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Race, Ethnicity, and Social Movements

PETER B. OWENS, RORY MCVEIGH, AND
DAVID CUNNINGHAM

Introduction

Systems of racial and ethnic inequality, and collective efforts to variously create, defend, or dismantle them, have powerfully influenced scholarship on contentious politics and social movements. Much of the scholarship on progressive social movements from the 1970s onward has been strongly, but often relatively implicitly, influenced by the American civil rights movement, which directed scholarly attention to various mobilizing mechanisms, resources, and opportunities that were arguably necessary for insurgent activists to counter the oppressive and stifling environment of Jim Crow segregation and engage in collective action. In contrast, the study of racist and reactionary collective action has focused more centrally on the puzzle of what motivates individuals who are the (relative) beneficiaries of systems of ethnic and racial stratification to collectively maintain or defend such systems from perceived challengers. As such, the study of these movements has focused more centrally on the mobilizing effects of perceived threats to existing systems of stratification, emphasizing structural and ecological factors and the influence of ideologies that render such shifts in resources and privileges as threatening.

Here we engage with both exemplars of and exceptions to these general trends in social movement research, focusing on the determinants of individual and collective participation, identity work and related collective boundary processes, tactical choices, the differential role of state and non-state repression, and the outcomes of social movements. In our review, we focus largely on racial and ethnic social movements in America, since we feel that scholarship on these movements has had the broadest influence on the field. We close by drawing together the insights developed in the above sections to argue for a more thoroughly interactive approach to the relationship between broader structural environments and the varying mobilization of contentious efforts by both challengers to and beneficiaries of racial and ethnic inequality.

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Race, Ethnicity, and Social Movement Theory

In many ways the historical trajectory of social movement theorizing has run parallel to similar developments in studies of race and ethnic relations. Indeed, it could be said that students of race relations were a step or two ahead in moving toward more contemporary understandings of collective mobilization. Scholars of race relations, like early social movement scholars, initially approached their subject by focusing on individual psychological attributes. As Hirschman (1983) points out, early assimilation theorists placed a great deal of faith in what they perceived to be rational economic and political institutions (i.e. capitalism and democracy) as engines of change that would ultimately undermine what they viewed as misguided and irrational prejudices. Yet even before the mass mobilization phase of the civil rights movement gained steam, some scholars, most notably Herbert Blalock (1960), began thinking of interracial conflict in terms of organizational capacity and as reactions to threats to white privilege. According to this line of thought, the larger size of an oppressed group requires greater organizational capacity and concerted effort among members of the privileged group to protect resources and opportunities that they monopolize.

This key insight was refined and incorporated into theories of racial and ethnic conflict such as split-labor market theory (Bonacich 1972) and ethnic competition theory (Nielsen 1985; Olzak 1992). Bonacich drew inspiration from Marxist scholarship and emphasized how in-migration can influence the bargaining relationship between capitalists and extant labor pools in local settings. Ethnic competition theory, on the other hand, draws primary inspiration from theories of organizational ecology. It focuses on how intergroup conflict is most likely to emerge when previously subordinated ethnic or racial groups enhance their capacity to compete with members of dominant groups for scarce resources. While ethnic antagonisms resulting from group competition may be rooted in labor force dynamics, political and social forms of competition matter as well. Explanatory models, therefore, diverge with split-labor market explanations in their emphasis on racial/ethnic, rather than class, identities as primary drivers of contention.

Importantly, these theories of racial and ethnic conflict anticipated contemporary structural understandings of race (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Omi and Winant 1994). Race is structural in the sense that socially constructed racial boundaries are used to sort individuals into different roles and positions in society based on stereotypes and imagined understandings of group members' characteristics and suitability for particular roles. In the United States, for example, certain rights and privileges (such as voting, sitting at a lunch counter, and seeking employment in particular occupations) were commonly reserved for white people and denied to black people. And while expressions of overt racism have declined in the United States, racial identity continues to play a role in the assignment of individuals to positions and the way in which members of different groups engage (or fail to engage) with each other (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Embrick and Henricks 2013; McVeigh 2004; Pager 2003).

