

**Linking Strategic Choice with Macro-Organizational Dynamics:  
Strategy and Social Movement Articulation\***

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*Abstract:*

The renascent focus on strategy in social movement research has made important contributions to our understanding of organizational dynamics but has not been systematically applied to relational dynamics within movements as a whole. We begin to bridge that gap by presenting a framework for mapping the relative strategic positions of multiple collective actors along two dimensions of strategic orientation: the depth of challenge promoted and the breadth of appeal cultivated. This framework integrates a wider range of collective actors into analyses, and identifies distinct movement roles and contributions associated with different strategic positions. More importantly, the framework facilitates analysis of the overall distribution of actors across a movement and the nature and extent of linkages among them – what we refer to as strategic articulation. Drawing on a breadth of secondary research, we identify characteristics of movement distributions that facilitate stronger articulation and draw out their implications for intra-movement relational dynamics – such as the balance between cooperation and competition, and the extent to which flanks are integrated or isolated.

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In recent years, social movement research has seen a renewed interest in strategy as an explanatory variable (Ganz 2000; McCammon 2003; Jasper 2004, 2006). The focus on strategy generally, and strategic choices specifically, has advanced our understanding of a range of movement phenomena including movement emergence (Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986; Benford and Snow 2000); the creation, maintenance, and deployment of collective identity (Snow and Anderson 1987; Clemens 1993; Bernstein 1997; J. Gamson 1997); and organizational success and failure (Ganz 2000). In short, the focus on strategic choice has helped to bridge the gap between structure and agency in social movement research, giving us a more nuanced understanding of the ways that collective actors can bring about social change (Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Jasper 2004, 2006). Research on strategy and social movements, however, generally limits its focus to single actors and their interactions with opponents, giving little systematic attention to intra-movement dynamics. Concurrently, macro-organizational research has given substantial attention to the structures and dynamics of movement populations (Minkoff 2002), but relatively little attention to strategic interactions among those populations.

This article provides a link between research on strategic decision-making at the organizational level and movement dynamics shaped by macro-organizational structures. Our arguments proceed in four sections. We begin with a discussion of the research on strategy, explaining how actors' routine decision-making is guided by general preferences embodied in strategic orientations. Next, we introduce two dimensions of strategic orientation that allow us to distinguish among actors in a parsimonious manner: the depth of political challenge and the breadth of political appeal. This framework illustrates fundamental strategic “tradeoffs” (Jasper 2006) that collective actors confront. We then show how the framework enables us to “map” the relative strategic locations of actors within a movement, and illustrates how tradeoffs between

the two dimensions define a strategic "frontier" where political mobilization and engagement confronts the political opportunities and constraints in a movement's environment. We argue that the benefit of conceptualizing political engagement along a frontier is that it highlights the range of distinct roles and contributions that actors may make to a movement – roles associated with different types of movement actors. As such, the framework facilitates the analytical inclusion of a wider range of movement actors than are normally considered – from radical to moderate flanks – and to consider relationships between them. Most importantly, moving from the organizational to macro-organizational level, the framework allows us to map the strategic distribution of actors in a movement and to consider its effect on the dynamics and form of strategic interaction among them – what we refer to as strategic articulation. We specify several propositions regarding the characteristics of movement distributions and their effect on intra-movement relational dynamics – such as whether competition or cooperation predominates, whether flanks are integrated or isolated, and how these dynamics affect movement trajectories. We conclude by discussing the benefits and limitations of our framework.

## STRATEGY AND MACRO-ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS

Strategy may be broadly defined as the connections that collective actors make between their goals and the actions that they take to achieve those goals. As Ganz (2000:1010) explains, "Strategy is the conceptual link we make between the places, the times and ways we mobilize and deploy our resources, and the goals we hope to achieve." Or, as Jasper (1997:44) defines, strategies are "the choices made by individuals and organizations in their interactions with other players, especially opponents." One benefit of making strategy central to social movement research is that it reestablishes a balance between structure and agency in explanations of movement processes and outcomes (Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Jasper 1997, 2004, 2006). It does

so in part by highlighting the importance of decision-making processes while recognizing that these choices are constrained by other actors and a larger political environment (Aminzade, Goldstone and Perry 2001; Ganz et al. 2004; Morris and Staggenborg 2004).

While the systematic focus on strategy represents an advance in the study of social movements, there are several emphases in current conceptualizations of strategy that limit its explanatory power. Specifically, strategic choice is generally conceptualized in terms of mutually independent and instrumental decisions, and strategy is largely confined to actor-opponent interactions. The emphasis on mutually independent decisions implies that strategy consists of a series of discrete choices regarding mobilization and engagement – including tactics, targets, organizational models, sources of support, audiences to appeal to and recruit from, and so on. The problem with that emphasis is that it downplays the interdependence of those decisions. To offer a simple example, the choice to utilize highly confrontational tactics has implications for choices about organization models, who to appeal to, and who to secure resources from, among others. As such, discrete strategic choices must be seen as components of broader decision-making processes.

Research on strategic choice also emphasizes instrumental logic and minimizes non-instrumental influences. Strategic decision-making, however, generally involves a logic that is not narrowly derived from a means-ends calculus (Jasper 2006). For example, collective identities embody a range of expectations (both internal and external) about what kind of actions will be taken by collective actors. Research on a variety of subjects – including early twentieth century club women (Clemens 1993), the National Organization for Women (Barakso 2004), gay pride organizations in San Francisco (Armstrong 2002), and the United Farm Workers (Ganz 2000) – all document the link between identity (collective and individual) and choices about

strategic action. Likewise, the impact of emotions in motivating participation (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001) contributes to a decision-making process that is not reducible to instrumental logic. Stated differently, without understanding the symbolic investments in identity and the passion associated with participation in collective action, many decisions are difficult to explain.

We argue that emphasizing the *interdependent* and *non-instrumental* characteristics of strategy suggests that a collective actor has a general logic regarding how social change occurs and the means through which it should be pursued. We refer to these general logics or templates as “strategic orientation.”<sup>1</sup> There are at least three advantages to focusing on actors' strategic orientations rather than discrete strategic decisions. First, strategic orientation embodies preferences for goal attainment and, as such, provides a template for decision-making. Stated differently, strategic orientation incorporates an actor's general theory of social change, suggesting an ideology, an organizational identity, and a preferred repertoire of tactics. Second, strategic orientation underscores the recursive nature of decision-making processes, which helps us to understand why different actors seek to exploit or cultivate distinct political opportunities (a point that we address further below). Finally, the focus on strategic orientation begins to address another limitation in the current research on strategy: the focus on actor-opponent interactions.

Generally, the research on strategy conceptualizes strategic decisions as a calculus made by single actors vis-à-vis opponents and the constellation of political opportunities and constraints that they confront (Gamson 1990; Meyer 2004). The inherent interactive emphasis of strategy takes us productively beyond a framework in which actors confront an objective (and static) political opportunity structure. However, the implicit emphasis on actor-opponent interactions and the tendency of research to focus on single actors fails to capture important intramovement dynamics such as the potential synergies among allied organizations operating

within a movement. Collective actors generally do not confront environments as isolated actors, but instead are enmeshed in networks of allies extending across a field and over phases. Thus, considering the response of allies is a crucial part of strategic decision-making, and those considerations are facilitated by the stability and predictability provided by strategic orientations. Strategic orientations, then, not only establish frameworks for actors' routine decision-making, but create external expectations about actors' decisions that help allies and opponents alike to more accurately assess potential bases of cooperation and conflict as well as to predict responses to their own strategic actions.

