

Leadership in Social Movements

Aldon Morris and Suzanne Staggenborg\*

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Leaders are critical to social movements: they inspire commitment, mobilize resources, create and recognize opportunities, devise strategies, frame demands, and influence outcomes. As numerous scholars have noted, however, leadership in social movements has yet to be adequately theorized (cf. Aminzade et al. 2001; Barker et al. 2001; Klandermans 1989; Melucci 1996; Morris 1999; Zurcher and Snow 1981). We argue that this lacuna results from a failure to fully integrate agency and structure in theories of social movements. A focus on great leaders risks neglect of structural opportunities and obstacles to collective action, while an emphasis on structures of opportunity risks slighting human agency. Moreover, an emphasis on leaders seems to unfairly relegate the critical masses of movements to the category of "followers" (cf. Barker et. al 2001). Thus, any approach to leadership in social movements must examine the actions of leaders within structural contexts and recognize the myriad levels of leadership and roles of participants.

We define movement leaders as strategic decision-makers who inspire and organize others to participate in social movements. Our goal in this essay is to show that by taking leadership into account we can improve explanations of key issues in social movement theory. We begin with a brief review of existing approaches to leadership in social movements.<sup>i</sup> We then discuss the social composition of leadership in movements before turning to several areas for which we think leadership is critical.<sup>ii</sup>

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## PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Early studies of social movement leadership (e.g., Blumer 1951; Lang and Lang 1961; Roche and Sachs 1955) identified the functional roles filled by different types of movement leaders at different stages in movement development (Wilson 1973:195-196). Gusfield (1966) points to the conflicting requirements for a leader to function both within the movement as a "mobilizer," inspiring participants, and outside the movement as an "articulator," linking the movement to the larger society. More recent work further analyzes the complexity of leadership roles at different levels within movements, the conflicts between different leadership tasks, and changes over time in movement leadership (see Aminzade et al. 2001; Goldstone 2001; Herda-Rapp 1998; Klandermans 1989; Marullo 1988; Melucci 1996; Nelson 1971; Robnett 1997; Staggenborg 1988; Turner and Killian, 1987).

Beyond analyzing the various roles and functions of leaders in social movements, researchers have also examined the ways in which leaders gain legitimate authority in social movements. Many draw on Weber's theory of charismatic leadership, a relational approach that assigns a key role to followers in imputing charisma to leaders (Platt and Lilley 1994). Weber (1968) elaborates the movement forms associated with charismatic leadership, including the emotional character of the community and the appointment of officials based on loyalty to the charismatic leader. Despite Weber's focus on the interactional nature of leadership, however, the notion of charisma is commonly used to refer to a personality type, and Weber's insight into the effects of leadership on movement characteristics has been

neglected (cf. Eichler 1977:101; Wilson 1973:1999). Melucci (1996:336) argues that the Weberian theory of charisma lends itself to neglect of the social relationship between leaders and followers; viewed as giving themselves up to a charismatic leader, followers lack agency.

Indeed, in Robert Michels's (1962[1911]) theory of political leadership, followers willingly cede agency to their leaders. The masses are grateful to leaders for speaking and acting on their behalf, even though leaders become political elites whose interests conflict with those of their followers. Large bureaucratic organizations, in Michels's view, are necessary to large-scale movements and parties, but they inevitably become oligarchical as leaders are motivated to preserve their own power and positions. Leaders become part of the power elite, more concerned with organizational maintenance than the original goals of the movement. The masses allow this to happen through apathy and a lack of competence in comparison to their skilled leaders. Marx and Engels (1968) and Lenin (1975) shared the view that outside leaders (intellectuals) were required for revolutionary movements because the masses were incapable of developing a theoretical understanding of revolutionary struggle.

Numerous theorists have disputed Michels's argument regarding the inevitable transformation of organizations into oligarchy, arguing that we need to examine the variety of organizational forms that actually constitute movements and the processes that allow some organizations to operate democratically (see C. Barker 2001; Lipset, Trow, and Coleman 1956). Zald and Ash (1966) argue that movement

organizations change in a variety of ways in response to external environmental factors as well as internal processes. Member apathy, when it occurs, does allow leaders to transform the goals of members, but in some instances leaders transform organizations in a radical rather than conservative direction (Zald and Ash 1966:339; see also Schwartz et al. 1981). Zald and Ash point to the ways in which organizational characteristics, such as structural requirements for membership, affect the demands placed on leaders. An exclusive organization, for example, would require its leaders to focus on mobilizing tasks, while an inclusive organization would be more likely to have leaders with an articulating style. At the same time, leaders committed to particular goals may also change the structure of an organization (Zald and Ash 1966:339-340).

Other theorists have detailed both the ways in which leaders influence movement organization and how movement characteristics shape leadership. Expanding on Weber's relational approach, Wilson (1973) distinguishes among charismatic, ideological, and pragmatic types of leaders and associated types of movement organization. Leadership type affects centralization of decision-making, division of labor, and the extent to which the organization is subject to schism. Eichler (1977) similarly associates bases of leadership with organizational characteristics and outcomes. Barker (2001) argues that the right combination of leadership and organizational type will allow movements to defy Michels's predictions and empower participants pursuing radical social change.

Different types of leaders come out of different types of pre-existing organizational structures. In the American women's movement,

for example, "older branch" leaders came out of experiences in traditional voluntary organizations, unions, and political parties with formalized structures, whereas "younger branch" feminist leaders emerged from experiences in decentralized, participatory civil rights and New Left organizations (Freeman 1975). Leaders from these different types of backgrounds shape organizational structures in accordance with their previous experiences, influencing the mobilization, strategies, and outcomes of movements.

A key theoretical issue is the extent to which the characteristics and actions of leaders, as opposed to structural conditions, matter. Collective behavior theorists have argued that social structural conduciveness is necessary but not sufficient for movement mobilization; leaders create the impetus for movements by providing examples of action, directing action, and defining problems and proposing solutions (Lang and Lang 1961:517-524). Smelser (1962) argues that leaders are essential to mobilization and can play a role in creating other conditions in the value-added process of collective behavior, but they also need structural strain and conduciveness, generalized beliefs, and precipitating factors to generate collective behavior.

Resource mobilization theorists have viewed leaders as political entrepreneurs who mobilize resources and found organizations in response to incentives, risks, and opportunities; supporters are seen as rational actors who follow effective leaders (see McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977; Oberschall 1973). Factors such as the availability of outside support and the operation of social control affect the emergence of leaders (Oberschall 1973:157-159). Political process

theorists have analyzed the impacts of structures of political opportunity, but in doing so they have paid little attention to leadership—a problem acknowledged in recent discussions of the role of leaders in recognizing and acting on opportunities (Goldstone 2001; Aminzade et al., 2001).

