

## MOBILIZING TECHNOLOGIES FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

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Activists are at the core of most collective action. Activists are people who care enough about some issue that they are prepared to incur significant costs and act to achieve their goals. Sometimes they act alone, but often they seek to draw others into collective action. This paper is about what happens when a small group of committed and highly motivated activists tries to mobilize collective action by a larger group of people whose commitment and motivation are considerably lower. It is a close examination of the choices they face and the consequences of those choices. We argue that the problems involved in getting other people to support collective action directly affect the kinds of goals activists pursue and the tactics they choose.

The processes we analyze arise in social movements, charitable causes, some kinds of politics, and volunteering. This is the collective action sector, where parents volunteer time in their children's schools and lobby their school boards for more money; where some march in the streets for civil rights and others walk door to door for the Heart Fund; where there are neighborhood movements and neighborhood fairs. Of course there are important differences between protest actions and volunteering, but we should not permit these differences to obscure the similarities that also exist.

Collective actions organized around markedly different goals and tactics are often mobilized in markedly similar ways. There are two reasons for this. First, these disparate activities share an orientation toward a collective or shared good that benefits others besides the participants. This similarity is not empty formalism, for the collective nature of the good means that those who are involved look for support from a larger circle of people who share their interest. This expectation of support from others drives the mobilization process.

Secondly, movement activists and non-movement "volunteers" often arise from the same culture and subcultures, and draw on the same set of shared knowledge about how collective actions are done. This cultural knowledge base is a theme which will dominate our analysis. The principle that a group's militant or protest actions draw from the its larger cultural knowledge and practices applies generally, but the details will be culture specific. Our details are about white middle class activists in the United States in the late 20th century. This group has played and is playing a major role in social change movements, and understanding how its cultural repertoire shapes action helps to illuminate some aspects of the political economy of social movements. Specifically, we will show how and why movement activists with protest orientations often act like volunteers in charities. The political implications of this analysis are presumably obvious.

The empirical base is also largely about how things work in "normal times," when most people are busy with their jobs and families and ordinary routines. There are historical periods of upheaval which are different, when a population collectively develops the belief that change is necessary and possible, and experiences a heightened level of mobilization. In these periods of upheaval, people essentially self-mobilize, and activists are busy trying to keep up with the masses, rather than prodding them to action. (See Oliver 1989a for a theoretical analysis of such periods.) Even in these periods of excitement, many of the fundamental processes and relationships described in this paper hold, but the overall higher level of mobilization makes the texture of action very different from the descriptions we paint in this paper.

## The Basic Elements of Activists' Decisions

Let's begin by saying what we do not assume. We do not assume that people care only about their own narrowly-construed personal self interest. Rather, we assume that some people can and do care about collective goals, and act on these collective goals just as if they were personal benefits. We take the "goals" as subjectively determined and often linked to important elements of people's self-identities. This assumption is in line with virtually all available empirical evidence about collective action participants.

Analytically, we define activists as people who care enough about some goal that they are willing to make a significant contribution of their time in its pursuit. Our theory takes activists as givens and does not seek to explain their motivations. For activists, the question is not whether they will act but how they will act. Each activist is defined with respect to a specific issue and might well be a nonactivist on any or all other issues.

Even though activists are highly motivated and willing to spend their own time and money on an issue, they have to worry about costs and benefits. They have to worry about whether the resources they begin with are enough to accomplish their goals. They incur real costs and sacrifices in their actions and they care whether their sacrifices are making a significant difference in things they care about. Their motivations are complex and often involve self-identity and expressiveness as well as instrumental goal-attainment, but instrumental considerations are almost always part of the mix.

Sometimes activists have sufficient time and money of their own to accomplish their goal, and may not try to mobilize others. Social movement scholars often ignore these kinds of cadre actions when they think about social movements, even though they are actually a very important part of any movement. In this present analysis, however, we focus on mobilization of others and thus assume that the activists do not start with enough resources to accomplish their goals, but must mobilize resources from others. The activists spend their own time and money on mobilization and organization, hoping that this investment will mobilize enough time or money from others to accomplish the goal.

## Nonactivists' Decisions

In our theoretical analysis, we assume that nonactivists definitely will not contribute unless an activist explicitly asks them to, or implicitly asks by creating an event that generates an occasion for decision-making (Collins 1981). Nonactivists never initiate action, but only respond to the opportunities created by activists. However, it is not certain that they will contribute, even if they are asked.

To explain the problem of mobilizing small contributions from nonactivists, we have to have a theoretical model of their behavior. The important thing to understand about nonactivist contributions is that they are small. Because they are small, each one contribution produces only a small difference in the outcome, most often a difference which is so small as to be technically

unnoticeable (cf Olson 1965). The cost of the contribution, while large enough to be technically noticeable, is typically small enough to range from trivial to minor. Often the largest components of the cost are the ancillary details that affect the convenience or comfort involved in making the contribution: whether a pre-addressed envelope is provided, whether it is raining or one's friends are participating. Even when the cost is very small, when it is compared to an infinitesimal benefit, a cost/benefit calculus would say that contributing is not worthwhile. Mobilizing nonactivist contributions is always plagued by the noticeability problem.