Because the concept of strategic orientation is inherently relational it provides a conceptual foundation for understanding, and empirically examining, intramovement dynamics. Orientations represent strategic "positions" staked by actors within a movement vis-à-vis other actors. "Strategic positions," then, refers to the location of a collective actor within a broader movement. The focus on strategic positioning extends current research on the microfoundations of social movements to a macro-organizational level (Jasper 2004, 2006).<sup>2</sup> That extension is necessary because while research on strategy has largely neglected macro-organizational dynamics, research on macro-organizational dynamics largely has ignored the strategic interactions among actors (except see Lofland 1993; Downey 2006a; Rohlinger 2006). Macro-organizational research generally focuses on organizational or field level characteristics and their implications for movement development and effectiveness (Minkoff 2002; Minkoff and McCarthy 2005). For instance, Gerlach and Hine (1977) found that the success of the Black Power and Pentecostal movements was attributable in part to several structural characteristics: decentralization, segmentation, and reticulation. More recently, Andrews and Edwards (2005) found that local environmental organizations are structurally different from national groups and

that these differences have implications for the course and content of social movements, and Minkoff (1993, 1997, 1999) has documented the importance of population density to movement outcomes. Research has also found that organizational diversity facilitates movement development and success (Armstrong 2002; Olzak and Ryo 2004). While research has documented the importance of macro-organizational properties, little has been done to develop links between the macro level of analysis and the insights of strategic decision-making processes (for exceptions, see Lofland 1993; Downey 2006a). Here, we develop those links.

We begin with a presentation of a bidimensional framework for considering relative strategic orientations among collective actors. We then outline the implications of strategic positioning for those actors and explicate how it affects intramovement dynamics as well as the political potential of social movements.

#### DIMENSIONS OF STRATEGIC ORIENTATION

Translating strategic *orientations* into strategic *positions* requires a framework for mapping the terrain within which collective actors operate. Lofland (1993:275-276) recommended a mapping approach for its utility in identifying movement structures. In this case, by locating actors along strategic dimensions, we can identify distinct strategic positions that they occupy – both individually and collectively.<sup>3</sup> Our framework is based on two dimensions: the depth of challenge promoted by an actor, and the breadth of appeal cultivated by that actor. We argue that actors' choices regarding the tradeoffs between these dimensions 1) embody fundamental aspects of their strategic orientation, 2) position actors vis-à-vis allies and opponents, and 3) have important implications for the nature of interactions between them.

Previous research on strategic differences tends to recognize a single strategic dimension based largely on goals and/or tactics. That dimension generally runs from radical to moderate,

highlighting distinctions between social movement organizations that are more or less radical and contentious (Haines 1988; Gamson 1990). While that single dimension encompasses important distinctions, it obscures the tradeoffs inherent in any orientation and neglects the variability of political opportunities. As Jasper (2006) argues, tradeoffs (or dilemmas) are essential to understanding all strategic decision-making because actors must choose between "two or more options, each with a long list of risks, costs, and potential benefits" (2006:1).<sup>4</sup> The focus on tradeoffs highlights the fact that external constraints narrow the range of choices available to collective actors and that decisions have consequences for subsequent developments. Jasper's emphasis on tradeoffs informs our own analysis; essentially, we argue that strategic orientation establishes a template for choices about many other discrete strategic tradeoffs.

In addition to obscuring tradeoffs, a unidimensional framework neglects the variability of political opportunities. Specifically, it suggests that political opportunities are unidimensional – i.e. that opportunities and constraints conceptually represent a line that moves backward and forward to permit or block such actions. As such, a unidimensional framework implies that actors further along that dimension represent those that can bring about the greatest social change and that less dramatic, contentious, or openly oppositional strategies hold limited potential for social change. Maximizing opposition, however, is not always the most effective strategy because opponents can limit the chances of success (Gamson 1990) and/or spur countermobilization and backlash (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). We argue that a bidimensional model – one that focuses on a collective actor's depth of challenge and breadth of appeal - makes explicit the fundamental tradeoffs entailed in strategic positioning. As we explain below, this expands the notion of political opportunities from a singular limit to a "frontier" with many potential points of engagement. This, in turn, widens our perspective in terms of the terrain

across which political mobilization occurs and conceptually expands the range of productive contributions that actors can make to a movement.

We should note that while a bidimensional framework is an improvement over a unidimensional framework, strategy is clearly a *multi*-dimensional phenomenon. There are multiple potential dimensions along which one might map strategic positions. Representing strategic orientations in two dimensions is a conceptual simplification taken to establish a foundation for discussing relative strategic positions. Having said that, the two dimensions we identify are not arbitrary. Both the depth of challenge and the breath of appeal have important implications for an actor's web of relationships within a movement, and are particularly productive in reducing the many aspects of strategy to an efficient spatial representation. Indeed, research on strategies supports the idea that different strategic components vary together (e.g. Lofland 1993; Andrews and Edwards 2005; Downey 2006a). As such, this bidimensional model represents a parsimonious framework for mapping strategic orientations, even if other dimensions might illuminate somewhat different relationships.

### Depth of Challenge

The depth of challenge represents the extent to which a collective actor seeks incremental or fundamental social change. This distinction is often made via the contrast between reform and revolution, or moderation and radicalism, or along a continuum between consensus and conflict orientations (Lofland 1989, 1993). To the extent that an actor is oriented toward the latter end of the spectrum, its goals are in basic conflict with those of the existing social order and seek to change part or all of that order. As such, they advocate social changes that are relatively dramatic, and generally do so through contentious means.<sup>5</sup> Here, we assume that more challenging goals will generally be associated with more contentious tactics and that an actor's

position along this dimension is determined by the general level of challenge inherent in their choice of both goals and tactics.

At the extreme are revolutionary actors, such as the Weatherman, which use violence to challenge existing power relations and institutions with the hope of dramatically transforming social and political life (Sprinzak 1990; Klatch 1999). More likely, however, collective actors will position themselves somewhere between the conflict-consensus (radical-moderate) poles. Groups falling toward the middle of the continuum might employ institutional tactics but draw on discourse that challenges status quo. For example, the National Organization for Women (NOW) largely employs institutional tactics to achieve incremental political change (Barasko 2004) but uses discourse that challenges societal assumptions about women. This is clear in the group's treatment of the abortion issue. Broadly, NOW argues that women have a right to make decisions about their bodies and that this right is constitutionally protected. Although "rights" discourse resonates with broader publics (Condit 1990; Snow and Benford 1992), NOW uses the rights framework to challenge status quo. In the early 1990s, for instance, NOW rejected parental consent and notification laws by arguing that abortion rights apply to minors and, as such, minor women had the right to obtain an abortion without the knowledge of a parent or guardian (Rohlinger 2002, 2006).

To the extent that an actor orients itself toward the consensus end of the dimension, it will highlight the consonance between the goals of the movement and societal values, largely by emphasizing dominant values that support social change (Klandermans 1988; Snow and Benford 1988; Snow and Benford 1992). Such an orientation is strengthened in its resonance because it builds on existing values and institutional discourse (McAdam 1996; Ferree 2003). These organizations have been given less attention in the social movement literature, and are sometimes

defined out of the category of social movements altogether (i.e. social movements narrowly as protest movements). One of the most focused examples of research on such actors is Lofland's (1989, 1993) work on the 1980s nuclear freeze movement in which collective actors with a consensus orientation are characterized as employing "timid" tactics (i.e. non-confrontational, and even non-political), and ultimately as "derailed dissent."<sup>6</sup> While collective actors who choose a consensus orientation are limited by dominant norms and values, they can play important roles in social movements. For example, emphases on public education projects among race relations organizations during the World War II era not only reflected the political realities in the United States, but also represented important efforts to set the stage for subsequent social change by the Civil Rights movement (Downey 2006a). Such actors will also frequently (or exclusively) make use of institutional politics (Meyer, Jenness, and Ingram 2005).

