The arrival of a new century and a new millennium are attention-grabbing symbolic markers. They provide a convenient opportunity for me to reflect critically on the current status of social movement theory. Because of space limitations, it is impossible to provide a comprehensive review and critique of this burgeoning field. I focus here on what I contend are serious blind spots within current social movement theory. I argue that these theories continue to slight the role that human agency plays in social movements. The slight occurs because assumptions in current theory lead its proponents to gloss over fundamental sources of agency that social movement groups can bring to the mobilization process, cultural framing, tactical problems, movement leadership, protest histories, and transformative events. I address the human agency and these movement phenomena, and offer correctives.

By the mid-twentieth century, collective behavior and related theories constituted the dominant paradigm that guided research of social movements. These theories argued that social movements were a form of collective behavior that emerged when significant social and cultural breakdowns occurred. As a form of collective behavior, social movements were considered spontaneous, unorganized, and unstructured phenomena that were discontinuous with institutional and organizational behavior (Morris 1999: 531). In this view, emotions and irrational ideologies were central because movements occurred in highly charged contexts characterized by mass enthusiasm, collective excitement, rumor, social contagion, and mass hysteria. Thus, social movements and movement participants were viewed as nonrational, given the unpredictability and heavy emotional content of movements. Collective behavior theory assumed a direct link between emotions and nonrationality (for an exception, see Turner and Killian 1957).

Human agency operated indirectly in collective behavior theories because participants were viewed as reacting to external forces beyond their control. Indeed, agency-producing mechanisms—social organization, strategizing, reasoning, analyses, and rationality—were argued to be absent in movements, especially in their formative stages. When agency entered the picture, it was as a weak reactive force that played a minor role in the causation of movements.

Human agency is important in current resource mobilization and political process models. The civil rights movement and the movements it helped spawn were the major catalysts that shattered the intellectual viability of collective behavior theory. When principal formulators of the current approaches sought to understand those movements, they found it necessary to reject the collective behavior model and its imagery of the emotional crowd. In so doing, resource mobilization and political process theorists (e.g., McCarthy and Zald 1977; Gamson 1975; Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; Oberschall 1973) have generated a rich plethora of social movement concepts that will continue to yield theoretical insights. Moreover, valuable work (e.g., Aminzade et al. forthcoming; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly forthcoming; Morris and Mueller 1992; Johnston and...
Klandermans 1995; Jasper 1997; Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Hart 1996; Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994) designed to correct biases inherent in current approaches continues to appear. Here I build on this work and suggest new formulations that I believe will lead to more robust analysis of movements. These formulations are rooted in my assessment that current theories continue to misspecify the central role that human agency plays in social movements.

I focus on the political process model because it has absorbed the key insights of resource mobilization theory and because it has become the dominant synthetic model of social movements. Formulators of the political process model (e.g., McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1994; McAdam et al. 1996; Aminzade et al. forthcoming; Tilly 1978) have reached a consensus on its basic theoretical components: the concepts of mobilizing structures, political opportunity structure, and cultural framing. Taken together, say these theorists, these concepts account for movement origins, the power generated by movements, the energizing cultural content of movements, and movement outcomes.

Mobilizing structures are “those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action” (McAdam et al. 1996: 3). This concept rejects the proposition that movements emerge from fluid, spontaneous, unstructured contexts that thrust marginal individuals into collective action. Drawing on empirical research by numerous scholars (e.g., Oberschall 1973; McAdam 1982; Morris 1981, 1984; Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson 1980), political process theorists demonstrate that movement mobilization occurs through informal networks, preexisting institutional structures, and formal organizations. Actors so situated can recruit participants, assemble necessary resources, and coordinate collective action. The centrality of mobilizing structures is crucial because it is through them that rational actors figure prominently in the origins of movements.

Political opportunity structure refers to the “consistent but not necessarily formal or permanent—dimensions of the political environment that provides incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectation for success or failure. Theorists of political opportunity structure emphasize the mobilization of resources external to the group” (Tarrow 1994: 85). Thus, potential challengers are unlikely to generate and sustain movements because of their weak social position. Movements are likely to emerge only when favorable changes occur in the external political system. These opportunities emerge when divisions develop among political elites, when new external allies emerge, when states weaken, and when new space in the political system opens. In short, for groups to engage successfully in collective action, they must first be the beneficiaries of new external political opportunities that they must exploit.