But the very fact that the cost of a contribution is so low means that it can be easily overcome by other incentives, such as wanting to feel good about oneself or not wanting to argue with an acquaintance. Furthermore, because the contribution is not very consequential either for its costs or its benefits, the person is not likely to spend very much time thinking about the decision or worrying about whether it is the best or most reasonable decision given her resources and values. In short, nonactivist contributions are "flaky": they are not strongly determined by consistent principles, but are highly subject to the impact of a wide variety extraneous and idiosyncratic factors.

This model of nonactivist decisions can be further specified for three subgroups: those with zero, low, and high probabilities of contributing. The boundaries between these three groups are definitely fuzzy, but they can be readily defined as ideal types, and I will show that these types are useful for understanding the differences among mobilization technologies.

The zero probability group are people who oppose the collective goal, or who are decidedly indifferent to it. Their behavior is well determined: they will not contribute.

The high probability group are those who do attach a significant positive value to the collective good and who are generally quite willing to make small contributions to it. This group has an interesting dynamic. They can be said to be motivated by purposive incentives (Wilson 1973), that is, by the incentive of feeling like the right kind of person who contributes to the right collective goods (see Oliver and Furman 1989). Making these contributions often reaffirms a central self-identity such as radical, conservative, feminist, or socially-conscious humanist. For any single contribution taken one at a time, the strong positive feeling they have about making the contribution easily exceeds its cost.

The problem is that this kind of person is asked to make many contributions. A person cannot respond positively to all these requests and possibilities without making large sacrifices. And, for all their self-identity as people who care about collective goods, these nonactivists are not willing to give all their money away to good causes and live in poverty, and are not willing to give up all their leisure time and reduce their commitments to their jobs or families. If they were, they'd be activists. Or even if they are activists for one issue, they cannot be activists for all the issues they care about. Thus, the high probability group must choose among requests for their small contributions, and their choices will be under determined and unpredictable.

Finally, the low probability group supports the goal, but has no strong identity with it. They are normally classic free riders deterred by the noticeability problem, and they will generally not

contribute. But because they nominally support the goal, and the cost of contributing is low, even small incentives for giving, such as persuasive or personal appeals or recent news events, can tip the balance.

Activists face two uncertainty problems in mobilizing nonactivists. First, they often lack sufficient information to sort a population accurately into the zero, low, and high probability groups. Secondly, even among the high probability group, it is never known exactly who will actually contribute to a given appeal, so that mobilization always involves wasted effort. In fact, the decisions of nonactivists are so under determined that it may be impossible accurately to predict even the aggregate outcome from a large population with a known proportion of high contributors.

Uncertainty and incomplete information are central problems for activists trying to mobilize others, and central to a theory of mobilization. Activists never know in advance how a mobilization will turn out. For the activist, this adds up to uncertainty and potential frustration if contributions are much lower than anticipated. The activists, who care deeply, know that other people also support the issue. They often find it hard to understand why all these supporters are not contributing.

Contributions that exceed expectations usually lead to euphoria, not frustration. But unanticipated success in mobilization is not unproblematic. Activists find themselves with participants for whom they have no work, or money for which they have no real use. Their once-comfortable organization may be overwhelmed with strangers who have different ideas and goals. The activists may have to patch together new programs to use all their resources, or appear to have misled the public in their call for contributions. If they cope well with the surfeit, they may reorganize themselves to expect high contributions the next time. But most likely the tide will shift and they may be left with new expectations they cannot meet. Years later, activists may still view the brief period of enthusiasm as normal, and may struggle fruitlessly to recreate past success.

Many common features of mobilization are best understood as ways to manage or contain uncertainty. But there are always surprises, and the ultimate success of a movement campaign often is due more to luck or the ability to react quickly than to planning. This does not, however, mean that activists give up planning. Quite the contrary. Real activists spend much of their time planning events, making predictions about consequences, and, if they are wise and experienced, making contingency plans for a wide range of possible results of their efforts.

## Knowledge and Technology

Activists cannot just throw abstract time and money at a goal nor can they abstractly mobilize others' time and money: they have to pursue a specific course of action. They must choose from among those actions they know how to do and perceive as options. Thus, knowledge is central to the matter of how people act. Available knowledge constrains action, and new knowledge creates new possibilities for action. Although we are putting a slightly different theoretical slant on the data, it is well established empirically that the existing state of knowledge sharply constrains

collective actions, and the discovery or invention of a new way of doing things can suddenly alter activists' choices. (See J. Wilson 1973, J.Q. Wilson 1973, Tilly 1978, Freeman 1979, McAdam 1983, Marwell and Oliver 1984, and Oliver 1989a for related arguments.)

Useful knowledge about how to do collective action comes in packages we call action technologies -- sets of knowledge about how to do a particular action and what its consequences are likely to be. The word technology is important, because it connotes knowledge that may not be generally available. We use the term technology in the anthropological or cultural sense, in which everyone has some technological knowledge. We do not mean that technologies are held only by experts. However, we do assert, with what we believe is tremendous empirical support, that some kinds of technologies found in social movements are held only by experts, and we discuss the significance of this pattern when it holds.

