

Haunted by the specter of communism: Collective identity and resource mobilization in the demise of the Workers Alliance of America

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Abstract. This article seeks to integrate identity-oriented and strategic models of collective action better by drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of classification struggles. On the one hand, the article extends culture to the realm of interest by highlighting the role collective identity plays in one of the key processes that strategic models of collective action foreground: the mobilization of resources. The article extends culture to the realm of interest in another way as well: by challenging the notion that labor movements are fundamentally different from or antithetical to the identity-oriented new social movements. On the other hand, the article also extends the idea of interest to culture. Rather than viewing collective identity as something formed prior to political struggle and according to a different logic, I show that collective identity is constructed in and through struggles over classificatory schemes. These include struggles between movements and their opponents as well as struggles within movements. The article provides empirical evidence for these theoretical claims with a study of the demise of the Workers Alliance of America, a powerful, nation-wide movement of the unemployed formed in the United States in 1935 and dissolved in 1941.

The study of social movements was long divided between resource mobilization and political process theories that focused on "how" movements emerge and "new social movement" theories that focused on "why" movements emerge. Resource mobilization and political process theories emphasized the importance of resources and political opportunities for movement emergence, but presumed "an already-existing collective actor able to recognize the opening of political opportunities and to mobilize ... resources for political purposes." In contrast, new social movement theorists employed the notion of collective identity to account for precisely what strategic models of collective action presupposed but were unable to explain: the formation of collective actors.¹

Although researchers initially viewed these theoretical perspectives as competing paradigms, more recent research on social movements

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views them as complementary.² This article builds on this scholarship and seeks to provide a deeper synthesis of the two approaches. Social movement theorists have already introduced the concept of framing to integrate culture and interpretation into resource mobilization and political process theories. However, the concept of framing is frequently used in ways that reproduce the exclusively strategic logic of these approaches rather than complementing it: framing theory focuses on the construction and deployment of frames by already existing collective actors, thereby neglecting the important question of how naming and categorizing serve to constitute collective actors in the first place.³ Moreover, research on framing reflects an “ideational bias,” focusing primarily on “ideas and their formal expression” rather than political ritual and other dramaturgical actions.⁴ Finally, the most important problem with existing efforts at theoretical synthesis has been identified by Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper: “In relying on collective identity to fill the gaps in structuralist, rational-actor, and state-centered models, that is, to explain the processes those models miss, scholars have sometimes neglected the role collective identity plays in the processes those models foreground. They have turned identity into a kind of residual category, describing what happens outside structures, outside the state, outside rational action.”⁵

In this article, I aim to further the task of synthesizing strategic and identity-oriented models of collective action by drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of classification struggles. At stake in classification struggles is “the power to make people see and believe, to get them to know and recognize, to impose the legitimate definition of the divisions of the social world and, thereby, to make and unmake groups.” Because classificatory schemes are “the basis of the representations of the groups and therefore of their mobilization and demobilization,” practical representations help to “bring into existence the thing named” and “*contribute to producing* what they apparently describe or designate.”⁶ Bourdieu’s work is especially useful for synthesizing strategic and identity-oriented models of collective action because one of his key concerns was to reveal the unity of the material and symbolic dimensions of practice. As one recent commentator puts it, Bourdieu’s “theory of practices extends the idea of interest to culture,” while “his theory of symbolic power extends culture to the realm of interest.”⁷

Following Bourdieu, I seek to extend culture to the realm of interest by highlighting the role collective identity plays in one of the key processes that strategic models of collective action foreground: the mobi-

lization of resources. According to resource mobilization and political process theories, movements can acquire resources in two ways: either by relying on the funding and sponsorship of elite allies or by appropriating an “indigenous” organizational base. In this article, I show how struggles over collective identity affect both alliances and the capacity of movements to hang on to indigenous organizational resources. In short, rather than seeing movement emergence as a two-step process of identity formation and resource mobilization, I argue that “how” social movements emerge (resource mobilization) involves and partly depends upon “why” they emerge (identity-formation).⁸

This article extends culture to the realm of interest in another way as well. The “new social movements” that demanded recognition for new identities in the 1970s and 1980s were said to differ from older movements in terms of issues, goals, tactics, and constituencies.⁹ Above all, these new social movements were defined “by contrast to the labor movement, which was the paradigmatic ‘old’ social movement.”¹⁰ In contrast to the new social movements, the collective identity of the labor movement was assumed to be relatively unproblematic. In this article, rather than examining a “new” social movement to provide empirical evidence for my claims about the role of collective identity in resource mobilization, I examine a quintessentially “old” movement, the Workers Alliance of America. I argue that the presumed differences between the identity-oriented “new social movements” and the strategic, class-based “old social movements” are not so stark as the collective identity approach would have it.¹¹ But I do not merely challenge the “newness” of what is taken to be the major distinguishing characteristic of the new social movements (i.e., their emphasis on collective identity formation as an important end in its own right). I also challenge the notion that labor movements are fundamentally different in nature from and even antithetical to the identity-oriented new social movements. In this way, too, I seek to extend culture to the realm of interest.

Conversely (again following Bourdieu’s lead), I also seek to extend the idea of interest to culture. New social movement theorists have argued that if political struggle presupposes collective identity, then collective identity must be formed prior to political struggle and according to a different logic. Alessandro Pizzorno, for example, suggests that “expressive conduct” prevails within “new groups seeking identity and recognition,” while the instrumental “logic of exchange and negotiation is unknown or abolished.” In his view, identity must be constructed

before social conflict can ensue.¹² I aim to challenge this dichotomous view. Rather than seeing collective identity as formed prior to political struggle and according to a different logic, I argue that collective identity is constructed in and through struggles over classificatory schemes. New social movement theorists recognize that these struggles emerge *between* movements and authorities as the former demand recognition for new identities from the latter.¹³ However, this dynamic between movements and authorities is often complicated by the emergence of struggles *within* movements over collective identity. Despite a few notable exceptions,¹⁴ new social movements theorists tend to neglect these internal struggles, because they often see identity-formation as taking place according to a different, non-strategic logic. In summary, I not only extend culture to the realm of interest by highlighting the role collective identity plays in resource mobilization and in the “old” labor movement, but I also extend the idea of interest to culture by emphasizing how classificatory schemes are both weapons and stakes in political struggles. In this way, I seek to contribute to a deeper synthesis of strategic and identity-oriented models of collective action.

I provide empirical evidence for these theoretical claims with a study of the demise of the Workers Alliance of America, a powerful, nationwide movement of the unemployed formed in the United States in 1935 and dissolved in 1941.¹⁵ I begin by examining and criticizing existing explanations for the demise of the Workers Alliance, which attribute it to economic recovery and a consequent decline in mass unemployment, co-optation by the reformist Roosevelt administration, state repression to protect capitalist class interests, or repression by “dispossessed” social groups seeking to vent their resentment of modernization. I argue that contrary to these prevailing views, the demobilization of the Workers Alliance cannot be fully explained as the result of a strategic struggle among already constituted collective actors pursuing predefined interests, nor as the consequence of displaced anger and frustration by groups whose status and power were threatened by modernization. Next, combining Bourdieu’s insights with those of Erving Goffman and Howard Becker, I provide an alternative explanation for the demise of the Workers Alliance. In my account, classification struggles are a key causal mechanism that shaped the movement’s collective identity in ways that hindered its capacity to mobilize resources, thereby contributing crucially to the movement’s demobilization.¹⁶ I focus on two important classification struggles.

First, opponents of the Workers Alliance invoked new categorical identities that cut across the old categories that initially provided a basis for the political mobilization of the unemployed. What were those older categories? The Workers Alliance defined and mobilized WPA workers as government employees rather than paupers. Much as the workers studied by Pierre Bourdieu and Luc Boltanski tried to upgrade their job titles to obtain “the corresponding material and symbolic profits,” the Workers Alliance demanded recognition of WPA workers as employees for similar reasons.¹⁷ In addition, the Workers Alliance relied on the Popular Front discourse of the 1930s to forge a collective identity that bridged differences between Communists and non-Communists, bringing both together in a broad-based movement. Group unity was thus provided in part by the external threat of fascism. Opponents of the Workers Alliance sought to disorganize the Workers Alliance by activating and institutionalizing a crosscutting principle of division between Americanism and communism. This symbolic re-ordering of the social world, which was facilitated by the 1939 non-aggression pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, hindered the movement’s mobilization of resources by legitimating government repression, weakening commitment to the movement, and discouraging participation in the Workers Alliance. As Polletta and Jasper note, “if identities play a critical role in mobilizing and sustaining participation, they also help explain people’s exodus from a movement. One of the chief causes of a movement’s decline is that collective identity stops lining up with the movement. We stop believing that the movement ‘represents’ us (the term suggests an expressive dimension as well as a strategic one).”¹⁸

Second, a related classification struggle also contributed crucially to the demise of the Workers Alliance. The capacity of the Workers Alliance to mobilize resources was hindered not only by a classification struggle between the movement and its opponents, but also by a classification struggle within the movement. As movement opponents struggled to impose a new vision and division of the social world, the Alliance resorted to what Goffman calls “in-group purification” to avoid de-legitimation and repression. In-group purification allows one part of a group to “take up in regard to those who are more evidently stigmatized” than themselves “the attitudes the normals take” toward the group as a whole. Stigmatized persons thus try “not only to ‘normify’ their own conduct but also to clean up the conduct of others in the group.” Although in-group purification may facilitate resource mobilization if it allows a movement to acquire new allies or hang on

to old ones, in-group purification was self-destructive in this case.¹⁹ Internal struggles to purify the Workers Alliance of “un-American” elements led to splits, purges, and defections, but the movement was unable to compensate for resources that were thereby dispersed or diverted to internal conflicts. In short, the classification struggle within the Workers Alliance compounded the demobilizing effects of the classification struggle between the movement and its opponents.

Existing explanations for the demise of the Workers Alliance

During the Great Depression, the unemployed were initially organized in the United States by the Socialist Party, A. J. Muste’s Conference on Progressive Labor Action, and the American Communist Party. By 1935, the Socialist-led groups and the Musteite Unemployed Leagues merged to form a single, nationwide social movement organization, the Workers Alliance of America. A year later, the Communist-led Unemployed Councils were also included, although non-Communist leaders retained a majority on the Alliance’s national executive board. “What had been three major organizations and a number of minor ones became a single entity able to bring increased pressure on behalf of the jobless.”²⁰ While the Workers Alliance was broadly inclusive and committed to upgrading and expanding all forms of relief, by 1939 roughly three-quarters of its members were employees of the Works Progress Administration, the massive public-works effort initiated by the Roosevelt administration in 1935.²¹

The Workers Alliance has been described as “perhaps the most formidable organization of the able-bodied unemployed in American history.” When the Workers Alliance sent 2,000 delegates on a job march to Washington in July 1937, “the action prompted one congressman, Clifton A. Woodrum of Virginia, to warn that the WAA would soon be a powerful political organization unless the federal government shifted relief back to the states and the municipalities. If this did not happen, said Woodrum, no congressman would be able to win reelection without acceding to WAA demands.” A year later, an alarmed *New York Times* editorial warned that the Workers Alliance was becoming “an enormous pressure group compared with which the American Legion and the farm lobbies may pale into insignificance.”²² Yet by the time the United States entered the Second World War in 1941, the movement had collapsed. Why?