Likewise, it is difficult to overstate the extent to which the American civil rights movement contributed to a parallel shift in the way in which social movement theory has evolved. Given the blatant discrimination and oppression faced by African Americans, social movement scholars could easily recognize that the emergence of the civil rights movement represented a response to collective oppression rather than individuals "acting-out" based on irrational frustration or anxiety. While sociologists studying race relations recognized the collective response of the privileged majority to threats to their privilege, social movement scholars began to recognize the importance of organizational capacity among the oppressed (McAdam 1982; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Morris 1984; Oberschall 1973; Tilly 1978).

Because of gains made through prolonged challenge to systems of racial oppression, the civil rights movement also became a model for other forms of ethnic mobilization in the USA, such as the Chicano movement and the American Indian Movement (e.g. Deloria 1981; Ganz 2000, 2009; Nagel 1996). In each case, shared ethnic identity facilitated recognition of collective oppression and contributed to the solidarity needed to overcome freeriding tendencies. These groups sought to capitalize on their own organizational capacities and to make claims for just treatment during a period when such claims were gaining broader acceptance and legitimacy in society at large (Jenkins and Perrow 1977).

White Racist Mobilization

Although research on race and social movements has long centered on mobilization among oppressed minority groups, a substantial parallel literature has developed to analyze white racist (or separatist) organizations. Ethnographic research has been vitally important to this larger body of work. While many social movement scholars have had extensive contact with activists on the left (and many scholars maintain such an activist identity themselves), very few have had significant exposure to activists on the extreme right. Without such familiarity, it is too easy to resort to the same kinds of stereotypes that were once applied to all activists and to attribute participation to some form of psychological malfunction.

Fortunately, despite this predominant social distance from the research community, foundational theories of racist mobilization have benefited from close interrogation of activist understandings of their own participation. For instance, Blee's (1991) groundbreaking study of the women who participated in the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s highlights the strong social incentives for their participation. Through Blee's interviews, we can see that the former Klanswomen were attracted to activism by many of the same things that appeal to progressive activists. The women spoke of the excitement of witnessing or actively engaging in the marches and rallies, while also enjoying the camaraderie of the numerous social events organized by the movement (also see McVeigh 1999).

In this work, and also in her later research on women in contemporary racist movements, Blee (2002) shows that unlike what some may expect, most participants were not drawn into the movement based on their strong ideological commitments to the goals of racist organizations. Instead, as is the case in many (if not most) social movements, participants tended to be drawn into movement activity through social ties to people who already were involved. Once exposed to the movement, some would stay and, over time, become more familiar with the organization's teaching, while others would not be drawn into the movement. Even among those who stay, however, Blee (2002) emphasizes that members and participants tend not to have a firm and cohesive grasp of movement ideology; adherents remain connected to the movement for a variety of reasons. Similarly, Simi and Futrell (2015) emphasize the role of close ties in such movements, demonstrating how parents in racist organizations take steps to isolate their children from connections to people outside of the movement in order to manage the stigma associated with the movement's heterodox beliefs.

These kinds of insights drawn from scholars courageous enough to do ethnographic fieldwork among racist activists have provided a foundation for researchers interested in identifying broader patterns in racist mobilization. Core tasks confronting scholars interested in patterns of mobilization involve, first, understanding the range of beliefs and values articulated by movement leaders as well as by rank-and-file members and supporters, and then identifying the historical and geographic contexts that allow individuals to acquire and maintain those beliefs, often in the face of opposition (McVeigh 2004). The most common approach taken thus far is to focus on the ways in which various forms of structurally-induced threats can compel organized racism (McVeigh 1999; Van Dyke and Soule 2002).

The focus on threat as a primary factor contributing to racist collective action flips the logic that underlies dominant theoretical approaches to the mobilization of progressive activism. Conventional resource mobilization and political opportunity models rest on an assumption that individuals who are disadvantaged or who hold grievances often do not act collectively because they lack an organizational infrastructure and/or fail to perceive favorable political circumstances to launch an effective challenge to the status quo. Within this familiar framework, collective action is predicted to emerge when new resources or organizational structures become available or when the political context becomes more favorable to activism. Scholars studying racist mobilization, on the other hand, have pointed out that activism on behalf of the beneficiaries of racial privilege is more likely to be prompted by perceived threats to pre-existing privileges, since the collective action to be explained is not emerging among oppressed groups previously stymied by lack of organizational resources or by fear of political repression.