Analytically, there are two types of action technologies. Production technologies are sets of knowledge about ways of achieving goals, such as lobbying, demonstrations, strikes, or attending a public hearing. Mobilization technologies are sets of knowledge about ways of accumulating the resources (time and money) necessary for production technologies. So you have a chain: production technology to accomplish the goal, mobilization technology to get the resources for the production technology. The distinction between production and mobilization is useful analytically even when the two are confounded in practice. We will show how and why the available mobilization technologies can often constrain the possible production technologies available to a cultural group.

#### Issues, Goals, and Strategies.

Most collective action theory takes the "goal" as a given (e.g. Olson 1965, Oberschall 1973, Oliver, Marwell, and Teixeira 1985). But this is very misleading. Activists are usually committed to something more broad and diffuse than a specific policy goal. They are committed to world peace, ending racism, women's rights, or helping the homeless. Even something like quality education at Crestwood Elementary School is actually rather diffuse. We can use the term collective issue for each of these things, precisely because it is broad and ill-defined. For any collective issue, there are a large number of more specific goals that concerned activists would consider relevant. Many of these goals are themselves broad, and subsume a variety of more proximate goals. Everyone who cares about the issue might consider most of these goals worthwhile, but there might be disagreement about priorities. For other goals, there may actually be disagreement about whether they are worthwhile, useless, or even counterproductive.

It must be recognized that specific goals, production technologies, and mobilization technologies are chosen together, as packages. An activist's selection of a particular goal is always based in part on her knowledge of a production technology that she believes has a chance of achieving that goal. Similarly, her choice of a production technology generally depends on her knowledge of a mobilization technology that she thinks can provide the required resources. Without doing violence to the common use of the term, we may use the term strategy for the whole package of a goal, a production technology, and a mobilization technology. The whole strategy package is constrained by constraints on each of its elements. Constraints on or choices

about mobilizing translate directly into constraints on goals and tactics.

### Resources and Production

The production technology defines the resources that need to be mobilized. Two important features of the resource needs may be identified. The first is the form of the "production function" (Oliver, Marwell, and Teixeira 1985) relating inputs of resources to outputs of the collective goal. On the low end, it matters whether there is some threshold level of contributions that must be achieved before the collective action can have a positive effect. If so, there is a risk of wasting both activist and nonactivist resources on an action that accomplishes nothing. Once the threshold is exceeded, there is a bandwagon effect. People are more willing to participate after they see that an action is going to be at least somewhat successful.

On the high end, it matters whether there is some level of contributions that is "enough." In such "closed-ended" production functions, contributions above that "saturation" point yield small marginal returns. In contrast, some production functions are "open-ended," with no saturation point. Additional contributions are always valuable. Collective actions oriented toward well-defined goals are usually closed-ended. Mobilizations of money, especially by professionalized organizations seeking to justify their permanent existence, are often for more open-ended goals like curing cancer, feeding the hungry, or achieving world peace.

### Time and Money as Resources

The second thing the production technology determines about resource needs is whether time or money is needed. It is important to recognize the vast difference between time and money as resources for collective action. "Resource mobilization" theory and our own collective action theories have typically conflated the two, assuming that they are more or less interchangeable. But time and money have markedly different analytic properties. These analytic differences capture genuine empirical differences, so that mobilizations of money are vastly different from mobilizations of time.

Time is the ultimate resource for collective action. The entire collective action sector is labor-intensive. Incidental amounts of money may be needed for supplies and rents, but the basic production activities always involve people doing things. When money is raised for collective action, it is mostly used to buy time. Thus, we need to understand time as a resource and the nature of the relation between time and money.

Analytically, time is not at all like money. Money is perfectly fungible; that is, it doesn't matter from whom the money comes or in what amounts. You can spend it on anything you want. If you have \$1000, it doesn't matter whether one person contributed all of it or 20 people contributed \$50, or 1000 people contributed \$1. You can spend your \$1000 on paper, hourly wages for labor, or long distance telephone charges.

Time is very different. There really is no such thing as abstract time. It always matters who is

participating, and a time contribution can never be physically removed from the giver. This has several consequences. First, different people have different skills, different acquaintances, different levels of status or influence. The performance of any job is affected by who does it, although the effect is smaller for, say, envelope stuffing than for, say, speech making. Second, there is a true physical limit to how much time a person can spend on collective action within a finite amount of time.

Third, in some technologies it is better if fewer people make larger contributions than if many make smaller contributions. Lobbying is an example. Effective lobbying requires getting to know people and establishing trust. One person working full time is much more effective than twenty working two hours a week. Creative intellectual tasks such as writing and research are best done by fewer people making larger contributions.

Finally, the opposite holds in some technologies: in mass actions such as marches, petition-signing, or voting, each person can make only the same small contribution, and what matters is how many have contributed. One person marching for 1,000 hours is not the same as 1,000 people marching for one hour.

Economists, and those influenced by economists, imagine that time and money are equivalent because you can pay people for their time. But they are wrong. The substitutability between time and money in collective action is highly constrained, and these constraints are a central force shaping the forms of collective action that are possible. Of course, volunteer labor can substitute for some paid services as when volunteers save postage by delivering leaflets. And there are some jobs that can be done by either paid workers or volunteers, such as staffing phone banks.

