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Social Movements and Social Networks: Introduction

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ABSTRACT *In this Introduction we provide a brief literature review of work on social networks and social movements, a brief introduction to certain key concepts and debates in social network analysis, and a brief introduction to the articles which follow in the special issue.*

KEY WORDS: Social movement networks, diffusion, brokerage, power and leadership, repertoire change

The importance of social networks and the usefulness of social network analysis (SNA) as a research method are both widely acknowledged in social movement studies (see Crossley, 2007; Diani & McAdam, 2003). Interest in both has increased significantly in recent years, not least as an effect of computing and software developments (e.g. Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002) which have facilitated routine access to sophisticated analytic tools for anybody with a basic PC or laptop and the patience to read one of a number of very clear introductions to SNA (e.g. Scott, 2000; Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

A great deal of research on networks and social movements has drawn on ideas from network analysis without employing its formal, quantitative tools. Conversely, studies that *do* employ the formal tools of network analysis have most often drawn their questions from work that uses networks in a less formal sense. In either case, however, there is a broad understanding – and one that reaches back into the main traditions of research from the 1970s forward, including resource mobilization theory, political process theory, framing theory, the *Dynamics of Contention* program (e.g. McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001), and new social movement theory – that recognizes social movements as essentially reticulate in structure, and therefore amenable to analysis through metaphors and formal operations that capture the properties of their networks.

One of the great strengths of network-analytic studies – and network-metaphorical thinking – in social movement studies is that it invites the observer to look below the official stories and representations that movements and their activists make and discover hidden dynamics and relations (which, it is true, activists sometimes want to keep from

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view, but also may sometimes appreciate as clarifying why they are running into roadblocks). As Tilly (2005, p. 61) writes:

In practice [...] constituent units of claim-making actors often consist not of living, breathing whole individuals but of groups, organizations, bundles of social ties, and social sites such as occupations and neighborhoods. Actors consist of networks deploying partially shared histories, cultures, and collective connections with other actors [...]

Such actors, however, almost never describe themselves as composite networks. Instead, they offer collective nouns; they call themselves workers, women, residents of X, or United Front Against Y. They attribute unitary intentions to themselves, and most often to the objects of their claims as well. They recast social relations and network processes as individuals and individually deliberated actions.

Although thinking in these terms is hardly new for movements, the advance of formal-analytic tools to translate thinking into concrete research has made analysis both easier and – unfortunately – sometimes more empiricist, as good network data may be hard to assemble. Nevertheless, as Saul Alinsky, the intellectual and practical ‘father’ of community organizing in the USA counseled organizers as far back as the 1940s (Alinsky was influenced by Chicago-School community studies), those people *designated* as leaders in a community are not necessarily the *real* leaders; the organizer has to find the real leaders by finding out who the people are to whom others talk and listen, and from whom others seek help and advice.

Even if understood most simply as the social ties among individual actors in and around movements, networks are important to collective action in many ways. At the most basic level, members of aggrieved populations must communicate if they are to coordinate their efforts, pool their resources and act collectively, and different patterns of connection between them will affect the ease with which such coordination is achieved, along with its efficiency/effectiveness (Coleman, 1990; Crossley & Ibrahim, 2012; Marwell & Oliver, 1993). This is one reason why some social movement scholars, notably Diani (1995), conceptualize social movements *as networks* (of activists and/or social movement organizations [SMOs]). ‘Social movement’ implies concerted activity which implies a level of coordination between actors that can only be achieved through sustained interaction and thus, through networks.

Moreover, in addition to the usual benefits of ‘social capital’ (Burt, 2005; Coleman, 1990), higher density – or a greater number of ties among actors – within networks has been linked, both theoretically and empirically, to increased solidarity, mutual support and to the generation of incentives for self-sacrifice within movements (Coleman, 1988; Crossley & Ibrahim, 2012; Gould, 1991, 1993, 1995; Pfaff, 1996). Where density is higher, participants are more willing to engage in the often costly and risky activity of protest (Coleman, 1988; Crossley & Ibrahim, 2012; Gould, 1991, 1993, 1995; Pfaff, 1996). Furthermore, because they involve more intense interactions among their members, dense networks facilitate establishment of the nonmainstream values, situational definitions and commitments which are characteristic of many social movement communities (Coleman, 1988; Fischer, 1982). That is to say they facilitate the formation and preservation of movement-specific subcultures – wherein shared definitions of the substance, source, and of scope of the aggrieved group’s troubles can develop – which

again fuel collective action (e.g. Scott, 1992). Conversely, as Goodwin (1997) shows, where collective action separates participants from others with whom they enjoy strong affective ties, this can have a destabilizing and demotivating effect.

None of these effects – or the effects of networks we present below – are automatic. All are mediated by other factors and, most importantly, by the interagency of those involved. How a network ‘works’ and what effects it has depend in large part upon the content of the interactions (ties) of its members. Furthermore, as various authors have argued, the graph theoretic and/or statistical methods of SNA capture only one aspect of networks and their significance, failing to engage sufficiently with issues of meaning and identity, and thereby necessitating use of qualitative methods too, in a mixed-method strategy (Crossley, 2010; Edwards, 2009; Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994; Mische, 2003).

Social Networks and Social Movements

The study of social movements and social networks has a long relationship in sociology. At least since Tilly (1978) adopted the idea of ‘catnets’ (category-networks) to describe the groupness of social movement actors in *From Mobilization to Revolution* from the network theorist, Harrison White, some element of network theory and analysis has been present in the discipline. And the roots likely extend farther back than that. For Tilly, catnets were a sort of analogue to the Marxist question of how to define a class, and extended too to E.P. Thompson’s (1963) contentions in *The Making of the English Working Class* that there was simultaneity in the development of ‘class in itself’ and ‘class for itself’ (‘The English working class was present at its own birth’). Catnets were a more formal and abstract way of talking about whether the members of groups objectively had connections with each other, and whether they understood these connections to give them sufficient commonality upon which they could base collective action. For White, who developed a distinct perspective on social networks throughout his career, the *cultural* content and aspects of networks are always central: social ties are narrated, either explicitly or not – ethnomethodologists, too, understand social ties to be based on collective, shared stories that underwrite social relationships – and typical ‘story sets’ compose distinct ‘types of [social] tie’.