Table 1. Workers Alliance protest event data by year, 1935–1941²³

Year	Number of protest events initiated wholly or partly by the WAA	Total combined arrests and injuries from protests reported during the year
1935	1	0
1936	18	54
1937	32	53
1938	32	29
1939	21	3
1940	10	29
1941	1	0

Table 2. Unemployment by year, 1929–1941²⁴

Year	Unemployed (in thousands of persons 14 years old and over)	Percent of civilian labor force
1929	1,550	3.2
1930	4,340	8.7
1931	8,020	15.9
1932	12,060	23.6
1933	12,830	24.9
1934	11,340	21.7
1935	10,610	20.1
1936	9,030	16.9
1937	7,700	14.3
1938	10,390	19.0
1939	9,480	17.2
1940	8,120	14.6
1941	5,560	9.9

The economic recovery thesis

The collapse of the Workers Alliance is often attributed to a decline in mass unemployment as the United States became embroiled in the Second World War.²⁵ However, to specify economic recovery as the only or even the primary cause of the movement's demise is unconvincing for two reasons. First, the Workers Alliance was already in decline by 1939, as shown in Table 1. At this time, there were still well over nine million Americans out of work, more than seventeen percent of the civilian labor force (see Table 2). "WPA is in the United States to stay for at least twenty years," WPA Commissioner F. C. Harrington publicly declared in February 1940. "Only a far-reaching change in the

economic system will change this [unemployment] problem. Until we readjust our economic system and distribute more equitably our work opportunities, we'll still have the problem of unemployment." Even as late as 1941, when the movement dissolved, unemployment stood at five and a half million, nearly ten percent of the civilian labor force. While these figures are below the peak of mass unemployment in 1933 (almost thirteen million), they indicate that it remained a serious problem.²⁶

There is a second reason why a decline in mass unemployment cannot fully explain the demise of the Workers Alliance. Even if mass unemployment had ceased to be a serious problem, as proponents of the economic recovery thesis suggest, both the Workers Alliance and the WPA could have been re-oriented to solve new problems. To be sure, following the German invasion of Poland in 1939, some Americans did attack the WPA on the grounds that rearmament in the United States and sales of arms and other supplies to Europe would solve the unemployment problem and eliminate or reduce the need for a works program. Conservatives like Senator James Byrnes of South Carolina also advocated cuts in WPA and relief funding in order to meet increased needs for national defense. And Roosevelt himself, increasingly preoccupied by the war in Europe, was forced to abandon much of his domestic reform agenda in order to win Congressional support for his collective security policies. However, some congressmen "clearly envisaged an *increase* in projects undertaken by the WPA to *further* the national defense," and some leaders of the unemployed movement sought cooperation with national defense agencies to promote the training of the unemployed. In line with these efforts to reorient the WPA and the unemployed movement toward defense needs, attempts were made in 1940 to eliminate earlier prohibitions on the use of WPA funds for "the manufacture, purchase, or construction of any naval vessel, any armament, munitions, or implement of war, for military or naval forces." By October 1941, "one out of every three WPA workers ... was engaged in defense work." In summary, even when the original purpose of an organization becomes obsolete, it can always adapt to its changing environment by adopting new aims, looking for new causes to espouse, and discovering new problems to which it can devote its energies and resources.²⁷

The co-optation thesis

If the economic recovery thesis fails to explain fully the collapse of the Workers Alliance, what else might explain it? A number of scholars have argued that the demise of the Workers Alliance can be attributed to co-optation of the movement by the Roosevelt administration. According to Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, for example, the formation of the Workers Alliance marked a shift from loosely structured, disruptive, and confrontational protests at the local level to organization-building and ineffective lobbying at the national level. They argue that protest by the unemployed declined at the local level “largely as a result of the Roosevelt Administration’s more liberal relief machinery, which diverted local groups from disruptive tactics and absorbed local leaders in bureaucratic roles.”²⁸ There is certainly some truth to the co-optation thesis, but it fails to explain both *why* the Workers Alliance was co-opted and the *timing* of co-optation. I argue that co-optation was symptomatic or derivative of a deeper underlying cause: the rise of an increasingly powerful coalition of Republicans and Southern Democrats in Congress in the late 1930s.²⁹ Following the electoral victories of the New Deal in 1932 and 1936, the Workers Alliance could afford to take an oppositional stance toward the Roosevelt administration. That the movement did take such a stance is evidenced by the increasing disruptiveness of the movement’s protests between 1935 and 1937 (as revealed by the number of arrests and injuries shown in Table 1), its harsh attacks on the New Deal, and its support for the formation of a third political party.³⁰ However, following the “Roosevelt Recession,” the House Un-American Activities Committee investigations, and the 1938 congressional election, New Dealers were on the defensive. Under these conditions, the Workers Alliance became increasingly alarmed that even the limited gains of the New Deal were being jeopardized by reactionary forces. While the demands of the movement continued to exceed what Roosevelt’s New Deal offered, movement leaders were determined to defend what little they already had. Thus, by 1938, the Workers Alliance saw itself as part of a progressive coalition in support of the New Deal, striving to protect important political gains against the attacks of reactionary forces. In short, prior to the emergence of a powerful conservative bloc in Congress, the Workers Alliance was engaged in a dyadic conflict with the Roosevelt administration. It was the emergence of a third party (the conservative bloc) that altered the way the movement interacted with the administration.³¹

The class repression thesis

A third account of the demise of the Workers Alliance stresses the importance of political factors generally and the role of the conservative congressional bloc that emerged in the late 1930s in particular, but minimizes the causal significance of class struggle and collective identity. According to this class repression thesis (probably held by some members of the Workers Alliance itself), the struggle between the Workers Alliance and its conservative opponents was primarily driven by clashes of real material interests. Thus, congressional conservatives repressed the Workers Alliance in order to protect capitalist class interests (potentially threatened by radical anti-capitalist politics) or the internal distribution of political power (potentially threatened by a Communist-led movement committed to the revolutionary transformation of the U.S. state).³² Moreover, according to this view, in-group purification within the Workers Alliance was not a struggle over the movement's collective identity, but only an opportunistic attempt to avoid real material sanctions and punishments. Although this model acknowledges that the struggle between the Workers Alliance and its political opponents involved framing work, it insists that this framing work was merely in the strategic service of material stakes and interests. Symbolic attacks on the Workers Alliance are thus seen as a means to purportedly non-cultural ends (profits, power, etc.).

Like the co-optation thesis, this account contains some truth, but it is not fully convincing. What I dispute is not the important role of repression in the demise of the Workers Alliance, but an account of how repression works that neglects the important role of collective identity. Of course, material interests do partly determine "the play of ideas within which different groups figure out the world and their role and *allegiances* in it." However, as Stuart Hall has pointed out, "social collectivities have more than one set of interests." Actors may have gender and race interests in addition to class interests; they may also have symbolic interests in addition to material interests. Because "interests can be and frequently are contradictory, even mutually exclusive," they may be articulated according to "alternative inferential logics," leading to quite different lines of political action. This is especially true during periods of social upheaval and transformation like the New Deal, when the old political order dissolved and actors struggled to construct a new one. As Sheryl Tynes points out, "in the turbulent environment of the 1930s, it was not easy for a wide variety of organizations to gain an understanding of, or agree upon, what their

true interests were, and whether, in the Depression, those interests had changed.” Under these circumstances, as theories of corporate liberalism have demonstrated, class interests could lead capitalists to support as well as oppose social reforms and to co-opt rather than repress radicals. In either case, symbolic work was necessary to “provide a concrete definition of interests to guide strategic choices.” Thus, rather than being “given as an objective feature of a structure of positions in a social system,” the interests and identities of actors are “constructed, *constituted*, in and through the ideological process.”³³

Moreover, although symbolic work may be more effective when it is backed by political and police violence, the converse is also true; political and police power rests at least partly on symbolic work. Emile Durkheim’s discussion of the forced division of labor, Max Weber’s notion of legitimacy, and Antonio Gramsci’s concept of consent all make clear that political and police violence typically requires some form of justification. Even Karl Marx recognized that in order to rule, a social class must “represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society.” Bourdieu – perhaps even more than Weber, Durkheim, Marx, and Gramsci – has also shown the importance of symbolic work in developing and maintaining power relations. Symbolic work is especially important during periods like the New Deal when an older historical bloc has disintegrated and actors – in this case, New Dealers and their opponents on the left and right – are struggling to construct a new one. At such times, conservatives and other political actors must “enter into struggle and win space *in civil society itself*” using “the trenches and fortifications of civil society as the means of forging a considerable ideological and intellectual *authority* outside the realm of the state proper and, indeed, *before* – as a necessary condition to – taking formal power *in the state*.” Just as symbolic work is necessary to constitute the identities and interests of groups, it is also needed for brokerage purposes, to construct alliances between different groups and social forces, and to transform coercion into the “authority of a leading bloc.” Thus, while material sanctions and punishments may have been necessary to induce splits between Communists and non-Communists within the Workers Alliance, it is unlikely that they would have been sufficient. Indeed, if it was only or primarily material sanctions that led to in-group purification, why did in-group purification begin (as I show below) in 1938, *before* Congress enacted the legal provisions that penalized Communists?³⁴

The psychological expressivism thesis

The psychological expressivism thesis also emphasizes the repression of the Workers Alliance at the hands of a conservative congressional bloc, but sees this anti-Communist drive as the effort of “dispossessed” social groups to vent their resentment of modernization. According to this thesis, some groups rapidly lost or gained status and power or came to occupy discrepant statuses as a result of the modernization of the United States in the twentieth century. These dispossessed groups then focused their resentment on Communists, who served as a scapegoat for modernization and “the strains associated with their uncertain or changing social status.” From this perspective, anti-Communism was “not a vehicle of conflict but a vehicle of catharsis – a purging of emotions through expression.” Where proponents of the class repression thesis view anti-Communism as a rational strategy to protect material class interests, proponents of the psychological expressivism thesis see it as an irrational displacement of aggression and frustration “against targets with little power to resist.” According to this model, “what the right wing [was] fighting, in the shadow of Communism, [was] essentially ‘modernity.’”³⁵

This thesis suffers from several related defects. First, because the modernization of American society arguably began well before the New Deal and continued afterwards, the psychological expressivism thesis cannot account for the precise timing of the anti-Communist drive against the Workers Alliance. In addition, as Joseph Gusfield has pointed out, this model of anti-Communist crusades tends to confuse “status and expressive elements.” Status movements are characterized as irrational “political action for the sake of expression” rather than rational political action to influence or control “the distribution of valued objects.” However, “the enhancement or defense of a position in the status order is as much an interest as the protection or expansion of income or economic power.” Thus, far from being oriented only to psychological release, status movements may be understood as rational political action to influence the allocation and distribution of honor or prestige. Moreover, these symbolic or status interests are also bound up with important material interests, for “[material] resources bring prestige and prestige often leads to material advantages.” In short, the psychological expressivism thesis misses the important symbolic and material interests at stake in status conflicts and elides the strategic dimension of such struggles. Yet it is only by taking into account the (ideologically constructed) interests of conservatives and the process of

political interpretation through which the Workers Alliance was identified as a potential threat to those interests that one can account for the timing of the anti-Communist drive of the late 1930s.³⁶

Mobilizing the specter of communism

Having specified the limitations of existing explanations for the demise of the Workers Alliance, I now provide an alternative explanation for the movement's demobilization that better integrates strategic and identity-oriented models of collective action. In this section of the article and the next, I show how a classification struggle between the Workers Alliance and its opponents shaped the movement's collective identity in ways that crippled its capacity to mobilize resources. The Workers Alliance initially encouraged the political mobilization of the unemployed by forging a collective identity that avoided the stigma of pauperism. As Piven and Cloward have shown, political authorities have traditionally deterred the poor from demanding relief by setting relief recipients apart as a "clearly demarcated and degraded . . . class of pariahs." The Workers Alliance resisted such ritual profanation by demanding that political authorities recognize WPA workers as government employees rather than paupers. Indeed, as noted above, the Workers Alliance had largely become "a trade union for WPA workers" by the late 1930s.³⁷

Congressional conservatives resisted these demands for recognition of WPA workers as employees with only mixed success, but in the late 1930s they hit upon a more effective strategy for opposing the movement. Just as twentieth-century middle-class professionals draw on a variety of criteria – economic, moral, and cultural – to draw boundaries between themselves and others,³⁸ so also people can draw boundaries between the deserving and the undeserving poor on the basis of different criteria. In this case, Republicans and Southern Democrats in Congress (with help from their allies outside of Congress) disorganized the Workers Alliance by activating and institutionalizing a boundary between Americanism and communism that cut across and over-rode the category of "employee" that initially provided a basis for political mobilization of the unemployed.³⁹ This symbolic re-ordering of the social world better enabled conservatives to de-legitimize the Workers Alliance, not with the taint of pauperism, but with the taint of "un-Americanism." In other words, rather than positioning Workers Alliance members as paupers in opposition to the citizen-earner, congressional

conservatives now positioned them as an internal enemy in opposition to the citizen-soldier.⁴⁰ This alternative mode of ritual profanation would increasingly resonate with the American public as the international situation grew more ominous in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The boundary between Americanism and communism also cut across and over-rode another categorical identity that the Workers Alliance used to mobilize the unemployed: the Popular Front against fascism that was embraced by the American Communist Party from 1935 to 1939. To be sure, for the Communist Party's leadership and inner circle, the Popular Front was a tactical move rather than a principled rejection of the party's earlier opposition to liberal democracy. Nevertheless, the Popular Front against fascism did reflect a new vision of the social world and its divisions wherein former enemies now became – at least temporarily and for a limited set of aims – allies. This symbolic work was partly successful in disarticulating old political formations and, by brokering new alliances, reworking their elements into new formations. As Irving Howe and Lewis Coser point out, “the Popular Front strategy, particularly through its appeal to the emotions of anti-fascist fraternity, was extremely successful in this country. It was the first approach the CP had found that enabled it to gain a measure of acceptance, respectability, and power within ordinary American life.” Although the American Communist Party never gained a mass membership, more Americans came to see the party as a legitimate political partner during the Popular Front phase than in any other period in American history.⁴¹

The Popular Front, however, provided a fragile collective identity. By activating and institutionalizing a boundary between Americanism and communism, conservatives undermined and re-ordered this Popular Front vision of the social world that (in contrast) had aligned communism and Americanism against fascism. Conservative efforts to shatter the collective identity provided by the Popular Front, although achieving some success before 1939, were greatly facilitated and reinforced by the non-aggression pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in August 1939. The pact – and the American Communist Party's resulting about-face when it came to support for the New Deal and vigilance against the threat of fascism – disillusioned and alienated many former allies, sympathizers, and “fellow travelers.” The pact also facilitated conservative efforts to equate communism and fascism as two sides of the same coin, equally threatening to Americanism. “The Nazi-Soviet Pact,” wrote Workers Alli-

ance organizer Eli Jaffe, “gave new impetus to the anti-communist feeling latent in many Americans, notably the policy-makers in Washington.... It became increasingly clear to me that [the] Nazi-Soviet Pact was providing a green light to anti-communist witch hunters.”⁴²

