THE ACCRETION AND DISPERSION OF ISSUES
IN SOCIAL MOVEMENT COALITIONS

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Abstract:
Social movement coalitions link groups and individuals with different goals and analyses together in the service of expedient goals. But those coalitions strain or strengthen over time, in response to exogenous and internal provocations and pressures. To examine the diversity within movements over time, we look at two social movement coalitions along two dimensions (among national groups and between a national organization and local affiliates). By assessing the expressed goals of Tea Party and Peace Movement groups at three distinct time periods, we can see how groups within a coalition diversify, accreting goals and issues, over time. We note that national groups diversify more slowly than local groups, and offer explanations of how and why. Our analysis exposes the diversity within social movements, and demonstrates the necessity of looking beneath the unifying label to see the real action within a movement.
THE ACCRETION AND DISPERSION OF ISSUES IN SOCIAL MOVEMENT COALITIONS

Although activists and analysts typically speak of social movements as unitary actors, we all know that the truth is more complicated. Social movements are comprised of groups and individuals who cooperate on some shared concerns, but they are not solid undifferentiated wholes. When groups of groups unite to work together, they ignore or paper over differences in analysis, tactics, priorities, and constituencies. How well they do so affects the development and ultimate influence of a social movement. Cooperation and differentiation within a movement coalition reflect the histories of cooperation and competition among critical actors, the opportunities and threats offered by the outside environment, and the skill of organizers in negotiating cooperative arrangements.

While a movement may appear monolithic to those it challenges or attempts to inspire, within both shorter and longer term alliances, there is often considerable conflict, as activists and organizations struggle to present their preferred vision of their goals and themselves (e.g., Ghaziani 2009), and the battles are often heated. Disparate organizations can be held together by shared goals, shared enemies, and even a shared culture (Ghaziani and Baldassare 2011), but the negotiated alliances reflect stress as well as unity, and they are dynamic, rather than static.

Here, we examine two contemporary movements as a means of unpacking the dynamics of cooperation and differentiation in social movement coalitions. We use data on the most recent mobilization of the antiwar movement and the Tea Party movement to trace patterns of cooperation and differentiation in social movement coalitions. We trace
these patterns along two dimensions: horizontally, that is, among cooperating national
groups; and vertically, that is, among local groups who cooperate with a national
superstructure.

We begin by looking at the developing literature on coalitions in social
movements, paying attention to the difficulties and dividends of uniting diverse groups.
We make a distinction between national level coalitions among cooperating
organizations, and the a more federated vision of a coalition in which local groups unite
as chapters or affiliates of a national organization. We then lay out our research design,
which entails examining both sorts of coalitions in two different movements. We present
our findings, which show the accretion of new issues in social movement coalitions and
the gradual dispersion of those coalitions. We conclude by reflecting on the implications
of our findings for understanding movements and for subsequent research.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND COALITIONS

Social movements are sustained interactions between challengers and authorities
on matters of policy and/or culture, including a range of activity inside and outside
mainstream political institutions (following Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1978). At least in liberal
polities, social movements are coalition affairs (van Dyke and McCammon 2010; Zald
and McCarthy 1980), featuring sometimes loosely negotiated alliances among groups and
individuals with different agendas. Indeed, contemporary social movements are often
comprised of multiple formal coalitions, competing for predominance and adherence
while cooperating – to some extent – on matters of policy. Although it is a grammatical
convenience to speak about THE peace movement, THE anti-globalization movement, or
THE environmental movement, such a label distorts the reality of a social movement, reifying boundaries and movements that are actually much sloppier affairs. The antiwar mobilization of the past decade, for example, included groups ranging from the Christian pacifists to the International Socialist Organization, both of which offer far broader—and substantially different—agendas for reform than just stopping this war. Marchers at the peace demonstrations after the war began knew that they agreed with those next to them on one key issue. When circumstances change, whether it is the politics of the war or the partisanship of those in elected office, some of the partisans are likely to recommit themselves to the movement, while others may exit (Heaney and Rojas 2011).

Social movements are always about more than their explicitly articulated claims, and many activists surely agree on much else (dellaPorta and Rucht 1995; Ghaziani and Baldassare 2011; Meyer and Whittier 1994), but it’s important to stress that the full range of concerns is much broader, more diverse, and far more vigorously contested than what can be gleaned from any one manifestation of activism.

Social movements are comprised of organized groups and individuals cooperating, to some degree, on a set of common issues. Although the resource mobilization tradition (e.g. McCarthy and Zald 1977) put social movement organizations at the center of analysis, relatively little work that explicitly considered the dynamics of social movement coalitions followed (but see Gerhards and Rucht 1992; McAmmon 2001; McAmmon and Campbell 2002; Zald and McCarthy 1987; Staggenborg 1986; Rochon and Meyer 1997; Van Dyke 2003). The growth of a political process approach (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1998; Meyer 2004) generally turned attention
toward events (Olzak 1989; Earl et al. 2004), rather than the organizations, activists, and processes that create them.