Recent scholarship in this vein has sought to further specify the nature of threat while also focusing attention on the linkages between threat and action. Cunningham (2012, 2013), for example, has offered a "mediated competition model" as an attempt to bridge scholarship on social movements and racial and ethnic conflict. The theory asserts that racist activism should be most likely to form when members of the racial majority group perceive a threat to their status, when mainstream outlets for addressing the threat are lacking or are ineffective, and when state repression is absent or insufficient to hinder organizing efforts (Cunningham 2013: 7).

Similarly, McVeigh's (1999, 2009) "power devaluation model" seeks to specify the nature of the threats that can give rise to conservative collective action (including those that act to preserve racial privilege). His theory develops a relational approach focusing on the nature of exchange in regard to economics, politics, and status. Power within exchange is depreciated (or undergoes devaluation) by increases in the supply of others who offer the same commodity within an exchange relationship (e.g. goods, labor, wages, votes, campaign contributions, political representation, political patronage, modes of behavior, and esteem), or by a declining demand for those commodities. These "objective" losses in bargaining power can become racialized when groups experiencing devaluation share a common racial identity. This allows for the possibility of framing a broad range of grievances as threats to racial privilege, and can provide incentives to activate organizational resources at the group's disposal and to exploit political opportunities available to the group to contest the threat. Initially applied to explain the phenomenal rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, its general logic has been extended to studies of the consequences of conservative or racist activism (McVeigh and Cunningham 2012; McVeigh, Cunningham, and Ferrell 2014).

Racial Oppression and Participation in Social Movements

Early collective behavior scholars tended to view protest and social movement participation as either a product of irrational appeals and crowd dynamics or of structural strains and breakdowns in the fabric of social relations, but such perspectives were eventually supplanted by a host of studies focusing on the social structures and mechanisms that enable individual participation, or "micromobilization" (e.g. McCarthy and Zald 1977; Snow et al. 1986; Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson 1980). As noted above, this focus on micromobilization was enabled, in part, through the recognition among scholars that individuals involved in racially progressive change efforts possessed legitimate and meaningful grievances but often did not possess the resources or capacities to overcome severe social sanctioning for engaging in protest.

Identification of the mechanisms that helped individuals to overcome systemic racial oppression and engage in contentious action have thus helped to clarify the importance of factors such as organizational linkages between Southern black churches and civil rights organizations (Calhoun-Brown 1996; McAdam 1982; Morris 1984) or the social capital and efficacy benefits of membership in racial justice organizations (Beyerlein and Andrews 2008; Ginwright 2007). Elaborating on the former, McAdam (1982) and Morris (1984) note how the black church promoted solidarity among parishioners that facilitated collective resistance against a powerful foe. At the same time, ministers of the churches were acquainted with other ministers throughout the South, allowing for communication and coordinated action beyond the local level. Pattillo-McCoy (1999) has noted that racial identity and shared cultural traditions nurtured within black churches continue to infuse political mobilization in the modern era.

Martinez (2005) identifies similar processes with regards to organizational and interpersonal support for Latino protest participants. Using nationally representative data, she finds that Latinos who were members of pre-existing political organizations or churches were much more likely to engage in protest activity (see also Heredia 2011; Martinez 2011). Nagel (1996) notes how shifts in American Indian protest actions in the 1960s from the tribal to the pan-tribal level were facilitated by the informational and network linkage of urban indigenous residents and organizations, including churches, community centers, and charitable groups, with reservation-based activists. Robnett (1996) adopts an intersectional approach to participation and leadership within movement organizations, demonstrating how African-American women who often lacked access to formal leadership positions within many civil rights groups instead occupied bridge leadership roles pivotal for recruitment and micromobilization within movement organizations. Within these various studies, mobilizing mechanisms interact with various political and interpersonal opportunities that can be leveraged against the collective disadvantages created by oppressive systems of ethno-racial domination, and their attendant means of repressing activism.

In contrast, and as noted above, participation in racist and white supremacist movements has been largely theorized as a more or less direct result of perceived threats to existing systems of ethno-racial stratification (e.g. Blalock 1967; Bonacich 1972). Much of the scholarship in this area has thus focused on the identification of causal linkages between perceived challenges to existing demographic, economic, and political conditions (Olzak 1992; Van Dyke and Soule 2002), and the mobilization of collective efforts to reduce or eliminate these challenges. Some scholars of repressive ethnic and racial contention have sought to clarify the relationship between such environments and mobilization outcomes by theorizing the ways in which structural shifts can enable ethnic and racial identities and boundaries to become a salient basis for collective action (e.g. McVeigh 2004, 2009; Nielsen 1985). Despite this focus, many such inquiries have generally not shared progressive movement scholars' focus on identification and measurement of the mobilizing structures that enable structural circumstances to be appraised as threatening, or that allow such individual perceptions to translate into contentious action (Cunningham 2012).