Two important congressional committees spearheaded these efforts to disorganize the Workers Alliance by invoking crosscutting categorical identities. The first was the 1938 House Special Committee on Un-American Activities, popularly known as the Dies Committee after its chairman, Texas Democrat Martin Dies.⁴³ The second was the 1939 House Subcommittee on the Works Progress Administration, composed of members of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, and popularly known as the Woodrum Committee after its leader, conservative Virginia Democrat Clifton Woodrum.⁴⁴ Through highly ritualized congressional investigations, both committees sought to activate new principles of social division that would weaken commitment to and discourage participation in the Workers Alliance. In addition to activating the boundary between Americanism and communism, this symbolic re-ordering of the social world involved three other elements: (1) identifying the Workers Alliance with communism; (2) identifying the Workers Alliance with foreign enemies (the Soviet Union), in part by emphasizing the presence of aliens and the foreign-born among movement participants; and (3) exposing ties between the Workers Alliance and the WPA to discredit the latter as well.⁴⁵

The charges of Communist subversion made against the Workers Alliance in committee hearings involved “a combination of fact and fiction.” As contemporary critics pointed out, accusations were often supported with flimsy or circumstantial evidence that would not have held up in a court of law, and congressional committee members and witnesses were rarely impartial. Yet conservative charges of Communist subversion were not completely unfounded. Communists were active in the Workers Alliance; they worked to increase their influence within the movement, tried to use the Alliance and the WPA to further their political aims, and the Communist Party did indeed oppose the American system of government. Thus, congressional conservatives did not simply conjure up or manufacture a Communist menace out of whole cloth. Neither did they create the anti-Communist sentiment that they encouraged and skillfully exploited. Representations of communism as politically impure or taboo were certainly not new, which meant that conservatives had plenty of historical precedents upon which to draw for this kind of framing work. There were also historical

precedents for viewing foreign-born workers as social carriers of “un-American” radicalism, notably the Red Scare of 1919 to 1920. Moreover, representations of aliens and foreigners as a potential fifth column tapped into an enduring republican tradition in American political culture that linked social provision to civic virtue, and into ascriptive forms of Americanism that linked fitness for self-government to racial qualifications.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, moral entrepreneurship was required to mobilize existing anti-Communist sentiment. As Howard Becker points out, “rules do not flow automatically from values,” and “the existence of a rule does not automatically guarantee that it will be enforced.” The degree to which others respond to a deviant act – including acts of political deviance – depends largely on the activities of the moral entrepreneurs who create rules, publicly bring infractions to the attention of others, and enforce rules. In these ways, moral entrepreneurs can mobilize new or alternative criteria of legitimacy, as conservatives did when they shifted public debate about the Workers Alliance and the WPA from pauperism to communism. Of course, like all moral entrepreneurs, congressional conservatives were not merely disinterested guardians of society’s values; they were motivated by particular interests that prompted them to take the initiative as well as by a fervent belief in the righteousness of their cause. And since congressional conservatives could not accomplish their aims without help, they did what moral entrepreneurs usually do: They “enlist[ed] the support of other interested organizations and develop[ed], through the use of the press and other communications media, a favorable public attitude” toward the rules they wanted to create and enforce.⁴⁷

This active moral entrepreneurship is especially evident in regard to the Dies Committee. Although it received little attention at first, publicity began to grow in July 1938, especially after the committee announced that the WPA Federal Theater and Writers’ Project would be investigated. By the time formal hearings opened in Washington in August 1938, committee chairman Martin Dies had “become front-page news,” and “from that time on his name was destined to become a familiar one to millions of newspaper readers throughout the United States.” By December 1938, public opinion polls “showed that three out of five voters were familiar with the work of the [Dies] Committee and that three out of four of those who knew of it believed that it should be continued.... Of all the voters polled, 74 per cent were in favor of continuing the investigation.” By March 1939, two out of every

three voters reported having heard of the Dies Committee, and a subsequent poll conducted in December 1939 revealed that public support for the committee remained strong and essentially unchanged. Following the release of the Dies Committee's second report in January 1940, a poll revealed that "70 per cent of the people interviewed thought it more important to investigate Communism than Nazism, a definite change from the attitude expressed in the Poll a year before."⁴⁸

As Patricia Sexton points out, "Dies's assault on the labor-left" not only "overshadowed in scope and influence even the McCarthy hearings in the post-World War II years," but also helped to change "the country's political balance." In October 1938, Dies boasted that his committee had "destroyed the legislative influence of the Workers' Alliance" in Congress. The Dies Committee probably influenced the outcome of the 1938 congressional election as well, which proved to be disastrous for the Workers Alliance: "With the increase of Republican strength in Congress after the November elections, conservative Democrats held the balance of power between liberals and conservative Republicans, and they used it to prevent completion of the structure of the Second New Deal." The changing balance of power in Congress ensured that the committee's work would continue. After receiving the Dies Committee's first report, Congress voted overwhelmingly in February 1939 to continue the committee and appropriated \$100,000 for that purpose. Congress again voted overwhelmingly to continue the Dies Committee after the release of its second report in January 1940. Even Roosevelt was prompted to praise the committee in May 1940 as "one of his sources of information on fifth columnists."⁴⁹

Institutionalizing the specter of communism

Congressional conservatives sought not only to activate the boundary between Americanism and communism as a new criterion of political legitimacy, but also to inscribe this criterion in institutions. In other words, they sought to transform a symbolic boundary into a social boundary.⁵⁰ This institutionalization reflected conservatives' vision and division of the social world, but it also reinforced that vision and division; by altering the patterns of social relations in which Workers Alliance members were embedded, conservatives facilitated changes in the movement's collective identity.⁵¹ Institutionalization provided what Boltanski calls "'objective' evidence of the existence" of those social divisions and social groupings that conservatives sought to

create: “The objectification of a group in a legally defined collective person, and then the collective person in an institutional ‘apparatus,’ helps to make the group a social being that is more solid and durable than the aggregate of the agents who give it their allegiance and maintain it” – and, one might add, more solid and durable than alternative groupings. Thus, institutionalization not only influenced the strategies through which actors pursued their interests; it shaped the identities and goals of actors as well.⁵²

Congress began to institutionalize the boundary between Americanism and communism in 1939, when it passed legislation that explicitly excluded Communists from participation in the federal works program.⁵³ These anti-Communist provisions were intended to weaken the Workers Alliance. One member of the Woodrum Committee, quoted in *The New York Times* on condition of anonymity, declared in April 1939:

Unless there is assurance given us that the Workers Alliance will no longer be welcomed at the WPA as the representative of the workers, then I shall propose an amendment to the law forbidding payment of relief funds to those who are members of the alliance. I take the position that since the testimony of the alliance officials shows clearly that it leans toward communism, which has as its aim the overthrow of our form of government, then the funds of this government should not continue to go into the hands of those who are themselves Communists, or who by their membership in this organization give force to its aims. Of course, the proposal to deny relief money to members of this organization is a drastic one. I do not feel that the workers ought not to organize. But I am convinced that, if in organizing they place themselves under the banner of an organization whose executive committee is honeycombed with Communists, they cannot in good conscience protest against the action of members of Congress in upholding their oaths to support the Constitution and to wage a relentless fight against enemies, both within and without this country. Many of us have known for a long time that the alliance was furthering – whether consciously or otherwise – the aims of the Communist party by preying upon those in want, organizing them and gradually spreading the Communist cloak over a large segment of those who must ask the government for subsistence. I, for one, do not propose to let money appropriated for relief go into the coffers of an organization such as the alliance.⁵⁴

In June 1939, *The New York Times* reported that “committee members said privately they had labored hours to find words that would bar employment to Workers’ Alliance members, but were unable to do so unless they wrote in provisions that would be harmful to persons who had no connection with the organization.” Instead, conservatives sought to exclude Workers Alliance members by proxy. The anti-

Communist provisions, *The New York Times* reported, were “a result of testimony in the current investigation of WPA” and were “aimed directly at the Workers Alliance and its alleged parent, the Communist party.” These measures were further supplemented by broader and more far-reaching legislation to repress the political influence of the Communist Party, including the 1939 Hatch Act and the 1940 Smith Act.⁵⁵

As noted above, fears of Communist subversion were related to suspicion of foreigners and aliens, who were often viewed as social carriers of communism. Congress began to restrict the eligibility of aliens for federal unemployment relief even before the investigations of the Dies and Woodrum Committees. The investigations created pressure for further restrictions while legitimating existing restrictions as anti-Communist measures. The 1936, 1937, 1938, and 1939 Emergency Relief Appropriation Acts were significant not only for their restrictions on aid to aliens, but also for the preference they increasingly gave to veterans. While the unemployed had struggled since the inception of the WPA to define themselves as worthy citizen-earners – “to work and be treated as workers,” in the words of Workers Alliance president David Lasser – it was the icon of the citizen-soldier that Congress increasingly held up as deserving. This icon could only be defined in opposition to a foreign and subversive threat against which the nation had to be defended. Hence, the preference given to veterans also implied the exclusion of aliens (foreigners) and Communists (perceived as dangerous proponents of an alien philosophy and tools of a hostile foreign power).⁵⁶

While some formulations of collective identity may limit the actions that authorities can take and discourage a regime from attacking movements, authorities can also redefine the collective identity of movements in ways that facilitate repression.⁵⁷ In this case, anti-Communist measures clearly provided the basis for political repression of the Workers Alliance. In November 1939, the official Workers Alliance newspaper *Work* complained that anti-Communist legislative provisions were being used to intimidate members of the movement: “Despite the fact that Workers Alliance members had voluntarily taken an oath of allegiance to the Government, some anti-labor [WPA] foremen and supervisors told Alliance members that they could not sign these September 30th slips [testifying to their allegiance] because they belonged to the Alliance.” While Alliance members were reportedly “not fooled by this low trick” and signed anyway, “non-

members signified their fear of joining the Workers Alliance because they were 'afraid of losing their [WPA] jobs.'" In a letter to Roosevelt dated January 10, 1940, Workers Alliance president David Lasser wrote: "Discrimination, intimidation, terrorization of [WPA] workers for exercising their legal rights to organize is widespread and growing.... As you may know, the present Relief Act prohibits employment of anyone who advocates or belongs to an organization which advocates overthrow of the government by force or violence. Now, we have absolutely nothing to do with any people who fall under this classification.... But this section of the law is being used in a widespread campaign against the Workers Alliance. WPA workers on the projects are told that this section refers to the Workers Alliance and that *they cannot belong to the Workers Alliance and work on the WPA program.*" In June 1940, national WPA Commissioner Frances Harrington announced plans to purge the WPA rolls of Communists by July 1. In New York City, local WPA administrator Brehon Somervell declared that the purge would be conducted with the assistance of the Board of Elections, the FBI, the police, the WPA's own Bureau of Investigation, and the reports and testimony gathered by the Dies Committee.⁵⁸

By de-legitimizing the Workers Alliance and calling into question the worthiness of movement participants, these legislative measures also paved the way for retrenchment of the federal works program for the unemployed. In the late 1930s, Congressional conservatives succeeded in restricting eligibility and curtailing funding for the WPA. A key strategy was to limit WPA employment and make it more precarious. The Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1939 instituted a new eighteen-month rule that required those on WPA rolls who had been employed for eighteen months or more to relinquish their WPA standing and to remain off the rolls for sixty days, after which time they could be reconsidered for WPA employment if re-certified as eligible. The eighteen-month rule was devastating for WPA workers: "When the new policy went into effect, its harshness immediately became apparent. Dismissals numbered about 171,000 in July, 1939. In August [1939], that catapulted to more than half a million – 611,733, or nearly a third of the number employed during the month." The American Association of Social Workers reported early in 1940 that the general effect of the eighteen-month rule was "to augment insecurity.... [P]rivate jobs did not become more numerous." According to a WPA survey, eighty-seven percent of the WPA workers laid off under the eighteen-month clause in July and August 1939 had yet to find jobs in private industry in November 1939. Moreover, only half of those who

had found private employment were earning as much or more than their former WPA wages. Florence Kerr, the assistant WPA commissioner in charge of white-collar and women's projects, declared that the eighteen-month clause led to "hunger, eviction, sickness and despair" among the unemployed. Despite such hardship, "efforts of the [Roosevelt] administration and others to mitigate the rigor of the eighteen-month clause did not deter Congress in 1940 from re-enacting essentially the same provision."⁵⁹