In our view, the relative neglect of leadership in social movement theory results from a failure to adequately address the importance and limitations of both structure and agency. The political process approach emphasizes structures of political opportunity to the neglect of human agency (see Goodwin and Jasper 1999). The entrepreneurial-organizational version of resource mobilization theory (see McCarthy and Zald 2002) actually overemphasizes agency in arguing that issue entrepreneurs can manufacture grievances. In another sense, however, the theory neglects agency in its treatment of mobilizing structures. Although resource mobilization theory implicitly assumes that leaders are directing movement organizations, analysts have generally not examined the emergence of leadership and the ways in which leaders affect movement strategy and outcomes. As McCarthy and Zald (2002:543) note in a recent assessment of resource mobilization theory, “[we] were almost silent, at least theoretically, on the issue of strategic decision making.”

We argue that social movement theory would benefit greatly from an examination of the numerous ways in which leaders generate social change and create the conditions for the agency of other participants. Although we think that human agency has been neglected by the recent emphasis on structures of opportunity, we do not propose that

researchers err in the opposite direction by highlighting agency at the expense of structure. Rather, we need to examine both the structural limitations and opportunities for social movements and the ways in which leaders make a difference within structural contexts. As this review shows, scholars have produced some general ideas that we can build on in developing theories of leadership in social movements: Leaders operate within structures, and they both influence and are influenced by movement organization and environment. They are found at different levels, performing numerous and varied functions. Leaders sometimes pursue their own interests and maintain organizations at the expense of movement goals, but different organizational structures produce different types of leaders, including some who work to advance movement goals over their own interests. Different types of leaders may dominate at different stages of movement development and sometimes come into conflict with one another.

To get beyond these general ideas about leadership, we need to address the difference that leadership makes for specific processes and issues. In the following sections, we attempt to outline some new directions for the study of movement leadership by showing how leadership is dependent on structural conditions and how leaders matters to the emergence, organization, strategy, and outcomes of social movements.

#### SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF LEADERSHIP

Leaders of social movements are not a representative assortment of individuals randomly chosen from the populations they lead. V. I.

Lenin, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Betty Friedan were leaders of very different types of social movements, yet they all enjoyed at least middle class status and were highly educated. Social movement leaders tend to come from the educated middle and upper classes, are disproportionately male, and usually share the race or ethnicity of their supporters (see Brinton 1952; Flacks 1971; Oberschall 1973). Although this assertion is based mainly on research in developed Western countries, studies of movement and revolutionary leaders in poor and non-Western countries also suggest that a majority either come from the middle and upper classes or have more education than their followers (see Rejai and Phillips 1988; Veltmeyer and Petras 2002). Here we seek to understand why this nonrepresentative quality of movement leaders seems to be the rule rather than the exception and what implications the social composition of leadership has for social movements.

It is obvious that privileged class backgrounds provide leaders with financial resources, flexible schedules and social contacts often unavailable to the rank and file. These resources are important because social movements often champion the interests of resource-poor groups. However, we believe that educational capital is the key resource that social movement leaders derive from their privileged backgrounds. To be successful, social movements require that a myriad of intellectual tasks be performed extremely well. A host of social movement activities—framing grievances and formulating ideologies, debating, interfacing with media, writing, orating, devising strategies and tactics, creatively synthesizing information gleaned from local, national and international venues, dialoguing with

internal and external elites, improvising and innovating, developing rationales for coalition building and channeling emotions—are primarily intellectual tasks. The manipulation of language and other symbols is central to these tasks. Formal education, especially at the university level, is the main avenue through which people acquire advanced reading, writing, speaking and analytic skills, and colleges and universities are settings in which many individuals absorb new ideas from different cultures.

These educational skills enabled Gandhi to develop a weapon for the weak when he formulated the strategy of nonviolent direct action. They were evident in the artistry of King's "I Have a Dream" speech, in which he linked the aspirations of the civil rights movement to those enshrined in the larger American culture. They were apparent in Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, which gave voice to women suffering from "the problem that has no name." They shone through in Phyllis Schlafly's debating skills, which helped to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment (Mansbridge 1986). Because we agree with Jasper (1997) that social movements are characterized by creativity, artful experimentation and improvisation, we argue that educated individuals often land leadership positions because they are best suited to design and preside over social movements tasks.

Social movements spend a great deal of time mobilizing, orchestrating and dissecting the collective action of social groups. Studies show that contemporary social movement leaders tend to major in the social sciences, humanities, and arts (e.g., Keniston 1968; McAdam 1988; Zald and McCarthy 1987; Pinard and Hamilton 1989). Our view is that these fields of study are highly relevant to movement

leaders because they constitute a "science of human action" that imparts movement appropriate skills. Many activists learn relevant values from their parents (cf. Lipset 1972; Klatch 1999), which are then reinforced by the experiences and skills gained through education.

This does not mean that all movement leaders hail from the privileged classes or receive higher educations, which are more common in post-World War II Europe and North America than in earlier times and in less developed countries. Nor are leaders from privileged classes necessarily the best leaders for all types of movements. Indeed, leaders who emerge from poor and working-class communities are likely to share the interests of their class and to enjoy advantages in mobilizing their social bases that outsiders lack. Yet, we believe that even for those who come from working and lower classes, educational capital is crucial. In a study of leadership in the Brazilian rural landless workers' movement, Veltmeyer and Petras (2002) found that a high proportion of leaders of a new wave of rural activism differed from leaders of previous waves of activism in that they had peasant origins rather than coming from the urban middle classes. Nevertheless, a large proportion of these leaders were well educated and committed to continuing education, an asset that, along with their ties to the rural poor, was key to the leaders' ability to carry out successful strategies.

Access to educational capital is a product of both agency and structure. Leaders can advance poor people's movements through their commitment to education for themselves and their followers. Thus, Malcolm X was renowned for transforming his jail cell into a

"university" and developing the intellectual capital that enabled him to win debates with university-trained scholars. Leaders without much formal education tend to have grown up in "movement families" or to be exposed to movement experiences by significant others, enabling them to acquire skills and knowledge regarding organizing and leadership. Movements that organize poor and uneducated people can develop organizing talents among their constituents when they create educational forums such as the citizenship schools of the civil rights movement. Although the educational capital needed by social movement leaders is more accessible for members of privileged classes and is generally acquired through formal education, it can also be taught by movements and absorbed through hands-on experience.

Large-scale structural trends and the characteristics of institutions also affect access to educational capital and leadership. For example, urban black ministers became leaders of the American civil rights movement after economic changes and subsequent urbanization produced a particular type of black minister who was educated and black churches with sufficient resources to support independent ministers. Large-scale entry of women into universities after World War II increased their presence in social movements such as the student and anti-war movements, and many women became feminist leaders after participating in small groups to discuss new ideas about women's liberation in the universities and movements of the sixties. As we argue below, many social movement leaders acquire leadership positions because of their prior leadership roles and skills acquired in the institutions of challenging groups.