In accounting for movement origins, this view stresses the political weaknesses of challenging groups while assigning considerable causal weight to elite external actors. The focus on changing political opportunities suggests that movement success or failure may rest largely in the hands of powerful external actors. Thus the relationship between challengers and the political systems is placed at the center of analysis because that political system determines whether movements are able to develop in the first place. While there is insight here, I will argue that this formulation locates far too much social movement agency in the hands of external actors, and it truncates analysis of movement origins.

Political process theorists are realizing increasingly that cultural dynamics are central to the origins and development of social movements. Thus, the third component of the model addresses framing processes. Proponents argue that “mediating between opportunity, organization, and action are the shared meanings and definitions that people bring to their situation. At a minimum, people need to feel both aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic, that, acting collectively, they can redress the problem” (McAdam et al. 1996: 5). The recognition that culture plays a central role in generating and sustaining movements was slow to develop and remains the model’s least developed concept. Much of the recent theorizing on culture and movements was actually formulated either by critics (Fantasia 1988; Snow et al. 1986; Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Morris and Mueller 1992; Jasper 1997; Johnston and Klandermans 1995) or in response to challenges raised by critics. I agree that culture—ideas, belief systems, rituals, oratory, emotions and grievance interpretations—are indeed central to social movements. I will argue, however, that current treatments continue to underemphasize
the cultural agency that fuels social movements. As a result, scholars underestimate the ability of challenging groups to generate and sustain movements despite recalcitrant political structures and heavy repression.

The concepts of mobilizing structures, political opportunities, and framing processes have generated insights into social movements. Nevertheless, as the critics (Ferree 1992; Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Jasper 1998) have argued, the political process model is overly structural and contains rationalistic biases. Additionally, I argue that the model’s preoccupation with powerful external elites has left key determinants of collective action in theoretical darkness. My task is to rescue them from the dark corners of this model and reveal their centrality to the origins and development of social movements.

The political process model has unduly restricted our understanding of the mobilization process and the capacity of challenging groups to generate and sustain collective action. Its limitations stem from the assumption that external political opportunities must first become available before challenging groups can generate collective action. This assumption still guides the analysis of movement origins, even though empirical examples (e.g., Kurzman 1996; Rasler 1996) suggest that enormous collective action can burst forth precisely when the political authorities close ranks and when heavy repression is unleashed.

The strong relationship theorized to exist between collective action and political opportunities should be relaxed because the production of collective action is also an independent function of the capacity of challenge groups. A reciprocal relationship exists between a challenging group’s capacity to mobilize and the presence of political opportunities. Thus, in some instances, collective action can generate political opportunities where none existed previously; in other instances political opportunities can clear the way for collective action. The temporal sequence is to be determined on empirical grounds rather than on a priori theorizing. I focus on how mobilization capacities generate collective action because that is where the political process model has proven inadequate and misleading.

The political process model has largely ignored the central role that a challenging group’s agency-laden institutions and frame lifting, leadership configurations, tactical solutions, protest histories, and transformative events play in producing and sustaining collective action. These factors find no place in the nexus of causal explanations posited by the model. When these factors are discussed, they are conceptualized as movement dynamics rather than as independent triggers of collective action. Using the civil rights movement as the referent, I will demonstrate how each of these factors was crucial to the origins and development of that movement.

Agency-Laden Institutions and Frame Lifting

Agency-laden institutions are those institutions, often long-standing, developed by potential challenging groups that house cultural and organizational resources that can be mobilized to launch collective action. Such institutions are configurations of cultural beliefs and practices that permeate and shape their social networks. Their cultural materials are constitutive in that they produce and solidify the trust, contacts, solidarity, rituals, meaning systems, and options of members embedded in their social networks. Endemic to some agency-laden institutions is a transcendent and coherent belief system that shapes its actors’ moral and political views about the kinds of relationships that ought to exist between individuals and social groups. These politically relevant beliefs inspire analyses and actions geared toward the realization of group interests (Hart 1996).

The African-American church has been an agency-laden institution for centuries. Its transcendent belief system stresses that all people are equal before God because God is the parent of humanity (Paris 1985). For centuries the African-American church has condemned racial inequality because it is inconsistent with ultimate religious values. These beliefs are ingrained in the cultural fabric of the church and given repeated expression through religious sermons, writings, music, testimonies, prayers, rituals, and emotional interactions. For these reasons, the African-American church has been in the vanguard of the historic African-American struggle by providing it with a disproportionate amount of its leaders, meeting space for protest organizations, financial resources, and moral legitimation (Morris 1993a; Harding 1983; Billingsley 1999; Harris 1999; Pattillo-McCoy 1998).

Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955 was a dangerous place for African Americans. The Cold
War was entrenched before the Montgomery movement and it certainly created the possibility that black protest could capitalize on America’s vulnerability because of its use of egalitarian rhetoric to gain the upper hand in that conflict. Nevertheless, it was not Cold War rhetoric that would mobilize Montgomery’s African-American community; the 1954 Brown vs. Board Supreme Court decision also constituted a new political opportunity. Yet the rise of the Southern massive resistance movement was a powerful and direct deterrent to black collective action. Emmett Till was lynched just three months before the boycott. The Brown decision itself generated a massive assault on African-American resistance by outlawing the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People throughout Alabama (Morris 1984). In this period, new white supremacy groups were organized while existing ones gained added strength. This was an unlikely era and location for the modern civil rights movement to take root. Where did Montgomery’s African-American community find the agency and organization to produce such historic collective action, despite mobilized opposition backed by local state power?

The mobilizing capacity of Montgomery’s African-American churches was the key. Shortly after Rosa Parks’s arrest, Martin Luther King, Jr., informs us, all of the ministers in Montgomery “endorsed the boycott plan with enthusiasm, and promised to go to their congregations on Sunday morning and drive home their approval” (King 1958: 47). Concerning the first organizing meeting, King declared “I was filled with joy when I entered the church and found so many of them there; for then I knew that something unusual was about to happen” (King 1958: 46). Something unusual happened because the church provided the emerging movement with its vast communication networks, its organized congregations, and its cultural and financial resources.

The church was more than a structural entity; it contained the cultural framework through which the movement would be framed. Movement theorists (e.g., Tarrow 1994; Snow and Bensford 1992) are mistaken when they argue that the civil rights movement’s central frame was one of “rights” that grew out of earlier court challenges. Being a product of the African-American church, King instinctively understood that the church’s transcendent belief system was the appropriate cultural material from which to frame the movement. He decided to emphasize the Christian doctrine of love: “our actions must be guided by the deepest principles of our Christian faith. Love must be our regulating ideal” (1958: 62). But the frame contained more than ideas of love. He told the future producers of collective action that “we come here tonight to be saved from that patience that makes us patient with anything less than freedom and justice” (1958: 62). Thus emerged the “freedom and justice” frame of the civil rights movement. King then articulated the motivational mainspring of action embedded in the frame: “So in order to be true to one’s conscience and true to God, a righteous man has no alternative but to refuse to cooperate with an evil system” (1958: 51). King concluded, “we are protesting for the birth of justice in the community.” This moral frame had mobilizing power because it was deeply rooted in the culture of the agency-laden African-American church and had instant resonance for most of the people embedded in that church. This frame assured the participants that God was on their side, for He condoned African-American collective action that sought justice.

Collective behavior theorists were right to argue that movements often occur in the context of mass enthusiasm and highly charged emotions. The mass meetings of the boycott teemed with emotions and mass enthusiasm. The singing, testifying, preaching, and praying at the mass meetings mobilized the emotions such that “the enthusiasm of these thousands of people, swept everything along like an onrushing tidal wave” (King 1958: 61). However, contrary to the logic of collective behavior theory, emotions in the civil rights movement were linked closely to the rational pursuits of the movement. The religious culture of the church produced cohesion and enabled participants to act under the spell of singing, preaching, and praying. In speaking of emotions one of King’s lieutenants remarked, “If I wait until my intellect gets to the place it can digest, hell I wouldn’t do nothing many times” (Walker 1978). The agency-laden church used its culture and its institutional structure to produce collective action.

My analysis of the framing process of the civil rights movement differs from frame alignment theory (Snow et al. 1986). In the latter approach, the main cultural task is for move-
ment leaders to develop and articulate a collective action frame and align it with the belief system of those whom they wish to mobilize. In contrast, my analysis reveals that the crucial cultural task for leaders was frame lifting. Frame lifting is a process by which leaders shape the collective action to match an institutionally embedded frame. In frame lifting, collective action is grafted onto the cultural and emotional schemata of actors embedded in relevant social networks. In Montgomery a potent frame already embedded in a mass-based agency-laden institution was lifted up and linked to the production of collective action.

The theoretical point is that such agency-laden institutions can play an independent role in the production of collective action despite a largely closed political system. Therefore, the crucial role that agency-laden institutions play in the mobilization process needs to be integrated into a causal explanation of social movements.