Tactical choice, of course, is not simply a preference in a vacuum (Jasper 2006). Rather, it includes a consideration of how tactics are likely to be perceived (and responded to) by other actors – including allies, opponents, authorities, and audiences. McAdam's (1983) research on tactical innovation, for instance, illustrates the dynamism central to strategic choice such that tactical efficacy is influenced by perceived and actual responses. Likewise, debates over the tactical choices of civil rights leaders, and specifically whether they deliberately provoked violence and the extent to which this response was central to movement gains, exemplifies the complexity of both strategic intent and effectiveness (Barkan 1984; Morris 1993). Additionally, debates over the use of institutional tactics address not only the nature of the tactics themselves, but how they interact with broader political structures (Santoro and McGuire 1997; Banaszak 2005). In short, tactical choices are embedded in a broader context which includes the

constraining effects of other tactical choices, the range of tactics employed by other actors, and assessments of how effective any particular tactic is likely to be in a given environment.<sup>7</sup>

Where a collective actor locates along this dimension, then, is a strategic choice that has both costs and benefits (although the full implications of the tradeoff will only become clear when we add the second dimension). Revolutionary groups may be "ideologically pure" (Mansbridge 1986) but may also force group members to go underground because their activities invite government repression (Gamson 1990). Groups that situate themselves closer to the conflict end of the continuum, but are not revolutionary, may not mobilize an immediate state response but countermobilization by other actors. The direct action, pro-life group, Operation Rescue (OR), for example, employed disruptive tactics, such as blockades, to shut down facilities offering the abortion procedure (Blanchard 1995; Ginsburg 1998; Risen and Thomas 1998). While in the short-run such tactics attracted members and money, in the long run members were arrested for violating new laws enacted to protect abortion clinics, and OR leaders were sued by pro-choice groups. In short, the depth of challenge dimension highlights that there are a wide variety of groups operating in a field at a given time and these groups differentially challenge institutional authorities.

In assessing a collective actor's location along this dimension, it is also essential to make a distinction between ultimate and proximate goals. While the former may include fundamental social change the latter might include only steps toward that goal, thus making an actor appear to be less contentious than otherwise would be the case. As actors opt to forefront proximate rather than ultimate goals in their political agenda, they will generally find it easier to draw on social consensus. Such a strategic decision, however, also institutionalizes a consensus-orientation and makes it more difficult for actors to employ more oppositional tactics subsequently given the

recursive influences inherent in strategic orientation.<sup>8</sup> The point here is that the decision to forefront ultimate or proximate goals has implications for the position of a collective actor along this crucial dimension of social movement terrain.

If we only assess one dimension, the vanguards of social change are inevitably identified as those actors embodying the deepest challenges. When we add the second dimension, the tradeoffs in strategic orientation are made clearer, and we begin to see distinct contributions made and crucial roles played by actors with less challenging strategic orientations.

### Breadth of Appeal

Our second strategic dimension concerns the breadth of appeal that actors cultivate for social change. This dimension assesses the base of support (material and human) a collective actor seeks to mobilize and, more specifically, how broadly or narrowly the base is constituted. Participation in social movements varies widely particularly in terms of how much energy participants invest as well as the “riskiness” of the activities in which they are willing to engage. Core activists are an essential component to any movement group; these participants have the highest levels of commitment and often make the greatest sacrifices for the movement – up to and including high risk activism (McAdam 1986). Core activists generally have very high levels of identification with a movement – i.e. their movement identity has high personal salience (Stryker 2000). That said, movements also depend on members who have lower levels of involvement in and identification with a cause, including those who only intermittently participate and those who are members on paper alone (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Staggenborg 1988). Of course, it is also important for collective actors to appeal to supportive outsiders who are conceptualized as bystanders, conscience constituents (McCarthy and Zald 1977), third parties (Lipsky 1968), and the audiences who collectively comprise public opinion (Burstein

1985). We posit that support exists along a continuum, from the most ardent supporters who are willing to make great personal sacrifices to promote movement goals through those who have some sense of identification with the movement but offer support at a much lower level. At any point in time, there are limited numbers of supporters available for mobilization, and those numbers are always smaller as we move across categories of support from lower to higher levels of investment, involvement, and commitment.

The breadth of appeal dimension, then, represents the extent to which the collective actor comprises a relatively small core of activists with high levels of commitment, or a larger social base with generally low levels of commitment. While most collective actors rely to some extent on all categories, they rely on them in different measures. To make a particularly dramatic contrast, while abeyance structures (Taylor 1989) rely almost solely on core activists without multiple layers of membership, and have little interaction with outsiders, professional social movement groups rely substantially on the support of a base of membership which has little day-to-day involvement with the work of the organization (McCarthy and Zald 1987). Generally, we can distinguish among collective actors by the nature of their participant composition, from those with an "insular" orientation (those comprising relatively higher numbers of more committed activists) to those with a "mass" orientation (those comprising a relatively high number of less committed participants, and more appeal to outsider support).<sup>9</sup>

Insularity has at least three interrelated benefits. An insular orientation generates strong boundaries between members and non-members (Kanter 1968; Mansbridge 1986), which is conducive to the cultivation of internal networks.<sup>10</sup> Second, insularity provides a foundation for commitment and collective identity even when political conditions are not conducive to social change. Subordinate groups can operate in "havens" or "free social spaces" where they can

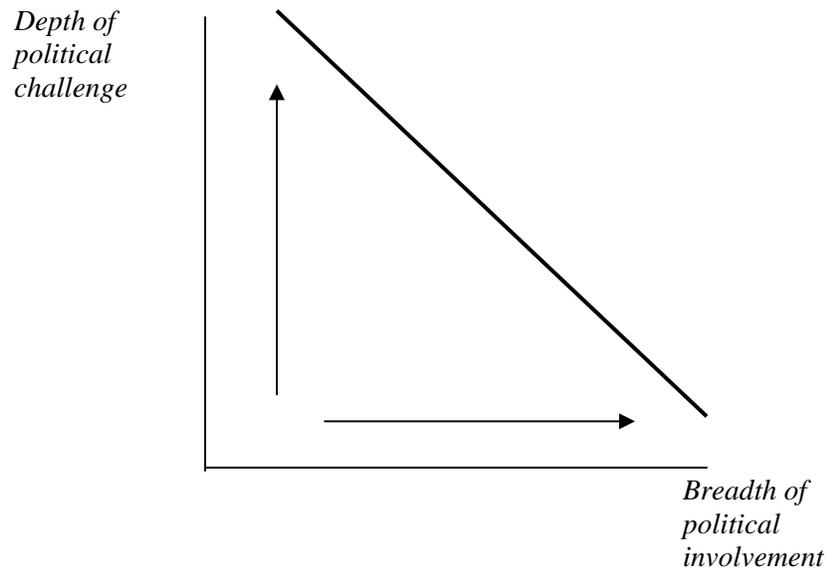
challenge dominant ideologies, develop alternative meanings, and construct emergent cultural forms in isolation from elites (Evans and Boyte 1986; Fantasia and Hirsch 1995; Polletta 1999; Futrell and Simi 2004). Such sites hold rich potential for the cultivation, sustenance, and promotion of oppositional consciousness (Mansbridge and Morris 2001), which can help groups (and movements) survive movement lulls (Taylor 1989). Third, insularity can provide a foundation for the solicitation of high risk activism (McAdam 1986). For example, Klatch (1999) found that the insularity of SDS members increased solidarity among activists, radicalized the membership, and provided a rationale for using confrontation and risky tactics.

While the social ties, solidarity, and commitment associated with insular organizations cultivate properties crucial to movement success, they are not well-suited to generating support from broader publics and elites which are also crucial for social change. Movement growth requires cosmopolitan networks to serve as a base for conversion, recruitment, and socialization into movement norms. Mass organizations can channel broader populations into a movement in a way that insular organizations cannot (aside from members of core beneficiary populations). At the other end of the spectrum, then, are collective actors with a mass orientation that are well-suited to generating support from broad segments of society and which demand little investment by members. Groups intended to elicit broad support are often more attuned to the public image of the movement and thus "pitch" movement ideas and goals in ways that generate sympathy from society writ large (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Bob 2005). This, in turn, can create elite allies and provide access to institutional venues (Tarrow 1998). In short, the dimension concerning breadth of appeal highlights how collective actors orient themselves toward various relevant populations – i.e. how broadly (or narrowly) they cast their net for participants, and how much involvement and commitment is expected of them.