Gender and Leadership

The degree of gender inequality in the community of a challenging group is one of the main determinants of gender inequality in top levels of leadership in social movements. As a result of gender inequalities at the institutional level, the top levels of social movement leadership have often had a male face, with women gaining access to leadership and status through their relationships with men. At the outset of the civil rights movement, for example, over ninety nine percent of the pastors in black churches were men and that office was one of the primary routes to social movement leadership. In the American New Left, women achieved status as the wives or lovers of important male leaders (Rosen 2000:120). In revolutionary movements, the few "major female revolutionary leaders...all acquired a leadership mantle from martyred husbands or fathers" (Goldstone 2001:159).

Although men have dominated the top leadership positions in many movements, recent work on gender and leadership shows that social movement leadership is a complex phenomenon consisting of multiple layers (Aminzade et al. 2001; Goldstone 2001; Jones 1993; Robnett 1997; Taylor 1999). Without doubt, women participate widely in social movements and play crucial roles in their activities and outcomes. Robnett (1997) and Jones (1993) demonstrate that women were heavily involved in secondary leadership roles even when they were not involved in the top layers of civil rights movement leadership.

Robnett argues that women often function in the role of "bridge leader," which she defines as "an intermediate layer of leadership, whose task includes bridging potential constituents and adherents, as well as potential formal leaders to the movement" (1997:191). Such leaders also perform the bulk of a movement's emotional work and may

play dominant roles during periods of crisis and spontaneity. In a similar argument, Jones (1993:119) maintains that women usually engage in leadership activities that establish networks and cement formal ties because of their skills associated with family life and family-like symbols. Robnett and Jones concur that women are usually excluded from the top formal leadership positions of SMOs, and both tend to view such positions as being occupied by spokespersons of movements. These scholars have pushed us to broaden our conception of movement leadership by not limiting leadership to activities associated with formal roles and masculine activities.

While we welcome this corrective, we worry that this line of analysis could lead to an overly broad definition of leadership and to neglect of power dynamics in movement leadership. In recognizing that leadership is involved in many organizing activities, and that women have been critical to social movements, we do not want to equate all active participation in social movements with leadership. Organizers who create strategy, develop projects, frame issues, or inspire participation are clearly a type of leader. But other participants in organizing projects, who carry out tasks such as fundraising and canvassing (and may be called "organizers" within movements), should not automatically be considered leaders if we want to retain any analytic meaning for the concept of leadership. Moreover, we need to be aware that there is a vertical ordering of leadership in most social movements. When women are excluded from top positions they are separated from a considerable amount of power wielded by top movement leaders.

We are skeptical of arguments that collapse the distinction

between formal leadership and movement spokespersons for two different reasons. On the one hand, formal movement leaders like Lenin, Gandhi, King, Castro, Mao and Nyerere were no mere movement spokespersons; they set movement goals, determined strategies and tactics, and shaped outcomes (Aminzade et al. 2001). On the other hand, some movement "spokespersons" may be individuals who put themselves forward or are selected by the mass media as "stars" but are not accountable leaders at all (cf. Freeman 1975:120; Gitlin 1980).

#### Inside and Outside Leaders

The social composition of top leadership positions is important because leaders with different backgrounds and experiences make different strategic choices, which influence movement success. Although members of challenging groups usually provide the majority of leaders for their movements, it is not unusual for members of privileged outside groups to function in leadership positions within movements of oppressed groups. For example, many leaders in the anti-slavery movement and some in the early civil rights movement were white (see Marx and Useem 1971). Research has shown that a mix of inside and outside leaders brings both advantages and disadvantages to social movement leadership. In terms of advantages, privileged outsiders often bring fresh viewpoints, social contacts, skills, and attention to the leadership circle that would be unavailable otherwise. Such leaders can increase the options open to movement leaders and enrich deliberations that serve as the basis for important decision-making (Marx and Useem 1971; Ganz 2000).

Leaders from outside the challenging group can also bring a host of problems to the leadership table. In a comparison of majority

involvement in three very different movements, Marx and Useem (1971) found that mixed leadership teams tend to generate conflicts based on ideological disagreements, prejudices and hostilities toward the challenging group held by outsiders, differential skill levels that enable outsiders to occupy a disproportionate number of leadership positions, and latent tensions that become highly visible over the course of a movement. Marx and Useem conclude that such conflicts are to be expected given the structural and cultural pressures inherent in insider/outsider interactions. Later, we will return to how the insider/outsider leadership dynamic can affect movement outcomes.

In sum, the composition of social movement leadership matters because it affects access to leadership skills that are crucial to leadership success. Those skills are often acquired through formal education and through knowledge gained in community institutions and prior movement experience. In the following sections, we look at the role of different types of leaders in movement emergence, strategy, and outcomes.

#### LEADERSHIP AND MOVEMENT EMERGENCE

Research has identified key ingredients for the emergence of social movements, including political and cultural opportunities, organizational bases, material and human resources, precipitating events, threats, grievances, and collective action frames. Although it is doubtful that even the most skilled leaders could mobilize movements in the absence of at least some of these factors, leaders make a difference in converting potential conditions for mobilization into actual social movements. At the same time, structural conditions

affect the emergence and effectiveness of leaders. We need to examine how leadership interacts with other influences on movement emergence by looking at how leaders emerge in particular cultural and political contexts and what leaders do to meet the challenges of mobilization.

#### Cultural and Political Contexts of Leadership

Oberschall (1973) suggests that potential leaders are almost always available, but their emergence depends on political opportunities. He argues that leadership skills "have to be learned through education and the trial and error experience of activists as the movement unfolds" (1973:158). However, political opportunities are often missed, and leaders play an important role in recognizing and acting on opportunities (Banaszak 1996; Goldstone 2001). If the emergence of movements requires that political leaders recognize structural opportunities, it follows that pre-existing organizational and cultural contexts are critical to the emergence of both leaders and movements. The types of pre-existing bases vary, however, depending on the type of social movement.

Morris and Braine (2001:34-37) distinguish three types of movements: "liberation movements" are populated by members of oppressed groups, who draw on the infrastructure of their oppositional culture; "equality-based special issue movements" address specific issues that affect particular oppressed groups; and "social responsibility" movements challenge certain conditions that affect the general population. In a liberation movement such as the civil rights movement, the black churches were a primary source of movement leadership and the participatory tradition and cultural forms of the Church were the backbone of the civil rights movement. In a special

issue movement like the abortion rights movement, leaders emerged from existing social movements, including the population and family planning movements as well as the women's movement, and they were influenced by the structures and tactics of these movements (Staggenborg 1991).