The “polity model” (Gamson 1990; Tilly 1978) located challengers outside a monolithic state, and thereby obscured important elements of social movements. Early articulations emphasized unified “challenging groups” rather than a more diverse variety of actors working together to mount challenges. First, in contemporary liberal polities the sharp demarcation between conventional politics and movement politics is hard to find. Elected officials protest, sometimes even engaging in civil disobedience, while activists who protest also vote, lobby, and participate in party politics (Meyer and Tarrow 1998). In this way, movement coalitions stretch across the boundaries between institutional and extra-institutional politics. Second, movements are not themselves unitary actors, but are comprised of organizations with a range of interests and concerns. Although Gamson (1990) recognized that allies could improve a single challenger’s prospect for success, his focus nonetheless remained on the individual challenging organization.

Recognition of the breadth of movement activism and concerns emphasizes the dynamic nature of social change efforts and social protest movements. Activists draw both grievances and resources from more mainstream sources. Further, they use extra-institutional or non-conventional protest as a lever to enhance the political efficacy of allies working within institutions, closer to the formal policymaking process. As they build inroads into political institutions, they alter the grievances, resources, and opportunities available to dissidents, including themselves. Because the different groups enter activism with distinct priorities and longer term goals, a movement’s interaction with mainstream politics affects the strength of coordination among its participating
organizations. The attractions of protest or mainstream politics vary for each group, as does their commitment to the strongest movement of the moment.

In this regard, it’s important to point out that the extent of cooperation within a movement will vary from coalition to coalition, and among cooperating groups within a coalition. Even when organized groups, or their leaders, agree on the general direction in which policy should move, they may choose not to work together on affecting political mobilization or influence. The extent of cooperation varies over at least two dimensions, *in degree* and *over time* (Levi and Murphy 2006; Hadden and Tarrow 2007; Tarrow 2004). In terms of the degree of cooperation, at a base level, groups can endorse the efforts and claims of other groups, but the extent of attention or resources they offer those groups varies tremendously. Joining a coalition may entail no more than agreeing to lend a group’s name to a manifesto or website, with no substantial commitment of resources, and input on goals or strategies limited by the threat to withdraw the name. On the other hand, groups can coordinate strategy, formally negotiate a division of labor, and share resources, including staff time. The second dimension of cooperation is temporal; groups can maintain a formal affiliation only for the support of a discrete event or for a coordinated campaign that lasts over a period of years and transcends several political issues. In such cases, the coalition often becomes a distinct organization in its own right, with independent staff, membership, and fundraising.

Because social movements are about more than their expressly articulated aims, we need to see each expression of political demands as partial. Activists and organizations generally offer broad analyses of social ills, only a small portion of which can be expressed on a placard or banner, or articulated in a demonstration. A given
mobilization can offer the chance to make claims only on the most urgent or promising set of issues. Articulating a fully developed long term agenda runs the risk of alienating potential supporters and invigorating political opposition (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). On the other hand, articulating an ill-defined set of claims runs the risk of being easily co-opted and demobilized by political authorities. Activists thus face the challenge of developing demands that are clear enough to be significant, and narrow enough to avoid alienating supporters and mobilizing the opposition.

In making decisions about alliances and issues, a social movement organization operates in the service of at least three distinct, but inter-related goals: 1) to pressure government to affect the policy changes it wants; 2) to educate the public and persuade people of the urgency of the problems it addresses and the wisdom of its position; and 3) to sustain a flow of resources that allows it to maintain its existence and efforts (Zald and McCarthy 1987; Wilson 1995). What is useful for achieving one objective is not always helpful in working toward another. As example, the literature on lobbying (e.g. Berry 1999; Schlozman and Tierney 1986) suggests that moderation, credibility, and restraint are keys to influence on Capitol Hill. At the same time, those very qualities are anathema to maintaining a high public profile, and thus publicizing ideas; they may make sustaining a flow of resources for a citizen group more difficult. In contrast, a politics of polemic, characterized by dramatic action, may be very useful in maintaining a public profile, but the action may supersede the analysis (say, for example, a dramatic civil disobedience action, like those staged by Operation Rescue). While satisfying supporters, it may reach few others and can even mobilize the opposition (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). In the case of groups with foreign policy concerns, transnational
connections and alliances, which can heighten the visibility, volatility, and scope of a social movement, raise suspicion among policymakers (Bandy and Smith 2005).

Organizations then must balance a profile that contains some mix of these three functions (pressure government; educate the public; generate resources), mindful of maintaining a balance that works for them. We need to see every choice of issue, tactic, and alliance as something that offers advantages and risks along these three dimensions.