While conservatives justified the eighteen-month rule as a way of spreading around WPA employment to as many as possible, the provision was also an indirect attack on the Workers Alliance. According to Herbert Benjamin, a Communist Party member and the Alliance's secretary-treasurer, "Mr. Woodrum and his colleagues . . . stated on the floor [of the House of Representatives] and they evidently actually believe that by partially wrecking the WPA, for example by requiring that all workers shall be compelled to take at least a 60-day furlough if they have worked 18 months or more on the program, they will effectively undermine the Workers Alliance." This view is confirmed by Edwin Amenta, who notes: "[T]he institution of an eighteen-month time limit on WPA employment was devised partly to hinder the organizing tasks of the Workers' Alliance, which had enough on its hands with the inherent difficulties of mobilizing unemployed workers." Re-certification requirements were a powerful disincentive to participation in protests or other forms of political action. In addition, the turnover generated by the eighteen-month rule undermined the group solidarity necessary for collective action. The tightening of eligibility requirements created divisions among relief recipients between the "ins" who continued to have an immediate stake in the WPA and the "outs" who no longer did.⁶⁰

The eighteen-month rule was also intended to deprive the Workers Alliance of a key recruitment incentive. Charges that the Workers Alliance influenced access to relief and WPA employment prompted Congressman Clifton Woodrum to praise the eighteen-month rule for "breaking up WPA racketeering." Other Congressmen reportedly shared Woodrum's concerns. According to *The New York Times*, the "members [of Congress] most interested in this phase of the measure said the provision was written in an attempt to destroy the alleged influence of the [Workers] alliance, which, it is asserted, has held out as an inducement to membership the claim that it can guarantee WPA employment to its members." "The testimony before the [Woodrum]

committee was abundant,” *The New York Times* reported in 1939, “that the Alliance holds out to prospective members its alleged influence in obtaining WPA jobs for them, and in maintaining such jobs. There is also much testimony to support the criticism that the Alliance – particularly in New York and other urban centers – has been able to do just what it said it could do to obtain and maintain jobs on the WPA for those who joined.” Accordingly, “the motive of the committee [in introducing the eighteen-month rule] was to deprive the Alliance of any right to its claim that it could guarantee employment, and maintain employment for its members.”⁶¹

The eighteen-month rule was also intended to de-fund the Workers Alliance. In 1939, Herbert Benjamin testified to the Woodrum Committee that roughly half of the movement’s monthly income came from membership dues, initiation fees, and charter fees. “Initiations and dues are the life blood of our organization,” Benjamin’s successor, Frank Ingram, wrote a year later. In June 1939, *The New York Times* reported: “Critics of the organization have taken few pains to conceal the fact that they hope to destroy the Workers’ Alliance by means of provisions in the currently considered [1940] relief bill which will force the members to quit paying dues, and thereby administer a financial blow that the organization cannot hope to weather.... [T]he [House Appropriations] committee set out on a course designed to wreck the Alliance, by denying its members the government-furnished cash to continue to pay dues.” This aim was confirmed by the Workers Alliance, which denounced the eighteen-month rule as “an effort on the part of House reactionaries to cramp the style of the Workers Alliance ... through a provision for mandatory ‘furloughs’ for WTA workers who have been on the rolls for a certain specified length of time. The reason put forth by Tories for this plan is allegedly to prevent the unemployed from ‘making a career out of relief.’ Actually ... it is hoped by these Congressional Tories that members of the Workers Alliance will be [the] ones laid off.”⁶²

Evidence suggests that the eighteen-month rule did indeed effectively de-fund the Workers Alliance. In July 1939, the Workers Alliance announced a new organizing drive to add 100,000 new members, increase dues payments by fifty percent, and add 25,000 new subscribers to its official newspaper, *Work*. In a statement issued to rank-and-file members, Alliance leaders Lasser and Benjamin described it as “one of the most important drives in the history of our movement.” A month later, the Workers Alliance proudly reported that the organiz-

ing drive had “yielded an 18 percent increase in new members” despite the “bitter Woodrum ‘WPA Investigation’” and the “continued attack from all sections of reaction.” However, the Alliance conceded that “general dues payments throughout the organization have not kept pace with recruiting” and that “many of our organizations have not even made the most modest beginnings in launching the drive.” Moreover, Benjamin noted, some of the states that had “a relatively high standing in their membership drive” had fallen behind in the drive to improve dues payments. Robin D. G. Kelley concludes that the eighteen-month rule “practically put an end to the Workers Alliance” in Alabama. The Alabama Workers Alliance “lost its organizational base within a few weeks” after the rule was implemented, and membership quickly dwindled from a peak of four thousand in 1938 to less than one thousand members.⁶³

In-group purification

I now turn from the classification struggle between the Workers Alliance and its conservative opponents to the classification struggle that emerged within the Workers Alliance. The effort of movement opponents to redefine the collective identity of the Workers Alliance in de-legitimizing ways precipitated internal conflicts over the movement’s collective identity. At stake in these internal struggles was not only how the movement would define itself, but also who within the movement would have the power to do so.⁶⁴ Initially, the movement resisted conservative efforts to oppose communism to Americanism, insisting instead upon the Popular Front vision of the social world that aligned them both against fascism. Unable to prevent congressional conservatives from mobilizing Americanism as a new criterion of legitimacy and political deviance and finding itself positioned on the wrong side of the American/un-American boundary, the Workers Alliance struggled by means of political ritual to effect a communion with symbols of Americanism.⁶⁵ Workers Alliance leaders thus sought to resist the ritual profanation of the movement, but within a framework and upon the basis of principles of division that were similar to those established by congressional conservatives. In addition, the Workers Alliance sought to invert charges of un-Americanism and redirect them at opponents, thereby turning republican concerns about civic virtue and charges of un-Americanism against conservatives, though again operating within a framework and upon the basis of principles of division similar to those conservatives had instituted.

Finally, in an attempt to preserve its legitimacy, hold on to allies, and protect itself from external repression and internal subversion, the Workers Alliance resorted to in-group purification.

In Weberian terms, one might say that in-group purification transforms a church, which that “lets grace shine over the righteous and the unrighteous alike,” into a sect, which demands stricter internal certification of a member’s moral qualities.⁶⁶ At its most extreme, in-group purification leads to purges in an effort to avoid social pollution. One part of a group thus seeks to deflect violence (physical or symbolic) away from the group as a whole and channel it toward that part of the group that has been rejected as impure.⁶⁷ In the case of the Workers Alliance, internal struggles to purify the movement of un-American elements led to internal conflict, weakening the movement’s capacity to mobilize organizational resources. In this way, the classification struggle within the Workers Alliance compounded the demobilizing effects of the classification struggle between the Workers Alliance and its opponents.

As the investigations of the Dies and Woodrum committees received growing public attention, increasing concerns within the Workers Alliance about its internal purity – in the eyes of members themselves as well as in the eyes of constituents and bystander publics – made differences between Communist and non-Communist members increasingly unbridgeable. Of course, these conflicts did not emerge *ex nihilo*. Rather, the efforts of movement opponents to re-order the social world symbolically exacerbated existing tensions and provided additional incentives to non-Communists to break with their Communist colleagues. Some of the earliest splits occurred in New York City, where the movement was especially strong. In September 1938, *The New York Times* reported that “Henry V. Rourke, who was associated with [the non-Communist Workers Alliance president] David Lasser in the founding of the Workers Alliance and who has been a paid member of its organizing staff ever since, announced yesterday that his local...had voted to withdraw from the alliance in protest against ‘Communist domination’ of the organization’s affairs.” Members of Rourke’s local vowed to form a new organization of home relief and work relief recipients, one presumably free of Communist domination. By early October 1938, delegates from eleven locals previously affiliated with the Workers Alliance and from four independent groups of WPA workers formed a new city-wide organization under Rourke’s leadership called the Unemployed and Project Workers Union.⁶⁸

Following the secession of Rourke's local, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) established the Federal Project Workers, headed by a former Workers Alliance member, "to unite the unorganized WPA employes [*sic*] and the many groups and branches that have recently split off from the Workers Alliance." A statement issued by leaders of Federal Project Workers also seized upon alleged Communist influence within the Workers Alliance to justify their activities: "In the face of widespread accusations that the Workers Alliance is under the domination of Communist leaders and has confused functions of a trade union with political activities, the need has been emphasized for a labor organization that will concentrate on the matters of wages and working conditions on WPA projects." Soon after the formation of the Federal Project Workers, another local of the Workers Alliance seceded and a third rival organization called the WPA Employees Association of America was formed. In a letter to Roosevelt, leaders of the WPA Employees Association declared that many WPA workers remained unorganized because "the organization now purporting to speak for them bears the taints of communism."⁶⁹

These defections were not confined to New York, but spread to Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Ohio, Maryland, New Jersey, and Wisconsin by the end of 1938. "In Gadsden, Alabama, the Communist issue prompted the formation of the Gadsden United WPA Workers that denounced the [Workers] alliance as a Communist front. In Jefferson County [Alabama], anti-Communism and racial conservatism on the part of white members split the [Workers] alliance in half." These were not unrelated issues. The movement's conservative opponents appealed to ascriptive forms of Americanism (and deep-rooted fears of African Americans as an internal domestic enemy) when they warned that Communists sought to establish "an independent black republic" in the United States "under the domination of the Communist commissars." In this context, the Alliance's vigorous multiracial organizing efforts in the South in 1938 appeared to confirm charges of Communist domination. "Because racial equality and Communism were seen as two sides of the same coin, many whites left the [Workers] alliance [in Alabama] on the pretext that its racial practices alone proved it was a Communist front." Thus, when racial divisions were aligned with the division between Americanism and communism, in-group purification took the form of racial purification.⁷⁰

At the Fourth National Workers Alliance Convention in late September 1938, movement leaders downplayed in-group purification and

insisted that the movement remained strong and unified. Yet the secession of dissident groups within the Alliance did alarm the leadership and delegates enough to take defensive actions. First, the convention voted 311 to 8 to exclude two delegates from New York City who accused the Alliance of following Communist party policies. "Claiming to speak for fourteen New York locals with a combined membership of more than 2,000, they told reporters that it was 'extremely doubtful' if their locals would remain in the alliance." Alliance leaders downplayed the loss, estimating that the expelled delegates represented only nine locals and three hundred members. Second, the convention voted to deny a seat to Brendan Sexton, a member of the executive board, for accusing the Alliance of being undemocratic in a letter to a popular magazine. Third, in order to prevent further factionalism, Lasser and Benjamin proposed the following amendment to the constitution of the Alliance: "Any member or officer shall be subject to discipline who proposes any action designed to bring about the secession from the Workers Alliance of any local or other subdivision; or who forms or joins in forming or associates himself in action with any organized group not legally recognized as an official body of the alliance which attempts to dictate or control the policies of the Workers Alliance; or who acts as an agent in the alliance of any group hostile to the alliance; or who joins or causes to be issued or joins in issuing any unauthorized public statement attacking the alliance or any of its officers or any subdivision; or who attempts or associates with others in attempting interference with or obstruction of lawful decisions of the Workers Alliance or its subdivisions." Fourth, evidently concerned that locals around the country were being weakened by internal splits and defections, the national executive board of the Workers Alliance sought to combine shrinking locals into larger county and inter-county organizations, "where their united strength would be many times greater." The national executive board also urged "a sustained campaign to go over the entire membership and bring back into activity and good standing those who have dropped out."⁷¹

Lasser's presidential remarks at the 1938 convention revealed his own growing ambivalence about the Communists in the Workers Alliance. On the one hand, he vigorously stressed the need for solidarity. Singling out the Dies Committee, Lasser denounced "the Tories in politics and the press" who sought "to slander and misrepresent us, *hoping to thus raise confusion and dissension in our ranks.*" "This convention," he declared, "must warn our enemies, within and without, that we intend to preserve the unity of our movement." On the

other hand, Lasser's stern warning to the Communists revealed his own growing conviction – well before the 1939 Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact brought an end to the Popular Front – that they were impure and untrustworthy: “Under our constitution any person or persons who are members of any group not an official body of the Alliance, which aims to control or dominate the policies of our organization, will be subject to disciplinary charges leading to suspension or expulsion.” Also revealing is the distinction Lasser made between two groups of enemies, external and internal. His fears of the Communists as an organizational fifth column seeking to control the Alliance paralleled conservative denunciations of the Workers Alliance as a national fifth column seeking to control the WPA. Lasser's comments thus suggest that he and other non-Communist members of the Workers Alliance were beginning to adopt a new vision of the social world and its divisions similar to that held by conservatives and to adopt a stance toward Communist members similar to the stance that conservatives took toward the Alliance as a whole.⁷²