In spite of this culturally laden groundwork, the study of social networks and the study of social movements have not *always* been as resolutely concerned with types of tie, stories, and identities as the earlier work might have suggested. Even Tilly took nearly 20 years to fully appreciate the cultural valences of his own arguments (see Krinsky & Mische, 2013). Instead, social movement scholars have often treated the analysis of social networks in ways that emphasize *certain* types of tie, and the strength of those ties, over the questions of how these types of tie form. This is not necessarily a shortcoming, but it is shorthand geared toward the analysis of specific issues that have concerned scholars of social movements for decades. These issues include questions about diffusion of social movement performances or actions, identities, and organizational forms; the centrality of certain actors and organizations in movements as ‘brokers’ of information, ideas, or resources; the centrality of actors and organizations as leaders or focal points of power and prestige; the role of social networks in recruiting movement participants; the structure of movement organizations and coalitions; and, finally – again, with significant concern for the cultural aspects of networks – shifts in repertoires of contention and in meaning structures. We will turn, in a moment, to brief descriptions of each of these areas of research.

Diffusion and Brokerage

Networks provide the channels whereby movement frames, repertoires, and sometimes even triggers are diffused beyond instigators to a wider population of potential participants (Andrews & Biggs, 2006; Hedström, 1994; Hedström, Sandel, & Stern, 2000; Ohlemacher, 1996; Oliver & Myers, 2003). In some cases, this will involve the ‘broadcast networks’ of both the mass and more specialized, activist media. In others, it will involve networks of geographically dispersed SMOs. Many accounts, however, suggest that face-to-face networks are important in the decisions that activists make regarding the appropriation and use of information and innovations that reach them by means of mass broadcasts.

Research on the US Civil Rights movement revealed the importance of social networks for diffusing sit-ins and other types of actions from one city to another. Rather than spreading spontaneously, ‘like a fever’, the sit-ins of 1960 spread through networks of activists affiliated with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and particularly through its youth division (see Polletta, 1998). Aldon Morris’s (1984) research revealed that instead of being simply a more hidebound organization that abjured direct action, the NAACP – while not officially involving itself in direct action – was a key ‘mobilizing structure’ that underlay the resurgence of militant challenges to Jim Crow at a crucial juncture in the Civil Rights movement. Moreover, he discusses the connections among civil rights movements in the South – and the North – and the ways in which these relationships were mediated by competition over resources (one type of tie) and by the necessity of cooperation against the counteroffensives of the white supremacist power structures of the Jim Crow South (another type of tie). Accordingly – and put more formally than Morris does in his work – the diffusion of protest activities through the Southern Civil Rights movement networks was conditioned both by preexisting networks of activists and by the organizational activities of resource-mobilization by which formal organizations acted as brokers, bringing resources from funders – often, though not exclusively – in the North to the struggle.

Similarly, some of the language of framing also uses network-like metaphors and is concerned crucially with diffusion. The practice of ‘frame bridging’, for example, involves a kind of brokerage that enables ideologically congruent frames to join together even among otherwise unconnected actors; it is a key process in coalition-building, but involves diffusion of ideological content through the establishment of new ties among actors. Even more crucially, the diffusion of ‘master frames’ such as the demand for group rights in the 1960s and 1970s, has been traced in a number of instances to show how frames travel through networks of interrelated activists, and from one arena to another. Without this diffusion, we cannot see ‘cycles of protest’, and without such cycles, we are unlikely to see the formation of ‘repertoires of contention’, in which certain kinds of contentious performances become modular and generalized means of social and political activism.

Furthermore, brokerage appears as a key explanatory mechanism in a good deal of studies of social movements, both because of brokers’ importance in diffusion dynamics and because of the roles that brokers play in intra-movement communication and the power they accrue in doing so. Again, though not cast in network terms, Robnett’s (1997) study of ‘bridge leaders’ in the Civil Rights movement explicitly theorizes the role that unofficial leaders play in connecting activists in a mass membership organization to the core leaders of these groups.

Studies of diffusion dynamics drawing explicitly on network imagery – and on network analysis – are increasingly common in social movement studies. Where earlier studies focused on the diffusion of activist performances through the channels of interpersonal

acquaintance networks, and then through generalized processes of mass-mediation, contemporary work is increasingly focused on web-based diffusion and diffusion through user-generated, internet communication technologies (ICTs). ICTs like *Facebook* and *Twitter* (however different they are configured) combine aspects of interpersonal networks and mass-communication broadcast, and can quickly join users from around the world, and can therefore assist in diffusing information through multiple channels quickly and across vast spaces. Earlier, websites and email forwards and Listservs appeared to play similar roles. For this reason, the application of ICTs to social movements has attracted considerable attention, in part to find out what is new about the dynamics ICTs produce. Furthermore, because ICTs leave electronic traces, and these traces are searchable, it is possible to reconstruct the networks of connection, page views, hyperlinks, and the like in ways that are more difficult for other kinds of communication.

Power and Leadership

Network analysis is also well suited to studies of power, influence, and leadership. Although as a metaphor, networks are often understood to be a third form of organization alongside – but distinct from – markets and hierarchies, in practice, the analysis of networks is often geared toward understanding the ways in which actual social interactions result in situations of unequal power, of hierarchies within more ‘horizontal’ organization, and of core-periphery structures.

Once again, the problems that network-based studies tackle are present elsewhere in the study of social movements: Jo Freeman’s pivotal article from the feminist movement on the ‘tyranny of structurelessness’, for example, indicates that elite formation in allegedly nonhierarchical – in the parlance of the time, ‘structureless’ – organizations occurs through preexisting friendship networks:

These friendship groups function as networks of communication outside any regular channels for such communication that may have been set up by a group. If no channels are set up, they function as the only networks of communication. Because people are friends, because they usually share the same values and orientations, because they talk to each other socially and consult with each other when common decisions have to be made, the people involved in these networks have more power in the group than those who don’t. And it is a rare group that does not establish some informal networks of communication through the friends that are made in it. (Freeman, 1972, p. 152)

Freeman’s suggestion that leaderless organizations *have leaders, whether or not they hold official power*, shook up feminist organizations and led some to attempt to make formal changes in their procedures in order to guard against the ‘iron law of oligarchy’ – e.g. rotating facilitators of meetings – so that power could be more transparent and more easily checked.