For any organization, the initial choice to join a coalition like the one against the war in Iraq immediately necessitates other choices: first, what, if any, alternative policies to offer; second, what means to use in making claims; third, who, if anyone, to work with in making these claims; and fourth, how much effort to direct to the coalition’s collective process. National groups often spur the creation of allies or affiliates at the grassroots and vice versa (McCarthy and Wolfson 1996; McCarthy 1998). The choice to participate carries with it potential costs and benefits that are partly dependent upon the nature and extent of participation. On the one hand, cooperation among groups increases the visibility of the movement, increasing its chances at political efficacy. Additionally, because organizations have distinct audiences, a broad coalition affords the prospects of mobilizing a wider range of people, tactics, and entry into a greater number of institutional niches. Organizations can specialize in terms of issues or tactics, enhancing not only the profile of the movement as a whole, but also its volatility and flexibility (Staggenborg 1986). Tactical diversity and multiple constituencies are assets for a movement in many ways. Radical action can enhance the visibility and credibility of moderates, but it can also discredit them (Haines 1988). Independent organizations can
escalate tactically (McAdam 1983), and can continue to mobilize in response to setbacks that one or several groups in a movement face.

At the same time, participation carries risks. By cooperating with groups that may appeal to the same funders or members, an organization risks obscuring its own identity in service of a larger movement, diminishing its visibility in mass media (Rohlinger 2002) and possibly its capacity to recruit members or raise funds (Hathaway and Meyer 1993/94). As with individuals, organizations cultivate distinct organizational identities that define them to both members and the outside world (Clemens 1993). Such identities encourage certain alliances, while forestalling others. Alliances can compromise identities, and can visibly associate organizations with unreliable or tainted allies. In addition, social ties and networks, which are significant factors in the participation of individuals in social movements, are also important predictors of cooperation among groups. In this way, a group will be more likely to cooperate with those they’ve worked with in the past or groups that share members in common.

Choices are more obvious for some organizations than others, depending upon the issue. The decision to oppose the war in Iraq through non-violent action, including civil disobedience, was simple for, say, the War Resister’s League (WRL), a small pacifist group nearly 100 years old, whose identity is defined by precisely such actions, and whose relatively small organizational presence is supported by loyal donors committed to the absolute nature of the WRL agenda. In contrast, the decision to participate is more difficult for organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) or the National Organization for Women (NOW), as they maintain a profile and base of support largely rooted in other political issues (Meyer and Corrigall-
Brown 2005). Undertaking a strict antiwar stance, engaging in particularly contentious tactics, or affiliating with marginal groups entails risks. At once, it threatens access to a set of political insiders, potentially directs attention away from other issues the group sees as critical, and may alienate supporters, members, and allies. In addition to making a statement on issues of vital concern, participation against the war can afford such organizations the opportunity to mobilize, raise the organizational profile and visibility of the group, and perhaps direct more attention to other issues of their concern. That a large portion of the leadership or membership may see the antiwar position as appropriate only sets the stage for a decision, it does not define it.

Coalitions are both a distinct set of organizational forms (Clemens 1993; Staggenborg 1986; McCarthy and Wolfson 1996), as well as a structuring mechanism coordinating dissent and protest (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Tarrow 2004). A coalition includes a range of groups, bringing with them different constituencies, analyses, tactical capabilities, and resources and cooperating on some piece of a political agenda (Rochon and Meyer 1997). The template flyer at any large demonstration in the United States today is comprised of a laundry list of organizations (cf. Gerhards and Rucht 1995). While there are costs and benefits for individual organizations when joining a coalition, for the prospects of advancing a political position, coalition politics are beneficial politics. Increased visibility aids in the pedagogic goals of movements; multiple organizational opportunities give potential members a place to join in and provide additional access points to government. As a movement grows in power, more groups find incentives to join in, to use the large light of a successful mobilization to bring attention to themselves and their causes. As movements grow in size and
visibility, the incentives for participation increase, as potential members see the prospects for influence and visibility (thus, advantages in recruiting). When a movement is growing, these incentives are likely to outweigh the pressures to be pure on matters of policy or rhetoric.

More generally, the coalition represents a template form that can include a broad variety of negotiated arrangements of two or more organizations coordinating their goals, demands, strategies of influence, and events. Given the organizational imperatives sketched above, negotiating cooperation on any of these matters involves understandable difficulties and requires significant efforts, generally greatest for more extensive coordination. As a result, it is worthwhile to track periods of greater and lesser cooperation among groups and the context in which they take place.

The literature on coalitions effectively lays out the dilemmas inherent in coalition participation, identifying potential conflicts over resources (Zald and Ash 1966; Zald and McCarthy 1987; Wilson 1996; Staggenborg 1986), frames and values (Benford 1993; dellaPorta and Rucht 1995; Gerhards and Rucht 1995), and the coordination of organizational and political goals with actions (Staggenborg 1986; Hathaway and Meyer 1993/94). We can understand why, in general, organizations would choose to cooperate, and how they might negotiate workable relationships.