Despite the measures adopted by the Workers Alliance in 1938 to contain internal conflicts and prevent the hemorrhaging of members and leaders, matters continued to worsen the following year. In August 1939, the non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany widened rifts within the Workers Alliance between its Communist and non-Communist members. Prior to the pact, the Workers Alliance had been strongly anti-fascist, prompting the movement to endorse the principle of collective security at its 1938 national convention in Cleveland. Solidarity between Communist and non-Communist members of the Workers Alliance, tenuous though it was, had been based in part on this shared hostility toward fascism. On a cultural level, fascism served as a symbol to which these groups could come together in opposition, despite their political differences. On a psychological level, strong negative emotional ties to fascism served as the basis for identification (in Freud's sense) between Communist and non-Communist movement participants. However, the non-aggression pact eliminated this cultural and emotional basis for the movement's internal cohesion. Some movement leaders (including Lasser) proposed that the Workers Alliance condemn the Soviet Union, side with the Allies, and support American rearmament “as steps toward fighting Fascism,” while others – particularly the Communists – continued to oppose both rearming and support for the Allies. By 1940, the Workers Alliance had taken a strongly antiwar position and insisted on maintaining strict American neutrality in the face of Nazi aggres-

sion in Europe. These antiwar and isolationist sentiments alienated those members of the movement like Lasser who felt that the Workers Alliance should support the Allies against fascism. In addition, Communist support for the pact seemed to confirm conservative charges that Communists were subservient to the Soviet Union. The non-aggression pact thus heightened suspicion, distrust, and conflict between Communists and non-Communists within the Workers Alliance. Many non-Communist members who opposed the Alliance's antiwar and isolationist stance expressed their dissent through exit rather than voice.⁷³

In 1940, in-group purification of the Workers Alliance spread to the movement's top leadership. In January 1940, Herbert Benjamin resigned as the movement's general secretary-treasurer. According to Franklin Folsom, this was part of an effort by Workers Alliance president David Lasser to purge the movement of Communists. Folsom reports that Lasser and American Communist Party leader Earl Browder asked Benjamin, "the most obvious target of the red-baiters," to resign. "Anyone who aids in giving our movement a character it does not deserve . . ." Lasser wrote, "is aiding those like the Dies Committee who are trying to smear us from the outside. We take steps to expose and remove such people from our ranks." In short, Benjamin's resignation was an attempt to deflect ritual profanation and political repression from the Alliance as a whole by expelling the most important and highest-ranking Communist in the organization. While dramatic, this gesture ultimately failed to protect the Workers Alliance. Despite Benjamin's resignation, "attacks by reactionaries" remained "intense."⁷⁴

Unable to deflect external attacks by removing Benjamin and increasingly convinced that the Workers Alliance no longer represented him and like-minded members, Lasser himself resigned as president of the Workers Alliance in June 1940 and began issuing his own strong attacks on Communists in the movement. According to Lasser, five of the six non-Communist members of the national executive board also resigned with him. The gesture confirmed that these former supporters of the Popular Front had embraced a new vision and re-division of the social world that realigned Americanism in opposition to both communism and fascism. "Along with many former Alliance leaders and dissatisfied locals throughout the country," Lasser wrote about his fellow defectors, "they are joining with me in support of a new national unemployment movement which will be 100 percent American and

free of isms.” The Communists, Lasser told *The New York Times*, had “driven out many thousands of sincere militant unemployed who did not wish to be ‘under the thumb of any political group to which they did not subscribe.’” While these defections were partly an attempt to evade de-legitimation and political repression, they also indicated that the collective identity of some movement leaders no longer lined up with the movement.⁷⁵

Why did the Workers Alliance fail to resist de-legitimation? Why did so many of the movement’s members and leaders embrace a new vision of the social world and its divisions, wherein communism and Americanism were antagonistic rather than (as in the Popular Front vision) aligned against fascism? Why did tensions between Communists and non-Communists within the Workers Alliance combust so effortlessly into full-blown splits and purges? To begin with, although conservative charges were frequently exaggerated, they had some basis in reality that made them credible. Conservatives tapped into existing fears and anxieties that were generated by domestic political turmoil, including the sit-down strike wave of 1936 to 1937, as well as an increasingly ominous international situation. The 1939 Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact greatly strengthened the plausibility of conservative efforts to equate fascism and communism as two faces of the same subversive threat to Americanism, and the outbreak of the war in Europe and the subsequent fall of the French republic in June 1940 further intensified concerns about national security and fears of subversive activity.

The anti-Communist drive of the late 1930s was also successful because congressional conservatives were part of a strong public that could make binding and authoritative decisions as well as deliberate, and they used their growing influence within Congress to institutionalize new principles of social division and new criteria of legitimacy. These new criteria were thus inscribed in law and enforced by the repressive machinery of the state; symbolic power was thereby reinforced with political and police violence. In contrast, the Workers Alliance was a weak public without decision-making powers; at best, it could only hope to shape opinion. Here, too, it was thwarted, for widespread and favorable press coverage allowed congressional conservatives to shape and mold public opinion more effectively than the Workers Alliance. “At all times newspaper coverage ... favored the [Dies] Committee and by means of it favorable public opinion had been built up.” “We may justly claim,” the Dies Committee announced in its January 1941 report to Congress, “to have been the decisive force

in shaping the present attitudes of the American people towards the activities of the ‘fifth columns’ that aim at our destruction. Our work has been a type of public education whose importance cannot be exaggerated.” In contrast, the Workers Alliance had much greater difficulty disseminating its representations and definitions of the social world. In April 1938, for example, the circulation of its official newspaper *Work* only reached seven thousand.⁷⁶

Finally, conservative representations of Communists as a subversive menace were compatible with the pre-existing political inclinations of diverse groups, including some groups within the Workers Alliance itself. Anti-communism signified different things to different people: racial segregation and white supremacy, patriotic nationalism, opposition to Stalinist dictatorship, or a general hostility to organized labor and the political left. Anti-communism was effective at realigning social forces into a new political formation in part because diverse groups could rally around the same symbol while attributing different meanings to it.⁷⁷ Although in-group purification failed for all of these reasons to protect the Workers Alliance from being stigmatized as un-American, it had important unintended consequences that contributed to the movement’s demise.

Effects on resource mobilization

Both of these classification struggles – the struggle *between* the movement and its opponents and the struggle *within* the movement – involved material as well as symbolic stakes. By propagating and institutionalizing a particular vision of the social world and its divisions, conservatives influenced the distribution of resources and power in significant ways, affecting both the Alliance’s access to legal protections against punitive reprisals and its capacity to mobilize organizational resources. To be sure, because the Workers Alliance relied heavily on dues from and newspaper sales to members who were unemployed or on relief, the movement was always short of resources from the very beginning.⁷⁸ However, the classification struggle between the movement and its opponents compounded this resource mobilization problem directly by discouraging participation in the movement and indirectly by legitimating political repression.

The classification struggle within the movement compounded its resource mobilization problems still further. First, in-group purification

led to the loss of experienced and committed leaders like Henry Rourke, Herbert Benjamin, and David Lasser, who either left voluntarily or were purged from the organization. Some Alliance organizers and leaders left to join other organizations like the Congress of Industrial Organizations.⁷⁹ Although Communists themselves placed more emphasis on labor organizing after 1935 or 1936, they were still clearly active in the Workers Alliance, and attempts to purge the movement of Communists probably cost it some of its most talented organizers: “By early 1937 the [Communist] Party had made organizing the unemployed through the WAA one of its main priorities . . . and the Party provided the skill and resources needed by the alliance.”⁸⁰

Second, the internal splits, purges, and defections experienced by the Workers Alliance led to a loss of rank-and-file members. According to leaders of the Workers Alliance, the movement continued to grow through most of 1938. However, by the end of that year, the growth in membership seems to have reversed. In March 1938, there were 11,316 dues-paying members of the Workers Alliance of Greater New York; in December 1938, the total had dropped to 8,916 despite the enrollment of new members during the year. Nor was this trend confined to New York. According to *The New York Post*, the Alliance’s national membership peaked by the beginning of 1939 at 600,000 (half of it paid up), but declined thereafter. Folsom suggests that it was the movement’s “internal factional squabbles” that “caused many WAA members to lose interest and drift away.” Movement leaders themselves expressed similar views. In the keynote report of the 1939 convention of the Workers Alliance of Greater New York, executive secretary Sam Wiseman wrote: “The conduct of most of our local meetings is disorganized and in many cases taken up with petty squabbles, resulting in the driving out of hundreds of members before they even get a chance to know what our organization really is.”⁸¹

Third, the loss of rank-and-file members meant a decline in dues payments and newspaper sales. By December 1938, movement leaders were concerned enough to launch a new campaign to consolidate and streamline the Workers Alliance, similar to an earlier 1937 campaign. The campaign was intended at least in part to make resource mobilization more effective; measures were proposed to ensure more regular payment of membership dues and newspaper subscriptions. Nevertheless, by September 1939, the Workers Alliance announced that *Work*, its official newspaper, had been operating at a deficit for several months and that without immediate financial help from members, it

would be forced to suspend publication. No issues of *Work* were published during the month of September 1940, and when it resumed publication in October 1940, it was published less frequently than before.⁸²

Finally, as the Workers Alliance struggled to find alternative sources of income in the face of dwindling dues payments and newspaper sales, the emergence of rival organizations increased competition for scarce resources. By December 1940, the Workers Alliance and Lasser's new American Security Union were both pleading for grants from the Robert Marshall Foundation. In a letter to George Marshall dated December 12, 1940, Workers Alliance president Richard McKibben (Lasser's successor) wrote that the Alliance was unable to support its work on membership dues and was "able to keep going only through the generosity of such public-minded, progressive men and women as the late Robert Marshall." McKibben added: "In the present period . . . the Alliance's dues income from its unemployed membership has naturally reached a low level. This makes it more imperative than ever before that we have the financial support of the Robert Marshall Foundation." While McKibben conceded that "there has been a decrease in the dues paying membership of the Workers Alliance in the last period," he insisted that this was not because of Lasser's resignation, but rather "because of the increasing impoverishment of the unemployed and a considered campaign of vilification, intimidation, and coercion by government officials."⁸³ McKibben seems not to have considered the possibility that the movement's internal difficulties were compounding the effects of external repression.

Conclusion

The demobilization of the Workers Alliance from the late 1930s to 1941 is unmistakable: According to Herbert Benjamin's testimony before the Woodrum Committee in April 1939, the Workers Alliance included a total of 1,521 locals distributed in forty-five states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. When the national executive board of the Workers Alliance decided to dissolve the organization in November 1941, it had dwindled to two hundred branches in twenty-five states.⁸⁴ This article has argued that classification struggles were a key causal mechanism that shaped the movement's collective identity in ways that hindered its capacity to mobilize resources, thereby contributing crucially to the movement's demobilization. I traced demobilization to two important classification struggles.

First, conservative opponents of the Workers Alliance appealed to new categorical identities that cut across the old categories that initially provided a basis for the political mobilization of the unemployed. The Workers Alliance defined and mobilized WPA workers as government employees rather than paupers and relied on the Popular Front discourse of the 1930s to forge a collective identity that bridged the gaps between Communists and non-Communists. Opponents of the Workers Alliance successfully activated and institutionalized a cross-cutting principle of division between Americanism and communism. This symbolic re-ordering of the social world, which was reinforced by the 1939 Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact, hampered the movement's mobilization of resources by legitimating government repression and discouraging participation in the Workers Alliance.

The capacity of the Workers Alliance to mobilize resources was undermined not only by the classification struggle between the movement and its opponents, but also by a second, related classification struggle within the movement. As movement opponents struggled to impose a new vision and division of the social world, the Alliance resorted to in-group purification to avoid internal subversion, de-legitimation, and repression. However, internal struggles to purify the Workers Alliance of "un-American" elements dispersed and diverted resources, and the movement failed to compensate for those losses by acquiring new allies or hanging on to old ones. In this way, the classification struggle within the Workers Alliance compounded the demobilizing effects of the classification struggle between the movement and its opponents.

These classification struggles help to explain the demobilization of the Workers Alliance itself, but what about the various rival organizations that split off from it? Although some Alliance leaders hoped to reinvigorate the unemployed movement by forming rival organizations free of Communist participation, these hopes remained unfulfilled. To begin with, the specter of communism often continued to haunt the defectors. Congress effectively blacklisted Lasser, for example, as a result of his previous association with the Workers Alliance. Moreover, even when these new unemployed organizations were able to escape the specter of communism, they were crippled by many of the same WPA reforms that had been directed against the Alliance, particularly the devastating eighteen-month rule. In addition, these rival organizations were weakened by competition (not only from the Workers Alliance but from the CIO as well) over resources that were rapidly dwindling as a result of WPA retrenchment. Factional struggles, turf

disputes, and increased competition for resources diverted these fledgling social movement organizations from social protest. Finally, America's entry into the Second World War in December 1941 (after the collapse of the Workers Alliance) eliminated the membership base of these spin-off organizations as a result of military mobilization, raised the costs of disruptive protests that might have interfered with the war effort (after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, even the Communists strove to avoid such interference), led to a loss of any remaining elite allies in the Roosevelt administration, and strengthened the political influence of business.⁸⁵

Long-term political impacts of classification struggles

What were the long-term political impacts of the classification struggles that took place in the late 1930s and early 1940s? How did these struggles reconfigure American politics, or at least contribute to new configurations? To begin with, although anti-communism was not the only basis for the working coalition that emerged between Republicans and Southern Democrats in Congress, it did help to disarticulate old party rivalries and forge a new cross-party conservative bloc that hindered and impeded completion of the New Deal. Moreover, although the anti-Communist friend-enemy grouping forged in the late 1930s was briefly disarticulated during the Second World War as the United States and the Soviet Union became allies, it nevertheless set an important historical precedent for the Cold War vision of the social world and its divisions. Finally, even as anti-communism organized some groups, it disorganized others. The division between Americanism and communism cut across earlier (admittedly fragile) political groupings (the Popular Front) and precluded the formation of similar ones. Why? Because the outcomes – including the failures – of earlier classification struggles shaped the subsequent choices of social movement activists. The CIO's postwar expulsion of its Communist-led unions, in particular, was probably influenced by union activists' memories and knowledge of previous struggles within the Workers Alliance.