Social responsibility movements, in contrast to the other two types, may lack such pre-existing organizational and structural foundations. "Suddenly imposed grievances" (Walsh 1981), including personal tragedies as well as events such as nuclear accidents and oil spills, may motivate new leaders. For example, the anti-drinking and driving movement took off in the early 1980s in the United States with the founding of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) by Candy Lightner after her daughter was killed by a drunk driver. Whereas earlier attempts to raise awareness of drunk driving had attracted little public attention, Lightner's leadership clearly made a difference. Despite her lack of movement experience, Lightner made effective use of the mass media, invoking motherhood and victims' rights in her framing of the problem and spurring the movement with her moral outrage. However, as Reinerman (1988) argues, the cultural and political contexts of the movement were also critical. The crusade thrived in the conservative political context of the 1980s because leaders used the frame of the "killer drunk" and the need for individual responsibility, which resonated with the "just say no" ethos of the Reagan era.

When movements are based on a history of oppression or inequality that generates indigenous institutions and prior social movements, leaders often emerge from pre-existing organizations and institutions.

When precipitating events create suddenly imposed grievances for individuals and communities, leaders who lack such backgrounds may be more likely to emerge, but their success is nevertheless affected by the political and cultural contexts in which they find themselves. Without doubt, leaders develop their skills in the process of organizing movements and some have no prior experience. However, many bring political and cultural traditions and skills learned in previous social movements, organizations, or institutions to their movement leadership.

#### Leadership and the Challenges of Mobilization

Social movement analysts have argued that political opportunities such as the presence of allies and divisions among elites encourage movement mobilization because they persuade activists there is a realistic chance for success (see McAdam 1982; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996; Tarrow 1998). However, pre-existing opportunities, like grievances, do not by themselves convince people to organize and join movements; leaders play an important role in recognizing and interpreting opportunities. Owing to a lack of skilled leadership, opportunities may be missed or, alternatively, mobilization may be attempted under unfavorable conditions (see Goldstone 2001)—although leaders and movements might also help to create political and cultural opportunities.

To understand how leadership affects mobilization, we need to examine the interactive relationships among various types of leaders and movement participants. Leaders do not simply create movements by enthraling followers; rather, the early stages of a movement are typically an "orgy of participation and of talk" in which participants

share stories, socially construct meaning, and explore new ideas (Oberschall 1973:174; Couto 1993; Ospina and Schall 2001). To mobilize movements out of these early interactions, leaders offer frames, tactics, and organizational vehicles that allow participants to actively construct a collective identity and participate in collective action at various levels. In doing so, leaders rely not only on their personal attractiveness and abilities, but also on previous experiences, cultural traditions, gender norms, social networks, and familiar organizing forms. Insofar as men have traditionally occupied positions of authority and dominated mixed-sex interactions, the gendered character of leadership in many movements is not surprising.

In the early civil rights movement, for example, leaders drew on the participatory tradition, music, narratives, and religious doctrines of the black church to build commitment to the movement and to introduce the strategy of nonviolent protest. King and other ministers who became the formal leaders of the civil rights movement used the resources and organizational model of the black church to create both "local movement centers" and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), which linked local organizations to the larger movement (Morris 1984). This church-based model of organization, and the gender assumptions of male ministers, excluded women from formal leadership positions. Nevertheless, it allowed for numerous tiers of participation from community members, and many women who were previously active in churches and in community organizations became informal leaders who connected other members of the community to the movement (Barnett 1993; Robnett 1997). When black students

organized the Student Nonviolent Organizing Committee (SNCC), Ella Baker, an influential leader who had been excluded from formal power, urged the students to remain independent of the SCLC and to create the kind of decentralized structure that enabled women to become leaders within SNCC and that attracted a variety of participants to the organization. Later, when SNCC's ideology changed and the structure became more hierarchical, "the disintegration of the bridging tier" of leadership was at least partly responsible for mobilizing problems (Robnett 1997:200-201).

As the example of the civil rights movement shows, cultural and political contexts and organizational structures affect the emergence of leaders and movements. At the same time, effective leaders play a critical role in mobilizing movements by engaging potential participants in discussions about movement ideas and strategies and creating organizations in which participants become involved and new leaders and strategies emerge.

#### AGENCY AND STRUCTURE IN MOVEMENT ORGANIZATION AND STRATEGY

Over the course of a social movement, leaders continue to influence movements by setting goals and developing strategies, creating movement organizations and shaping their structures, and forging connections among activists, organizations, and levels of action. Because organizational structures and networks affect access to leaders, one of the key problems for movements is to organize in ways that facilitate the development of leadership.

Ganz (2000:1016-1018) identifies several features of organizations that generate effective leaders and increase their

"strategic capacity": First, organizational structures that permit "regular, open, and authoritative deliberation" give leaders access to information by creating forums for discussion among heterogeneous participants and they motivate leaders by allowing them the authority to act on decisions. Second, "organizations that mobilize resources from multiple constituencies" give leaders flexibility. Finally, organizations that hold leaders accountable to their constituents are likely to have leaders with useful knowledge and political skills. Ganz argues that effective strategy is usually the product of a "leadership team" rather than an individual leader (see also Disney and Gelb 2000), and that diverse leadership teams increase strategic capacity. Teams consisting of both "insiders" with links to constituencies and "outsiders" with normative or professional commitments, of leaders with strong and weak ties to constituencies, and leaders with diverse repertoires of collective action have the greatest strategic capacity (Ganz 2000:1015).

As Ganz's work demonstrates, analyses of how leaders impact movement strategies need to examine the ways in which organizational structures and networks affect the quality of leadership available to a movement. One of the difficulties of the younger branch of the women's movement, for example, was that many feminist groups shunned leaders and formal structures out of a desire for participatory democracy. As an activist who experienced "the tyranny of structurelessness," Jo Freeman (1972) warned feminists of the impossibility of a truly leaderless, structureless group, arguing that in the absence of a formal structure, an informal structure will develop with unaccountable leaders who are selected through friendship

networks. Freeman advocated experimenting with structural forms that encourage maximum participation but also accountability on the part of activists who are delegated authority and responsibilities.

Since the early years of the women's movement, feminist groups have experimented with structures that allow for both participatory democracy and effective and accountable leadership (see Baker 1986; Disney and Gelb 2000; Gottfried and Weiss 1994). Brown (1989) argues that leadership can be seen as "a set of organizing skills" that need not be performed by a minority of participants. Non-hierarchical, "distributed leadership" is possible when the requirements of skilled organizing are recognized and distributed among participants (231). Although she recognizes that "sharing tasks and skills is not an easy process" and that there are often shortages of skilled participants in movement organizations (236), Brown contends that feminist values in support of equality and opposed to hierarchy have resulted in continued attempts to create organizations in which all participants learn leadership skills.