## POLITICAL POSSIBILITIES AND THE VARIED CONTRIBUTIONS OF ACTORS

So far, we have addressed the two dimensions independently, although much of our discussion already points to a tradeoff *between* dimensions. It is clear that decisions about the depth of challenge and the breadth of appeal are mutually dependent in that choices about one dimension have clear implications for the other. We now turn to a more direct discussion of tradeoffs across dimensions and their implications for collective actors and movement dynamics. To do so, we arrange the two dimensions into a single framework wherein we can locate any collective actor in relative terms via abstract paired coordinates. The framework is presented in *Figure 1*.

**Figure 1:** *Dimensions of Strategic Orientation and the "Political Possibilities Frontier"*



The bidimensional framework makes explicit the tradeoffs entailed in any strategic orientation. We expect actors to position themselves along a diagonal line from upper left (deeper challenges and insular composition) to lower right (mass composition and shallow

challenges), as illustrated in the figure. That tradeoff makes the logical simplifying assumption that the number of people who support fundamental change is generally less than those who support incremental change (assuming that the former entail the latter plus additional change), and that there are less participants available for high investment activism than for lower levels of participation. In other words, *ceteris paribus*, the base of support for social change becomes narrower as the challenges become deeper. The line illustrated in the diagram represents a strategic "frontier" – or a political possibilities frontier (PPF) – along which actors mobilize and engage, i.e. where mobilization and engagement confront the limits of political opportunities and constraints within a given political context.<sup>11</sup> That frontier can be read as a graphical representation of political opportunity structures (POS) – although, as we discuss below, it also elaborates on that perspective in some ways.

Making underlying tradeoffs explicit is an important advantage of the two dimensional model; equally important is that it conceptually broadens the range of potential contributions that actors can make to movements. When political opportunities are conceived unidimensionally, differences are simply quantitative – i.e. "how much" opportunity exists. The vanguard for social change exists at that point along the continuum where political mobilization confronts political constraints. In a bidimensional framework, in contrast, there is a range along which actors confront (and potentially expand) those limits. Because context entails a range of opportunities, actors must make choices about where to position themselves – i.e. choices about *which* opportunities to cultivate or exploit. Conceived in this way, opportunities (like grievances) are always more plentiful than a given actor is able to exploit (which is not to deny that some clearly hold more potential than others). The line, then, represents not singular opportunities, but a frontier that encompasses a range of strategic orientations cultivating and exploiting somewhat

different opportunities. Because social movement development and success accrues from both the depth of challenge *and* the breadth of appeal, "maximizing" one's contribution to social change is achieved by extending the frontier along *either* dimension. That promotes the analytical inclusion of a broader range of potential contributions by movement actors, and highlights the strategic decisions actors make concerning the range of opportunities at a given historical moment.

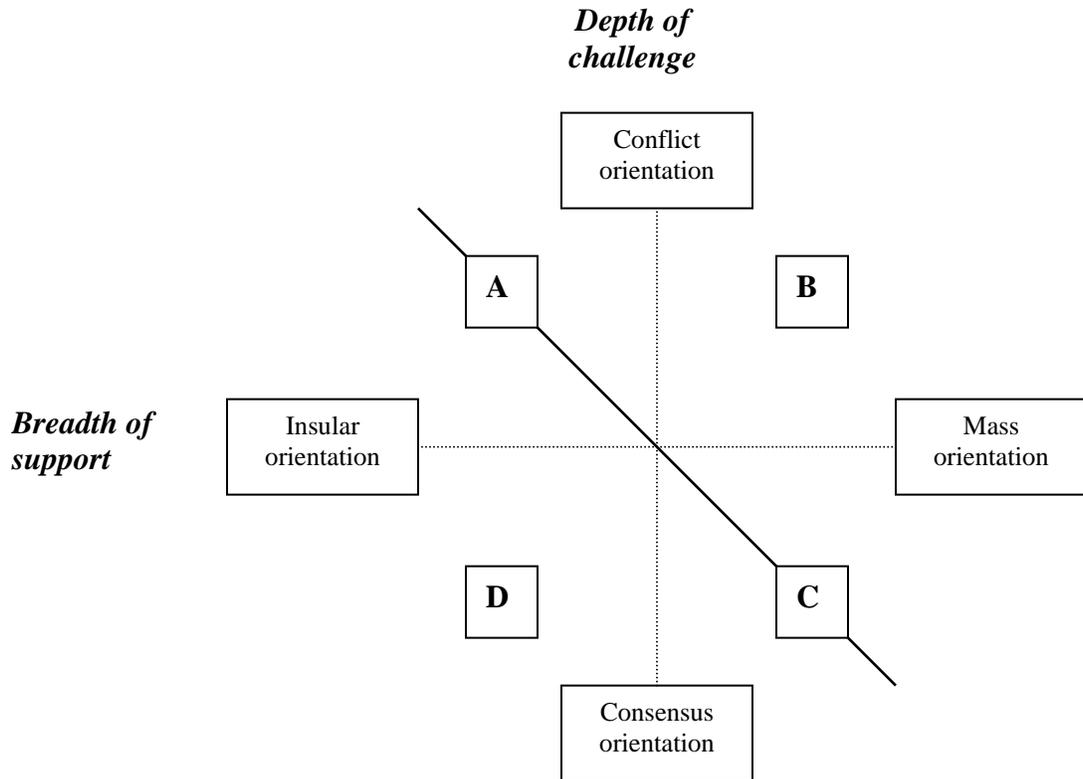
As proponents and opponents alike have noted, political opportunities are too often unproductively reified as objective and static structures (Gamson and Meyer 1996; Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Meyer 2004). We agree with this critique, but also concur with the underlying assessment that the concept of political opportunity continues to represent an essential analytical tool (Meyer 2004; Meyer and Minkoff 2004). The bidimensional framework – and the concept of a frontier of possible engagements – address a central aspect of that critique by reintegrating strategic choice about which opportunities to cultivate and exploit into analyses of actors' interactions with their environments. Moreover, it underscores that there are actors engaging on *both* sides of the frontier, which is an essential aspect of its dynamism. Strategic decisions are always shaped by the interaction between movement actors and the political contexts within which they operate – fields shaped by actors and opponents, onlookers, institutional structures, history, culture, etc. (Ray 1999). Actors position themselves based in part on an assessment of opponents and where they are mobilized. While countermobilization can take a variety of forms, it is not completely unpredictable (Zald and Useem 1987; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). Consequently, not only is the distribution of countermobilization a consideration in strategic positioning, but the *potential* for countermobilization also affects decisions about where an actor will position itself and how it will engage – i.e. whether or not to avoid countermobilization.

Decisions about positioning by actors on both sides of the frontier are part of the interactive dynamic of strategy, and that interaction is manifest in the inherent instability of the frontier itself.<sup>12</sup> Thus, while mapping a frontier at any point in time misses temporal dynamics, the framework clearly assumes that dynamism – i.e. in the lexicon of McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001), shifting from political opportunity "structures" to political opportunity "spirals." Expansion of the frontier, then, is essential to making deeper changes acceptable to greater numbers (i.e. expansion along *both* dimensions). A contracting frontier, in contrast, is associated with movement decline, demobilization, and/or countermobilization.

While an actor's position along the frontier has important implications for the nature of its contribution to a movement, it also has implications for the characteristics of that actor in terms of organizational form and internal politics. Research has documented the complex and reciprocal relationship between strategy and organizational characteristics (e.g. form) and dynamics (e.g. internal politics) in a variety of contexts. Minkoff (1993), for instance, distinguishes between protest, advocacy, and service organizations, noting that they embody different levels of challenge. Barakso (2004) explains how initial decisions about governance structures within NOW emphasizing the empowerment of grassroots activists exercised important guiding influence on subsequent strategic directions. Likewise, Polletta (2002) illustrates how a commitment to participatory democracy in a number of movements throughout the twentieth century shaped those movements and their decisions about how to mobilize and engage. Our point is that strategic orientation, and the strategic positioning that it entails, exists in a close and reciprocal relationship to actors' characteristics in terms of organizational form, internal politics, and collective identities. That allows us to make general distinctions among actors positioned in different regions of the strategic frontier; *Figure 2* illustrates those

distinctions. The diagram identifies four positions, based on the combinations of high and low on each dimension. Those positions represent conceptually useful "ideal types" sharing fundamental characteristics, linking orientations/positions, contributions, and organizational forms.