Implications for sociological work on the New Deal

Most sociological studies of the New Deal aim to show how struggles between already constituted groups (usually labor and business) influ-

enced policy. In this study, I have attempted to redirect the focus to explain how groups were organized, disorganized, and reorganized. In other words, I have tried to show how the New Deal was shaped not only by struggles among classes, but also by what Adam Przeworski calls struggles about class. To understand the latter fully, I have argued, it is necessary to move beyond (even while building upon) the neo-Marxist theoretical framework that dominates much of the sociological literature on the New Deal. At the same time, this study engages historical institutional models of the New Deal as well. In line with this approach, I emphasized the ways in which institutions shaped the perceptions of interests and the behavior of individuals and groups. However, while most of the existing institutionalist work on the New Deal focuses on national governmental capacity, the U.S. party system, and other enduring structures that constrained New Deal reforms, this study focused upon those institutions created by the New Dealers themselves, particularly the WPA. My findings are consistent with Piven and Cloward's claim that the WPA discouraged protest by the unemployed. However, while they argue that the WPA discouraged protest by "once more enmeshing people in the work role," I trace demobilization (in part) back to the anti-Communist reforms of the WPA instituted in the late 1930s.⁸⁶

Theoretical contributions

I have tried to use this particular case to provide a better synthesis of identity-oriented and strategic models of collective action. To do so, I have drawn heavily on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of classification struggles as well as insights from Erving Goffman and Howard Becker. On the one hand, I extended culture to the realm of interest by highlighting the role collective identity plays in one of the key processes that strategic models of collective action foreground: the mobilization of resources. Although it is well established that the sponsorship of elite allies and the appropriation of an "indigenous" organizational base are important for resource mobilization, it is less widely recognized how classification struggles and collective identity shape both. Moreover, I extended culture to the realm of interest in another way as well: by challenging the notion that labor movements like the Workers Alliance are fundamentally different from or antithetical to the identity-oriented new social movements. On the other hand, I also extended the idea of interest to culture. Rather than viewing collective identity as something formed prior to political struggle and according to a different logic, I

showed that the collective identity of the Workers Alliance was constructed in and through struggles over classificatory schemes. These included struggles *between* the movement and its opponents as well as struggles *within* the movement. To summarize, rather than seeing movement decline as a two-step process of identity formation followed by stalled resource mobilization, I have tried to show that resource mobilization involves and partly depends upon identity-formation.

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Notes

1. The quotation is from Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 286. For resource mobilization and political process theories, see John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82/6 (May 1977): 1212–1241; Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978); and Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). For new social movement theories, see Jean L. Cohen, "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements," *Social Research* 52/ 4 (Winter 1985): 663–716; Alberto Melucci, "The New Social Movements: A Theoretical Approach," *Social Science Information* 19/2 (1980): 199–226; idem, "The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements," *Social Research* 52/4 (Winter 1985): 789–816; idem, *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*, ed. John Keane and Paul Mier (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); idem, "The Process of Collective Identity," in *Social Movements and Culture*, ed. Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Alessandro Pizzorno, "Political Exchange and Collective Identity in Industrial Conflict," chapter 11 in *The Resurgence of Class Conflict in Western Europe since 1968*, ed.

- Colin Crouch and Alessandro Pizzorno, Vol. 2 (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1978); idem, "On the Rationality of Democratic Choice," *Telos* 63 (Spring 1985): 41–69; Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier, "Collective Identity in Social Movement Communities: Lesbian Feminist Mobilization," in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, ed. Aldon Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); and Alain Touraine, "An Introduction to the Study of Social Movements," *Social Research* 52/4 (Winter 1985): 749–787.
2. See Bert Klandermans, "Introduction: Social Movement Organizations and the Study of Social Movements," *International Social Movement Research* 2 (1989): 1–17; Morris and Mueller, editors, *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*; Enrique Larana, Hank Johnston, and Joseph R. Gusfield, editors, *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Johnston and Klandermans, editors, *Social Movements and Culture*; Jon Shefner, "Moving in the Wrong Direction in Social Movement Theory," *Theory and Society* 24/4 (1995): 595–612; Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and David S. Meyer, Nancy Whittier, and Belinda Robnett, editors, *Social Movements: Identity, Culture, and the State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). This shift is part of a broader "cultural turn" in social movement theory.
 3. On framing, see William A. Gamson, "Goffman's Legacy to Political Sociology," *Theory and Society* 14/5 (September 1985): 605–622; William A. Gamson, "Constructing Social Protest," in Johnston and Klandermans, editors, *Social Movements and Culture*; David A. Snow, E. Burke Rochford, Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford, "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization and Movement Participation," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): 464–481; Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, editors, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 611–639. Scott A. Hunt, Robert D. Benford, and David A. Snow, "Identity Fields: Framing Processes and the Construction of Movement Identities," in Larana, Johnston, and Gusfield, editors, *New Social Movements*, provide a valuable discussion of the relation between framing and collective identity, but they, too, take the existence of "SMO [social movement organization] actors" as a given. I do not mean to suggest that framing theory has been useless or should be discarded. Rather, my point is that we need to modify and expand how the concept of framing is used in social movement theory.
 4. Doug McAdam, "The Framing Function of Movement Tactics," chapter 15 in McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, editors, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*.
 5. Polletta and Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," 285.
 6. Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 220–221, 223 (emphasis in the original). Idem, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984 [1979]), 477–479. See also Pierre Bourdieu and Luc Boltanski, "The Educational System and the Economy: Titles and Jobs," chapter 8 in *French Sociology: Rupture and Renewal since 1968*, ed. Charles Lemert (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); and Luc Boltanski, "How a Social Group

- Objectified Itself: 'Cadres' in France, 1936–45," *Social Science Information* 23/3 (1984): 469–491.
7. David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 89.
 8. On resource acquisition, see McAdam, *Political Process*, 20–59; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, 44, 47–48. By arguing that collective identity shapes resource mobilization, I do not mean to deny that resource mobilization also shapes collective identity. Although I emphasize the former here, I acknowledge that causality runs in both directions.
 9. Claus Offe, "New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics," *Social Research* 52/4 (Winter 1985): 817–868.
 10. Craig Calhoun, "'New Social Movements' of the Early Nineteenth Century," in *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action*, ed. Mark Traugott (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 173.
 11. Cf. William H. Sewell, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*; and Calhoun, "New Social Movements."
 12. Pizzorno, "Political Exchange and Collective Identity," 293. Cf. Cohen, "Strategy or Identity."
 13. Melucci, "The Process of Collective Identity," 48–49. Cf. Marc W. Steinberg, "The Roar of the Crowd: Repertoires of Discourse and Collective Action among the Spitalfields Silk Weavers in Nineteenth-Century London," in Traugott, editor, *Repertoires and Cycles*; and idem, "Toward a More Dialogic Analysis of Social Movement Culture," in Meyer, Whittier, and Robnett, editors, *Social Movements*.
 14. E.g. Belinda Robnett, "External Political Change, Collective Identities, and Participation in Social Movement Organizations," in Meyer, Whittier, and Robnett, editors, *Social Movements*.
 15. Due to space constraints, this article only addresses the reasons for the decline and demise of the Workers Alliance. A separate work on the rise of the movement is in progress.
 16. By causal mechanisms, I mean "a delimited class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations." Following McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, this article eschews "general models ... that purport to summarize whole categories of contention and moves toward the analysis of smaller-scale causal mechanisms that recur in different combinations with different aggregate consequences in varying historical settings" (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, 24). I do not deny that other causal mechanisms besides classification struggles contributed to the demobilization of the Workers Alliance, nor do I wish to minimize the impact of those mechanisms, but I do argue that those mechanisms alone (i.e., without reference to classification struggles) cannot explain the demobilization of the Workers Alliance. On causal mechanisms as an alternative to both general covering laws and historicist accounts that eschew generalization altogether, see Robert Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, third edition (Glencoe: Free Press, 1968); Jon Elster, *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Arthur L. Stinchcombe, "The Conditions of Fruitfulness of Theorizing About Mechanisms in Social Science," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 21 (1991): 367–388; Charles Tilly, "Means and Ends of Comparison in Macrosociology," *Comparative Social Research* 16 (1997): 47–57; and McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*.

17. Bourdieu and Boltanski, "The Educational System and the Economy."
18. Polletta and Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," 292.
19. Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 107–108. Like all causal mechanisms, in-group purification produces "different aggregate outcomes depending on the initial conditions, combinations, and sequences" in which it occurs and concatenates with other mechanisms (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, 37). On the potential benefits of factionalism, see Mildred A. Schwartz, "Factions and the Continuity of Political Challengers," and Jo Reger, "More than One Feminism: Organizational Structure and the Construction of Collective Identity," both in Meyer, Whittier, and Robnett, editors, *Social Movements*.
20. Franklin Folsom, *Impatient Armies of the Poor: The Story of Collective Action of the Unemployed, 1808–1942* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1991), 417.
21. Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 297–298. For an overview of the political mobilization of the unemployed in the 1930s, see Helen Seymour, "The Organized Unemployed," (Ph.D. dissertation, Division of the Social Sciences, University of Chicago, 1937); Bernard Karsh and Phillips L. Garman, "The Impact of the Political Left," chapter 2 in *Labor and the New Deal*, ed. Milton Derber and Edwin Young (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961); Roy Rosenzweig, "Radicals and the Jobless: The Musteites and the Unemployed Leagues, 1932–1936," *Labor History* 16/1 (Winter 1975): 52–77; idem, "'Socialism in Our Time': The Socialist Party and the Unemployed, 1929–1936," *Labor History* 20/4 (Fall 1979): 485–509; idem, "Organizing the Unemployed: The Early Years of the Great Depression, 1929–1933," chapter 8 in *Workers' Struggles, Past and Present: A "Radical America" Reader*, ed. James Green (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983); Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Vintage, 1977); Harold R. Kerbo and Richard A. Shaffer, "Unemployment and Protest in the United States, 1890–1940: A Methodological Critique and Research Note," *Social Forces* 64/4 (June 1986): 1046–1056; Harold R. Kerbo and Richard A. Shaffer, "Lower Class Insurgency and the Political Process: The Response of the U.S. Unemployed, 1890–1940," *Social Problems* 39/2 (May 1992): 139–154; Steve Valocchi, "The Unemployed Workers Movement of the 1930s: A Reexamination of the Piven and Cloward Thesis," *Social Problems* 37/2 (May 1990): 191–205; and Folsom, *Impatient Armies of the Poor*. On the WPA, see Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*; David L. Porter, *Congress and the Waning of the New Deal* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1980); Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1986); and Edwin Amenta, *Bold Relief: Institutional Politics and the Origins of Modern American Social Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). "The WPA ... by 1939 had become the most comprehensive, ambitious, and controversial government program," and it "was regarded as the cornerstone of domestic relief" (Porter, *Congress and the Waning of the New Deal*, 61, 70). It "absorbed both the greatest amount of public spending and public attention" and was "Roosevelt's top priority in social policy" (Amenta, *Bold Relief*, 81, 83, 144).
22. Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*, updated edition (New York: Vintage, 1993 [1971]), 106. Folsom, *Impatient Armies of the Poor*, 421. *The New York Times*, August 12, 1938, p. 16. *Work*, August 27, 1938, p. 5 (Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives of the Tamiment Institute Library, New York University Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, Microfilm R1568).