The notions of leadership teams (Ganz 2000), distributed leadership (Brown 1989), and bridge leaders (Robnett 1997) all point to the importance of interactions among participants and networks within movements in the exercise of leadership and organizing skills. Leaders need to obtain information about opportunities, organizational forms, and tactics from one another and from other participants. Connections among leaders create access to a wider repertoire of strategies, promote coordination between national and local strategies, and encourage interorganizational cooperation and coalition work.

In the early civil rights movement, ministers who led the SCLC in different cities knew one another through their activism in the black church, and they shared information about how to organize boycotts and other direct action tactics (see Morris 1984). At the local level, bridge leaders connected members of the community to the movement and they connected leaders to one another (Robnett 1997; Herda-Rapp 1998). Herda-Rapp describes the lifelong leadership of Hattie Kendrick, a local civil rights leader who recruited and inspired young activists to become movement leaders, put new leaders in contact with one another and with older generations of leaders, and introduced them "to a vast network of national, state and grassroots leaders" (1998:351).

Such connections among levels and generations of leadership are critical to movement strategy. In her comparison of the women's suffrage movements in the United States and Switzerland, Banaszak (1996) argues that the American movement was more successful because it made heavier use of effective organizing techniques and strategies than did the Swiss movement. Although political opportunities were similar in both countries, Banaszak argues, American suffragists perceived these opportunities and used strategies to exploit them much more frequently than did the Swiss suffragists. This superior strategic capacity was the result of connections between national and state suffrage leaders and connections between the American suffrage movement and other movements such as the abolition and temperance movements. For example, the American suffrage movement used paid organizers and lecturers to travel the country and organize the movement, a model that leaders such as Susan B. Anthony learned through their activism in the temperance and abolition movements

(Banaszak 1996:68). The Swiss movement lacked such ties and its decentralized structure also prevented the diffusion of tactics within the movement whereas the National American Women's Suffrage Association put leaders from different states in contact with one another, helping to spread local innovations.

In addition to influencing organizational models and tactics, connections among leaders also influence interorganizational cooperation and the formation of coalitions. Cooperation among movement organizations is likely to increase under conditions of heightened opportunity or threat (Staggenborg 1986; Zald and McCarthy 1980), but leaders are important in recognizing opportunities for coalition work (Shaffer 2000:114). Moreover, different types of leaders influence the amount and type of coalition work in a movement. In a study of environmental coalitions, Shaffer (2000) finds that professional leaders, who are employed full time by a movement organization, are more often involved in coalitions than are volunteer leaders, probably because they have more time to cultivate relationships with other organizations (123). In addition, leaders who are more highly connected to other organizations in the community and in the movement are most likely to build coalitions (118-119).

#### LEADERS AND THE FRAMING PROCESS

A now extensive literature on collective action framing examines the ways in which social movement actors define grievances and construct social reality to motivate collective action (see Benford and Snow 2000 for a review). As Snow and Benford (1992) have argued, collective action frames punctuate the seriousness, injustice, and

immorality of social conditions while attributing blame to concrete actors and specifying the collective action needed to generate social change. To be effective, SMOs must engage in highly skilled frame alignment work to create frames that resonate with the culture and experiences of the aggrieved population or other relevant actors (see Snow et al., 1986).

The framing perspective has played an important role in revealing how meaning-generating processes anchored in cultural frameworks propel collective action. Yet this approach is limited by its own blind spots. Like resource mobilization and political process theory, its analytical focus is slanted toward structural and organizational factors. The social movement organization (SMO) is depicted as the major actor, framing its activities, goals, and ideology in a manner congruent with the interests, values, and beliefs of a set of individuals. In their numerous references to framers Snow and his colleagues refer to them as organizers, activists, and movement speakers. At times they simply refer to the SMO or the movement as the framers. The few times they refer to framers as leaders they fail to examine how movement leaders drive the framing process. This approach discourages analysis of the factors that enable or prevent social movement leaders from being effective agents of the framing process.

A second problem is that, in ignoring the role of leaders, framing analyses neglect the important institutional and social contexts of framers. These actors appear to operate in the rarefied spaces of SMOs, disembodied from the populations they wish to lead into collective action. SMOs are portrayed as coherent structures with developed frames while potential followers are viewed as culture-

bearing individuals operating outside of institutions. We argue that this one-way directional logic truncates analyses of the framing process, and that these two blind spots divert attention from the central role that institutionally based leaders play in the framing process.

SMOs are social structures with a division of labor in which leaders usually determine organizational goals and design the strategies and tactics for reaching those goals. Framing is central to these key tasks because it identifies both challenging groups and adversaries and suggests potential allies. Framing specifies the unjust conditions that must be changed and the appropriate strategies and tactics to achieve the desired ends. Because they often need to reach multiple targets, framers must be skilled in using a variety of discourses and identifying a range of themes appropriate to different audiences (cf. Evans 1997; Gerhards and Rucht 1992; Hull 2001; McAdam 1996). Frame disputes, which arise from the demands of different constituents and targets, must be carefully mediated (Benford 1993). An SMO's success or failure is related to its ability to meet the complex demands of framing work.

Because framing work is so important and fraught with difficulty, it is the preserve of social movement leaders and leadership teams who possess the educational capital and necessary skills. Different types of movements and SMOs solve framing needs in various ways. In some SMOs, leaders occupy organizational positions that provide them with privileged access to resources and high-level decision-making, allowing them to exercise a great deal of agency and a virtual monopoly over the framing process. Other organizations find ways to

distribute the framing work associated with leadership, as in the case of many early women's liberation groups that rotated public speaking responsibilities--though not all such arrangements are successful. Following Ganz (2000), we suggest that diverse leadership teams that can address a broad range of problems are particularly effective framers for many movements. Leaders with close connections to constituents can produce frames that are credible and salient to aggrieved populations, while outside supporters help reach elite allies. Some organizations are structured to encourage and develop diverse leadership teams that generate ideas for effective frames. Others rely on charismatic leaders capable of reaching diverse audiences.

Effective leaders appeal to heterogeneous supporters and enhance the agency of their supporters as well as their own agency. For example, Martin Luther King mobilized diverse supporters by drawing on a wide variety of themes, including not only religious beliefs, but also the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence, democratic theory, and pragmatic values (McAdam 1996; Platt and Lilley 1994). Supporters actively interpreted King's messages in light of their own situations, constructing an inclusive collective identity. As Platt and Lilley (1994) show in their analysis of letters written to King, his followers were not passive devotees. They were active participants and leaders at different levels of the movement, and many of them offered strategic advice to King. By looking at the interactions of followers and leaders, and the framing work of leaders at multiple levels of movements, we go beyond the focus on elite frames that Benford (1997) identifies as one of the problems with current framing

analyses.