**Figure 2:** *Dimensions of Strategic Orientation and Organizational Position*



To clarify our points, we focus here on contrasts between actors positioning themselves toward either flank of the frontier, indicated in the diagram as positions A and D. Collective actors that position themselves in quadrant A embody an orientation favoring contentious politics and insular organization. Such actors are characterized by oppositional consciousness and are able to maintain relatively deep political challenges, as well as contentious tactics, but in most instances have relatively narrow appeal. Actors may choose a more insular and conflict

orientation during pre-emergent movement phases, in response to a non-receptive political environment, or to deepen challenges as a movement develops. For example, Meier and Rudwick (1973) found that race relation cells developed by the Fellowship of Reconciliation provided an organizational basis for the Congress of Racial Equality and served as an incubator for the direct action tactics of the civil rights movement. D'Emilio (1983) argued that cell structures initially deployed by the Mattachine Society played a similar role in the 1950's homophile movement vis-à-vis the subsequent emergence of the gay liberation movement – and that organizational transformations were largely responses to debates over the relative advantages and disadvantages of strategic insularity. In that sense, the contributions made by those actors to ultimate movement success are often indirect and temporally removed. Morris's (1984:139-173) research on movement halfway houses also suggests that while groups may be largely insular, they serve movement goals by expanding the capacity and tactical repertoire of participants and organizations (also see Staggenborg 1998). A burgeoning literature on free spaces is explicit about the tradeoff represented by oppositional insular structures (Evans and Boyte 1986; Polletta 1999). These actors opt for insularity in order to cultivate and disseminate the collective identities and tactical repertoires essential to more contentious politics. However, this requires an actor to throttle back on immediate political challenges in exchange for important contributions to movement maintenance or development. In short, actors in position A make important contributions to social change by serving as bases for social movement mobilization and/or continuity and the development of oppositional consciousness (Mansbridge 1986; Mansbridge and Morris 2001).

In contrast, collective actors in position D may be characterized as having a mass base with relatively low investment and commitment, and a predominantly consensus orientation.

These actors may be limited to shallower challenges, such as public education, in order to mobilize prior to movement emergence or to maintain broader public support after movement emergence. A professional movement organization with an extensive but shallow paper membership is an example of a collective actor in position D. Actors in this position tend to have higher interaction with institutional political actors, or be institutional actors themselves (although that is most common in eras following a movement cycle). For example, Rohlinger (2006) found that Planned Parenthood Federation of America adopted a centrist view of abortion after Clinton (a pro-choice ally) took office. This was an explicit attempt by the organization to maintain broad public support and capitalize on a broader political environment, which was receptive to social change. Here again, the choice represents a tradeoff: throttling back on substantial political challenges in order to expand their appeal. Actors in this position sometimes are dismissed as "timid" (Lofland 1993) and largely irrelevant to a movement. However, these actors can make important contributions to social change by maintaining public support for movement ideas and by working within these confines to pursue movement goals incrementally (Downey 2006a).

Position C represents an ostensible failure to exploit existing political possibilities, characterizing what Sawyers and Meyer (1999) refer to as "missed opportunities." This quadrant also generally represents activities that some have defined outside of the purview of social movement activity – although that assessment is a subject of active debate. For example, Roberts and Kloss (1979:57) discuss the phenomenon of "nonmovements" in which there is "no attempt to influence the labor or property relations of a given society." Some define consensus movements in largely the same manner (Lofland 1989; Schwartz and Paul 1992), although others suggest that they do in fact contribute to social change (McCarthy and Wolfson 1992). A parallel

debate concerns the implications of an emphasis on *personal* rather than *social* change. In a classic typology of movements, Aberle (1966) distinguished redemptive movements as those seeking change solely at the individual level, marking them off from movements with broader social change potential. Taylor (1996) makes a strong argument that personal goals, if wedded to particular groups and identities, can encompass an impetus for social change (see also Snow 1993). Recently, similar arguments have been made for the need to integrate "everyday politics" into our perspectives on social change (Boyte 2005; Kirkvliet 2005; Mansbridge and Flaster 2006). While viewpoints vary, we would argue that only *after* the tradeoffs are considered can we suggest that an actor is, for example, timid in its orientation or that it is missing opportunities rather than making an incremental or developmental contribution to social change.

Finally, positions in quadrant B (and all points beyond the diagonal) are where sustained mobilization is not possible, based on the definitions and explanations provided above. Actors that attempt to mobilize beyond the strategic frontier will be expected to retreat either toward increased insularity or toward more moderate challenges. Attempts to move beyond the frontier represent vanguard positions – i.e. those that push for deeper challenges (the radical vanguard, as commonly conceived) or one that pushes to broaden appeals for social change. Mobilization defines and alters the frontier, uncovering and creating opportunities as its boundaries are challenged. Ultimately, the area beyond the frontier is an aspirational region, where challenging movements seek to merge mass mobilization with fundamental challenges to the status quo, and potentially a revolutionary situation.

Strategic position has important implications for the characteristics associated with a collective actor and for the role that it plays in generating social change. The most important analytical implications of our framework, however, are not at the level of the single actor but at

the macro-organizational level. We now shift our discussion to that level to address the implications of the distribution of actors across the frontier.

#### STRATEGIC DISTRIBUTION AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT ARTICULATION

Previous research addressing inter-actor dynamics has focused primarily on competition, as exemplified by research from the resource mobilization perspective (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Zald and McCarthy 1987; Benford 1993). Research has recently given more systematic attention to strategic coordination, mostly in the form of coalitions (Rochon and Meyer 1997; Smith 2005; Bandy and Smith 2005). Although scholars recognize the potential for either competitive or cooperative relations between actors, there is little research explaining why either predominates in any particular movement. Generally, coalition is seen as somewhat exceptional, or the product of historical moments – typically times of exceptional political threat – when cooperation, rather than competition, is a rational activity to stave off political losses. Once these exceptional moments pass, ideological differences and the need for organizational maintenance become more pronounced and allies again become competitors for scarce resources, members, and political standing (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Staggenborg 1986; Zald and McCarthy 1987; Hathaway and Meyer 1997). If we solely focus on coordination as a cost-benefit analysis that makes cooperation a rational activity during particular moments, we miss the fact that collective actors orient themselves toward strategic outputs as well and consider allied actors in their strategic calculations, even if only informally and implicitly. Viewed in this manner, potential synergies exist among like-minded groups and do not simply benefit moderate organizations, as Haines (1988) argued in his radical flank thesis. For example, the moderate social and economic justice group, United for a Fair Economy, supported the newly formed and more radical,

Billionaires for Bush (or Gore), which proved critical to organizational growth and brought additional media attention to both groups during the 2000 Republican Convention (Boyd 2002).

To conceptualize variation across movements in terms of coordinative or competitive dynamics, we introduce the concept of *strategic articulation*. Strategic articulation refers to the overall level of strategic interaction within a movement, and the extent to which those interactions are predominantly coordinative or competitive. A movement that is strongly articulated will have relatively dense interactions among actors, and substantial strategic coordination among them. A weakly articulated movement is characterized by the lack of coordination, and predominantly competitive relationships among actors. Armstrong (2002) describes relationships among gay identity organizations in San Francisco as articulated in the sense that they are disparate in strategic focus but share common goals in the form of gay solidarity and rights.<sup>13</sup> Articulation is essentially a macro-organizational analog to inter-organizational coordination, but it entails broader structural properties and dynamics.