The problem is that purchased time has to be in the form of jobs. On the demand side, the central work of most collective action requires long-term ongoing involvement and cumulative experience and knowledge, not occasional labor. On the supply side, most people want well-defined permanent full- or half-time jobs, not a couple of hours of work a week on an irregular basis. Although there collective action often involves the sporadic need for low-skill activities that could be performed either by volunteers or hired help, within white middle-class circles, the promise of payment is often no help in finding someone to do the work. Donating your time to a worthy cause can be satisfying. Being offered a wage below your regular wage to do a job with lower status than your regular job is an insult, not an inducement. The ability to attract volunteers always signals the importance and justice of the cause, and for many kinds of participation, the payment itself delegitimizes the action. Even if one could mobilize a mass demonstration by offering to pay every participant \$20, the fact of payment would destroy the demonstration's political impact. It is clear that canvassers would collect less money if the public was generally aware that they are paid.

For these reasons, money cannot be easily converted into time when the technology requires many people making small contributions. Such technologies usually require the direct mobilization of volunteer time, or the restructuring of many small tasks into larger ongoing "jobs" for which people can be paid regularly. On the other end of the continuum, it is very difficult for unpaid volunteers to handle the kinds of jobs that require large ongoing commitments. They can

do it only if they do not have paid jobs occupying their time, and they can afford to be full-time volunteers only if they have alternate sources of support. Thus, there is a strong pull for the "big" jobs to be done by full-time paid staff.

The processes that lead nonactivists to participate and give time are generally different from those that elicit contributions of money. The nature of the costs that activists incur in mobilizing time and money are different, and it is usually difficult to do both at the same time with the same technology. (See Oliver and Furman 1989 for related arguments.) Thus, quite different technologies have been developed for the two tasks. Each available technology imposes constraints on strategies.

### How Mobilizing Technologies Constrain Strategies

In the rest of this paper, we will survey the empirical terrain of currently available mobilizing technologies for white middle-class Americans, showing how each necessarily imposes constraints on the possibilities for action.

#### Mobilizing Money

The decision to rely on money as a resource propels activists into a world dominated by professionals, moderation, and ritual. McCarthy, Britt, and Wolfson (1990) show that most ways of raising money require tax-exempt status, which itself sharply constrains production technologies. Social movement and protest organizations find themselves constrained to act like charities. Apart from this very general (and very important) constraint, the specific technology chosen for fund-raising adds more constraints.

Regardless of the issue, be it conventional or radical, when white middle-class activists need to raise money, they do it in a small number of well-defined ways which fall into two groups. The first consists of highly professionalized technologies: large donor fund-raising, grants and contracts, direct mail solicitation, paid canvassing, and telemarketing. Payroll checkoff plans and televangelism belong in this group as well, although we will not say much about them. In the second group are technologies that typically use volunteer labor. These include fairs, rummage and bake sales, brunches, car washes, -athons (walk/run-athons, dance-athons, bowl-athons), volunteer canvassing and telephoning, raffles, ad books, and selling things on commission. Also in this group are benefit concerts, fun runs or walks, and "social" events such as dances or dinners. The volunteer technologies are more diverse than the professional, and we may have missed a few, but the list is still short. People raise money for charities and social movements in virtually identical ways. Organizations may be radical or conservative at the level of ideology and program, but when you look at their fund-raising approaches, they are more similar than different.

**Professionalized Technologies.** The professionalized technologies all involve a great deal of highly specialized information which is largely independent of the issue or goal. Evidence of this may be seen in the proliferation of for-profit consulting and marketing firms serving the non-profit sector. The important analytic divide among professionalized technologies is whether contributions are mobilized from a few large contributors or from many small contributors. The

former requires less overhead, but large contributors tend to seek control over what is done with their money. The technologies for getting money from many small contributors are more expensive, more risky, and more shaped by market-like processes (McCarthy and Zald 1977). However, they produce a pool of money with virtually no strings attached. All professionalized technologies seek to damp out uncertainty by creating a fund-raising system that provides a stable and reliable baseline income. One approach to reducing uncertainty is a mixture of fund-raising techniques. But because these techniques are so specialized, this mixed approach can be used only by organizations large enough to have many professional employees specializing in different things. Larger, older organizations are better able to do this, but none are immune from risk.

Large donor fund-raising and grants and contracts are very similar, differing primarily in whether the donor is a person or an organization (foundation, company, or government agency) and whether a written proposal is required. These technologies have relatively low overhead. One person can do it part-time, and a relatively high proportion of available time and money can be channeled into "program." Large donor fund-raising can be performed by inexperienced activists, if they are bold, and some organizations fund sketchy proposals from novices with interesting ideas. Nevertheless, most grants and large contributions are to activist groups employing professionals experienced with one or the other technology.

Dependence on large donors usually forces activists to change strategies as elite concerns and resources shift. Even though it is very common for activists to have goals other than those they can "sell" in a proposal, and to try to divert resources into these other goals, reporting and accounting procedures increasingly constrain them to do what the donor was willing to pay them to do. Thus, these technologies can only support goals and production technologies which appeal to wealthy individuals or organizations.

The technologies that depend on small contributions have the opposite configuration. Small contributors wield essentially no control over the activists and their choice of strategies, but all technologies for obtaining small contributions involve high overhead costs. Direct mail solicitation is an old technology that has been professionalized and elaborated in the computer revolution. The technology draws directly on advances in direct mail advertising. It is used by almost every kind of group -- political movements on the right and left, pro- and anti-abortion groups, colleges, medical charities, organizations to save children in the third world. All the major social movement organizations use direct mail including NAACP, NOW, Sierra Club, SANE/Freeze, and so forth.