In response to this relative oversight, Owens and his colleagues (2015) demonstrate how leadership and organizational presence were particularly important in mobilizing aggrieved (but relatively disorganized) rural whites into joining the Ku Klux Klan in 1960s North Carolina. In areas where state and national KKK leaders were not often present at rallies and events, or in areas where the Klan had not developed an extensive network of meeting places, Klan membership and activities were often much less pronounced. Simi and Futrell (2015) focus on narrower interactive settings to demonstrate the importance of online and offline "free spaces," such as web forums, White Power music concerts, the homes of committed activists, and even the creation of entire White Power communities, in both drawing individuals into the movement and maintaining their commitment to it. Without such spaces, given that open expressions of racism and bigotry are stigmatized in contemporary American society, the movement would likely have much greater difficulty in developing and maintaining commitment and support among adherents. Blee's (2002) research on contemporary racial hate groups similarly highlights the complex pathways to becoming a movement participant by noting that social bonding, solidary incentives, and the desire "to be somebody," rather than pre-existing ideological beliefs, are the main drivers of initial involvement for many contemporary racist activists.

Identity Processes, Race, and Social Movements

Collective change efforts often require individuals to take an oppositional stance to existing social, political, and cultural arrangements – to set themselves apart from the existing status quo in some fashion. Frameworks highlighting how personal understandings of self can be multiple and fragmentary, and thus subject to constant negotiation and maintenance (e.g. Bernstein 1997; Snow and McAdam 2000), direct attention to "identity work" processes: the ways in which social movement participants construct and manage senses of who they are relative to others within a broader political and cultural context (Reger, Myers, and Einwohner 2008; see also Chapter 24, by Flesher Fominaya, in this volume, on collective identity).

Because movements often deploy notions of collective "difference" and "sameness" in strategic ways (Bernstein 1997), important similarities and differences in identity work processes are likely to exist across progressive and repressive ethno-racial movement cases. For instance, those seeking to establish or defend existing systems of inequality often must strategically de-emphasize their dominant social status to identify themselves as "victims," rather than benefactors, of existing social arrangements. Berbrier (1998), for instance, demonstrates that, in order to develop a mobilizing sense of injustice among the beneficiaries of racial inequality, white supremacist activists must both discursively realign themselves as being "just another ethnic minority," and accordingly argue that their rights to protection from defamation and disrespect are equivalent to those of nonwhite minorities. Simi and Futrell's (2009) research on the negotiation of White Power activist stigma also demonstrates the importance of social context in the negotiation of an oppositional identity. Their work demonstrates how White Power activists must strategically conceal their supremacist beliefs in public arenas, and develop movement "free spaces" such as White Power web forums, to share their beliefs with like-minded whites out of the public eye. Historically, in contrast, racist movements such as the Ku Klux Klan (Cunningham 2013; McVeigh 2009), enabled and emboldened by far more permissive social and political contexts, could make conspicuous identity claims through public rallies and other terroristic spectacles.

Movements on the progressive end of this spectrum also frequently clash with dominant models of personal and collective identification. These identity work processes have ranged from the Black Power movement's reformulation of "Black is Beautiful" (Van Deburg 1992), to contemporary movements for the recognition of American Indians as politically sovereign groups rather than domestic minorities (Steinman 2012), and the recognition of novel, multi-racial categories of identification. Addressing the latter issue, Bernstein and De La Cruz (2009) analyze efforts by Hawaiian activists to deconstruct existing racial and ethnic categories and to secure cultural recognition for the explicitly multi-racial "Hapa" identity. In contrast to strategic uses of identity that mobilize or draw attention to conditions for members of already-recognized identity categories, Hapa activists focused their challenges on confronting more diffuse cultural systems of difference, knowledge, and power.