Articulation is most understandable when contrasted with its opposite: disarticulation. A disarticulated movement is characterized by the lack of strategic coordination and more pronounced conflicts between actors.<sup>14</sup> Disarticulation is exemplified by polarized movements that are divided between flanks interacting primarily as opponents. As Tarrow (1998:147-48) argues, polarization is characteristic of declining movement phases, often leading to conflict over the use of violence. One of the most historically recognized examples of polarization is the rupture within the Civil Rights movement after approximately 1965, in which more contentious groups (such as the Black Panthers or the radicalized SNCC) found less in common with more moderate groups retaining their emphasis on peaceful protest – even as movement demands were being institutionalized in the form of government agencies (Berger 1967; Cousens 1969). Branch

(2006:23-43) provides many examples of both internal and inter-organizational politics flowing from that dynamic – for example, as it concerned strategic decisions made by collective actors on all sides of the historic Selma march of 1965. The result was a movement with declining potential for productive synergy, and in which conflict – whether over strategic directions or resource competition – becomes a central dynamic of interaction. While strategic articulation enhances success by increasing intramovement coordination, disarticulation hinders coordination and decreases the chances for unified action.

Strategic articulation, then, is a variable property of social movements with important implications for outcomes. So what determines strategic articulation? As with any complex social phenomenon it is shaped by multiple factors, but we argue that different patterns in strategic distributions of movements are more or less conducive to strong articulation. To conceptualize those distributions, the framework that we use to locate the strategic position of single actors can be applied in a similar way to map all actors simultaneously across a movement – i.e. their distribution. Here, we draw on existing social movements literature to identify several patterns in those distributions and their impacts on strategic articulation. We suggest that the greatest potential for strategic articulation is achieved when a movement is balanced across several properties of the distribution. Articulation is facilitated to the extent that the distribution is *widely spread* (as opposed to narrowly concentrated), *evenly spaced* (as opposed to clustered and gapped), and the shape of the curve is *gradually sloped* (as opposed to concave or convex). Below, we present informal proposition about how each of those properties of strategic distribution affects articulation. Subsequently, we return to discuss the implications of strategic articulation, and the utility of the concept as an analytical tool. We should add: as with all such

propositions in the social sciences, they come with a *ceteris paribus* caveat; that is, we hypothesize that they will hold with all other factors equal.

*Proposition 1: Social movements in which actors are widely spread (as opposed to narrowly concentrated) across the political possibilities frontier generally are more strongly articulated.*

When actors are positioned across the full range of the frontier (i.e. widely spread), that presents the greatest potential for strategic differentiation and for the complementary contributions of "insular challengers" and "mass consensus-builders" (and all points in between). Scholars have documented the benefits of tactical diversity to social movements (Armstrong 2002; Olzak and Ryo 2004), and have illustrated that tactical differentiation and shifts are a result of organizational diversity within a movement (McCammon 2003). We extend that argument to hypothesize that strategic diversity in all forms, indicated by widely spread actors across a frontier, benefits the coordinative potential of movements.

*Proposition 2: The spacing of collective actors across a frontier affects strategic articulation. Specifically, movements are more strongly articulated when actors are evenly spaced across the frontier and are weakly articulated when actors are clustered together or when there are large gaps between them.*

This hypothesis is based on the relationship between strategic proximities, on the one hand, and dynamics of cooperation and competition on the other. Hathaway and Meyer (1997) found that greater political agreement between actors (i.e. strategic proximity) contributes to increased potential for coordination. However, market overlap (i.e. the extent to which actors draw from the same resource and participant bases), increases tendencies toward competition.

Because market overlap also generally increases with strategic proximity, it simultaneously increases the potential for cooperation (by maximizing the commonality of goals and tactics) and the potential for competition (by maximizing the commonality of resources and participants that they seek to mobilize). The result is a curvilinear relationship between overall strategic proximity and strategic articulation across a movement; too little proximity leaves little opportunity for cooperation, while too much proximity generates too much potential for competition. An even distribution of actors across the frontier, then, maximizes the potential for strategic articulation.<sup>15</sup>

*Proposition 3: The form of coordination (whether it is implicit or explicit) will vary depending upon the strategic proximity of actors.*

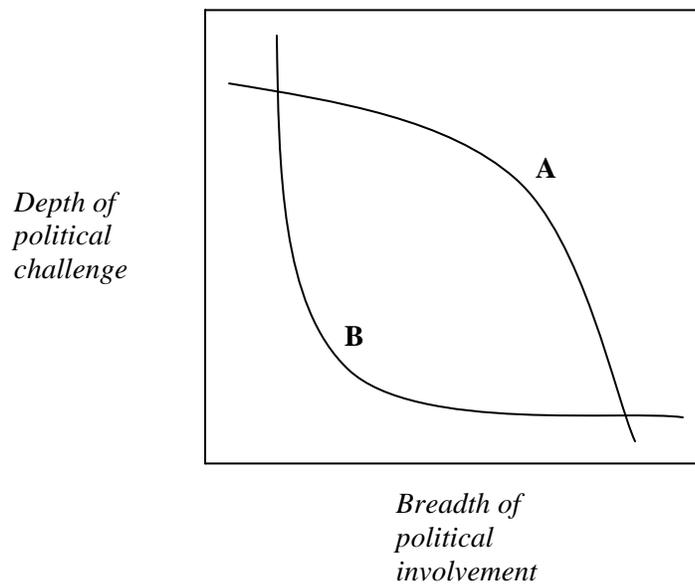
While proximity increases the potential for strategic coordination, coordination is not precluded by the distance among actors alone. As we have argued, the bidimensional framework illustrates how actors in different positions make different contributions to social movements, underscoring a rationale for coordination among actors that are distinct in terms of forms and positions. The *form* strategic coordination is likely to take, however, varies depending upon the proximity between actors. Coordination may be explicit, such as formal coalitions, but this is not always the case. When coordination occurs between more distant actors, coordination will be more implicit (rather than explicit). For example, the concept of "niche definition" (Downey 2006b) or "cooperative differentiation" (Hathaway and Meyer 1997) suggests that political actors in different institutional locations may cultivate a strategic division of labor, even without formal contact or coalition. The level of formality or explicitness, then, represents a variable property of coordination.

We move now to more conceptual patterns in strategic distribution, focusing particularly on how it affects the role of movement flanks. It is important to first underscore that while research most often associates flanks with radicalism, the framework presented above underscores that flanks are positioned on both radical and moderate ends of the strategic frontier, and that each is positioned to make distinct but valuable contributions. Specifically, while radical flanks serve to deepen challenges, "moderate" flanks serve to broaden appeals. Radical flanks are typically associated with the vanguard role, although their effects on movements as a whole vary. Haines' (1988) suggested that radical flanks make largely sacrificial contributions to movements, and that moderate groups are generally the beneficiaries – i.e. a somewhat parasitic role.<sup>16</sup> Radical flanks can also hasten movement decline to the extent that they exacerbate polarization and disintegration. Likewise, moderate flanks can broaden a movement's base and facilitate productive institutionalization, or they can "derail dissent" (in Lofland's terminology). Flanks, then, can play critical roles in movements – either developmental or divisive. The relationship between movement flanks and "body" is a crucial aspect of strategic articulation, and while that relationship varies there is little research to explain that variation. Here, we offer an explanation of that variation based on properties of strategic distributions, illustrating differences between integrated, isolated, and underdeveloped flanks.

*Proposition 4: To the extent that the strategic distribution is characterized by a constant slope, the movement overall will be more strongly articulated, specifically, flanks will be developed and integrated rather than isolated.*

To illustrate our proposition, we present two contrasting distributions in *Figure 3* – labeled A (convex) and B (concave) – and discuss their implications for strategic articulation.