The basic issue here is that in many social groupings there emerge focal people to whom others listen and whom they follow, and there emerge subgroups who are more densely connected to each other than to people in other subgroups – or in no subgroup at all. Furthermore, there are actors who are positioned well to connect the group to the outside or to connect groups to each other but who are not clearly part of any group.

Accordingly, Ganz’s (2000) argument that creative leadership in social movements (‘strategic capacity’) lies in a leadership group’s dense connections to grassroots activists on one hand, and to other movements on the other, suggests that leadership itself is

multidimensional and frequently *distributed*: leaders' ability to react creatively to situation depends on strong local knowledge and motivation as well as on the ability to recontextualize this knowledge through dialogue with experiences gained in other movement settings. Accordingly, leadership and creativity are often a property of *groups* rather than of individuals, and depends on the group members' proximate and distant social ties.

Even classic formulations in social movement theory, whether Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy (or Piven and Cloward's extension of it in *Poor People's Movements*, 1979) or McCarthy and Zald's (1977) predictions about resource mobilization, depend on the kind of relational thinking that underlies network analysis. Each is interested in the ways in which social movement leaders forge ties not only with the members of movements but also with resource-rich potential allies and representatives of the state. This forging and severing of social ties – and its consequences – is the stuff of network thinking and amenable to network analysis. This is not, of course, to say that all relational thinking *is* network analysis, but rather to say that the consideration of leadership, prestige, and power in social movements tends to highlight the ways in which political actors are tied to grassroots 'social movement communities', to other movements, and to a variety of elite actors.

The same kinds of questions have also characterized some efforts to understand the overall changes in social movement activity. Specifically, scholars have studied the question of whether social movements that are more oriented toward 'identity' and 'recognition' have supplanted those more oriented toward material gains. This postulate, stemming from New Social Movement theory in the 1980s (even amid the early wave of neoliberal attacks on northern European social welfare states!), suggested that 'new social movements' had taken their place at the center of political protest, whereas labor movements – the old social movement – had declined. Nevertheless, what this meant was difficult to ascertain empirically; if labor protest continued to occur, and to involve many people, how could it be said that other movements had become more prominent? Numerically? Perhaps. But more important would be to show that either they articulated a more radical vision of social change or that they had become focal actors in setting terms of social debate, or focal actors in coalitions, however many people they mobilized and however many protests they actually organized. The question of articulating radical social criticism and demands does not take network-like thinking, but the latter set of questions does.

Similar questions of relational prominence also characterize efforts to understand who exerts power and influence in networks of Internet-mediated communication. Here, questions of who repeats whose tweets, who links to others' websites, likes *Facebook* posts and pages become keys to thinking about who enjoys prominence, prestige, and brokerage power in these interactions.

Finally, in the sociology of movements, increasing concern with cultural dynamics has led to relational metaphors and analyses of cultural artifacts and activity. According to Snow and Benford, 'frame resonance' relies, in part, on the 'centrality' of frames proffered by activists to the worldviews of those who receive them, while others look at the connections among frames, claims, or other language in order to understand the ways in which new meanings arise through their relationships.

Recruitment and Continuity

Much of the work on social movement diffusion and brokerage is applicable to questions of social movement recruitment. After all, in order to recruit members, movement groups must

diffuse their message out and gain adherents. Ties to active members and supporters increase the likelihood of recruitment and provide a channel for it, whilst ties to nonparticipants and movement opponents often inhibit this process (Fernandez & McAdam, 1988; Kitts, 2000; McAdam, 1982, 1986; McAdam & Paulson, 1993; Passy, 2001, 2003; Snow, Zurcher, & Ekland-Olson, 1980 – but see Jasper & Poulsen, 1995). Furthermore, this applies at the collective as well as the individual level. McAdam (1982), for example, observes both that recruitment of blacks to the civil rights movement in the USA in the 1950s was more difficult in communities with higher levels of integration, because black–white relations constituted a mechanism of control over the former and that whole church populations were sometimes recruited, *en masse*, where their pastor was linked to the wider movement (see also Morris, 1984). However, adding further complexity, Biggs (2006) notes that church attendance appears to have inhibited recruitment in some and perhaps a majority of cases, particularly where the pastor was not connected to the movement, again suggesting that networks have an effect but that this can be negative or positive depending on the norms and situational definitions generated within them and on the demands that they make upon their members' time. In a further, interesting twist upon this idea, Sandell (1999) demonstrates that the outflow of participants leaving a movement is affected by network ties too. Activists are more likely to leave a group or campaign when those to whom they have ties leave.

To be sure, network effects on movement recruitment are not always the same. For example, Bearman & Stovel (2000) found that early joiners to the Nazi party frequently reported that their attachment to the Nazi movement increased with personal loss and disconnection from existing social relations, though these were replaced by strong and multiplex ties to the Nazi party itself. Nevertheless, Blee's research on the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s suggests almost the opposite: the Klan recruited much in the same way that Alinskyist community organizers and civil rights activists would begin to organize two generations later; they organized through bloc recruitment, taking advantage of existing social networks by recruiting, for example, whole congregations at once.

Networks are also important in movement continuity in at least three ways. First, the principal organizations in a movement may, at the end of a cycle of protest, disappear, leaving either smaller organizations behind or even informal networks of activists who still keep the flame of the movement burning. Second, as Taylor (1989; also see Whittier 1994) shows for the women's movement, these 'abeyance structures' contain small clusters of activists who can provide collective memory of and symbolic links to earlier movement activity for later generations of activists seeking to reclaim the mantle of leadership on a given issue. Similarly, Barker (2001) shows that the solidarity mobilizations of 1980 were rooted in small networks of independent labor activists that had, in many senses, lain low for nearly 10 years after the repression of strikes by the Communist regime in 1970. These small networks, however, were critical for forming a dense core around which new activists and strikers could be recruited.

Third, and similarly, McAdam (1989) shows that in addition to his earlier findings that potential activists were more easily recruited to high-risk activism via dense social networks, the *biographical consequences* of social movement participation are likely to result in the formation of social networks that *keep activists active* across movements and issues over time.