As the above studies variously emphasize, the ways in which activists use and/or transform existing categories of identification are heavily influenced by the broader systems of power and meaning that such attempts occur within, and the various opportunities and constraints they present. For instance, Einwohner's (2006) historical research on Jewish resistance to the Nazi genocide in the Warsaw ghetto demonstrates how certain Jewish resisters had to strategically downplay their personal Jewish identities to "pass" as non-Jewish, while maintaining a personal and confidential Jewish identity to bolster commitment to their stigmatized comrades. Yukich's (2013) ethnographic research on an American immigrant rights organization similarly details how activists selectively deployed a framework of “deserving” versus “undeserving” migrants. These categories, while intended to support greater rights for undocumented migrants, in effect, reified existing “model minority” stereotypes.

Race and Social Movement Strategy and Tactics

Activism oriented toward reducing racial or ethnic inequalities has been extraordinarily influential in shaping scholars’ views about the role that social movement tactics play in securing social change. The politics of protest, involving the capacity to disrupt the status quo, can provide the leverage needed to force beneficiaries of the status quo to change their behavior and practices.

Civil rights leaders of the 1960s made a strategic choice to be disruptive while simultaneously practicing nonviolent resistance. This strategic choice reflected an awareness of a severe power imbalance, as representatives of the state could use the state’s monopoly over the “legitimate” use of violence to quell riots and other forms of disorder. Violent resistance from African Americans also could potentially generate widespread backlash among the white population. Yet the nonviolent tactics deployed by the civil rights movement would have been ineffective if acts of disruption did not impose costs on powerful actors who had the capacity to grant concessions to the movement and its constituents (Luders 2003; McAdam 1982; Morris 1984).

The civil rights movement’s creative and strategic deployment of tactics provided scholars with opportunities to study and theorize ways in which social movements, in general, engage in action to generate solidarity and support, but also to win concessions from the state or from other powerful actors who were either opponents of the movement or potential allies that could be prompted to take action. In his study of the pacing of insurgency during the civil rights movement, McAdam (1983) highlighted the way in which the movement’s deployment of new and innovative tactics helped to stimulate movement activity throughout the country. His research, however, also focused on the way in which civil rights opponents developed counter-tactics in an effort to stall the movement’s momentum, leading to a chess-like tactical interaction. Ganz’s (2000, 2009) explanation for the success of the relatively resource-poor United Farm Workers (UFW) movement, when compared with the AFL-CIO’s Agricultural Worker’s Organizing Committee, focuses on complex interactions between leadership, organizational structure, and movement strategy. Ganz demonstrates that the UFW’s strategic capacity, rooted in organizers’ motivation and engagement with available information, enabled a degree of “resourcefulness” that enhanced the group’s responsiveness and accountability to a broader constituency of workers. In his analysis of the American Indian sovereignty movement, Steinman (2012) also draws important attention to the ways in which structures of domination influence social movement strategy. Noting the specifically decolonizing objectives of the movement, Steinman emphasizes the unique ways that American Indian activists engaged in pragmatic political relations with state and federal institutions, while also working to create recognition for their sovereign national statuses in broader cultural and international arenas.

Like many social movements, those that have sought to address racial or ethnic inequality have had to grapple with the choice of using nonviolent tactics or resorting to violence (see Chapter 19 by Schock and Demetriou, in this volume, for a fuller discussion of violence vs. non-violence as strategic alternatives). Commonly, there are disagreements over the question within movement ranks. Violent tactics appear to be most likely to appeal to activists frustrated with a lack of progress associated with other forms of action. As McAdam (1982) has argued, nonviolent tactics used by the civil rights movement to challenge Jim Crow segregation in the South were largely effective as they struck at vulnerabilities in systems of overt oppression and garnered support from sympathetic white liberals, particularly in northern states. Yet more militant resistance was advocated by younger activists (e.g. from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), whose commitment to nonviolence was tested by prolonged exposure to the realities of racial oppression in the South (Carson 1981; McAdam 1986). Militant stances by groups such as the Black Panther Party (Bloom and Martin 2014) or the Nation of Islam also resonated strongly among African Americans in northern cities who were faced with debilitating poverty resulting from racism that was, perhaps, less visibly enacted but brutal in its consequences.