### Institutions, Leaders, and Framing

In addition to examining the ways in which the internal structures of SMOs and movements affect leadership and framing, we need to look at the effects of other institutions and organizations in the SMO's environment. Current framing theory does not adequately explain where the frames, framing skills, and leaders come from prior to SMO development. Social movements often emerge within indigenous institutions and organizations and social movement leaders often have prior lives that are deeply imbedded in community institutions. These institutions contribute a variety of elements to the leadership and framing of social movements: collective action relevant frames; mass bases of people who share those frames; populations with a collective identity; safe spaces; solidarity and commitment producing rituals; social networks of people imbued with high levels of trust; and skilled leaders who have access to institutionally embedded frames and the legitimacy to set them in motion. In a formulation resonant with our approach, Hart (1996) emphasizes that institutions, especially religious ones, can become central to framing because they house relevant preexisting frames and leaders who can utilize them in framing collective action.

The civil rights movement is a good place to examine the linkage between social movement leaders, framing, and institutional context. A "freedom and justice" frame<sup>iii</sup> was deeply embedded in the central black institution of the church and the cultural experiences of black

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people. This frame was rooted in the church that emerged during slavery and served as the key institutional framework through which slaves fought for freedom and justice. The theology of the black church, largely expressed through the sermons of preachers, emphasized the Biblical foundations of freedom and justice and the liberation rhetoric of great Biblical personalities, including Jesus, Moses and Amos. The black church is an interactive institution in which the preacher and congregants come to share cultural frames by engaging in dialogue during the sermon and participating together in prayers and music.

The freedom and justice frame demonstrates that a preexisting institutional frame of a challenging group may emerge as the major collective action frame of a social movement. Of course, pre-existing frames are not inelastic, and leaders alter them to frame collective action. To understand this process, we need to shift our analytical focus from the alignment processes of SMOs and professional movement leaders to institutional and cultural processes of challenging groups. At this level, one investigates the presence or absence of historically produced institutional frames and their relevance to the production of collective action. If there exists a mass base of people who share an institutional frame that is conducive to collective action, the difficulty of mobilizing large numbers of people for risky behavior can be reduced considerably. Similarly, when people share a common collective identity as well as an institutional frame, conditions are favorable for the emergence of social movements. In our example, members of the black Christian community saw themselves as an oppressed group of people who desired

freedom and justice. Institutionally based frames relevant to the framing of collective action stand a greater chance of being activated if the institutions that generate them also provide safe places where they can be elaborated and enacted and rituals through which solidarity and commitment can be created and maintained among those sharing the frame. Because the potential challenging group controlled it, the black church provided such safe places. It also provided institutionally derived rituals—singing, praying and the call and response dynamic—capable of producing and sustaining solidarity and commitment among the participants.

Earlier we argued that leaders were the main actors in charge of movement framing processes. In our formulation, the institutions of the challenging groups may produce social movement leaders who have the skills and occupy the positions that enable them to frame movements. The freedom and justice frame operated in this manner because it was the pastors and preachers who possessed the authority and leadership skills to lift this institutional frame for collective action purposes. The authority and trustworthiness of the preacher derived from the fact that he and the members of the black church community were co-producers of the institutional frames and were embedded in the same cultural milieu. Rhetorical skills were central to the Black preacher for his prestige and charisma were rooted in his ability to be a virtuoso of language and speaking. As Wills wrote of the preacher, "the entire discipline of these men's lives issued on the eloquence they kept refining for pulpit use. The sermon...was an art form in continual process of refinement, its practitioners skilled critics of each other, improvers of the common state of themes and

tropes" (1994:216). Because of experience, practices, peer criticism and audience feedback, the preacher established himself as an expert user of symbols.

On the eve of the civil rights movement, the freedom and justice frame was deeply entrenched in the black religious community, as were thousands of preachers who could further refine it to frame collective action. Thus, before the SCLC and SNCC were formed, the mass-based Montgomery bus boycott could be organized and framed as a movement for freedom and justice and led by local ministers because both the frame and the leaders clustered in the church. The job of the leaders was not one of aligning the collective action frame of a SMO with the values and preferences of individual blacks. Rather, the task was to adapt a preexisting institutional frame to collective action. We label this process *frame lifting* because the relevant frame is chosen and lifted from a repertoire of institutional frames by institutional leaders who then alter the frame to accommodate collective action and shape collective action in accordance with the institutionally embedded frame (Morris, 2000). This idea of frame lifting differs from McAdam's (1999) concept of appropriation because the latter formulation suggests that outside agents seize sites or ideas from others to use for their own purposes. In contrast, frame lifters are able to use institutional frames because they are inside agents embedded structurally and social psychologically within such frames.

We believe this analysis has general applicability. Although not all institutions are controlled by challenging groups, many serve as sources of leadership and frames.<sup>iv</sup> Many leaders of the New Left, for

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example, were previously student leaders who absorbed frames critical of capitalist society in the universities. The majority of the leaders of the United Farm Workers had been organizers and leaders of movements based in the Catholic Church (Ganz, 2000). They inherited frames from the Catholic Church, which they utilized in their framing activities of the farm workers movement. Labor unions and their frames also served as prior organizational and symbolic bases for some organizers who would come to be leaders in the UFW. The modern's women movement was possible in part because militant suffrage leaders continued to keep injustice frames alive within an "elite-sustained" organization (Rupp and Taylor 1987). We conclude, therefore, that many social movement frames are adapted to collective action within organizations and institutions and then lifted by leaders and grafted onto movements. These pre-existing organizations and institutions play a major role in producing social movement leaders who perform the bulk of framing work for movements.

#### Framing and Mass Media

The media is a major channel through which movements recruit members, boost morale of adherents, and convey their importance and messages to the public. Framing work by both movements and media is crucial to how movements are covered and portrayed in the mass media (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993; Gitlin 1980; Motlotch 1979; Ryan 1991). Social movement leaders, as the actors most centrally engaged in movement framing, devise media strategy, make judgments regarding information provided to media, conduct press conferences, and are usually sought out by media to serve as movement spokespersons. The ability of leaders to convey movement frames through the mass media is

influenced by the organizational and ideological character of both the movement and the media.

News gathering procedures are highly centralized, and media organizations look for authoritative sources of information. Movements such as the New Left and the women's liberation movement, which are ambivalent about leadership because they value democracy and spontaneity, have an extremely difficult time conveying their own frames through the mass media. When movements fail to offer formal spokespersons, the media typically appoint "leaders," often seeking out colorful characters who are not necessarily accountable to movement organizations (cf. Gitlin 1980; Tuchman 1978). Because they can better control their leaders and messages, professionalized movement organizations with centralized structures typically have an advantage in dealing with media organizations. Decentralized organizations with ideological objections to centralized leadership often have difficulty in formulating effective media strategies, and leaders who develop frames may be repudiated by other participants (see Gamson, this volume; Gitlin 1980:104-109).