Organizations, Coalitions, and Spillover

One fairly clear area in which to think about networks in social movements is in the network-like form of most social movement ‘fields’ or ‘industries’ and ‘sectors’ (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Students of movements have long argued that reducing movements to single organizations is a serious error and that movements are fundamentally coalitional in their structure. Coalitions, however, vary considerably in the strength and the number of bonds that hold their members together, in the density of relations among their members. Furthermore, coalitions can be more or less coordinated and more or less directed at a single object. McCarthy (2005), for example, discusses community coalitions that frequently take shape around specific public policies in US cities as ‘velcro triangles’ in which constituent groups can attach themselves or detach themselves easily from the coalition’s activities at any given time. This is a riff on the concept of ‘iron triangles’ in studies of policy-making that point to dense networks of legislative aides, regulators, and industry representatives, but are part of a larger set of ‘policy networks’ that exert influence on policy. Important here is that social movement networks can and do overlap with policy networks, and in doing so, social movements may be channeled into more institutionalized action. Nevertheless, it is also true that movements tend to move in and out of institutionalized action *as* movements.

Here too is where ‘social movement spillover’ can be understood as a problem of bounding networks and porous network boundaries. Meyer and Whittier (1994) define social movement spillover where movements’ boundaries become indistinct as they address themselves to overlapping policies and overlapping participants or potential participants. Krinsky (2007) suggests that cases of spillover and coalitions be understood together, on a continuum from uncoordinated to fully coordinated action, and from the kind of coalitions that develop through shared claim-making and those that develop through shared organizational, purposive activity. What counts is not just the *presence* of a tie, but its content and its patterns.

Repertoire Change

Concern for the content of network connections and their patterning is fundamental to a whole area of network analytic approaches to the study of political contention based on the concepts of contentious repertoires. The key to relational understandings of contention lies in their explicit thinking about social interactions, and particularly the question of *who does what to whom* and *who does what back*. Tilly’s exhaustive coding of records of contentious action in France and Great Britain enabled him and his students to ascertain not just who interacted with whom and how often but also how these interactions changed their *quality* over time. From petitioning to cheering, and from beating to marching, various kinds and configurations of protesters, their targets – including, but not limited to, authorities of various kinds – and bystanders to their interactions changed their ways of interacting over the course of the nineteenth century. The change, therefore, in the central performances of protest repertoires changed the ways in which noninstitutional politics were carried out.

Franzosi (1997) devised a way of turning records of these interactions into networks that could be analyzed through the use of network analysis. Drawing on the tools of ‘story grammars’, he coded interactions in terms of subject–verb–object triplets, and found very different patterns of contentious clashes between Communist and fascist activists in the

‘red years’ (1919–1920) following the end of the First World War and the Bolshevik revolution, and the ‘black years’ leading up to the accession to power of Mussolini and the fascists.

Tilly – in dialogue with Franzosi, his former student – developed a similar way of reading his own massive data-set on popular contention in Great Britain, and in several publications from the late 1990s, promulgated a way of understanding repertoire change as alterations in the characterization of collective *subjects* of protest, shifts in the objects of protest, and shifts in the verbs that connected them. Tilly (1997) connects these shifts to the increasing centralization of parliamentary politics in Britain in the mid-nineteenth century, but also shows the ways in which these patterns varied geographically (Tilly & Wood, 2003) in ways that altered Tilly’s earlier suggestions for clear national-level convergence of these trends.

Mische’s work took the interactive connections in Tilly’s work one step further toward cultural analysis, as she drew on a wide range of tools to show the ways in which overlapping patterns of political party membership, presence of activists at major events, and political claims among students active during the impeachment movement against Brazil’s president Fernando Collor de Mello changed the very meanings of political claims, parties, and activists’ own identities over time. Krinsky’s work on the politics of welfare reform and work in New York City investigated *who said what and in what context* over the course of 10 years of policy debate and contention. Drawing on Bakhtinian ‘dialogic’ theory, Krinsky sought to show the ways in which the power to set the terms of debate within and across policy settings was rooted in the overlapping claims – and variously centripetal or centrifugal forces these overlaps exerted on the meanings of claims – that a variety of actors made about welfare reform over time.

In all these cases and others (e.g. Mohr, 1994; Mohr & Lee, 2000; Vedres & Csigo, 2002; Wada, 2012), analysts drawing on network analysis have attempted to deepen our understandings of networks as being laden with – and consequential for – constructed meanings, much as indicated by Tilly’s early use of White’s work.

Network Analysis and Social Movement Studies: Continuing Problems

To be sure, even the most nuanced modeling of cultural dynamics using network models simplifies the layered meanings that symbolic – and even nakedly instrumental – action entails. In each of the cases mentioned of innovative applications of network analysis to the content of social ties, the authors either use mixed-method research strategies or have engaged their data with qualitative rigor in other work. Accordingly, rather than making a fetish out of network methods, they treat them as an opportunity to use their data twice: once for gaining a qualitative understanding of their cases, and once for seeing how complex elements of their cases fit together in different patterns that may not be readily discernible up close. Nevertheless, this work is also evidence of an increasing agreement that the content of ties – the types of tie characterized by narrative or other cultural content – is critical to understanding the ways in which social relations work, whether in the context of contention or not.

And yet, network-based studies are just as susceptible – and perhaps because of their methods of presentation, even more susceptible – to questions that bedevil sociology and historical analysis more generally. For example, if one sees social movements as networks with porous boundaries, how do we settle key questions such as where a movement begins

and ends? How do we justify analytic choices for geographic focus when the social networks – and influences – of activists regularly span geographic borders? How do we decide what the relevant starting points, cut points, and endpoints of our studies of contention should be, if social ties, political claims, organizations, and their influences regularly spill over the usually short temporal periods studied by social movements scholars? How, too, do we measure movement networks, cultural relations, and social relations over time when there are no *a priori* ways to model the ‘decay’ of political claims or influences from the point of their introduction to a protest field; long-forgotten political performances are often revived in new contexts, and seemingly out of nowhere. Finally, how do we think about connections among people that are not easily detected or measured? Do we simply lapse into empiricism and assume them away?

Key Concepts in Social Network Studies of Movements

SNA, as a formal set of procedures, rather than a set of metaphors, involves, in the end, both concepts and mathematics. In the balance of this introduction, we will skip the maths, but lay out several key, measurable concepts that will help those less familiar with network analysis to understand the papers in this special issue. The treatment of each topic will necessarily be brief, but again, good overall introductions to network analysis are available elsewhere.