The key to direct mail is a good list of high probability contributors. Unselective mailings usually lose money. Larger well-established organizations have their own lucrative mailing operations, but smaller or new organizations must rely on someone else's list and thus usually contract their mailing out to for-profit firms working on commission. In the highly professional business of direct mail, the "rich get richer," and many of those who are getting rich are the professional mailers.

Direct mail contributors may be called members, but they exert little or no control over the organization, except indirectly through refusing to give more money. In some cases they may

have tremendous identification with their organization and may gain a sense of participation and satisfaction in loyally contributing when asked. These loyal contributors provide the large direct mail organizations with a relatively stable funding source that permits them to hire large staffs and pursue long-term strategies. In the social movement sector, direct mail as a mobilizing technology tends to be most compatible with national lobbying and public education as production technologies. Both can be conducted by professional staffs in national offices. Some of the strongest direct mail organizations also have active local chapters, and in many of these, the local chapter receives a small share of the money received from contributors in its area. But national offices cannot create or sustain chapters, which depend on the entirely different dynamics of volunteering (Oliver and Furman 1989).

Less depersonalized is paid door-to-door canvassing for social movement organizations, a complex technology that was invented in 1974 by Mark Anderson, the founder of Citizens for a Better Environment. It was an explicit application of the technology of door-to-door encyclopedia sales to organizations seeking to benefit the public. The key innovations are organizational: setting up the canvass as a year-round full-time occupation, paying the canvassers a commission or bonus for the money they raise, and firing canvassers who fail to meet quota, i.e. who fail to collect a specified minimum amount of money every day. Canvassing diffused through environmental and consumer movement organizations to the peace movement and other groups (Oliver 1989b).

Canvassing unselectively targets every household in its geographic area. This makes it very inefficient and costly. It succeeds at all only because a person on the doorstep is much more persuasive and has a much higher probability of obtaining a contribution than an impersonal piece of "junk mail." Thus, the cost is somewhat compensated for by the fact that it can find new high probability contributors. Canvasses are often linked with direct mail or telemarketing operations which can take advantage of these new contacts. Paid canvassing has not spread into the charitable sector, partly because it is considered unethical, and partly because it is so financially inefficient.

Canvassing has extremely high overhead, often approaching 100% by the late 1980s. Its value is that it can support a large cadre of trained grassroots organizers. Canvassers not only ask for money and tell the public about the organization's goals and activities, but can ask people about their needs and concerns and reactions to the organization. Canvass organizations have often been able to mobilize simple mass actions like postcard mailings, and canvassers have sometimes been able to act as organizers of local groups that would participate in demonstrations or direct action campaigns. Canvassers are trained in exactly the skills needed for electoral canvassing and are often lent to political candidates. Thus canvassing combines mobilization and production. This can be clearly seen in one variant, where professional community organizers support themselves by canvassing part time.

In the past, canvassing had the advantage over direct mail that it could be bootstrapped. A knowledgeable canvass director can pay his own salary canvassing while he trains new canvassers and brings them up to quota. This is less possible today because canvasses have to carry insurance and provide transportation and thus require larger initial overhead costs.

Telemarketing is exploding everywhere in the non-profit sector. Most telephone solicitation uses lists of high probability contributors, although some issues with mass appeal can be "sold" to the general population. Some telephone solicitors are volunteers, but these are usually for short-term annual "drives." Most are paid, and telemarketing is increasingly performed by specialized for-profit businesses which sell their services on commission to non-profit organizations. Telephone solicitors sell almost anything including Citizens Action-type environmental groups, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, peace, and religion, along with every conceivable variety of charitable and political cause, from conservative to radical.

Our analytic framework makes the explanation for the telemarketing boom transparent. It is much less costly than door-to-door canvassing, but has almost the same appeal of a real person making the request. Telemarketing can be either selective or unselective, and thus can be tailored to an issue. Exotic causes can be sold to specialized lists, while those with broader appeal (like Mothers Against Drunk Driving) can be marketed to the general population. The telemarketing business is booming, and the only cloud on the horizon is the increasing consumer resistance as many people are coming to define calls at home as an invasion of privacy.

We will briefly mention two other professionalized fund-raising approaches, religious offerings, including televangelism, and United Way type campaigns. The longstanding tradition in virtually every organized religion of soliciting offerings or requiring tithes may be viewed as a kind of professionalized fund-raising. Even though most activists cannot do it, money raised in religious offerings is available through large-donor fund-raising to support many kinds of actions: charitable groups, community organizing, and certain political causes and issues, including anti-abortion groups, peace groups, the Sanctuary movement, and certain political candidates.

The United Way, raises money for a wide variety of charitable causes through payroll deductions. For existing charities, obtaining a share of the United Way budget is a form of large donor fund-raising, since it involves writing an application to a governing board. In a few areas, more politicized groups have fought for and won the right to have alternative funds listed as options on the payroll deduction forms. Once the right to be on the form has been won, the member organizations of a Fund obtain money for relatively little cost, as long as they can successfully negotiate agreements about how to divide it up.