**Figure 3:** *Distinct "Shapes" among Political Possibilities Frontiers*



It is important to briefly explain the importance of the slope of the frontier for understanding the dynamics of strategic distributions. Following the logic that we have already presented, a relatively flat slope represents a situation in which breadth of appeal is relatively sensitive to the depth of challenges – i.e. increasing the depth of challenge is likely to lead to substantially narrowed appeals. In that situation, the incentives of strategic positioning are such that actors will tend to lessen challenges to reach a much broader public. In contrast, a steep slope represents the opposite: the breadth of appeal is relatively insensitive to the depth of challenges. Here, the incentives generally run in the opposite direction; since deepened challenges only minimally influence the breadth of appeals, we would expect activists to deepen challenges. Of course, as the diagram illustrates, slopes may not be constant across the frontier, resulting in curves of various shapes – which represents a final crucial property of distributions for influencing the relationship of flanks to the core.

Curve A (concave) indicates substantial potential for (mass) mobilization at the lowest levels of challenge; likewise for (insular) actors that present deep challenges. Here, the slopes present tradeoffs that push actors toward extremes (i.e. radical and moderate flanks), with fewer mediating actors in between. This represents the dynamic of polarization associated with movement decline. It might also be characteristic of pre-emergent movements – e.g. where abeyance structures operate as insular actors and others appeal to a mass public through public education campaigns. Because of the chasm that exists between those general positions, there is little potential for coordination. This represents a disarticulated movement – i.e. one in which flanks tend to be isolated.

In contrast, curve B (convex) represents a movement with relatively underdeveloped flanks. That is, actors at the ends of the frontiers are not positioned appreciably forward (in terms of breadth or depth) relative to other actors. Referring back to the relationship between slope and incentives, actors tend to migrate and cluster toward the middle of the frontier, with mid-range challenges and appeals, rather than to push forward at the flanks. In that case, the movement is doing little to cultivate breadth or depth and that clustering will contribute to increased competitive pressures. Hence, the distribution is not ideal for overall strategic articulation.

Both distributions (concave and convex) represent alternate dangers for movements, and offer little opportunity for overall strategic articulation. A gradual curve (neither concave nor convex) offers a relatively strong central base of support for the movement – that is, substantial support for some challenges to the status quo with gradually and constantly decreasing levels of support for deeper challenges. In this case, flanks are able to play the crucial role of broadening appeals and deepening challenges (i.e. developmental roles), but they are not isolated from other actors and consequently there are greater opportunities for inter-actor coordination. For example,

the growth of the pro-life movement paralleled the expansion of the political possibilities in the 1980s. With Reagan at the helm and trumpeting the pro-life cause, mainstream pro-life groups began to push for incremental policy changes that would restrict abortion access (Rohlinger and Meyer 2005). However, pro-life youth became impatient with the pace of change, formed their own organizations, and took their challenges to the street (Blanchard 1995; Diamond 1995).

While these new more radical groups spurned institutional tactics, they coordinated their activities with more moderate pro-life organizations, who used the presence of a “radical flank” to push its own policy goals (Rohlinger 2006). In this way, the pro-life radical flank was relatively integrated into the broader pro-life movement. When we say that a flank is “integrated,” it identifies more closely with other actors in the movement and has more extensive interactions with them, thereby increasing the potential for coordination. Flanks will be more integrated when there are multiple actors extending from the strategic core at regular intervals with minor strategic differences. In that situation, while a particular actor might be positioned a substantial distance (strategically speaking) from the main body, there exists a “chain” of actors extending back to the core. (Here we see the interaction among the properties that we discussed previously – specifically, wide spread and even spacing.)

The integration of flanks also helps us to understand processes of movement decline, especially as declines are associated with countermovement activity and the potentially divisive role played by flanks. Countermovements seek to erode the support of their opponents (Mottl 1980; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996), and naturally draw from those who have the shallowest support (those found at the lowest levels on the depth dimension). A disarticulated movement is particularly ripe for a divide-and-conquer strategy by countermovements seeking to splinter a movement. Therefore, movements with isolated flanks will be more vulnerable to

countermobilization than those with integrated flanks. This suggests that while movements at their peak may concentrate their energies on deepening challenges, it is equally important in the long run to cultivate support across the strategic frontier in order to lessen vulnerability to countermovement attacks. This also underscores the importance of conscience constituents in movement success (part of the moderate flank). While some scholars argue that such support is essential, research is generally skeptical toward the role of movement bystanders because they are fickle in their support, and because organizations can alter their goals to appeal to them. To the extent that a movement has a broad distribution of strategically positioned actors, the danger may be minimized because actors to whom they primarily appeal are distinct from those that pursue the deepest social changes. Here, then, we reemphasize the importance of specific roles for such actors – both in terms of generating support for movement gains (a developmental role) *and* in deflecting the most aggressive responses of countermovements (a defensive role). While conscience constituents may (or may not) play a central role in movement success, they represent an important barrier to countermovement success. Therefore, the ability of movement actors to retain support from bystanders is an important defensive strategy. Of course, such efforts may also draw on the energies of those seeking to move toward the deepest challenges – representing another aspect of strategic tradeoffs within a movement. In short, while the concave frontier suggests the problem of isolated flanks, the convex frontier suggests movement flanks are underdeveloped. Thus, we argue that a balanced distribution (i.e. neither concave nor convex, and gradually sloped) offers the greatest potential for a strongly articulated movement and integrated flanks.

Our central argument, then, is that strategic distributions have an important effect on the potential for strategic articulation across a movement – i.e. facilitating (or obstructing) actors'

abilities to coordinate activities (explicitly or implicitly) and to generate a stronger movement for social change. When considered at the level of single actors, the strategic frontier emphasizes tradeoffs that any actor confronts; considered at the movement level, however, it suggests the potential for actors with distinct strategic orientations to cultivate complementary and synergistic strategic action. The focus on different kinds of actors engaged in distinct activities toward similar goals underscores that collective actions for social change are not only multi-organizational fields (Klandermans 1992) but multiform movements (Tarrow 1998:103-104).

## DISCUSSION

The goal of our research is to extend current insights on social movement strategy to the macro-organizational level. Specifically, we present strategic articulation as an important but largely unrecognized variable property of social movements, and identify several properties of strategic distributions that facilitate articulation. Before specifying the analytical payoffs of this framework, we briefly recapitulate our central arguments. We began by explaining how strategic orientations operate to guide the numerous strategic decisions that collective actors make. We present a framework for assessing strategic orientation in terms of actors' relative positions along a frontier across whose parameters are defined by the tradeoff between depth of challenge and breadth of appeal – a parsimonious representation of strategic space. That framework allows us to distinguish among actors' strategic orientations (and their corresponding contributions to movement development), and to map the distribution of actors across a movement as a whole. Finally, we propose specific links between the properties of those distributions and the potential for strategic articulation within a movement.

There are several readily identifiable analytical payoffs associated with the framework: 1) it broadens our perspective on the distinct roles and contributions that actors can make to movements; 2) it generates expectations about the predominance of competitive or cooperative dynamics; 3) it generates expectations about whether flanks will play developmental or divisive roles; and 4) it elaborates on the ways that macro-organizational structures can influence movement dynamics and trajectories. We review each of those payoffs below.

First, the framework illustrates the tradeoffs associated with strategic choice at the level of strategic orientations – i.e. how some actors opt toward insular organizations cultivating deep challenges while others opt for mass mobilization to broaden appeals for social change. The focus on strategic orientation (rather than discrete choices) facilitates a more general mapping of relative strategic positions within a movement. That mapping underscores how strategic tradeoffs confronted by actors can simultaneously represent opportunities for differentiation and complementary action at the macro-organizational level. That is, while there are indeed (as Jasper explains) a long list of "risks, costs, and potential benefits" associated with any strategic choice, a field of loosely coordinated actors that assume *distinct* risks, costs, and benefits have the potential for generating a strategic division of labor (even if only implicit) that works to the benefit of the movements as whole. As such, the framework identifies distinct contributions made by collective actors with different strategic orientations, and illustrates how the potential for movement success is maximized when efforts toward social change are both deepened and broadened. That underscores how actors posing incremental challenges can contribute to movement success by broadening appeals, thereby integrating them more fully into social movement analysis. Rather than marginalizing such actors from analyses, or assuming their effects (productive or counterproductive), we must examine the extent to which flanks are

integrated into or isolated from the movement as a whole to help understand whether it might play a constructive or divisive role. That assists, for example, in the contemporary project of systematically integrating institutional politics into social movement research (e.g. Meyer, Jenness and Ingram 2005), underscoring how "institutionalization" literally transforms social change demands into conventional social goals – i.e. broadening appeals.