Most network analyses begin in a table linking actors to actors or, more commonly, actors to groups or performances of one sort or another. Table 1 shows several kinds of network tables. Table 1a is a simple one, showing the connection of types of actors to political claims they make. Though it could be rendered as simple absence or presence (coded ‘0’ or ‘1’), we have put in frequency counts to indicate that this is possible and common for many operations later on. Table 1b is more complex – a directional table – showing the ways in which actors connect to other actors through specific performances

Table 1. Basic network matrices.

Actor/claim	NYPD Brutal	We are the 99%	Protests unsafe	Can evict	Cannot evict	Banks greedy	Capitalism stinks	TINA
(a) hypothetical actor–claim matrix for Occupy Wall Street								
Police	0	0	22	50	0	0	0	0
Mayor	1	0	15	6	0	2	0	36
Unions	5	60	0	0	41	98	21	0
Judges	3	0	10	2	4	0	0	0
Occupiers	58	235	5	14	110	221	109	32
Community activists	20	31	20	0	34	66	28	10
Actor/claim	Police	Mayor	Unions	Judges	Occupiers	Community activists		
(b) hypothetical table of mentions of other actors in news stories, Occupy Wall Street								
Police	1	0	−1	−1	1	0		
Mayor	1	1	−1	1	1	0		
Unions	1	1	1	0	−1	1		
Judges	1	−1	0	1	1	−1		
Occupiers	−1	−1	1	−1	1	1		
Community activists	0	0	−1	1	−1	0		

(subjects connect through verbs to objects). Here, we have kept it to the relatively simple binary coding, but have indicated that a verb is being done *to* an actor with a ‘-1’ and *by* an actor with ‘1’.

Because of a mathematical property of the first type of table, it is straightforward to multiply it by its inverse and get two tables, one showing the connection of actors to actors (based on common claim-making) and the other showing the connection of claims to claims (based on common actors’ speaking them). Though this operation reduces the specificity of the content of social ties, it makes understanding the *overall pattern* of social ties relatively straightforward.

Brokerage

The concept of brokerage, already introduced earlier, can be visualized in a number of different ways, corresponding to various kinds of brokerage roles. As Gould and Fernandez (1989) indicate, there are at least five ways in which we can understand the position and role of the actor that sits between and connects social networks (see Figure 1).

While, following Burt (2005), one can think of power advantages to brokerage positions – they are actors who bridge across ‘structural holes’ and can achieve a strategic advantage by keeping the other actors separate – this is hardly necessary. In movements, as in other realms of activity, as Lizardo (2008) points out, brokers most often try to close the triad rather than trying to keep it open; they make connections in the hopes that the two previously unconnected parties make their own connections. This, at the very least, is what social movement organizers try to do (see Alinsky, 1971). The larger issue from Fernandez and Gould’s work, however, is that the activity of connecting previously disconnected actors differs according to whether the broker is part of a group with either of the disconnected actors, in a group with both actors, in a group with neither, or not in any group at all.

Figure 2 shows a model of brokerage in which the broker (Actor L) is most clearly not part of any group. In a more complex network, where group boundaries are less clear, or where the integration of a broker into a given group is not absolute (i.e. the broker is not connected to everyone in the group to which he or she belongs), we can understand the ways in which brokerage roles change according to the parameters we set around group membership. In many cases, we can see multiple forms of brokerage being possible at once.

Seen in this way, the connection between brokerage and recruitment can be understood as a way in which SMOs are connected to potential members through intermediaries.

Centrality and Centralization

The concept of brokerage hinges on the structural potential to share information (and control its flow) with and between two or more otherwise unconnected actors. Some of the

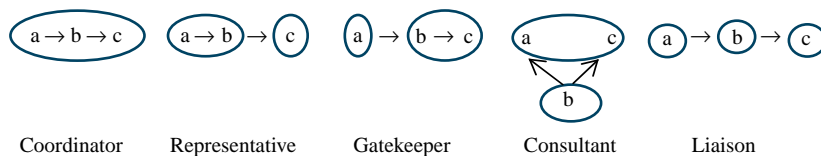


Figure 1. Brokerage roles (Gould & Fernandez, 1989).

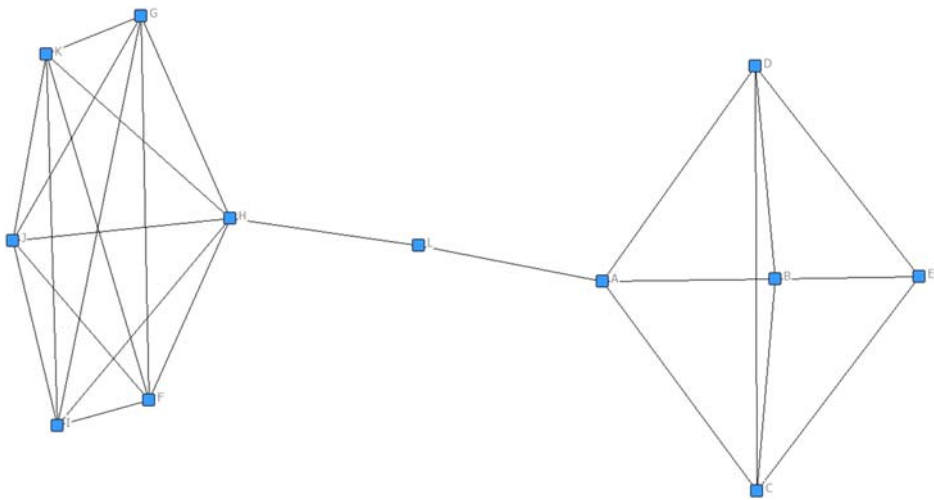


Figure 2. A network with cliques and central actors.

same idea animates the concept of ‘centrality’ – though like brokerage, centrality has several types or aspects.

Centrality is another way of thinking about positions in networks. One common way of thinking about central actors in a network is to think about positions that uniquely, or to a greater degree than others, connect different parts of a network. Actors H, L and A in Figure 2 have the greatest ‘betweenness’ centrality in the network (see Table 2), since they are key in connecting the other actors into the network as a whole.

Here, the question is not whether actor L is necessarily an exclusive broker, but rather the extent to which it – and not other actors – lies between otherwise unconnected or weakly connected others and how those others tie still other actors into the network by joining with actor L.

