theory of fields, such as the civil rights movement or revolutionary movements
that try to topple states. These movements have two traits: a strong distinction between incumbent and challenger and clear moments of conflict.

[Figure 1. Typology of movements]

Then, we can think about movements that vary along one or both of these dimensions. Some movements have clear challenger-incumbent distinctions but they do not play as direct conflicts. The movements that “by-pass” states are an example. By establishing rival organizations that have movement adherents as an audience, they can clearly compete with the mainstream while avoiding conflict. Conversely, some movements may have well defined conflict with an incumbent but it is not clearly a conflict between “insiders” and “challengers.” Many disputes in the corporate sector may have this characteristic as coalitions of shareholders build coalitions to assert their positions. Then, some movements interact with organizations without any obvious conflict and without incumbents in the traditional sense of the word. The example of American Buddhism is an excellent example. This elite driven movement used the resources of the academy to legitimate its ideologies and avoid conflict with religious institutions altogether. There is little sense that American Buddhists has a clear antagonist they were struggling with to disseminate their ideas.

“Insider activism” is a topic that is now more widely recognized by scholars. Briefly, it refers to ways the actors within organizations promote social change without the type of contention traditional studied in social movement research. This may include leaders instituting new policies or rank and file workers speaking up to promote a specific issue. Perhaps the starting point of this literature is Katzenstein’ (1999) work on reform in the Catholic church and
the US military. Her analysis classifies “insider activism” according to whether the protest is disruptive or discursive and whether it is radical, and thus challenges existing values and norms. Wayne A. Santoro and Gail M. McGuire (1997) explain when external movements can help, or facilitate, insiders who can promote their cause, which has been reinforced by more recent studies such as Raeburn’s study of LGBT activism in corporate America (2004). Recently, Briscoe and Gupta (2016) review research on insider activism and identify various aspects of insider activism that require more scholarly attention, such as whether “insiders” are completely or only partially inside the organization and whether organizational change is a direct or indirect effect of activism.

The purpose of the typology is to sensitize the reader to the spectrum of movement-organization interactions. The goal is to draw attention to examples of collective action that are not characterized by low status challengers struggling against high status incumbents. These movements that exist “off the diagonal” in Figure 1 require more theorizing. Further research can ask how the protest cycle differs across different types of movements. It can also be hypothesized that moving from one trajectory (direct conflict with challengers) to parallelism might be a normal evolution for unsuccessful movements. Thus, this theoretical exercise suggests that how movements and organizations interact affects the life cycle of movements whose sequencing needs to be more fully understood.

**Conclusion**

The study of movements, organizations, and institutions has gone through multiple phases. The earliest work examined the ways that movements erupt in organizations and used
movement theory to provide a vocabulary for intra-organizational conflict. Then, from the 1990s to the 2000s, research on movements and organizations became more systematic. One stream attempted to examine the mechanisms that linked activism to organizational behavior. Another stream, motivated by classical movement studies, tried to generalize the theory that was used to explain cycles of challenger-incumbent conflict. We argued in this chapter that there is much more to be learned about movement-organization interaction by looking at collective action that does not resemble prototypical case studies. Movements and organizations interact in a multitude of ways that both create and reproduce their institutional environments.
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Movement Spillover and Structural Isolation.” Forthcoming in *American Sociological Review*.


Figure 1. Typology of Movements in Fields with Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incumbent Challenge</th>
<th>Conflict Style</th>
<th>Indirect/Bypassing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Civil Rights Movement</td>
<td>Separatist Ethnic Movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Intra-corporate conflict/</td>
<td>American Buddhism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>shareholder activism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biographical Notes:

Brayden G King is a professor of Management and Organizations and is also affiliated with the Department of Sociology. Professor King's research focuses on how social movement activists influence corporate social responsibility, organizational change, and legislative policymaking. He also studies the ways in which the reputations and identities of businesses and social movement organizations emerge and transform in response to their institutional environments. More recently, his research has begun to examine social media and its influence on individual and organizational reputations.