A similar challenge faces activists today in the Black Lives Matter movement, as they seek to challenge inequities in the criminal justice system and, most directly, the frequent police shootings of young African American men. While civil rights activists of the 1960s confronted blatant discrimination encoded into law, Black Lives Matter activists must generate support for their very real grievances in an era of "colorblind racism" (Bonilla-Silva 2006), where many white Americans believe that racism is a thing of the past and tend to view police killings as justifiable in spite of video evidence to the contrary. These conditions produce a context in which violent tactics could surely generate a backlash from the white population, providing government leaders with the cover needed to violently repress the movement. Yet lack of progress obtained through peaceful demonstrations can make it difficult for activists to maintain consensus on the use of nonviolent tactics.

In contrast, common perceptions of racist collective action carry with them images of violent tactics. There is good reason for this association: historically, racist organizations in the United States have played a role not unlike terrorist organizations, using violence and intimidation in an effort to maintain white privilege. Yet, to better understand the nature of racist organizations it is important to recognize that the use of violent tactics has varied across time and across space.

The contours of this variation are rooted in two primary sources. The first involves the extent to which racist activists perceive that violence will be tolerated by legal authorities (Cunningham 2013; Owens et al., 2015). Violence perpetrated by the civil rights-era KKK, for example, was often carried out with the acquiescence of, and sometimes collaboration with, local law enforcement agents. Relatedly, Tolnay and Beck (1995) show that declines in the southern lynching rate were influenced, to a great extent, by a shift in the willingness of southern elites to intervene and discourage the violence. A second primary factor involves the extent to which racist movements feel that their goals can be achieved by influencing mainstream political processes. Klan members of the 1920s, for example, made a deliberate attempt to curtail the violence of its supporters when they perceived that violence would harm their chances of influencing the political process (McVeigh 2009). Even in more recent time periods, racist leaders have, at times, attempted to frame movement goals in a way that downplays violent intent and instead attempts to portray movement goals as consistent with patriotism, Christianity, and mainstream American values (Berbrier 1998).

Indeed, beyond the important question of violent tactics, we should not overlook the ways in which racist organizations utilize nonviolent tactics to advance their goals. Scholars have emphasized how movement-sponsored activities such as rallies, picnics, and music events help to attract supporters (Blee 1991, 2002; Cunningham 2013; McVeigh 2009; Simi and Futrell 2015). In many instances, promotion of these types of events can also be viewed as efforts to assert rights of public assembly and to ward off government surveillance and repression. McVeigh (2009), for example, emphasizes the way in which the Klan sought to broadly publicize charitable acts sponsored by the movement in order to generate public support and hence make it more difficult for the Federal Government to crack down on the movement. In the contemporary context, the Internet and social media have provided racist organizations with an opportunity to present different faces to different audiences. In public, movement leaders can attempt to present a softer side of the movement that aligns with values held by many white Americans. Yet the existence of chat rooms and restricted access websites provides members with opportunities to spew vitriolic rhetoric, appealing to deep-seated prejudices of potential recruits (Caren, Jowers, and Gaby 2012; Simi and Futrell 2015).

State Repression and Social Movement Outcomes: The Racialized Consequences of Contention

The preceding sections have demonstrated that social movement scholarship has predominantly engaged race implicitly, through cases such as the US civil rights movement, where race-based claims-making has motivated and defined contentious campaigns. A more explicit interrogation of how race informs and operates within such campaigns, however, has been more elusive. Indeed, issues associated with the construction of racial boundaries and grievances have been ceded largely to work in the ethnic conflict tradition. As a strength of social movement theory resides in its ability to consider interactive dimensions of contention, we argue that models that integrate these perspectives can offer particularly fertile approaches to engage how race shapes the manner in which state and elite actors react to mobilized challenges, and – by extension – the broader impacts and consequences of contention.

Research on historical patterns of lynching and organized racial violence provide one productive touchstone to inform such approaches. Classic work in this vein orients broadly to issues of race and social control. In their foundational studies of the wave of lynchings occurring between 1880–1930 in the USA, for instance, Tolnay, Beck, and their colleagues rooted the phenomenon in economic, political, and social threat, which "poison[ed] the social environment" (1995: 3) and thereby made racially-motivated violence significantly more likely (Beck and Tolnay 1990; Tolnay and Beck 1995; Tolnay, Deane, and Beck 1996). As a product of threat, vigilante racial violence served as a mode of social control, intended to repress challenges to the racial order, ranging from protest to out-migration to legislative reform.