Other concepts of centrality focus around ‘degree’ centrality. Here, the question is not whether an actor lies between unconnected others, but rather how many connections to others an actor has. This is often taken as a measure of prestige, but could also apply to political claims’ connections to other political claims. The idea is that the degree of connections that a person or a claim has to others indicates something about its importance and, potentially, its power, as well. In Figure 2, actor L has the lowest *degree centrality* because it is joined only to two others, while the other actors, with ties to others in their groups – though not across groups – have higher degree centrality.

Network analysis scholars have also suggested – along with many other measures of centrality – that those connected to well-connected others have a kind of influence that accrues not just from first-degree connections but from the connections of the others to whom they are tied. This conforms to a basic premise in political organizing: organizers should try to find leaders in a community who have influence over others, rather than just finding recruits regardless of their networks (Alinsky, 1971). Similarly, the diffusion of claims or frames is more likely to occur on a widespread basis if innovators maximize their *eigenvector* centrality over their *degree* centrality. The eigenvector speaks to the mathematical estimate required for this operation, since, otherwise, basing one actor’s

Table 2. ‘Betweenness’ centrality score for Figure 2 network, calculated with UCINET.

Actors	Betweenness
H	30.000
L	30.000
A	28.000
D	2.667
B	2.667
C	2.667
G	0.000
E	0.000
I	0.000
J	0.000
K	0.000
F	0.000

Source: Borgatti et al. (2002).

centrality on the centrality of other actors, whose centrality is based on the centrality of *their* connections, is otherwise an open-ended exercise.

Several further issues arise with centrality. First, we have, so far, discussed centrality as if the ties among actors are nondirected. But in many cases, we might find *directed ties*, that is ties that are nonreciprocal. We can think, for example, of connections between two actors that are made initially through shared claims. But we might say that one actor is the innovator and the other the follower, in which case, the tie between the innovator and the follower is a directional one, going from the follower to the innovator. Because this adds direction to the graph, the calculation of degree will be one that can be separated between ‘in-degree’ and ‘out-degree’.

Similarly, though betweenness centrality is usually measured for binarized relations (presence or absence of a tie), other measures are possible with valued networks, similarly to eigenvector measures, so that ‘flow-betweenness’ or the volume of information flow across bridges in a network may be measured.

Finally, network analysts can measure the overall ‘centralization’ of a network so that for any measure of centrality, they can assess the overall extent to which the structure of the network is dependent on the central actors. One way to think about this might be to think about the Peronist patronage and political networks in Argentina, described so richly in Auyero’s (1999) work. In the Argentine case, the *punteros* or local power brokers join the masses to the party apparatus, and therefore have considerable ‘betweenness’ centrality. Nevertheless, there may be numerous *punteros* in a given neighborhood, so that competition among the *punteros* can develop and the subtraction of one from the network may not make an enormous difference to the structure of the network. One can contrast this with the case of the southern civil rights movement as described by Robnett (1997). There, rural southern blacks were often tied to the major civil rights organizations by ‘bridge leaders’ – usually women without official movement positions – who, for a variety of reasons, were trusted brokers in their communities. Also enjoying a good deal of betweenness centrality, these leaders lay between the rural constituents of the movement, and the national and regional organizations. The network’s centralization depended completely on them. When, however, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) changed its structure after 1966, becoming more centralized at its Atlanta core,

the bridge leaders in the hinterlands lost their betweenness centrality, even as they retained their local prominence. Thus, from the point of view of betweenness centrality, civil rights organizations like SNCC became *less centralized*, while from the point of view of degree centrality and eigenvector centrality, the bridge leaders' local networks probably retained much of their *centralization*.

Density

Other properties of networks include density and 'core-ness'. These are related, as well, to issues of centrality and centralization. Density simply refers to the number of ties among actors (or other 'nodes' or elements) in a network as a proportion of all the possible ties. Dense networks are often less centralized than sparse networks, simply for the reason that the more tied are actors to each other, the less the network should depend for its structure on one or several highly central actors.

Furthermore, many networks have a dense core and a more loosely connected periphery. Understanding this is a key to understanding the ways in which social movement coalitions usually operate. Many coalitions are core-periphery structures, and therefore, understanding the actions of members in the tightly dense core requires different explanations than understanding the actions of coalition members along the periphery. In between the two may be brokerage structures, and those along the periphery may be susceptible both to centrifugal forces pulling them out of the coalition and to becoming brokers themselves, to new actors or to new claims or ideas (or organizational forms – in short, whatever characterizes the coalitional ties). Accordingly, it is along the periphery that development may often occur, and the coreness of the coalition can migrate to the old periphery over time.

Subgroups

One feature of networks is that there are usually subgroups within them that are of some significant consequence to their operation. There are many ways to understand subgroups, but one frequently used one is the analysis of 'cliques'. Cliques are groups of actors – minimally three – who are completely joined to each other. It is a concept that allows for nesting, as well; there can be cliques within cliques. Analysts can adjust the definition of a subgroup for analysis, for example, setting a minimum size of cliques or allowing for less-than-complete connection among the actors. Here, the point is that there are areas of dense connections within a network that – like Freeman's friendship groups who turn into the 'elite' of 'unstructured' organizations – help to explain how the network itself works. Everett & Borgatti (1998) further note that the extent to which a given actor or other element in a network is a member of multiple cliques indicates both their presence in a dense area of a network, and also can be understood as a measure of their centrality.

In two-mode networks, where actors are not directly tied to each other, but are tied through another set of elements (e.g. organizational membership, common claims), cliques can still be defined as subgroups by which all elements are tied to each other. Krinsky (2007, 2010; see Borgatti & Everett, 1997) used this to investigate the ways in which movement and nonmovement actors in debates about welfare reform in New York City connected to each other – and opposed each other – in their specific claims about the policy issues at stake. In Figure 3, the polygons enclose several 'biclques' that include *both* actors and the claims they make.