**Tactical Solutions**

Tactical solutions play an important role in the development of collective action (McAdam 1983; Morris 1993b). Yet in the political process, model tactical matters are treated as a dynamic rather than a causal factor. The Montgomery movement is instructive for understanding how a tactical breakthrough can help initiate social movements. Before the boycott, Montgomery’s African-American leaders had met on numerous occasions with the white leadership, pleading with them to end bus segregation. The white leaders ignored them because African-American leaders lacked the power to apply negative sanctions when their requests were not granted. Collective action that could function as the negative sanction was needed to achieve group goals. Widespread and sustainable collective action is not likely to develop if potential movement leaders fail to meet the tactical challenge. Such leaders must select and then execute appropriate tactics that will generate sufficient disorder and be attractive to their constituency. If they fail to meet this challenge, collective action will not develop.

For mass-based movements to emerge, leaders must develop tactics that are congruent both with the cultural framework of the challenging community and their main organizational vehicles. On the eve of the Montgomery bus boycott, King and other leaders knew that mass participation was required for the protest to be effective. They decided to choose and frame the tactic in a manner consistent with the moral frame being lifted from the agency-laden church. Rather than define the movement as a boycott, King chose to define the tactic as an act of massive noncooperation with evil. He wrote that “we were simply saying to the white community ‘we can no longer lend our cooperation to an evil system’” (1958: 51).

To link the boycott tactic directly to the mass-based church, King situated it in a context of love and evil—familiar themes in the African-American religious community. For centuries the church had preached that all people should be loved because they were God’s children. King added the theme of evil by arguing that noncooperation was a tactic whose “attack is directed against forces of evil rather than against persons who happen to be doing the evil” (1958: 102). By imbuing the tactic with love and identifying the Jim Crow social order as an evil force, the leaders successfully rooted the protest in the moral frame of the African-American church. The result was a marriage in which culture, tactic, and organizational capacity were linked so that collective action could be produced.

Nonviolent noncooperation made it difficult for the white community to use the machinery of violence to defeat the movement. The tactic also provided the emerging movement with an ideological high ground bathed in love and Christian principles while simultaneously casting segregation as an evil force that should be destroyed. Because of the mobilizing capacity of the noncooperation tactic, as well as its strategic usefulness, King concluded, “I came to feel that this was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom” (1958: 97).

The development of a tactical solution is one of the central factors in movement causation. Such tactical solutions are not inevitable and do not occur by happenstance. It is this challenge that leaders must meet if collective action is to occur. In Montgomery the leaders chose a tactic that was creatively woven into a moral frame and the organizational capacity of an agency-laden institution. In short, there is an interaction between the type of tactic and type of pre-existing organizations and cultural frames, which can be rapidly adopted and spread by a protest group (Morris 1981). That interaction
sets the perimeters in which tactical solutions are hammered out.

**Social Movement Leadership**

Movement leadership is an important complex phenomenon that affects the origins and outcomes of movements. By neglecting leadership, political process models fail to shed light on another important source of movement agency.

Social movement theory should focus on what movement leaders do and why what they do matters. The Montgomery case illustrates that the idea of a single leader is sociologically unsound. Rather, in Montgomery a configuration of leaders constituted the leadership that mobilized and guided that movement. Leadership configurations should be placed at the center of analysis. The first task of such analysis is to identify the pre-existing leadership of a challenging group and investigate its importance to a movement’s origins and development.

A wide array of African-American organizations and institutions existed in Montgomery before the bus protest. Perched at the top of them were the political leaders of the voluntary associations and the clergy of the numerous churches. These pre-existing leaders could mobilize a movement because they headed organized followings. Focusing on leadership configurations reveals that multiple leaders operate at the nodes of indigenous networks. In these critical locations, Montgomery’s African-American leaders promoted mobilization by giving the new movement access to their vast communication networks, embedded cultural frames, material resources, and organized followings. Movement agency is contained in leadership configurations where pre-existing leaders have the capacity to mobilize social networks because of their nodal positions. At the organizing meeting of the boycott, King reported that “Virtually every organization of the Negro community was represented” (1958: 46). The same held true for the African-American clergy. These leaders mobilized their constituencies to participate in the movement. Thus pre-existing leaders of a challenging group are crucial to the initial mobilizing stage of a mass movement.