External circumstances alter the costs and benefits of cooperation, to say nothing of the perceived urgency for collective action (Meyer 2004). Recently, a few scholars have directed attention to the contextual factors that affect the calculus of cooperation. McCammon and Campbell (2002), in an historical study of the suffrage movement, examine alliances between suffragettes and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union.
They find that alliances are most likely to form in response to political threats, including mobilization and organization of the opposition (in this case, brewers’ associations) and the prospects of legislative defeats. Similarly, in a longitudinal study of student activism across a wide range of American campuses, Van Dyke (2003) finds that both proximate (campus-based) and national threats spurred cooperation among a broad range of student activists group. Meyer and Corrigall-Brown (2006) have shown that peace movement groups pressed to cooperate and focus on a common agenda when the threat of war was particularly proximate. Just as extreme threat and possibilities may lead to cooperation, however, changes in those circumstances could encourage groups to differentiate.

We can offer a theory of cooperation among social movement groups that follows the logic of social movement cycles (Tarrow 1989; Meyer and Imig 1993). Groups join coalition efforts when they see their efforts on a particular set of issues and efforts as urgent and potentially efficacious. Like individuals, most groups represent a range of political concerns, and external conditions play a substantial role in organizing their relative priorities. Following McCammon and Campbell (2002) and Van Dyke (2003), it makes sense that threats, defined as unwanted policy initiatives, are more likely to spur cooperation than openings. During favorable political circumstances, groups are likely to have less interest in cooperating with others. In other words, threats lead the urgency of cooperation to outweigh the inherent risks. When external circumstances change, altering either the perceived urgency or efficacy of mobilization, organizations return to their core concerns and activities. Importantly, groups generally don’t need to exit coalitions in order to refocus their own priorities and activities. Paper coalitions may
continue, but the commitment to coordinated collective action dissipates, as does the extent of actual cooperation among groups.

NATIONAL AND LOCAL COALITIONS

The dynamics that drive cooperation and differentiation are likely to work differently for national and local groups. For national groups, a visible public profile and a stable flow of financial resources are of critical importance. National groups maintain professional offices, which require rent and supplies, as well as professional staff, which require management and money (Staggenborg 1988). The flow of money, as well as the heightened visibility that can generate successful fundraising, are a high priority. Further, the proximity to Washington, DC and the policymaking process are likely to put a higher priority on cultivating routine political access to elected officials and bureaucrats. For these reasons, we expect national groups to be more explicitly sensitive to changes in the political environment, and more ready to make entrepreneurial shifts in their prime issues to take advantage of the politics of the moment.

In contrast, grassroots-oriented local groups rarely maintain an extensive infrastructure (McCarthy and Wolfson 1996; McCarthy 1998). At the same time, they are keenly sensitive to a different kind of resource, voluntary participation. Without people showing up at meetings, taking on maintenance tasks, and engaging in collective action, such groups can be ephemeral. Local democratic processes are also unlikely to be as constrained by bureaucratic procedures as their national counterparts. As a result, we expect these groups to respond more directly to the concerns and constraints of their most active members.
We can observe cooperation and differentiation on at least three factors: tactics, issues, and rhetoric. For the purposes of this study, we focus on issues. Groups do not have to abandon the articulation of an issue to place it, effectively, on their back burner. Thus, we’d expect groups to accrete issues to a central demand more rapidly than to allow them to erode. We want to see how these patterns of accretion and erosion develop in two large movement coalitions over time.

DATA AND METHODS

To study the process of cooperation and differentiation on issues, we have identified two social movement coalitions: the antiwar movement that commenced in the run-up to the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, and the more recent Tea Party mobilization, commonly traced to early in 2009. Like many social movements, both campaigns enjoyed the support of a range of local and national groups and both engaged on a variety of issues.

We identified the core national groups engaged in the coalition supporting each movement. We then selected the most grassroots-oriented of the national groups, United for Peace and Justice and Tea Party Patriots, and generated a random sample of 100 local groups affiliated with that national group. We then used the Wayback Machine, an organization devoted to archiving the Internet, to examine the webpages (in contemporary movement politics, every group can have a web presence). We recorded the articulated issues for each of the groups at three time points. We expect the number of issues to increase over time, and the differences in issues among cooperating groups to increase over time. We also expect the differences to be more pronounced between local
and national groups than between cooperating national groups. Below, we note specific modifications made for studying each coalition.

We use these data to assess the diversity of issues and concerns represented within each coalition and how they change over time.