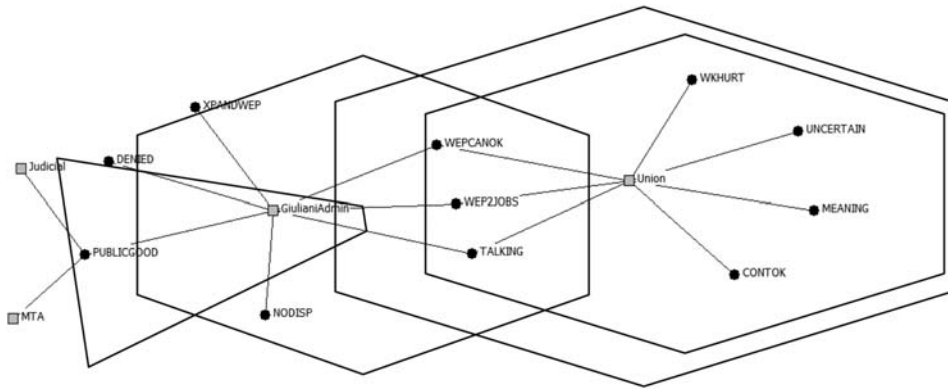


Figure 3. Bicliques.

Note: Actors are represented by squares and claims by circles. The four shapes enclose the four bicliques in the graph.

Here, the idea is that by retaining the specificity of the *content* of ties, researchers can understand the ways in which coalitions – or what Vološinov (1973) called ‘choral support’ – can develop around specific ways of talking about an issue, even among actors on different sides of a debate.

Blockmodeling and Structural Equivalence

Subgroup analysis depends on direct connections among actors (‘cohesion’), whether these are conscious or not. Another way of understanding similarities in networks lies in the concept of *structural equivalence*. Here, what counts are the patterns by which actors are tied to others in a network, rather than cohesion. The concept of structural equivalence is important in thinking about identity in social movements. To a great degree, the taken-for-grantedness of ideas about class identity – as well as other identities – hinges on the idea of structural equivalence. Marx’s contention that capitalist dynamics rendered ‘labor power’ increasingly abstract, and therefore made each worker equivalent to every other worker in his or her relation to capital means that workers were becoming increasingly ‘structurally equivalent’ to each other. If actors in a network are structurally equivalent, they have the same set of ties to other actors, but are not necessarily connected themselves. Debates about identity are often debates about the *nonequivalence of structural positions*, as where women of color in the USA contested the universalism of patriarchy and the relation of women to gender oppression. Without denying gender oppression, they pointedly insisted that the intersection of oppressive systems – e.g. of race, class, ethnicity – positioned them differently with respect to gender relations than the white, middle-class women who articulated core principles of the women’s movement.

The concept and measurement of structural equivalence was developed a great deal by White and his students during the 1970s (e.g. White, Boorman, & Breiger 1976). It also feeds into White’s concept of ‘catnets’ that Tilly borrowed in *From Mobilization to Revolution*, as it speaks most directly to the definition of a *category*. White and his students developed ways of detecting structural equivalence – using an algorithm called ‘CONCOR’ or the ‘convergence of iterated correlations’. Other algorithms also exist to measure

structural equivalence, as well as ‘regular equivalence’ and ‘automorphic equivalence’, which differ from structural equivalence (see e.g. Everett & Borgatti, 1994). Measures of structural equivalence hinge on measuring either the correlation or the dissimilarity of an actor’s profile of ties to others with other actors’ profiles of ties.

Finally, *blockmodeling* is an analytic strategy for reducing the complexity of the network, based on ‘partitioning’ a network based on ‘blocks’ of structurally equivalent actors. Blockmodeling groups actors in a network into structurally equivalent groups. Because in large networks actors are rarely perfectly structurally equivalent, it is up to the analyst to decide either how many times a network will be partitioned into increasingly structurally equivalent sets of actors (though the sets get smaller with each iteration) or what level of ‘fit’ of a given number of partitions is acceptable. Figure 4 shows the process with the network from Figure 3.

One goal of blockmodeling is to produce a ‘reduced blockmodel’ by dichotomizing the correlation matrix at a given level of correlation, so that you have a set of blocks connected or disconnected from each other based on the correlation of their elements’ structural equivalence (see Figure 5).

Though this method loses a great deal of the specificity of the data, it is useful for analyzing and presenting complex networks. For example, in his work on the ‘Parliamentarization of Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758–1834’ (also see Tilly & Wood, 2003), Tilly (1997) uses blockmodeling to reduce the complexity of actor and action categories from 8088 gatherings into clear relationships among types of actors (e.g. crowds, parliament, authorities) and actions (e.g. attack, cheer; see Figure 6).

This figure represents just two of the most common verbs (actually blocks of verbs based on 50,875 recorded instances of action verbs) and the actor blocks indicated as carrying out

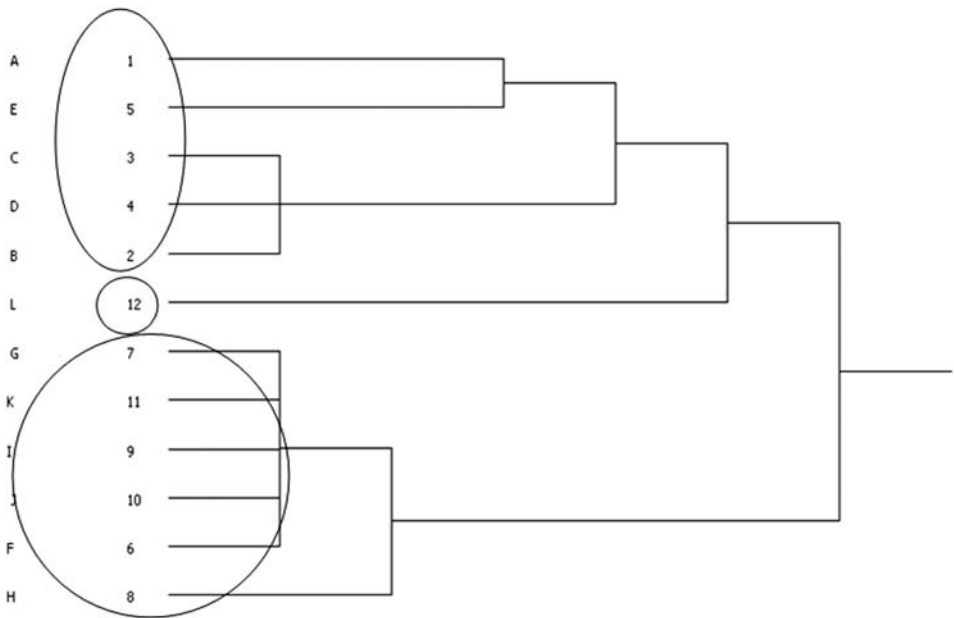


Figure 4. Hierarchical clustering of similarities of actor profiles into block partitions.