Social movement scholars' somewhat narrower focus on mobilized collective challenges has provided a basis to understand instances of repression that unfold through tactical exchanges between challengers and power-holders. McAdam (1983), for instance, uses the civil rights movement case to demonstrate the chess-like interplay between civil rights forces and their state opponents, showing that challengers can accelerate the pace of insurgency through successful tactical innovation, with the pace then slowing as authorities learn how to engage and contain the tactic in question. Luders (2003) complicates such dichotomous interactions, arguing that state authorities can enable or hinder protestors' ability to act not only through their direct orientation to those targets but through their suppression, toleration, or encouragement of third-party counter-movements as well.

Such models productively intersect with a large literature on the interactive dynamics of protest policing, much of which centers on the "nexus" of protest and repression, i.e. the impact of policing on the likelihood and scale of subsequent protest activity. While divergent findings along these lines have sparked a robust effort to contextualize flat baseline conceptualizations of policing and protest (Earl 2011), race is rarely treated as a key contingent factor affecting state action. Welcome exceptions include Earl and Soule (2006), who argue that racial and ethnic minorities comprise one of several categories that may be policed aggressively based on their assumed vulnerability, and Davenport and his colleagues (2011), who find that protest events associated with African Americans were more likely to draw police presence than similar "white" actions. While this core association varies over time and across settings, their study importantly uncovers a systematic relationship between race and the policing of protest.

Such findings demonstrate how race can shape police practices both through the assumptions and actions of individual officers and agents as well as through systemic policy enacted by state agencies writ large. Focusing on the latter, Irons' (2010) study of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission demonstrates how the racist worldviews of authorities can shape the imposition of state repression, and how such processes can shift over time, as state agents deploy evolving rationales to accomplish the same ends in response to broader shifts in the racial landscape. Treading similar ground, Cunningham's (2003, 2004) study of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) focuses on how such racist worldviews interact with bureaucratic process to differentially impact protest targets based on racial status. His textual analysis of FBI memos uncovers a clear pattern of racist assumptions that generated strong incentives for agents to formulate and carry out proposals that more intensively and harshly targeted African-American activists. In contrast, "COINTELPRO-White Hate Group" targets such as the Ku Klux Klan were viewed as something to be controlled rather than eliminated.

While these kinds of findings are intended to point to generalizable processes, their tight focus on 1960s activism in the USA risks under-emphasizing or altogether ignoring the changing character of both race and contention over time and under differing regimes (McAdam et al. 2005). As a partial corrective, Simi and Futrell's (2015) study of contemporary racist hate groups demonstrates how white supremacists also work to manage the more quotidian sense of stigma associated with the open expression of their political beliefs, developing a range of strategies to selectively disclose those beliefs as well as insulate themselves and their family members from an inundation of competing (i.e. non-racist) social and political influences. Oliver (2008) offers another important effort to broaden conceptions of the intersection between race and state repression. Paralleling the underexplored synergies between the social movements and ethnic conflict literatures that we emphasize here, she focuses on how massive repression instituted in the wake of widespread urban unrest in the late 1960s related directly to the subsequent acceleration of incarceration rates associated with intensified crime control and drug policies after 1980. Such work is especially prescient for its ability to develop and emphasize such connections across protest and criminal justice domains, while also highlighting the longer-run disjoint consequences of state repression campaigns.

This line of work, while attentive to the imposition of state repression, also seeks to understand more broadly how such struggles intersect with race to shape a range of social movement outcomes. As with much of the research reviewed in this chapter, this area of the literature primarily engages race as a byproduct of movement cases, with the civil rights movement taking center stage. McAdam (1988), for instance, adopts a micro-longitudinal approach to focus on the biographical consequences of civil rights activism. At the community level, Andrews (1997, 2001; see also Andrews and Gaby 2015) demonstrates both the short- and longer-run impacts of local civil rights struggles across a range of political domains, emphasizing the complex manner in which local movement infrastructures and white resistance strategies relate to the trajectories of these outcomes over time.

Given the interactive nature of that struggle – i.e. between civil rights constituencies and the white resistance movements that emerged in response to shifts in the racial status quo in Mississippi and elsewhere in the US South – Andrews (2002) also shifts perspective to view the formation of private white academy schools as a reaction to federal desegregation mandates. Similarly engaging with civil rights counter-mobilizations, McVeigh and his colleagues have demonstrated how organized vigilantism has broader and enduring effects, showing how KKK presence in southern communities during the 1960s relates to continued elevated rates of violent crime (McVeigh and Cunningham 2012), as well as more pronounced electoral support for Republican candidates (McVeigh et al. 2014). The underlying argument emphasizes the pervasiveness of racial division, which can delegitimize authority, disrupt patterns of informal social control, and serve as a "takeoff issue" that provides a basis for political polarization (see also Baldassarri and Bearman 2007).