**FINDINGS: THE TEA PARTY**

Most analysts agree that the Tea Party began in February 2009 with multiple protests opposing the Obama administration's recently passed economic stimulus package, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Bennett 2010). As it gained steam, Tea Party activists articulated a platform of broad fiscal conservatism. The movement decried increasing taxation, excessive government spending, and threats to state and national sovereignty; it favored small, limited government, and unconstrained free market capitalism. Tea Partiers rallied around a cry of “re-founding” America, pledging to restore the country to their vision of its founding values and to advocate originalist interpretation of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. They were particularly enthusiastic in uniting against President Obama’s health care reform efforts, fighting against the bill’s passage and cheering judicial rulings against a mandate that they called unconstitutional and overbearing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Descriptive stats of three national Tea Party groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>descriptive stats</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total number of issues:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>average number of issues:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minimum number of issues:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maximum number of issues:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues mentioned by 1 group:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues mentioned by 2 groups:</td>
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<tr>
<td>issues mentioned by 3 groups:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In this study, we examined three national Tea Party organizations—Tea Party Patriots, Tea Party Express, and Tea Party Nation—as well as 100 local-level affiliates of Tea Party Patriots. We coded each group’s concerns, in terms of issues discussed on each group’s publicly accessible webpage—including local groups’ Facebook, Meetup, Ning, and other “social networking” sites, as these were the sole Internet presence for many groups—over six-month intervals from 2009-2011 (for national groups) and 2010-2011 (for local groups).

Although all three groups claim to represent at least one segment of the Tea Party, the three have quite varied beginnings and functions. Tea Party Patriots was founded by a few activists and serves as a hub for grassroots organizations, with over 2500 local allies. Tea Party Express, originally a PAC called “Our Country Deserves Better,” was founded by conservative political strategist Sal Russo. The group has organized a series of bus tours featuring entertainment and speeches from Tea Party supporters; it has also provided funding and support for specific conservative candidates, such as Joe Miller (Alaska) and Sharron Angle (Nevada).

Finally, Tea Party Nation bills itself as a social networking site where individual Tea Partiers can interact online, although the group has also organized a national conference at which, for over $500 per ticket, attendees could attend workshops and hear from speakers such as Sarah Palin. The high prices and substantial compensation for speakers drew considerable criticism, and, in a notable instance of disagreement within the movement, Tea Party Patriots warned its members to “thoroughly research the convention before purchasing a ticket” (Zernike 2010). Subsequent Tea Party Nation conferences were cancelled.
As shown in Table 1, the three national Tea Party groups added more claims over time, and the average and maximum numbers of issues per group also increased over time. However, the three groups we studied are hardly unified on their concerns. In every time period, most of the issues we observed were mentioned by only one national group. The only issues that all three groups mentioned at any time period were favoring a smaller/more limited government (in late 2009) and advocating personal freedom or liberty (in late 2010). However, both Tea Party Patriots and Tea Party Express mentioned some fiscal concern (such as fiscal responsibility, opposition to Obama’s economic stimulus package, or opposition to excessive government spending) in every time period.

Each of the three national groups was quite consistent in its “core” claims over the time periods we studied. Tea Party Patriots advanced three primary issues—“fiscal responsibility, Constitutionally limited government, and free markets”—that are always emblazoned prominently across its website, though the group also discusses other issues episodically, such as health care reform. Tea Party Express, beginning sometime in early 2010, explained its concerns as a succinct open letter to elected officials:

“You, the politicians in Washington, have failed We The People with your bailouts, out-of-control deficit spending, government takeovers of sectors of the economy, Cap & Trade, government-run health care, and higher taxes! If you thought we were just going to quietly go away, or that this tea party movement would be just a passing fad, you were mistaken. We’re taking our country back!”

This statement evolved into the mission statement Tea Party Express displayed on its website as of June 2012:
“Tea Party Express is proud to stand for six simple principles: No more bailouts, Reduce the size and intrusiveness of government, Stop raising our taxes, Repeal Obamacare, Cease out-of-control spending, [and] Bring back American prosperity”

Interestingly, only one component of the earlier statement (opposition to cap-and-trade legislation) was dropped from the current mission statement. This change probably reflects the failure of the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009, which would have implemented an emissions trading program. The bill passed the House of Representatives in June 2009, but in July 2010, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid announced that the bill would not be considered in the Senate, where it lacked enough votes for passage (Hulse and Herszenhorn 2010).

Tea Party Nation, likely owing to its role as a Tea Party social networking site and a desire to attract as many Tea Partiers as possible—both as website participants and paying conference-goers--expressed a broad set of claims across all time periods. Tea Party Nation has, beginning shortly after it transitioned from a Tennessee-only page to a national resource in mid-2009, always displayed the same statement in bold letters at the top of their webpage:

“Tea Party Nation is a user-driven group of like-minded people who desire our God-given individual freedoms written out by the Founding Fathers. We believe in Limited Government, Free Speech, the 2nd Amendment, our Military, Secure Borders and our Country.”
In other words, the national Tea Party groups have become quite specialized in both their functions and their claims, with each group building upon a core set of concerns, yet not overlapping very much with other national groups.