23. The author gathered all protest event data from *The New York Times Index* and *The New York Times*. Because of the way the data were originally reported, it was necessary to count as a single event coordinated protests occurring at the same time but in different locations within the same city (e.g., at different relief offices or WPA projects).
24. All unemployment data are from United States Department of Commerce (Bureau of the Census), *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*, Part 1 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), 135.
25. E.g., Folsom, *Impatient Armies of the Poor*, 431; Karsh and Garman, "The Impact of the Political Left," 94.
26. Harrington is quoted in *Work*, February 15, 1940, 3. It was only in 1942 that the unemployment rate dropped below five percent. WPA employment also remained high; the average number of persons employed on WPA projects per month did not fall below one million until March 1942. See United States Federal Works Agency, *Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935–43* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946), 28.
27. Quotations are from Donald S. Howard, *The WPA and Federal Relief Policy* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1943), 132–133 (emphasis added). Also see *Work*, November 23, 1939, 1; Basil Rauch, *The History of the New Deal, 1933–1938* (New York: Creative Age Press, 1944), 314–315, 326; and Franklin D. Roosevelt, President's Personal File, File #6794 (American Security Union), Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
28. Quotation is from Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, 76. Cf. Rosenzweig, "Socialism in Our Time," 503; idem, "Organizing the Unemployed," 177; and James J. Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed: Community and Union Activists in the Industrial Heartland* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 82, 115, 272.
29. See James T. Patterson, *Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal: The Growth of the Conservative Coalition in Congress, 1933–1939* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967); and Porter, *Congress and the Waning of the New Deal*.
30. See the following issues of *The Workers Alliance: The Official Newspaper of the Workers Alliance of America* (Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives of the Tamiment Institute Library, New York University Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, Microfilm R1569): August 15, 1935, 1; October 2, 1935, 2; "Second October Issue" [1935], 1; "November Issue" [1935], 1; "Second April Issue" [1936], 2; "First June Issue" [1936], 1; and "First July Issue" [1936], 1.
31. See the following issues of *Work*: September 24, 1938, 7; October 8, 1938, 4; October 22, 1938, 12; July 29, 1939, 6, 12; and August 12, 1939, 6. On the way in which dyadic interaction is altered by the addition of a third party, see Georg Simmel, "The Triad," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. and ed. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950).
32. While the Workers Alliance pushed for an expansion of the WPA, business largely opposed New Deal experiments with work relief (Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Politics of Upheaval* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960], 264; Nancy Ellen Rose, *Put to Work: Relief Programs in the Great Depression* [New York: Monthly Review Press, 1994], 53; Edwin Amenta, Ellen Benoit, Chris Bonastia, Nancy K. Cauthen, and Drew T. Halfmann, "The Works Progress Administration and the Origins of Welfare Reform: Work and Relief in New Deal Social Policy" [unpublished manuscript, Department of Sociology, New York University, 1996], 50, note 12). Their concerns were threefold: First, employers feared that work relief would cause labor shortages and create pressure for private-sector wage increases (Rose, *Put to Work*,

- 53). Second, they believed that too much was being spent on relief and they favored cutbacks in order to balance the federal budget (Rose, *Put to Work*, 54, 77; Schlesinger, *Politics of Upheaval*, 264). Third, they feared that production-for-use projects would lead to government competition with the private sector and crowd out production for profit (Rose, *Put to Work*, 76–80).
33. Quotations are from Stuart Hall, “The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism Among the Theorists,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 45–46 (emphasis in the original); Sheryl R. Tynes, *Turning Points in Social Security: From “Cruel Hoax” to “Sacred Entitlement”* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 60; and David Plotke, “The Political Mobilization of Business,” chapter 8 in *The Politics of Interests*, ed. Mark Petracca (Boulder: Westview, 1992), 176. On the multiple interests of social collectivities, also see Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 280; Pierre Bourdieu, “What Makes a Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups,” *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32 (1987): 1–18; idem, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); and idem, *Language and Symbolic Power*. On the discursive definition of interests, see idem, “What Makes a Social Class?”; Mustafa Emirbayer, “Beyond Structuralism and Voluntarism: The Politics and Discourse of Progressive School Reform, 1890–1930,” *Theory and Society* 21/5 (1992): 621–664; Mustafa Emirbayer, “The Shaping of a Virtuous Citizenry: Educational Reform in Massachusetts, 1830–1860,” *Studies in American Political Development* 6 (Fall 1992): 391–419; Plotke, “The Political Mobilization of Business”; David Plotke, *Building a Democratic Political Order: Reshaping American Liberalism in the 1930s and 1940s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 47–97; and Weber, *From Max Weber*, 184–185. Proponents of the collective identity approach to social movements have also stressed the discursive definition of interests. Rather than seeing interpretation as driven by prior strategic calculations, it makes more sense to understand political action as always simultaneously involving interpretation and strategy (Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Action and Its Environments* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1988], 311–316). On corporate liberalism, see James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State, 1900–1918* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968); G. William Domhoff, “How the Power Elite Shape Social Legislation,” chapter 6 in *The Higher Circles: The Governing Class in America* (New York: Vintage, 1971); and Ronald Radosh, “The Myth of the New Deal,” in *A New History of Leviathan: Essays on the Rise of the Corporate State*, ed. Ronald Radosh and Murray Rothbard (New York: Dutton, 1972).
34. See Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. W. D. Halls (New York: Free Press, 1984 [1893]); Weber, *From Max Weber*; Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971); Robert C. Tucker, editor, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, second edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 174. Quotations on constructing a leading bloc are from Hall, “The Toad in the Garden,” 47, 53 (emphasis in the original). Also see Stuart Hall, “The Great Moving Right Show,” in *The Politics of Thatcherism*, ed. Stuart Hall and Martin Jaques (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1983); Emirbayer, “Beyond Structuralism and Voluntarism”; idem, “The Shaping of a Virtuous Citizenry”; and Plotke, *Building a Democratic Political Order*.

35. For the psychological expressivism thesis, see Daniel Bell, editor, *The Radical Right* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963), and Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right Wing Extremism in America, 1790–1977*, second edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). For critical reviews of this perspective, see Joseph R. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963), and Jerome L. Himmelstein, *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), chapter 3. Quotations are from Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 73; Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade*, 179, 19; and Bell, *The Radical Right*, 12.
36. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade*, 19, 175, 18. Of course, in the case of the Workers Alliance, it was mainly the status of organized WPA workers (their worthiness to receive social assistance) rather than the movement's anti-Communist opponents that was at stake.
37. Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, 41–44. Lorence, *Organizing the Unemployed*. Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 297–298. I borrow the concept of ritual profanation from Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face-to-Face Behavior* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967), 85–90 (cf. Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*, chapter 5).
38. Michèle Lamont, *Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and American Upper-Middle Class* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
39. There is debate among political sociologists about whether the imposition of stigmatizing categorical identities discourages political mobilization or provides a basis for it. Piven and Cloward, e.g., argue that turning welfare recipients into “a clearly demarcated . . . class of pariahs deters political mobilization for public relief” (*Poor People's Movements*, 42–43). In contrast, Anthony Marx, e.g., argues that legal discrimination creates a stigmatized categorical identity that provides a “potential base for resistance,” establishing the “who” that then challenges exclusion and discrimination (“Race-Making and the Nation-State,” *World Politics* 48/2 [January 1996]: 180–208). What I am suggesting here is that both views may be correct under different conditions. In other words, whether categorical identities that are created through exclusion and/or discrimination also become the basis for political mobilization depends in part on whether those categorical identities are aligned with other social divisions or weakened by crosscutting social divisions. Political mobilization, I argue, is more common under the former condition than the latter condition.
40. I borrow the notion of citizen-earner from Judith N. Shklar, *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). On the gendered character of the citizen-earner, see Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, “A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19/2 (1994): 309–336. These two forms of ritual profanation, which represent what might be called the civic death of relief recipients bear a striking resemblance to Orlando Patterson's two ways of representing the social death of slaves (*Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982], 39, 41).
41. Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party: A Critical History, 1919–1957* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 325, 362–363, 385. Karsh and Garman, “Impact of the Political Left,” 103–104. Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*.
42. Howe and Coser, *American Communist Party*, 391–392. Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 400–409. Eli Jaffe, *Oklahoma Odyssey: A Memoir* (Robert F.

- Wagner Labor Archives of the Tamiment Institute Library, New York University Elmer Holmes Bobst Library), 91.
43. United States House of Representatives, *Hearings Before a Special Committee on Un-American Activities, 75th Congress, Third Session, on H. Res. 282*, vol. 1 and 2 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1938). August Raymond Ogden, *The Dies Committee: A Study of the Special House Committee for the Investigation of Un-American Activities, 1938–1944* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1945).
 44. United States House of Representatives, *Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 76th Congress, First Session, Acting Under House Resolution 130* (1939–40), in Record Group 233: House of Representatives, 76th Congress, Appropriations Committee: Subcommittee on the Works Progress Administration, Hearings: Acting Under House Resolution 130, 9E2, Row 31, Compartments 11-14, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC. Arthur W. Macmahon, John D. Millett, and Gladys Ogden, *The Administration of Federal Work Relief* (Chicago: Public Administration Service, 1941), 289–290.
 45. The investigations and hearings conducted by these two committees may be seen as ritualized in at least three ways. First, this activity was partly ceremonial in Goffman's sense, i.e., a conventionalized means of communicating one's evaluation or assessment of another's status (Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*, 48–56). Unlike the micro-level ceremonial profanations described by Goffman (*Interaction Ritual*, 85–90), however, the individuals involved here typically represented, spoke, and acted on behalf of large groups of people (or at least attempted to do so). Second, these congressional investigations, and the red scare of the late 1930s more broadly, appear to have involved the kind of “generalization” that Jeffrey C. Alexander sees in political rituals like Watergate, through which “social solidarities are reworked” and classificatory systems (and the relation of actors to them) are shifted and transformed (“Three Models of Culture and Society Relations: Toward an Analysis of Watergate,” chapter 5 in *Action and Its Environments*; idem, “Culture and Political Crisis: ‘Watergate’ and Durkheimian Sociology,” chapter 6 in *Structure and Meaning* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1989]). Third, committee hearings helped to bring about a convergence of ethos and world-view in the manner described by Clifford Geertz. For participants, he suggests, ritual involves not only the presentation of a world-view, but “in addition enactments, materializations, realizations of it – not only models of what they believe, but also models for the believing of it. In these plastic dramas men attain their faith as they portray it.” The dispositions that rituals induce, Geertz adds, “have their most important impact . . . outside the boundaries of the ritual itself as they reflect back to color the individual's conception of the established world of bare fact” (*The Interpretation of Cultures* [New York: Basic Books, 1973], 113–114, 119 [emphasis in the original]).
 46. Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 249. On the aims and activities of the Communist Party, see Howe and Coser, *American Communist Party*, and Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*. On republicanism and ascriptive Americanism, see Suzanne Mettler, *Dividing Citizens: Gender and Federalism in New Deal Public Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Rogers M. Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America,” *American Political Science Review* 87/3 (September 1993): 549–566; idem, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); and Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

47. Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1963), 132, 121, 139. Social movement theorists have usefully extended and elaborated Becker's point about the importance of the mass media for moral entrepreneurship. See, e.g., William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani, "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach," *American Journal of Sociology* 95/1 (1989): 1–37; William A. Gamson, David Croteau, William Hoynes, and Theodore Sasson, "Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality," *Annual Review of Sociology* 18 (1992): 373–393; Gamson, "Constructing Social Protest"; William A. Gamson and David S. Meyer, "Framing Political Opportunity," chapter 12 in McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, editors, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*; and Bert Klandermans and Sjoerd Goslinga, "Media Discourse, Movement Publicity, and the Generation of Collective Action Frames," chapter 14 in McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, editors, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*.
48. Ogden, *Dies Committee*, 48, 101–102, 114, 173, 179.
49. Patricia Cayo Sexton, *The War on Labor and the Left: Understanding America's Unique Conservatism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 145. Ogden, *Dies Committee*, 104, 107, 113, 152, 177–188, 208. Rauch, *History of the New Deal*, 284. The coalition between conservative factions of the Republican and Democratic parties had to be actively brokered and constructed (Patterson, *Congressional Conservatism*). Just as the Workers Alliance relied on the Popular Front discourse of the 1930s to forge a collective identity that bridged differences between Communists and non-Communists, so anti-Communist discourse forged a collective identity that bridged party differences between conservatives and provided a basis for their alliance. The forging of this conservative coalition after the 1938 election signaled the end of the New Deal (Patterson, *Congressional Conservatism*; Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* [New York: Knopf, 1995]). Even Amenta, who argues that the 1939 Congress was "far from dominated by conservatives," concedes that "the pro-spenders lost their majority" (*Bold Relief*, 137).
50. "Symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space.... Social boundaries are objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities" (Michèle Lamont and Virag Molnar, "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 [2002]: 168).
51. Cf. Roger V. Gould, *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
52. Boltanski, "How a Social Group Objectified Itself," 485–486. Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," in *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, ed. Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen, and Frank Longstreth (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
53. *The New York Times*, June 23, 1940, 1. Macmahon et al., *Administration of Federal Work Relief*, 336. Howard, *WPA and Federal Relief Policy*, 119, 138–139, 303–324. Lewis Meriam, *Relief and Social Security* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1946), 369–370. Sexton, *War on Labor*, 148. Rose, *Put to Work*, 112–114, 137–138 (notes 56 and 57).
54. *The New York Times*, April 20, 1939, 1.
55. *The New York Times*, June 18, 1939, IV, 6. *The New York Times*, June 13, 1939, 1.