Movement and media frames compete and often clash, and media decision-makers are usually in a superior position to make their frames stick. One way movements generate favorable media coverage is by utilizing a highly visible charismatic leader, such as Martin Luther King, who attracts media coverage and conveys movement frames to relevant audiences. However, the charismatic leader can lose control of media framing when the effectiveness of the leader becomes the focus rather than the activities and goals of the movement. This happened on the final campaign King led just days before he was

assassinated when the media framed the conflict as an instance of King's inability to prevent demonstrations from becoming violent rather than a battle to empower poor sanitation workers.

The media may withhold coverage of a movement because of the low status of movement participants. In this case movement leaders can alter their strategy by recruiting members of privileged groups or by implementing dramatic tactics. Thus, leaders of the 1964 Freedom Summer campaign recruited affluent white students to attract media coverage (McAdam 1988). In the 1963 Birmingham campaign, SCLC recruited young students to confront the dogs and water hoses unleashed by social control agents. While such innovations may attract media coverage and enable leaders to frame movement messages, they can create problems as well. In particular, movements may escalate their tactics and engage in violence as they are caught up in the cycle of needing more and more flamboyant tactics to attract coverage (Gitlin 1980).

In short, movement leaders are essential to the framing process, but they are constrained by the structures of movements and their environments. We have argued that it is leaders who share the disproportionate burden of framing movements because of their institutional positions and skills. It is generally their responsibility to lift frames from their institutional contexts, make any necessary adjustments to the frames, and devise appropriate forms of collective action and media strategies. Organizational and institutional structures, in turn, affect the ability of leaders to perform these tasks.

## LEADERSHIP AND MOVEMENT OUTCOMES

Social movement theorists have argued that political and economic structures determine whether social movements fail or succeed (e.g., McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1998). However, social structures cannot deliberate, imagine, strategize or engage in decision-making; human actors, navigating a matrix of social structures, initiate these activities. Strategic decisions figure prominently in determining movement outcomes, and social movement leaders are the primary decision-makers within social movements. Social movement leaders carry out a complex set of activities that are crucial to outcomes because, regardless of structural conditions, there exist a variety of choices to be made regarding these tasks. Because some choices are more effective than others, the quality of the decision-making process can determine success or failure.

A variety of leadership types and styles are required to effectively perform the wide array of tasks inherent to social movements (Aminzade et al. 2001; Goldstone 2001; Ganz 2000; Robnett 1997). Four ideal types of leadership tiers often exist within movements: The first tier consists of leaders who occupy the top formal leadership positions of SMOs. The second tier consists of those who constitute the immediate leadership team of formal leaders. Such leaders often occupy secondary formal positions within SMOs. The third leadership tier consists of bridge leaders. As Goldstone (2001:158), building on Robnett, writes, "Bridge leaders are those neighborhood and community organizers who mediate between top leadership and the vast bulk of followers, turning dreams and grand plans into on-the-ground realities." The fourth tier of leadership

consists of those organizers who, in addition to building connections between members of a challenging group and helping them develop organizations, also routinely engage in leadership activity.

These various tiers of leadership are important in producing different types of movement outcomes. Bridge leaders and organizers affect movement success through their work within the movement, mobilizing the support necessary to carry out collective action tactics, which result in concrete gains for the movement (Robnett 1997). The formal leaders of SMOs are crucial to internal movement dynamics and they are important in influencing elites outside the movement. Successful formal leaders may become "elite challengers" who have connections to elites in other sectors such as political parties, unions, and mass media (Schmitt 1989). Leadership teams are essential in making strategic decisions, and the success of the movement depends on the creativity, imagination, and skill of these leaders.

Movements are more likely to succeed if they attract leadership teams with diverse backgrounds, skills and viewpoints. Quality decisions are likely to emerge from a collective of such leaders who set the creative process in motion through concerted deliberations and brainstorming (Ganz, 2000). The civil rights and farm worker movements are cases in point. Both had great charismatic leaders but the overall genius of their decision making was rooted in the leadership teams in which King and Chavez were embedded. Accounting for King's success, Bennett (1970:32-33) writes, "King had...an unexcelled ability to pull men and women of diverse viewpoints together and to keep their eyes focused on the goal...King...demonstrated

...a rare talent for attracting and using the skills and ideas of brilliant aides and administrators." Ganz reveals that Chavez was embedded in a leadership team whose members were characterized by diverse skills, networks, biographical experiences and repertoires of collective action (2000:1026-27). In both of these movements diverse leadership generated creativity, encouraged innovations, and enhanced the possibility of success.

A concrete example of how the creativity of a leadership team can be decisive is provided by the 1963 civil rights campaign in Birmingham, Alabama. The strategy in that setting called for massive direct action to paralyze the city through demonstrations, mass arrests to fill the jails, and an economic boycott. The mobilization and deployment of thousands of protesters was key; without them social order could be maintained and the movement would fail. At a crucial stage King and the SCLC were not able to mobilize enough demonstrators to fill the jails and to create massive disruption. The campaign teetered at the brink of defeat. Meanwhile, King's second tier of leadership mobilized thousands of youth to engage in demonstrations (Morris, 1993; Garrow 1986; Branch, 1988; Fairclough, 1987). The leadership team fiercely debated whether young children should be employed to face the repression sure to be unleashed by social control agents. During a critical weekend King honored an out-of-town engagement only to learn upon his return that members of his leadership team had begun including hundreds of youth in demonstrations while thousands more were en route. Having little choice, King condoned the strategy. The children filled the jails, clogged public spaces and provoked the use of attack dogs, billy clubs

and fire hoses, thereby precipitating the crisis needed to win the struggle. If leadership had failed to act creatively this campaign could have been lost and the entire movement may have stalled. Because of creative leadership, the campaign was a success and served as a model for additional protests that toppled the Jim Crow regime. It was the leadership team rather than an omnipotent and isolated charismatic leader who mobilized a controversial support group and made the decision to deploy them.

Movements led by leadership teams comprised of both insiders and outsiders have the greatest chances of success (Marx and Useem 1971; Ganz, 2000). Leaders who are members of the challenging group are crucial as they are rooted in the institutional structures and culture of the movement group and enjoy legitimacy given their shared group membership and shared fate. Their biographical experiences provide them with insights into the motives of the challengers and their cultural and organizational resources required for successful mobilization. Thus, it was Mexican and Mexican American leaders of the farm workers who decided to test support for a grape strike "by meeting in the hall of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Delano, the religious center of the community on September 16, Mexican Independence Day" (Ganz 2000:1031). By bringing Mexican history alive and employing the symbols and resources of the farm workers' religious community, these indigenous leaders ignited a social movement. Similarly, King and other civil rights leaders launched boycotts during the Easter season and engineered arrests on religious holidays because of their understanding of such symbolism (Morris 1984).