Table 1A: Issues mentioned by National Tea Party groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Tea Party Patriots</th>
<th>Tea Party Express</th>
<th>Tea Party Nation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>Time 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited gov’t</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov’t spending</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free markets</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal responsibility</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget/deficit</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom/liberty</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>free speech</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gun rights</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military/defense</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose socialism</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state sovereignty</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defund NPR</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract from America</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support specific candidates</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose charges of racism</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailout/stimulus</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose unions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support education</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although each national-level Tea Party organization had a relatively consistent set of issues, local Tea Parties were more volatile, and likely more responsive to current national policy debates, local-level politics, grassroots members’ concerns, and the influence of popular conservative figures such as Glenn Beck. The members of local groups discussed and took action for a stronger stance against undocumented immigration, protection and expansion of their right to bear arms, opposition to abortion and LGBT rights, and disdain for increased environmental regulation, among other issues. Within and across local-level groups, some Tea Partiers split into factions: libertarians who touted Representative Ron Paul’s noninterventionist and hard money policies (and resented what they saw as the Religious Right’s hijacking of the Tea Party) and evangelical Christians who wanted to infuse religion into their politics (and quickly tired of hearing about the libertarians’ favored candidate).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of local Tea Party issues over 3 time periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive stats</th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total number of issues:</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>average number of issues per group:</td>
<td>8.69</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>8.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minimum number of issues:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maximum number of issues:</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues mentioned by 1 group:</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues mentioned by 2-5 groups:</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues mentioned by 10% or more</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues mentioned by 25% or more</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in table 2, like their national counterparts, local Tea Party groups collectively accumulated a steadily increasing number of concerns over the two years for which data was collected. The total number of issues discussed by Tea Partiers grew slowly but steadily, and the average number of concerns per group showed a slight upward trend, peaking at Time 2. Over time, the count of issues mentioned by only one local Tea Party group also tended to increase slightly, as did the count of issues mentioned by 2-5 groups, but the count of issues shared by 25% or more of the groups remained relatively stable. This suggests that individual Tea Party groups are not abandoning the claims of the national Tea Party or of other local Tea Parties; rather, local groups tend to “tack on” specialized concerns to their sets of claims, simultaneously staying within the set of shared Tea Party goals and adapting to members’ additional goals.

Table 3: Top 5 issues for local Tea Party groups at each time period, and percent of groups mentioning each issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>early 2010</th>
<th>late 2010</th>
<th>early 2011</th>
<th>late 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>health care (74%)</td>
<td>taxation (56%)</td>
<td>health care (64%)</td>
<td>budget (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taxation (58%)</td>
<td>health care (50%)</td>
<td>govt spending (48%)</td>
<td>taxation (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution (51%)</td>
<td>Constitution (48%)</td>
<td>taxation (47%)</td>
<td>Constitution (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>immigration (48%)</td>
<td>immigration (46%)</td>
<td>Constitution (46%)</td>
<td>health care (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environment (43%)</td>
<td>limited govt (40%)</td>
<td>environment (44%)</td>
<td>govt spending (43%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows the top 5 issues, by number of groups mentioning each issue, at each time period. Tea Party Patriots lists three primary issues of interest—“fiscal responsibility, Constitutionally limited government, and free markets”—and it’s clear that local affiliates share these concerns. Support for the Constitution, desire for a smaller government, and worries over government spending, the national budget, and
increased taxation combine are all among the issues that Tea Party affiliates mention most often across all four time periods. However, a few other highly contentious political issues also dominate Tea Party activists’ attention.

Health care is the clearest example; the number of groups mentioning President Obama’s health care reform efforts was highest in early 2010 (unsurprisingly, as the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was signed by Obama in March 2010), but health care ranks among the five issues mentioned by the largest number of groups in every time period. It’s clear that health care is a recurrent concern of Tea Party members; surely, the debate over health care reform drove the initial mobilization of the Tea Party in the summer of 2009.

Figure 1.

![Number of Mentions of Top Issues (shared by >30% of local Tea Party groups) at Three Time Periods]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Issues</th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>socialism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limited govt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd amendment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>free markets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>immigration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>govt spending</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constitution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taxation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>budget</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Similarly, other issues of concern to Tea Partiers are also closely linked to contemporaneous political debates. Environmental issues (which often took the form of opposition to cap-and-trade legislation) were among the top five most mentioned issues in early 2010, when the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 had passed the House of Representatives but had not yet died in the Senate. Approximately half of the Tea Party groups sampled in late 2011 were concerned about the national budget and debt, while members of Congress engaged in a fierce debate over whether to raise the nation’s debt ceiling and how to deal with the national deficit; ultimately, legislators passed the Budget Control Act of 2011 in August. However, environmental concerns only ranked in the top 5 at one other time period, and budget concerns were not among the top 5 at any other time. These issues were still mentioned by Tea Partiers, but less often; other concerns seem to have taken priority, and these were pushed to the “back burner” while no further Congressional action was occurring (see figure 1).

Grassroots Tea Partiers generally agree when it comes to their stances on these concerns. They oppose President Obama’s health care reform legislation; want stricter controls on immigration and oppose amnesty for undocumented immigrants; oppose environmental regulations such as “cap and trade”; and want the federal government to decrease its spending, lower the national deficit, and balance the budget, without raising existing taxes or imposing new ones. They advocate trying to determine the original intentions of the authors of the Constitution, and adhering strictly to that intent.