Second, our framework helps to explain the balance between the twin dynamics of intra-movement competition and coordination. Previous research (most notably from the resource mobilization perspective) has emphasized competition between organizations, and more recent research has addressed the potential for inter-actor coordination. Research has not generally offered explanations as to why the balance tips in one direction or another in any particular movement. Our framework generates such expectations based on specific properties of the strategic distribution of actors across the strategic frontier. Specifically, we posit that certain properties of the distribution of actors across the frontier (namely spread, spacing, slope and shape) help to promote strategic articulation across a movement and increase the potential for coordination. In that sense, the framework links structural properties to intra-movement dynamics, and links both in a recursive manner to strategic choices made by movement actors.

Third, as an extension of our arguments about intra-movement dynamics, we suggest that strategic articulation has important implications for the crucial role of movement flanks. Again, this is important because while research has indicated the potential for distinct roles, we have no systematic explanations as to why those roles vary. Without a systematic explanation of those differences, the utility of analyzing flanks in general has limited utility for understanding movement dynamics. Drawing from existing research, we have identified the possibility for flanks to play constructive or divisive roles, and suggest that the strategic distribution of actors is

an important determinant of which role a flank will play in a particular movement. Specifically, we suggest that the potential for more constructive contributions (e.g. developmental or defensive) is greater when movement flanks are integrated; in contrast, the potential for contributing to movement divisiveness is greater when flanks are isolated. In that sense, the framework allows us to go beyond universal expectations regarding flanks, but to explore variation in the role of flanks vis-à-vis a movements as a whole.,

Finally, drawing out the implications of our previous arguments, this framework offers insights into the determinants of movement trajectories, especially regarding development and decline. Strategic articulation facilitates movement development by broadening the potential base for mobilization, facilitating greater opportunities for deepening activism, allowing greater potential for inter-actor coordination, and expanding the range of political opportunities that can be cultivated and exploited. To reiterate: movements develop in a manner most propitious for long-term success when they expand both the breadth of appeal and the depth of challenge, and when actors across the strategic frontier coordinate their activities toward social change (implicitly or explicitly). Strategic articulation also prevents rapid movement decline by lessening vulnerability to countermovements and preventing movement polarization, and by maintaining links between radical and moderate, contentious and consensus, institutionalized and grassroots actors.

Recent concerns about new developments in social movement research have criticized the tendency toward "exercise[s] in typologizing" (Myers 2005). That is, indeed, a danger for a field in which empirical research on basic variables and outcomes presents so many challenges due to embeddedness and overdetermination. We have identified specific conceptual payoffs to emphasize both the potential and the limitations of our framework. It is important to point out

that we do not present a new and/or competing perspective on social movements. Rather, we provide a supplemental conceptual tool that helps to explain heretofore undertheorized intra-movement dynamics and their implications. Specifically, our framework contextualizes strategic choices made by collective actors, which helps to explain how strategic decisions by collective actors affect intra-movement dynamics and, ultimately, movement trajectories. By presenting a parsimonious framework for mapping distinct strategic positions and distributions, we point to important areas for future empirical research that will help to bridge structure and agency, as well as macro and micro, in social movement research.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Strategic orientation parallels the familiar concept of tactical repertoires (Tilly 1978), but suggest a more general set of choices beyond tactics and emphasizes collective identity as an organizing principal, rather than the investment in familiarity at the heart of the repertoire

concept. In that sense, the concept of strategic orientation is closer to what Lofland (1993) defines as theories of social change, or Armstrong (2002) defines as political logics.

<sup>2</sup> Minkoff (2002:261) explains the logic of macro-organizational analysis succinctly: "The starting point for a macro-organizational approach to studying social movements is the observation that although movements are comprised of more than the sum of their affiliated organizations, their organizational base fundamentally shapes the kinds and amounts of resources that activists are able to mobilize, the issues that come to dominate and identify their cause, and the strategies they adopt in interaction with authorities and opponents."

<sup>2</sup> This is not a network approach that seeks to measure the relationships between actors – although the positions we are describing clearly have implications for such networks.

<sup>3</sup> When tradeoffs are made explicit, Jasper refers to them as dilemmas. Because we argue that decisions made by one group has implications for other actors in the field, the potential consequences of strategic choices are not always explicit. As such, we use the term tradeoffs throughout the paper.

<sup>4</sup> In terms of tactics, Jasper (2006:106-07) refers to the "naughty or nice" dilemma, concerning the relative benefits of different manners of challenging existing arrangements.

<sup>6</sup> Research on consensus movements are not unanimous in their assessment of their implications; compare McCarthy and Wolfson (1992) and Schwartz and Paul (1992).

<sup>7</sup> It is important to underscore that the depth of challenge dimension does not narrowly refer to goals and tactics. For example, different organizational types encompass distinct levels of challenge related to means and ends. As we have noted, and as empirical examples underscore, the choice of goals and tactics and other strategic components tend to incorporate similar levels of challenge (although exceptions clearly exist).

<sup>8</sup> Jasper (2006:83) refers to this as the "today or tomorrow" dilemma – i.e. the decision as to whether to focus on "immediate objectives" or "distant goals."

<sup>9</sup> Jasper (2006:125) describes the decision about the extent to which strategy should focus on outsiders or insiders as the Janus dilemma. It is also related to the extension dilemma (2006:127) in which an actor confronts a tradeoff between diversity and unity in its composition.

<sup>10</sup> Some political or geographic conditions can impose or facilitate insularity. For example, in his analysis of the communal revolt of 1871, Gould (1991) found that information networks that were geographically defined neighborhoods were crucial to mobilization into the insurgency. Similarly, Einwohner (2006) found that the Nazi occupation of Warsaw forced activists to band together and create an oppositional identity.

<sup>11</sup> Those familiar with elementary economics will notice that the framework of the "political possibilities frontier" is borrowed from the concept of the "production possibilities frontier," or PPF. In the PPF (economics), the two dimensions represent two goods that might be produced by a given society with fixed resources. Those resources may be allocated to production of the two good in various combinations, producing a range of combined outputs. In the economics model, increased overall productivity expands productive possibilities in the same way that social movement mobilization expands political possibilities.

<sup>12</sup> Jasper (2006) makes this point clearly in his constant links between strategy in the domain of social movements and of military engagement.

<sup>13</sup> According to Armstrong (2002:110): "Something that is articulated is expressed in parts, but is also systematically interrelated. Each contingent or organization expresses its position without restraint but does not claim to represent the gay movement as a whole."

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<sup>14</sup> We borrow the term "disarticulation" from research explaining the structural distortions associated with economic underdevelopment. Stokes and Anderson (1990:66), building on Amin (1974, 1976) suggest that disarticulation is "characterized by weak or missing links between economic sectors. Any integration occurs via the world economy rather than through internal exchanges. Disarticulation thus consists of the juxtaposition of economic sectors with radically different levels of development and productivity."

<sup>15</sup> Another dynamic that follows from spread and spacing concerns its implications for movement careers. Widely spread and evenly spaced movements will tend to exhibit not only greater inter-actor coordination, but greater intramovement mobility among participants. Collective actors with a mass/consensus orientation are more "entry-friendly" for potential participants, and are therefore important sites for initiating participation. Even spacing and wide spread allow participants more opportunity to deepen their participation as they become socialized to movement ideals and goals because they will have greater contact with other actors within the movement. To the extent that distribution is evenly spaced and widely spread, movement careers of participants will exhibit greater shifting of organizational affiliation in association with deepening their participation.

<sup>16</sup> While his argument focused specifically on resource allocations, the implications of radical flank effects have generally been more broadly interpreted to apply to other aspects of movement dynamics.