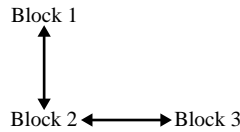


Figure 5. Reduced blockmodel.

the actions on each other. In showing the different ways in which political contention became focused on claim-making activities directed at parliament and ‘attacks’ became ‘thinned’, he was able to show (along with analysis of three other common verb categories) the ways in which the repertoires of popular politics changed over the course of several decades.

Gould’s assessment of Bearman’s (1993) application of blockmodeling to his history of elite change in pre-Civil War Britain sums up well the advantages in the application of blockmodeling for handling extensive and complex stories of changing relationships:

To be sure, a structurally oriented and insightful historian could in principle have woven a similar account and illustrated it with anecdotal evidence. But without a method for wrestling literally thousands of social relationships, spread out over a whole century, into a pliable form, it is unlikely. (2003, p. 255)

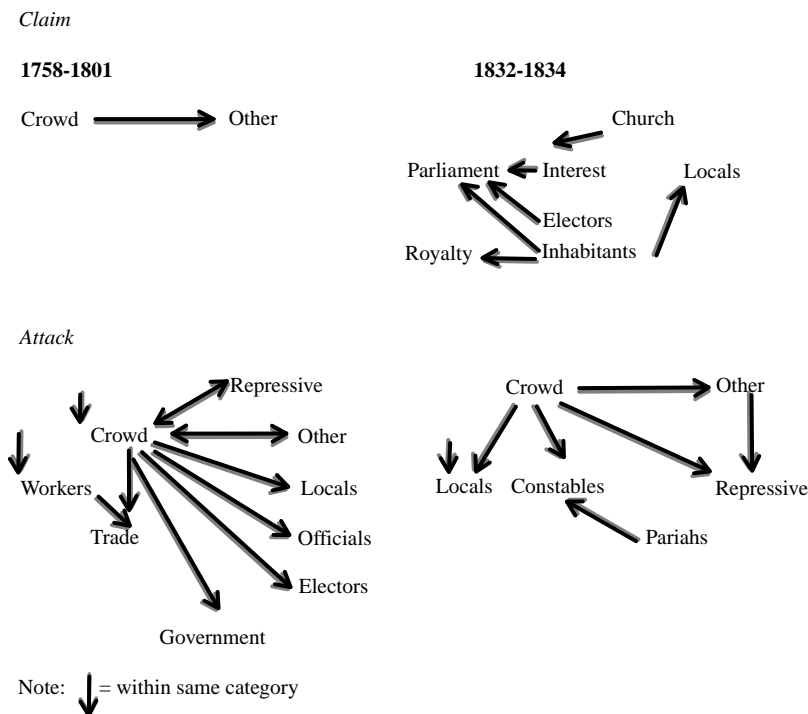


Figure 6. Within and between category interactions.
Source: Tilly (1997).

Introduction to the Papers

The papers in this special issue cover a range of issues and applications. In the first, Florence Passy and Gian-Andrea Monsch, building upon Passy's earlier work (e.g. Passy, 2001, 2003) and engaging with a wider, ongoing debate, explore the impact of network ties upon decisions regarding participation in actions and movements. Their answer to that question calls for caution and attention to nuance and detail. Networks are important, but we need to be more specific and clear about when and how.

Gemma Edwards' paper touches upon similar issues, under the rubric of the diffusion of tactical innovation, and arrives at similar conclusions regarding the need for specificity and clarity. In her case, however, she also stresses the need to explore the cultural aspect of ties and interactions, and she considers the utility of the work of Habermas in this context, introducing a theorist and, indeed, a level of more abstract theorizing seldom seen in work of this type (though see Krinsky, 2007, 2010; Mische, 2003).

Taking the discussion off in a different direction, Rachel Stevenson and Nick Crossley explore the issue of change and dynamism in movement networks, and simultaneously the effect of the demand for secrecy upon network structure (see also Crossley, Edwards, Harries, & Stevenson, 2012). Whilst not questioning the explanatory potential of networks, discussed in the previous papers, this work turns the table by considering the ways in which networks are shaped by movement activism and the wider context of contention.

The growth of interest in social networks both in social movement studies and in the social sciences more widely has undoubtedly been fueled by the advent of the Internet and virtual networks. Contributing to a growing literature on virtual networks and their impact upon mobilization, Stefania Vicari explores how a number of early twenty-first-century mobilizations made use of the Internet. In addition, her paper discusses and makes use of hyperlink analysis – a key approach among analysts seeking to explore the networks of the online worlds.

Mark Tremayne also explores the role of ICTs in contemporary protest by looking at the use of *Twitter* in the lead-up to the Occupy Wall Street demonstration in New York City in 2011. He considers the degree centralities of hashtags and users in the weeks leading up to Occupy Wall Street on 17 September to understand the changing diffusion dynamics of the call to occupation.

Takeshi Wada's paper draws on an extensive database on contentious events in Mexico City, modeled after Tilly's databases on popular contention in Great Britain (which Wada transformed for Tilly into a relational database in the 1990s, largely enabling Tilly's conceptual and methodological innovations). Drawing on the work by Bearman & Everett (1993) on the prominence of different movement organizations in national protests in Washington, DC, over the course of the late twentieth century, Wada, like Bearman and Everett, seeks to understand whether the 'old' social movement activity of the labor movement has been supplanted by 'new' social movement activity. Wada's paper takes the reader step by step through his network methods, culminating in a comparison of several time periods in Mexican protest based on a blockmodel of the actors in the field and their changing degree centralities.

All of the papers in the collection, except one, focus in one way or another on actors who engage in overt acts of protest. The exception is the paper by Clare Saunders, Milena Büchs, Anastasios Papafragkou, Rebecca Wallbridge and Graham Smith. In a very original paper,

they use network analysis to explore the impact of movement communications and ties upon actors who can be assumed, in many cases, to have no direct involvement in protest. Specifically, they consider whether very minimal and indirect forms of contact with environmental movement organizations are in any way associated with reduced levels of electricity usage.

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