Pre-existing leaders of agency-laden institutions are particularly important to the mobilization and tactical developments of movements. Although King articulated the marriage between the church’s moral frame and the tactic of nonviolent noncooperation, it was the clergy as a whole who lifted that moral frame and linked it to collective action. The clergy could do this important cultural work because of their religious authority and charisma. Charismatic leadership, as Weber argued, is important because such leaders are able to articulate powerful, mobilizing visions and attract followers because of their personal magnetism. Charisma in this instance was situated within the leadership role of the African-American clergy. The presence of institutionalized charisma enhanced the agency capacity of the African-American church especially in its ability to mobilize people. The mobilization of a movement is enhanced when charismatic leadership is situated within agency-laden institutions. Such leaders can play crucial roles in developing a movement’s cultural frame and mobilizing participants because of their charisma and institutional resources.

It has been firmly established in the literature that social movement organizations (SMOs) play critical roles by mobilizing and coordinating collective action and by defining the goals and tactics of movements (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Gamson 1975; Morris 1984; Zald and Ash 1966; Morris and Herring 1987). What is usually ignored is that leaders of SMOs must choose from a number of options. The choices they make affect the mobilizing capacity and outcomes of movements. If King had chosen to adopt an aggressive militant tactic that included the use of violence, the masses and their churches would not have supported it. Moreover, chances are great that the state would have violently crushed such protest in its infancy. Tactical choices that leaders make matter. Additionally, leaders must make choices about the nature of interorganizational relations between SMOs, about whom to build external allies with, and about how to deal with the opposition (Haines 1988; Zald and McCarthy 1980; Morris 1984). Social movement leaders are also responsible for reading and exploiting the external political structure. Media coverage of social movements is crucially important in modern societies (Molotch 1979; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Gamson and Wolfsohn 1993; Gitlin 1980). How to generate and manage that coverage is a challenge that movement leaders must address. Social movement theory needs to explore these important leadership activities and the contingencies that shape them.

The interaction between gender and movement leadership is another important issue. In
patriarchal societies, men tend to control formal leadership positions in movements (Robnett 1997; Taylor 1999; Ferree and Hess 1985; Payne 1994). One important question is whether women would build the same kinds of SMOs and make the same kinds of decisions as men, given their different gender experiences (see Staggenborg 1991; Taylor 1999). Belinda Robnett's work on the civil rights movement has revealed the fundamental ways in which the organization and activities of that movement were gendered. This gendering shaped movement leadership by landing men at the top of SMOs while forcing women to exercise leadership outside of formal leadership positions. Robnett (1997) argues that African-American women developed what she labeled as "bridge leadership," which is "an intermediate layer of leadership, whose tasks include bridging potential constituents and adherents, as well and potential formal leaders, to the movement" (p. 191). There is some evidence that women may have become more skilled in executing the critically important emotional work of social movements because they had fewer opportunities to become SMO leaders and to be situated at the nodes of social networks (Taylor 1999, 1995; Robnett 1997). In this manner social movements reproduce gender inequality within movements and the larger society (Taylor 1999). Because the assumed links between emotions and irrationality in movements are no longer tenable, the importance of emotional work to movements is becoming increasingly clear. It is time for movement theory to analyze the importance of such work and formulate models that capture the difference that gender plays in movement leadership, mobilization, and the generation of inequality.

I have argued that social movement theory needs to bring in leadership. It deserves a central place in movement theorizing because it intersects human agency into collective action and affects the mobilization and outcomes of movements. Thus a major task of movement theory is to unpack the "black box" of movement leadership so that we can develop more robust models of how collective action emerges and is sustained.

Protest Traditions

The political process model devotes a great deal of attention to how changing external political structures create new opportunities for movements to emerge. The model, in my view, overemphasizes external agency while failing to explore agency-generating factors within challenging groups.

At the turn of the twentieth century, African Americans engaged in widespread boycotts of Southern Jim Crow streetcars. In 1910 the NAACP was founded and began initiating court battles against racial segregation. In the 1920s Marcus Garvey developed a mass-based national movement among African Americans, thus revealing how the African-American masses could be organized. Marches and pickets were used against northern merchants by African Americans in the 1930s and 1940s. During the Gandhi movement, African-American leaders traveled to India to absorb the lessons afforded by that movement. They were especially attentive to the role that nonviolent tactics played in Gandhi's movement. Most important, in the early 1940s A. Philip Randolph, drawing on lessons of the Garvey movement, organized a national nonviolent March on Washington Movement that forced President Roosevelt to issue an executive order barring discrimination in the defense industry. During the same period Bayard Rustin and other leaders participated in a "freedom ride" in the border states of the South. In 1953 Baton Rouge's African-American community organized a bus boycott of that city's segregated buses.