- Macmahon et al., *Administration of Federal Work Relief*, 287. Porter, *Congress and the Waning of the New Deal*, 109. Sexton, *War on Labor*, 148–149. Jaffe, *Oklahoma Odyssey*. Brinkley, *End of Reform*, 141.
56. Lasser is quoted in *The New York Times*, August 25, 1936, 11. On restrictions on aid to aliens and preferences for veterans, see John D. Millet, *The Works Progress Administration in New York City* (Chicago: Public Administration Service, 1938), 65; Howard, *WPA and Federal Relief Policy*, 523; Meriam, *Relief and Social Security*, 381–382; and Rose, *Put to Work*, 112–114, 137–138 (notes 56 and 57). New Dealers opposed special programs and benefits for veterans, preferring instead to meet the needs of veterans through “programs directed at the entire population.” As late as 1942, Roosevelt’s National Resources Planning Board envisioned comprehensive expansion of New Deal programs rather than special legislation for veterans following the war. However, the Second World War brought “what the New Deal reformers had hoped to avoid: a special welfare state for a substantial sector of the population [veterans] deemed especially deserving” (Edwin Amenta and Theda Skocpol, “Redefining the New Deal: World War II and the Development of Social Provision in the United States,” chapter 2 in *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States*, ed. Margaret Weir, Ann Shola Orloff, and Theda Skocpol [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988], 85, 93–94).
 57. See Steven Pfaff, “Collective Identity and Informal Groups in Revolutionary Mobilization: East Germany in 1989,” *Social Forces* 75/1 (1996): 91–118; and Stephen Adair, “Overcoming a Collective Action Frame in the Remaking of an Antinuclear Opposition,” *Sociological Forum* 11/2 (June 1996): 347–375.
 58. See *Work*, November 9, 1939, 4; *Work*, February 15, 1940, 1; *Work*, June 20, 1940, 1; and *Work*, November 9, 1939, 4. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Papers as President, Official File, File 2366 (Workers Alliance of America, 1935–1942), Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York (emphasis in the original). *The New York Times*, June 23, 1940, 1.
 59. Rose, *Put to Work*, 111–114. *The New York Times*, June 13, 1939, 1. Howard, *WPA and Federal Relief Policy*, 522–523. *Work*, February 15, 1940, 1. *Work*, September 28, 1939, 1.
 60. Amenta, *Bold Relief*, 141, 222. *Work*, July 1, 1939, 7. On the use of tighter eligibility requirements to divide “ins” from “outs,” see Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State? Reagan, Thatcher, and the Politics of Retrenchment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 22–23.
 61. *Work*, July 29, 1939, 7. *The New York Times*, June 13, 1939, 1. *The New York Times*, June 18, 1939, IV, 6.
 62. U.S. House of Representatives, *Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations*, 37–39, 82. *The New York Times*, April 18, 1939, 3. *Work*, June 20, 1940, 3. *The New York Times*, June 18, 1939, IV, 6. *Work*, June 17, 1939, 2. Similar defunding measures were considered at the state level. In California, where the Workers Alliance was particularly strong, the state legislature in 1939 considered prohibiting recipients of public assistance from paying dues to any unemployed organization. Assemblyman Hugh Burns, who introduced the proposed legislation, admitted openly that it was aimed at the Workers Alliance (*Work*, June 3, 1939, 3; *Work*, June 17, 1939, 3).
 63. *Work*, July 1, 1939, 1. *Work*, August 12, 1939, 1, 8. *Work*, July 29, 1939, 8. Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 157.
 64. Group formation requires political representation (delegation of authority to act

- on behalf of another or of another's interests) as well as social representation (symbolic or discursive depiction). Through the delegation of symbolic power, mandated representatives and spokespersons receive "from the group the power to make the group" (Bourdieu, quoted in Swartz, *Culture and Power*, 187; cf. Boltanski, "How a Social Group Objectified Itself").
65. In 1939, for example, movement leaders sought to demonstrate the organization's commitment to Americanism by requiring Alliance officers and members to take an oath of allegiance to the Constitution and the U.S. government, in conscious imitation of the requirements of the 1940 emergency relief bill (*The New York Times*, June 29, 1939, 12; *Work*, July 1, 1939, 2; *Work*, July 15, 1939, 11; *Work*, November 9, 1939, 4). "The idea," said Willis Morgan, head of the New York Workers Alliance, "is to answer those who charge we are subversive and against the Government." At the same time, Morgan added that he did not believe the oath would exclude Communists from membership in the Alliance (*The New York Times*, June 29, 1939, 12). The Alliance's national executive board recommended that the oath be "administered by city officials or ministers" at "special Fourth of July membership meetings." In addition, the board recommended that "addresses on Americanism . . . should also form part of the meetings." Workers Alliance leaders declared that the movement was "adopting this oath voluntarily, rededicating itself to true Americanism and leaving no doubt as to where it stands on upholding the Constitution and form of government of the United States" (*Work*, July 1, 1939, 2). The patriotic character of the movement was similarly emphasized at the second annual convention of the New York Workers Alliance in January 1940, where the first session was opened by delegates singing "The Star Spangled Banner" (*The New York Times*, January 13, 1940, 6).
 66. Weber, *From Max Weber*, 302–322. Cf. Christopher K. Ansell, *Schism and Solidarity in Social Movements: The Politics of Labor in the French Third Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
 67. Cf. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, translator Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).
 68. On constituents and bystander publics, see McCarthy and Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements." *The New York Times*, September 4, 1938, 1. *The New York Times*, October 2, 1938, 45. *The New York Times*, October 3, 1938, 16. On Rourke's defection, see also the report dated July 7, 1938, on "The Workers Alliance and Its Dominance by the Communist Party," in the Harry L. Hopkins Collection, Container 100, File: Workers Alliance, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. On Rourke, see also U.S. House of Representatives, *Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations*, 111.
 69. *The New York Times*, September 19, 1938, 1. *The New York Times*, September 20, 1938, 2.
 70. *The New York Times*, September 23, 1938, 18. *Work*, November 19, 1938, 9. Karsh and Garman, "Impact of the Political Left," 94. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 156–157. U.S. House of Representatives, *Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations*, 1096. For a detailed account of splits within the New Jersey Workers Alliance, and the decision of some locals to form a rival organization (the Workers Relief and WPA Union), see George Breitman's letter to the Robert Marshall Foundation, dated November 6, 1940, in the Gardner Jackson Collection, Container 85, File: Workers Alliance of America, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. On ascriptive Americanism, see Smith, "Beyond Tocqueville," and idem, *Civic Ideals*. The Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928 did in

fact call for the establishment of a separate “Negro republic” in those Southern counties that contained a majority of African Americans, but the American Communist Party no longer “pushed this theory” after 1934 (Howe and Coser, *American Communist Party*, 206–208). On the American Communist Party’s efforts to promote racial equality and mobilize African Americans in the 1930s, see Howe and Coser, *American Communist Party*, 204–216ff. For an account that is more sympathetic to the Communist Party, see Michael Goldfield, *The Color of Politics: Race and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York: New Press, 1997), chapter 6.

71. *The New York Times*, September 25, 1938, 1. David Lasser, *Work and Security: A Program for America* (Washington, DC: Workers Alliance of America, 1938), 15. *The New York Times*, September 25, 1938, 1. *The New York Times*, September 26, 1938, 9. *Work*, September 28, 1939, 11. For an account of events at the 1938 convention from the perspective of the Workers Alliance, see *Work*, October 8, 1938, 4. The Alliance referred to the excluded delegates as “splitting disrupters” who had “aided and abetted a small group of dissidents in New York who sought to break up of the Alliance [*sic*].”
72. Lasser, *Work and Security*, 8–10, 14 (emphasis in the original).
73. On the use of symbols to bridge political differences, see Rebecca E. Klatch, *Women of the New Right* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987). As Melucci (“The Process of Collective Identity”) has emphasized, collective identity involves emotional investments as well as cognitive definitions. In line with this view, Sigmund Freud suggests that group members identify themselves with one another because they have made similar emotional investments in the group leader. He adds that an idea or abstraction may take the place of the leader, and that “the leader or the leading idea might also, so to speak, be negative; hatred against a particular person or institution might operate in just the same unifying way, and might call up the same kind of emotional ties as positive attachment” (*Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. and ed. James Strachey [New York: W.W. Norton, 1959 [1922]], 40–41). Folsom, *Impatient Armies of the Poor*, 427–428. *Work*, June 20, 1940, 2. *Work*, August 1, 1940, 1. *The New York Times*, June 12, 1940, 18. On exit and voice, see Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970).
74. *The New York Times*, January 31, 1940, 6. *Work*, February 15, 1940, 1, 3–4. Folsom, *Impatient Armies of the Poor*, 428–429.
75. *The New York Times*, June 20, 1940, 16. Folsom, *Impatient Armies of the Poor*, 429–430. Franklin D. Roosevelt, President’s Personal File, File 7649 (Lasser, David), Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
76. On the distinction between strong and weak publics, see Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” chapter 5 in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992). Ogden, *Dies Committee*, 101–102, 230. *Work*, April 23, 1938, 4.
77. Cf. Klatch, *Women of the New Right*.
78. According to Benjamin’s testimony before the Woodrum Committee in 1939, “dues, initiation fees and charter fees” accounted for approximately half of the national organization’s monthly income of \$4,000. “Income from the sale of other organizational supplies such as literature and our newspaper” accounted for an additional forty-five percent of that total (U.S. House of Representatives, *Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations*, 37–39, 82). On the Alliance’s

- difficulties mobilizing resources in the early years of the movement, see *The Workers Alliance*, October 2, 1935, 2; *The Workers Alliance*, “First June Issue” [1936], 4; and *The Workers Alliance*, “First September Issue” [1936], 4.
79. Folsom, *Impatient Armies of the Poor*, 428–429. The CIO was also subjected to red baiting by the Dies Committee in the late 1930s. However, in contrast to the Workers Alliance, the CIO received countervailing legitimation and support from the National Labor Relations Board, “which partially countered the adverse circumstances of 1938–39” (Steve Babson, *The Unfinished Struggle: Turning Points in American Labor, 1877-Present* [New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999], 109). In this respect, the CIO was as dependent on the federal government as the Workers Alliance. In 1947, Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act, which required “each union official of a national or international . . . to file an affidavit assuring the government that he was not affiliated with communism or the Communist party; failing to comply would cause the union to lose the protection and privileges” of the National Labor Relations Act (Joseph G. Rayback, *A History of American Labor*, expanded and updated edition [New York: Free Press, 1966], 399; Babson, *Unfinished Struggle*, 130). In this respect, the Taft-Hartley Act was comparable to the legislation that excluded Communists from participation in the WPA. Moreover, international politics – the 1939 Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact in the case of the Workers Alliance, and the Marshall Plan in the case of the CIO – exacerbated internal conflict between Communists and non-Communists in both cases (Babson, *Unfinished Struggle*, 133). Like the Workers Alliance, the CIO ultimately responded with in-group purification, expelling eleven affiliates between 1949 and 1950 on grounds of Communist domination. These parallels raise an obvious question: Why was in-group purification a more successful response to anti-communism for the CIO than for the Workers Alliance? Non-Communists in the Workers Alliance were unable to dislodge the Communists and instead left the organization, while non-Communists in the CIO were able to expel them and take control. As a result, in-group purification was more successful for the CIO: “As the Korean War reached its critical stage, the CIO could claim a purity equal to that of the AFL and was able, thereby, to escape public indictment during the years when the anti-communist hysteria in the nation reached its height” (Rayback, *History of American Labor*, 408). Nevertheless, in-group purification was not without serious costs for the CIO, including the loss of nearly a million members (Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO, 1935–1955* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995], 253). CIO raids on the expelled Communist unions diverted time and money from organizing the unorganized, and competition played into employers’ hands, particularly in the electrical industry, where union membership declined, wages fell, and working conditions deteriorated (Harvey A. Levenstein, *Communism, Anticommunism, and the CIO* [Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981], 312; Zieger, *The CIO*, 285–286; Babson, *Unfinished Struggle*, 136). The CIO was able to partly compensate for these costs by raising per capita dues (Levenstein, *Communism, Anticommunism, and the CIO*, 299–300; Zieger, *The CIO*, 290), a course of action that WPA reforms made far more difficult for the Workers Alliance. Even so, with membership rolls stagnating, the CIO was forced into a merger with the AFL in 1955 (Levenstein, *Communism, Anticommunism, and the CIO*, 330). A similar attempt by the Workers Alliance to affiliate with the CIO in the late 1930s was less successful.
80. James J. Lorence, *Gerald J. Boileau and the Progressive Farmer-Labor Alliance: Politics of the New Deal* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 171.
81. On the growth of the Workers Alliance through most of 1938, see, e.g., *Work*, June

- 4, 1938, 7; *Work*, September 24, 1938, 9–10; and *Work*, October 8, 1938, 4. On membership decline, see *The New York Times*, February 12, 1939, 9; and *The New York Post*, August 7, 1940, in Franklin D. Roosevelt, President's Personal File, File 7649 (Lasser, David). Folsom, *Impatient Armies of the Poor*, 428–429.
82. *Work*, December 3, 1938, 7. *Work*, September 14, 1939, 3. *Work*, September 28, 1939, 3.
83. Gardner Jackson Collection, Container 85, File: Workers Alliance of America, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
84. U.S. House of Representatives, *Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations*, 37–39, 82. *The New York Times*, November 20, 1941, 29.
85. Howard, *WPA and Federal Relief Policy*, 119–120. Franklin D. Roosevelt, President's Personal File, File 7649 (Lasser, David). Brinkley, *End of Reform*, 145. Margaret Weir, *Politics and Jobs: The Boundaries of Employment Policy in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 51.
86. Jeff Manza, "Political Sociological Models of the U.S. New Deal," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 297–322. Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy*. Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*, 97.