However, sometimes issues arise that create dissent and division within and among Tea Party groups. Religion is one; some Tea Partiers favor restricting the
movement’s goals to include only fiscal concerns, while others view religiously-informed morality as crucial to political reform. Another is marijuana legalization: while most Tea Party groups do not discuss the issue at all, we have found groups on each side of the issue. Importantly, as candidates entered (and subsequently withdrew from) the race for the Republican Party’s 2012 presidential nomination, Tea Partiers disagreed on their preferred champions. Ron Paul, Michele Bachmann, Rick Perry, and Herman Cain were early favorites within many local groups, but other candidates found Tea Party support as well, especially as the primary season continued and the field began to narrow. Ironically, the Republican Party’s eventual nominee, Mitt Romney, gathered little support—and more than a few outright opponents—from the Tea Party.

PEACE MOVEMENT: NATIONAL AND LOCAL ISSUES

The American peace movement, which has ebbed and flowed in response to external circumstances (Meyer 1993), experienced a massive resurgence in 2003, when President Bush called for regime change in Iraq. Both existing and new groups, in the United States and abroad, focused on preventing that war (Walgrave and Rucht 2010). When this effort failed, somewhat smaller coalitions of groups turned their efforts to curtailing US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, and participating groups turned their efforts to a variety of interrelated issues, often opportunistically experimenting with claims that might remobilize the large crowds of 2003. Some groups called for the impeachment of President Bush; others argued that high military spending was undermining the economy, and called for alternative budgets that emphasized spending on social programs and education.
As the United States began to reduce its military presence in Iraq, peace movement groups focused their attention on other areas that seemed threatening. In 2007, some peace groups worried that the United States would turn its military presence in the Middle East toward Iran; some groups focused on the character of US support for Israel in an ongoing struggle with Palestinian nationalists.

More generally, most of the peace groups in our study focused on specific military engagements, recruiting practices, military spending, nuclear abolition, nuclear disarmament and other military related concerns such as non-violent conflict resolution. However, many of the groups were also concerned with other, non-military related issues such as inequality, racism, immigration, and environmentalism.

To track the development of issues over time, we coded five national peace groups’ websites for issues addressed from 2003-2011: Act Now to Stop War and Racism (International ANSWER), United For Peace and Justice (UFPJ), US Labor Against War, Peace Action, and Win Without War. Using the WayBackMachine, we coded the issues mentioned on these websites every year from 2003-2011. Two of the organizations' websites were not available in 2003 (ANSWER and UFPJ).

The five national organizations mentioned 28 distinct issues on their websites over the time studied. Table 4 describes the number of issues mentioned by each group each year. Over time, the number of issues each group mentioned on their website increased. The most popular issues for the national organizations were Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Nuclear Abolition/Nuclear Disarmament, Support Palestine, Military Spending, and
Support Minority Rights/Civil Liberties. These issues were mentioned by the majority of the groups for at least two years.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UFPJ</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANSWER</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Win Without War</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Labor Against War</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Action</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pattern of issues and the tendency for groups to increase the number of issues mentioned over time suggests that these organizations add new issues each year rather than change existing issues. If an issue had been mentioned on the website the previous year, it was very likely to be mentioned again the subsequent year. Overall, the national organizations appear to have stable set of core issues. Over time these groups will add additional issues but will continue working on issues from previous years. Again, however, we will see more variance at the local level.

LOCAL

To analyze the issues important to local peace groups, we coded the websites of local peace groups websites from 2003-2011. Using the United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) directory of local organizations, we compiled a list of organizations with a web presence. We randomized the list and coded organizations' websites from 2003 to 2011. To identify issues from a previous time period, we used the Wayback Machine. This
program contains previous captures of various websites. Because most websites were not captured by the Wayback Machine each year, we divided our analysis into three distinct periods: Time 1 (2003-2005), Time 2 (2006-2009), and Time 3 (2010-2011).