The Montgomery protest movement emerged in the context of these prior struggles. African-American leaders familiar with Gandhi's techniques of nonviolence advised the leadership in Montgomery. The leader of the Baton Rouge boycott provided critical information to King about how to organize the protest. The NAACP agreed to cover the legal aspects of the struggle. The music, moral frames, and preaching of the African-American church, which contained protest themes developed by slaves, provided cultural energy for the bus protest.

Pre-existing protest traditions rooted in agency-laden institutions, prior SMOs, and the experiences of leaders affect the rise and trajectory of new social movements. Such traditions contain material and cultural resources that can be injected in new movements (Rupp and Taylor 1987). Often mobilization must develop rapidly to be successful. Thus, time itself is a crucial resource for movements (Oliver and Marwell 1992). The availability of knowledge and resources provided by protest traditions can drastically reduce the time it takes to mobilize.
For these reasons, protest traditions decrease the mobilization, organizational, and cultural costs associated with the rise of new collective action. A theoretical formulation is needed to explain how pre-existing protest traditions figure in movement emergence and outcomes.

**Transformative Events**

We turn to the transformative event and the role it plays in producing large volumes of collective action. Political process theorists (McAdam and Sewell, forthcoming) who formulated the “transformative event” concept are coming to realize that some collective action campaigns or events are more important than others because they can produce radical turning points in collective action and affect the outcome of social movements. Political process theorists have overlooked these transformative events because they have tended to rely on time-series data that treat all events as largely equivalent. McAdam and Sewell (1999) lament this outcome, especially as it pertains to the civil rights movement. They identify the Montgomery bus boycott, the 1960s sit-ins, and the assassination of King as such transformative events.

However, I argue the Montgomery bus boycott, the 1960s sit-ins, and the Birmingham Confrontation of 1963 were turning points in the civil rights movement (Morris 1981, 1984, 1993b). In terms of Montgomery, this movement represented a turning point because it introduced and perfected an effective tactic, catapulted a charismatic leader into the forefront of the movement, revealed the mobilizing capacity of the African-American community, sustained a movement for a considerable period of time, and produced a victory.

The Montgomery movement was a transformative event because it provided an oppressed African-American community with a highly visible and dynamic model of how to build successful local movements across the South. Through movements people discover a collective agency they were unaware of previously, or perceived only dimly. Initially the boycott was planned as a one-day protest but was extended indefinitely when the leaders discovered its near total community support. However, the larger discovery pertained to human agency. The Montgomery movement revealed to a national African-American community that a disciplined and organized mass movement could eventually overthrow the Jim Crow regime. As a result, Montgomery functioned as the transformative event that launched the modern civil rights movement. Future research on transformative events is likely to be fruitful because it can illuminate another important source of agency capable of fueling protracted collective action.

**Conclusions**

Resource mobilization and political process theories have added greatly to our understanding of social movements and collective action. We understand far more clearly now how internal social organization facilitates mobilization and how external political opportunities provide openings for challenging groups to initiate collective action. We have also come to realize that framing processes are germane to the generation of collective action. Social movement research during the new century can yield additional theoretical insights by further developing these three foci of the political process model.

Yet in this essay I have argued that the political process model has slighted important sources of social movement agency because of its tendency to assign undue causal weight to external factors and its propensity to gloss over the deep cultural and emotional processes that inspire and produce collective action. Future social movement theory can begin to correct these limitations by incorporating analyses that explicate the causal role that agency-laden institutions, frame lifting, tactical solutions, leadership configurations, pre-existing protest traditions, and transformative events play in social movements and collective action. The challenge for social movement theory is to devise robust theoretical formulations of collective action that corresponds closely to social realities. The goal of this effort was to place human agency at the center of movement analysis for it operates at the center of collective action.

**References**


Framing theories begin from the assumption that language matters politically. Analyses of gender have suggested that language often carries masculinist assumptions and normative judgments that pass as neutral concepts. In this paper, we connect these two perspectives. In particular, we suggest that gender-conventional conceptions obscure important elements of understanding political thought at multiple levels of analysis, as well as biasing the process of framing research questions about social movements. We argue that uncovering the gender dimension in political discourse would not only to bring women more fully into the picture but also correct partial and politically biased understandings of “political man.” The questions we raise here about the future of framing thus arise from our feminist concerns about the discipline of sociology as a whole.

Our specific objective in this essay is to use critical ideas about gender to address the literature on framing in social movements. By investigating the often-unexamined assumptions...