Social movement leaders drawn from outside of the challenging

group are valuable because they may be anchored in social networks otherwise unavailable to the challenging group and they often bring fresh insights and analyses to the table from cultural sources outside the movement. Especially relevant are collective action repertoires outsiders may have learned from other movements. Thus, the civil rights movement drew on leaders who had been active in the Communist, labor and peace movements. Nevertheless, outside leaders often create problems by usurping leadership positions and creating animosity and jealousy, which can lead to disintegration and factionalism (Marx and Useem 1972; McAdam 1988). Even more important, if outsiders dominate the leadership process they can make poor strategic choices because of their lack of understanding of the challenging group, lower levels of motivation, and the likelihood that they will not be accountable to movement constituencies (Ganz, 2000). It appears that movements that employ leaders from the outside but make sure that they are not dominant numerically or strategically are likely to have a greater chance of success.

If creative and innovative leadership emerges from a collective decision-making process, leaders can only be effective if they are able to deliberate collectively. The structure and nature of social movement organizations largely determine whether leaders are provided the latitude to function collectively and creatively. Both classical (Michels 1959) and contemporary analysts (Piven and Cloward, 1977; Schwartz et al. 1981) warn that leadership in SMOs can become autocratic and obsessed with narrow self interests that may limit the chances for movement success or derail the movement altogether. Both bureaucratic and "structureless" forms of organizations tend to stifle

creative leadership, for opposite reasons. Bureaucratic SMOs privilege routine decision-making and seek to avoid the uncertainty that usually accompanies mass participation and innovative tendencies (Morris 1984). SMOs that seek to avoid structure and hierarchies run the risk of being ambushed by back door "invisible" autocratic leadership that operates free of accountability structures (Freeman 1972; Hanisch 2001). Neither of these organizational forms promotes democratic, open-ended deliberations, where numerous options are placed before a collectivity. In contrast, SMOs that have deliberative structures that encourage and promote imaginative and creative collective decision-making avoid these problems (see Ganz 2000).

However, no one structure is appropriate for all types of movements. Some religious movements, for example, succeed under a charismatic leader, with organizational structures that strengthen the leader's charismatic authority. Moreover, mature social movements usually include multiple organizations. We argue that a variety of organizational forms increase the likelihood of social movement success by specializing in different but complimentary work. This dynamic can lead to a leadership team of diverse SMO leaders who propel the movement towards its goals through their cooperation and competition. The same dynamic can degenerate into destructive competition and conflict that leads to failure. On balance, however, we agree with Ganz (2000) that teams of diverse leaders anchored in authoritative organizational structures that are conducive to open and critical debate and challenging deliberations are more likely to succeed because of the creativity and innovation such leaders generate

as they execute leadership activities.

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has attempted to show that social movement leadership matters at all levels of social movement activity. We agree with the emerging literature on this topic (Robnett 1997; Aminzade et al. 2001; Goldstone 2001; Barker et al. 2001) that social movement analysts need to open up the black box of leadership and develop theories and empirical investigations of how leadership affects the emergence, dynamics and outcomes of social movements. Social movement leadership, in our view, is not a residual activity deducible from political and economic structures. We fully agree with political process theorists that a movement's structural context profoundly affects its leadership by creating opportunities and constraints that influence what leaders can and cannot do. At the same time, our approach to leadership suggests that leaders help to create or undermine political and socioeconomic realities that influence the trajectories and outcomes of social movements. Leaders interpret relevant structural contexts and identify their weaknesses, strengths and contradictions and make decisions about how they are to be exploited for movement purposes. In our view social movement theory should avoid the tendency to view political opportunities as part of a structure that is always external to social movements. For example, black leaders had prepared the foundations and developed the connections to exploit the international arena long before the Cold War materialized. Because the groundwork had been established, the leaders of the civil rights movement were positioned to take advantage

of Cold War politics.

McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001) rightly call for the study of mechanisms and processes that drive contentious politics. Yet they fail to analyze leadership itself as a mechanism or a process or even as having explicit bearings on the determination and outcomes of contentious politics. We argue that questions about leadership need to be central to this agenda: Under what conditions and by what means are leaders able to exploit or change structural conditions? How do environmental conditions constrain strategic decision-making, and how does this change with various movement outcomes? How do different types of movements utilize institutionally situated leaders and how are leaders developed within movement organizations? What types of educational forums work to develop educational capital in deprived groups? How do leaders and leadership teams create effective strategies and frames? What types of organizational structures are conducive to democratic leadership and the agency of participants? How are connections among leaders within and across movements created and maintained? How do these connections affect strategies and coalitions? How do movement leaders become elite challengers and how do their connections to leaders in government and other sectors affect movement goals, strategies, and outcomes? Such questions need empirical investigation to develop our understanding of how agency and structure interact in the dynamics of social movements.

Human initiatives and choices guide social movements. Social movement agency is rooted in these initiatives and choices. Social movement leaders are the actors whose hands and brains rest disproportionately on the throttles of social movements. What they do

matters and it is the job of social movement analysts to elucidate the dynamics and processes that constrain and enable the work of social movement leaders.

## NOTES

1. Owing to space constraints, we do not discuss the large organizational and psychological literature on leadership, although we believe that this work is relevant to social movement theory and it informs our views in general ways. For instance, organizational theorists have stressed the importance of situational context, the ways in which leaders empower others to lead, and the dispersal of leadership in organizations (see Bryman 1996:283-284). For recent reviews of this literature, see R. Barker 2001; Brodbeck 2001; de Vries 2001.

2. At the risk of bias toward contemporary Western movements, many of our examples are drawn from the civil rights movement because we found this to be an excellent case for understanding leadership dynamics.

3. Influential analyses of framing by the civil rights movement (Snow and Benford 1992; Tarrow 1998) have argued that its guiding frame was one of "rights" and that this frame emerged because early black struggles were waged in courts. The rights frame in this view was adopted by King and other civil rights leaders and aligned to the culture of the Black community. In our view, this account is wrong; the leaders of the civil rights movement drew primarily on the "freedom and justice" frame of the black church rather than the "rights" frame of the courts. It is this frame that one encounters in the writings, music and speeches of the movement. For example, in King's 1963 "I have a Dream" speech the word "freedom" or "free" is mentioned nineteen times and "justice" nine times. "Rights" is mentioned three times and not in a prominent manner. Similarly in 1955, at the beginning of the modern movement, King declared that the

movement would not accept anything less than freedom and justice and that "we are protesting for the birth of justice in the community." The freedom frame is reflected in the naming of important movement campaigns, events and cultural activities. Thus, there were the "Freedom Rides", "Freedom Summer", Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party", "Freedom Schools" "Freedom Songs" and the "Chicago Freedom Movement." Black people resonated to the message of fighting for freedom and justice and the movement was framed to capture this thrust.

4. See Morris (2000) for a discussion of how "agency-laden" institutions such the black church, which are controlled by the potential challenging group, play an important role in providing institutionally based collective action frames.

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