Professionalized technologies raise large amounts of money, but all impose severe constraints on collective action. To be tax-deductible, and virtually all are, they must file for 401-3-c status and promise not to be disruptive. Large donor fund-raising depends on the whims of the wealthy or powerful. Direct mail and telephone solicitation are subject to the vagaries of market processes and are increasingly controlled by for-profit firms. Canvasses require extraordinarily high overhead and can remain solvent only by strictly enforcing nightly quotas of money to be raised.

All of the professionalized technologies are designed to raise as much money as possible on an indefinite time horizon. They require open-ended strategies with diffuse and long-term goals that are not in immediate danger of being realized. Goal displacement is ubiquitous, in that the top priority of paid staffs becomes being sure that the organization has a stable funding source. Each

type of professionalized fund-raising approach calls for a different kind of specialist and a different kind of organization. Once these are in place, an organization is committed to a particular type of mobilizing technology and cannot easily change it. Thus, in ongoing organizations, the mobilizing technology is usually taken as a given, and new goals and production technologies are chosen in large measure to be compatible with the way the organization raises money.

Volunteer Fund-raising. Although the list of fund-raising methods that use volunteer labor is longer and more diverse, it is still relatively short. People rarely invent whole new fund-raising technologies. They use existing ones, perhaps adapting or modifying them a little. Successful new technologies rapidly diffuse. People recognize these basic technologies and the principle of modifying them. If someone asks you to buy a frozen pizza for world peace, you know they mean, even if it sounds a bit bizarre. Once you've filled out pledge cards for run-athons and bike-athons, you understand the idea. Now we have bowl-athons and hop-athons, cartwheel-athons and sing-athons.

All these technologies have the same general structure. Core activists spend resources to create some "event" with well-defined roles that can be played by volunteer participants. The activists spend more resources mobilizing nonactivist participants for these roles. Nonactivists then pay to participate in this event. After expenses for rents, insurance, etc., the profits can fund the collective action. These expenses are often kept low, partly by soliciting in kind donations of food, raffle prizes, etc. needed for the event, so that there is little risk of losing much money. Volunteer participants get involved in the organization and actually do something that helps achieve the group's goals. Even in this sector, there are professionals who run fund-raising events on commission, but all-volunteer events are still common.

The first time, activists pick a particular technology because they learned it elsewhere or because they have heard about it and think they can do it. There are always some inefficiencies and mistakes the first time, but if the event basically works, the activists are motivated to build on that experience and use the same technology again. Organizations tend to ritualize their fund-raising events, to have their annual fair or raffle. Ritualized events are much less costly, because the activists can draw on their own experience or the codified experience of their predecessors. Volunteers and customers are easier to mobilize because they already understand the event and the roles they are to play.

In contrast with the professionalized fund-raising technologies, these volunteer-based technologies raise relatively little money, sometimes for a large expenditure of volunteer labor. Where the professionalized technologies can often gross millions of dollars, the volunteer technologies gross in the thousands of dollars, sometimes much less, with \$20,000 being high. To some extent, this comparison is unfair, since the professionalized technologies are ongoing year-round operations, while the volunteer-based fundraiser is a single event. However, the amount they raise is often plenty for them. Organizations that do not have paid staff, or whose staff is supported by a grant or another organization, do not need much money. What they usually need more of is time.

Mobilizing Time

Collective action always requires that time be mobilized. In professionalized collective action, money is mobilized from nonactivists to pay activists to do the collective action. What we need to treat here are the technologies for mobilizing participation by nonactivist volunteers in activities like attending meetings, marching in demonstrations, carrying petitions around for people to sign, or helping with fundraisers.

Technologies for mobilizing time from nonactivist volunteers are much less professionalized, and much less well-defined and elaborated than those for mobilizing money. Although the term "technology" comfortably fits fund-raising, it is more awkward when applied to getting people to participate because the knowledge involved is more diffuse and less specialized. But it is knowledge nonetheless, or at least shared cultural understandings about who can ask other people to do things in which circumstances. In this section, we attempt to subject the obvious to analysis.

Limited and Open Requests for Participation. Being asked to spend two hours at a protest demonstration or working at a school fair may sound the same as being asked to attend a two hour organizational meeting, both involving two hours, and differing only in people's taste for one kind of activity versus another. But attending a meeting, especially an organizational meeting, implies a willingness to attend future meetings and to participate in the group's projects. That is, it is tantamount to becoming an activist on the issue in question, and implicitly involves a much greater time commitment, a commitment which is of uncertain extent and indefinite duration.

For this reason, a lot of the technological knowledge about mobilizing volunteer time is about organizing and dividing labor and structuring events and jobs so that people can be invited to participate in well-defined and limited ways. The technology of direct action organizing provides information about how to create well-defined dramatic protest actions that can accomplish a goal in an exciting way and leave participants wanting to do more. The general technology of voluntary fund-raising events involves subdividing jobs into well-defined units like organizing the food concession or bringing six dozen cookies to a bake sale. A technology often used in the charitable sector but only occasionally used in social movements involves creating long-term "jobs" that involve only a few hours a week, such as calling for Jewish Charities for three hours every Tuesday night, or being on call for the Rape Crisis Center three nights a month. Many people who are unwilling to make the major short-term open-ended commitment that activism entails are quite willing to make a long-term commitment to a well-defined task. They also are aware that failing to keep their commitment will cause a noticeable problem in the event.