Other influential work takes up civil rights cases to directly demonstrate how racial dynamics shape the contingent nature of social movement constructs. For instance, Bell's (1980) now-classic interest convergence model posits that civil rights gains for African Americans are likely to occur when black and white interests at least temporarily align. Consistent with Andrews' (2001) focus on movement infrastructures, Payne's (1995) emphasis on how grassroots organizing traditions can durably affect political cultures points to a consideration of how, both within and across ethnic communities, we might see enduring patterns of mobilization in the face of emerging racialized issues such as immigration.

Addressing directly the racial dimension of contemporary immigration struggles, Brown (2013a, 2013b) demonstrates how racial hostilities can, when framed as such by politicians, contribute to spillover effects associated with various immigrant and welfare policies. Steil and Vasi (2014) show how, when applied to immigrant rights and ethnic division, the impacts of proactive and reactive movements are forged via distinct channels, with strong organizations and sympathetic allies aiding the former and rapid structural changes that could be framed as threats by reactionary forces benefiting the latter. And following a similar logic, Bloom (2015) adopts a practice-oriented perspective to show how such structural opportunities do not automatically confer to groups to aid their across-the-board efforts, but rather serve as resources to be strategically leveraged to shape outcomes associated with particular issue domains that may cross-cut race in complex ways.

Conclusion

In sum, understandings of race and ethnicity – whether developed implicitly through the study of civil rights and other like cases, or explicitly by interrogating political contention as a racialized process – reside at the center of a varied body of work on social movement mobilization and outcomes. In this chapter, we have identified at least two primary ways in which this emphasis has benefited social movement scholarship. We review those here, and conclude by suggesting how, in each case, more explicit interrogation of racialized processes can further the development of the field.

First, attentiveness to grievances associated with racial and ethnic inequity and division has contributed to a more precise understanding of the environments that produce contention. A significant strength of ethnic conflict perspectives in particular has been the ability for research in that tradition to draw out how structural arrangements shape group identities and boundaries, showing how such environments can be conducive to protest and other forms of collective action. At the same time, such approaches have been slower to embrace the social movements literature's emphasis on elaborating the processes through which conducive environments translate into collective struggles. Developing approaches that integrate ethnic conflict theory's nuanced attunement to grievances, threat, and intergroup competition with movement scholarship on collective identity, resource deployment, and repertoires of contention remains a continuing challenge. Such efforts can have considerable payoff, however, in their potential to spur the development of stronger theories of race and conflict, and also modes of interrogation that more robustly explain a broader range of cases. In particular, an integrative approach can provide a coherent foundation for overcoming the longstanding divide associated with explanations of left- and right-wing movements, a critique noted and lamented much more frequently than it is engaged theoretically or empirically.

Second, much of the literature discussed above demonstrates how race and ethnicity impact how activists see themselves, as well as how those self-definitions intersect with the racialized assumptions and reactions of authorities and audiences. A full reckoning of such processes should be responsive both to the construction and attribution of racialized inequity and threat, as well as how related discourses shape – and respond to – interactions (tactical and otherwise) among challengers, authorities, counter-movements, and public audiences. Such an approach should press analysts not only to recognize these players, but also to take seriously their interplay. Such efforts might draw strength from both social movement and ethnic competition perspectives, which – in different ways – attend to repression and authorities' reactive efforts to enable or, often, suppress the gains of challengers.

Along these and other dimensions, we see how future advances and breakthroughs in the social movements field require not only a sharpening of existing frameworks but also a look outward to insights from cognate literatures. Largely through foundational studies of the civil rights movement, race has long resided at the core of social movement theory. This connection, however, should not be viewed as implicit – a pairing of convenience or historical coincidence – but rather as one to be engaged actively as a harbinger of continued advances. Whether as a vehicle to refine ecological and interactive thinking, as we suggest here, or as a lever to expand and deepen our general conceptual toolkit, we expect that future influential work will gain power and purchase from serious attention to how social movements shape, and are shaped by, conceptions of race and ethnicity.

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