### Technologies for Communicating the Request

If activists are to mobilize volunteer participants, they have to invite them to participate, most commonly by explicitly asking for their cooperation, although sometimes by creating a visible event which by its existence invites others to participate. After deciding what to ask participants to do, activists must decide whom to ask to do it, and how to ask them. There is technology and cultural knowledge in this decision, even if sometimes it is so mundane that one is essentially naming the obvious. But let's work through the possibilities anyway. The first possibility is unselectively to personally contact and ask for help from all available nonactivists or a random

sample of them. This approach is so expensive and inefficient that it is almost never used for requesting time contributions for anything more demanding than signing a petition. Its use represents an absence of technological knowledge in extremely uninformed novice activists, or sometimes desperation after the more usual approaches have failed. However, it is a useful baseline against which technologies for mobilizing volunteers may be measured.

**Ask Those You Know.** The second choice, and the first real technology, is to ask the people you have some personal acquaintance with and/or ask the people on some list of high probability contributors such as members of the organization sponsoring the action, or those who live near the site of a proposed toxic waste dump. Those who are both acquaintances and high probability contributors will have very high probabilities of agreeing to contribute, and are always the starting point for this technology. If this group does not provide enough contributors, the next choice between other acquaintances and other high probability contributors varies a great deal depending on the nature of the issue, the subculture of the activist and potential participants, and the social organization of the two groups.

Mobilizing time requires being willing to ask people to do things and knowing something about the people you are trying to mobilize. The personal link is very important. It is easier to ask a friend for help than a stranger. It is considered legitimate in most white middle class circles to ask for participation from a stranger whose interest in an issue can be taken as publically known, although even here there are etiquette barriers. Strangers cannot politely be asked to do things that would violate stereotyped gender roles, for example. Strangers also find it relatively easy to provide excuses for refusing the request. In some cultural groups, approaching strangers is not acceptable at all, and even among middle class whites, there are some who find approaches from strangers illegitimate. Etiquette barriers and differences of cultural styles make it very difficult to make requests across race and class lines.

This technology, "ask the people you know, or whom you know are interested" is efficient but inherently limited. It is so efficient that we may safely predict that if participation by the conjunction of the activists' acquaintances and a pool of known high contributors provides enough participation for the production technology, all mobilization efforts will be limited to this group. But it is limited, because it ignores everyone who is not already known to the activists, either personally or by virtue of being on the high probability list.

**Federated Mobilization.** A second technology for mobilizing participation is the federated mobilization, which is commonly used for large marches and demonstrations. This involves personally approaching the leaders of existing organizations, who are persuaded to use their position to solicit the participation of their members. For example, many actions in the Civil Rights Movement were coordinated this way through Black churches (Morris 1984). Although the principle of federated mobilization is not difficult to understand, it is not part of the general cultural knowledge of nonactivists, and is usually something people learn through experience. Federated mobilization expands the scope of mobilization, but is dependent on the cooperation of the leaders of the organizations, and only reaches those who are members of contacted organizations.

An example of a highly specialized form of federated mobilization is the technology for organizing a large demonstration. Demonstration initiators negotiate with established organizations to form an ad hoc sponsoring coalition. A compromise "platform" and speakers list is drawn up. The coalition partners take responsibility for getting their own members to attend and, sometimes, for trying to bring in other participants. If the march is national, coordinators in each locale make arrangements for group transportation. The initiators take responsibility for general publicity, obtaining permits, training marshals, and a host of other details that are part of the contemporary technology of demonstrations.

Mass Media Advertising or Coverage. One method of reaching beyond existing relationships is to advertise for participants in an appropriate mass medium. The possibility of doing this is part of the common culture, and naive activists often try to do it. What those who lack technological knowledge do not know is that this approach usually fails miserably. Actually attracting participants with impersonal mass appeals usually requires specialized knowledge. Many trees have died for leaflets which were thrown out unread and which had no effect on behavior even when they were read. Movie posters have impact because people like to go to movies. Posters or leaflets calling people to meet about some event or issue that they are all talking about have effect because people are already thinking about it. Organizations which have already built a committed constituency may call their constituents to action with simple announcements. But written material produced by anonymous others almost never has enough credibility to change opinions or motivate action. That is, technologies of mass mobilization include the information that leaflets and posters are nearly worthless as a sole means of communication, and have value only as part of a larger multi-faceted mobilization technology.

Another mass medium is the newspaper. Newspaper advertising is no more credible than anonymous leaflets, and is subject to the same constraints, except that it costs more. There is a fairly common technology in educated circles of collecting money to pay for large newspaper ads about political or protest issues. These ads are used more for persuasive purposes or even for purely symbolic protest gestures than for calls to action. Radio advertising is much less often used but would probably have similar dynamics. Television advertising is too expensive to be widely used outside of electoral campaigns and occasional public relations efforts by very large well-funded organizations.

News stories, by contrast, have much more credibility. It is common knowledge that it is not easy to get your story in the paper or on television or radio, but the technological knowledge of how to write a press release that will get printed or stage an event that will attract television reporters is definitely not widely diffused. I assume I need not belabor that point. But even if the press release is printed or the media event is covered, the call to action may or may not succeed, depending in part on the skill of the person who wrote the release and the skills of the people planning the event being described.

There are also more specialized impersonal media that can be used. Many newspapers and radio stations carry "public service" announcements about upcoming events of presumed general interest. Newspapers and some other organizations run "volunteers needed" columns or bulletin boards that have essentially the same format as help-wanted advertisements for paid jobs.

Parent-teacher organizations send home sign-up sheets listing a wide array of specific ways parents can help. The newsletters of organizations with large paper memberships inform people of upcoming actions and ongoing programs, and include lists of various issues and types of actions for which one could volunteer. These impersonal mass approaches often pull in new participants who are not known to the original activists. The response rate to these approaches is always very low, but even a low response can provide a significant cadre of workers, although usually in numbers too small to be adequate as the sole source of volunteers. These approaches depend upon prior organization and communication channels, and a shared cultural understanding of the concept of "volunteering" for a common cause or attending a public event.

It is worth stressing that these impersonal channels sometimes work in a way that is out of activists' control. Every once in a while, impersonal communications from activists strike an unexpectedly responsive chord. Publicity can sometimes lead people in the population to start talking among themselves about an event and the issues involved. Occasionally, these conversations snowball and lead to a widespread collective understanding that whole networks of people will participate. The problem for the activists is that they cannot create these conditions, nor even necessarily know in advance whether they exist. Thus, when this happens, activists are usually caught off guard and overwhelmed with the unexpected success of their event.

Professional Organizing. Finally, there are professional organizers trained in various traditions that are based on explicit technologies for mobilizing time. Prominent examples are labor organizers and Alinskyist (and other) community organizers. Professional organizing is highly technological, but also highly ideological and at times romanticized and mystified, so that it is often difficult to separate rhetoric from reality. There are many distinct schools of organizing, but we may say very generally that all organizers share the goal of creating or maintaining an organization that will serve the interests of some target population. The ideology of professional organizing is that the organizer has no goals of his own, but rather seeks to learn the people's interests and concerns and helps them to define their own goals. Different schools of organizing differ in the extent to which they believe organizers need to raise the consciousness of people and give them new ways of understanding what their interests are. Initially, organizers spend time getting to know people and fostering relations among them. Depending on their orientation, they may also spend a great deal of time in "political education," that is, in talking to people with the goal of persuading them to reinterpret their circumstances and interests.

Organizers help people create organizational structures. As the organization proceeds, the organizers help plan events, and always do much of the "leg work" involved in carrying out a project. They use personal and impersonal channels to draw participants into the event. Their objective is to create participation experiences that will in turn create new activists who will become the initiators of future actions.

Professional organizers generally create organizations which depend on the continuing presence of paid staff, although there are some instances in which the paid staff are indigenous to the group, so that outside organizers leave the scene. The ideology of organizing sharply distinguishes the organizer from indigenous leaders, and says that leaders should make policy while organizers help to execute policy. In fact, organizers and paid staff often function as

leaders, and when indigenous leaders are strong, they often get into conflict with the paid staff.

## Conclusions

Our central thesis is that technologies for mobilizing resources impose tight constraints on the forms of action that are possible. Once a person or group is using one technology, it is not easy to switch to another. Groups that are structured to raise money are not well structured to mobilize volunteers, and vice versa. Raising money through direct mail tends to concentrate power in a central national office, while raising money through canvassing creates large cadre of canvassers in local areas who need to be managed and motivated. Volunteers mobilized for a protest demonstration are not usually available for volunteer fund-raising.

Within technologies, activists talk the language of this paper. Professional activists worry about mailing lists, market saturation, labor costs, and the mass appeal of issues and programs. Volunteer activists try to think up new attractive events or execute the ritualized ones well. The same people go to the same events, and activists exchange the currency of mutual obligation: I went to your event, so you go to mine.

This is not the stuff of transcendent social change, not the stuff of revolution or upheaval. This is the world as it looks most of the time, in the non-turbulent troughs in a protest cycle (Tarrow 1989). As far as we can tell, the volunteer world looks about the same as it always has in relatively quiet times. The -athons are fairly new, but fairs and sales and benefit concerts continue. Cultural information passes relatively easily between protest or social change organizations and charitable organizations. Actions are organized primarily through preexisting social networks. Much activity is cyclical and ritualized, and most innovation takes the form of applying old models to new circumstances, or making small changes in existing models.

On the professional side, however, there are enormous differences between the present and the past. There have always been some paid activists (see Oliver 1983 for a review), but the past thirty years have seen an enormous proliferation of professionalized technologies and professional activists. For the individuals involved, the pull into professional activism is (or at least was initially) an ideological commitment to social change and a self-identity as an activist. But the technologies have clearly taken on lives of their own and have seemingly become virtual ends in themselves, especially for the private firms serving the sector.

We do not want in any way to imply that professionalized mobilization has replaced "spontaneous" grassroots mobilization. Our arguments have made it clear that we do not think professionalized mobilizations generally can create grassroots mobilizations of volunteers, because mobilizing money is generally inconsistent with mobilizing action. But we also think that the processes through which new actions emerge are still in place and operating, although we seem to be in a "quiet" period. It is nevertheless worth asking whether these professionalized organizations will prove to be irrelevant to grassroots mobilization, supportive of it, or competitive with it.

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