Similar to the Tea Party groups, the local Peace groups mentioned a diverse set of interests on their websites. Over time, a greater variety of issues were mentioned by the local organizations' websites. Table 5 shows descriptive statistics of the local peace groups at each time period. From 2003-2011 all the observed groups mentioned a similar number of issues. However, both the number of groups and the variety of issues mentioned increased overtime. At the earliest time period, Time 1, 100 organizations mentioned 47 different issues. During Time 2, 113 local groups mentioned 52 different issues. Finally, 140 groups mentioned 61 different issues. The increased number of issues appears to reflect an increased variety of issues. This becomes more evident when looking at the number of issues mentioned by only a single group.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Time 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average number of issues</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentioned per group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max issues mentioned per group</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min issues mentioned per group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median issues mentioned per group</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of groups</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Issues mentioned</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Issues</th>
<th>Time 1 (cumulative %)</th>
<th>Time 2 (cumulative %)</th>
<th>Time 3 (cumulative %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of issues mentioned by 1 group</td>
<td>18 (38)</td>
<td>24 (42)</td>
<td>19 (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of issues mentioned by 2 groups</td>
<td>6 (51)</td>
<td>8 (56)</td>
<td>7 (47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of issues mentioned by 3 groups</td>
<td>1 (53)</td>
<td>2 (60)</td>
<td>5 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of issues mentioned by 4 groups</td>
<td>4 (62)</td>
<td>3 (65)</td>
<td>5 (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of issues mentioned by 5+ groups</td>
<td>18 (100)</td>
<td>20 (100)</td>
<td>28 (100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over time, groups identified an increasing number of critical issues. Additionally, groups increasingly found their own way to pursue peace activism, as the number of issues mentioned by only one or two groups increased over time. In Time 1, 38% of issues were mentioned by one group and 51% were mentioned by one or two groups. Time 2 shows an increase in the issues mentioned by just one group (42%) and issues mentioned by only one or two groups (56%). Disparity seemed to level off by Time 3. Only 33% of issues were mentioned by one group while 41% of issues were mentioned by one or two groups.

Unlike the Tea Party Groups, the peace movement organizations shared an initial unifying issue. Figure 1 shows the number of times the most common issues were mentioned during each time period. During time 1, Iraq and non-violence were major issues mentioned by the majority of websites. These issues remained popular throughout all three time periods, but additional issues began to gain adherence during times 2 and 3. Iran, Afghanistan, concern for the environment, and nuclear abolition/nuclear disarmament appeared more frequently on peace groups' websites during time 2. By time 3, Afghanistan became the third most often mentioned issue. Other peripheral issues that
received a great deal of attention in time 3 were immigration, racism/inequality, military spending, and support for Palestine. Over time, a greater variety of issues were mentioned as groups reframed their goals.

Figure 2

**Local/National Comparison**

The national level organizations appear to have a consistent set of core issues that they continue to mention on their websites over time. The majority of these groups were
consistently concerned with Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Nuclear Abolition/Nuclear Disarmament, Support Palestine, Military Spending, and Support Minority Rights/Civil Liberties. Over time, every national group mentioned a greater number of issues.

By contrast, the local organizations mentioned a similar number of issues from 2003-2011 but groups’ concerns appeared to diverge. The average number of issues mentioned by local organizations rises, but not nearly as dramatically as the rise at the national level. Furthermore, what is a popular issue differs between each time point. The only issues that receive a consistently high number of mentions by the local organizations are Iraq and non-violence.

THE BREADTH OF A COALITION

How consequential are these differences among groups? To assess the coherence of national and local coalitions over time, we used Blau’s index of diversity to see changes in similarity over time. The index provides a measurement of heterogeneity within a sample, with a value of 1 representing maximum heterogeneity.

Table 7 shows the heterogeneity of issues for times 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the national and local Tea Party websites. Both the national and local Tea Party websites mentioned an extremely diverse set of issues on their websites. The national Tea Party groups' issues were slightly less diverse than the local organizations. However, the issues were extremely diverse at all time periods considering that the upper limit of Blau's Index is 1. This data also shows an increase in the diversity of issues mentioned by both local and national organizational over time. In other words, from early 2010 to late 2011 the Tea Party websites mentioned an increasingly diverse set of issues.
Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Local Tea Party</th>
<th>National Tea Party</th>
<th>Local Peace</th>
<th>National Peace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9621</td>
<td>0.9198</td>
<td>0.9313</td>
<td>0.9246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9665</td>
<td>0.9301</td>
<td>0.9372</td>
<td>0.9444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9664</td>
<td>0.9340</td>
<td>0.9511</td>
<td>0.9438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.9671</td>
<td>0.9513</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.

Note that the peace groups exhibited increased diversity over time, while the Tea Party groups appear relatively more stable. It’s important to recognize, however, just how diverse the Tea Party groups’ concerns were from the start.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As anticipated, we see a greater dispersion of issues over time, with the principles organizing the range of issues articulated in each coalition also varying over time. This
suggests that as a movement grows and time passes, the unity and coherence initially presented will diminish, and do so more visibly at the grassroots level.

We think that this is at least partly explained by the nature of relevant resources to national and local groups. Because national groups seek to sustain a professional staff, offices, and general presence, they are more dependent upon financial resources than voluntary labor. We expect that those resources, provided by committed individuals or foundations, are relatively more stable than the resources required for grassroots mobilization.

At the grassroots, local groups are dependent upon the efforts of neighbors. Local organizers work to get adherents to attend meetings. Processes of adding—or even deleting issues—are likely to be informal and personal. An issue of concern to a committed member is likely to wind its way onto the agenda more easily and with less resistance—and analysis—than for groups at the national level.

So, what does this tell us about social movements more generally? We think these analyses demonstrate the critical issue of the diversity within social movements. Although there was little direct opposition on particular issues within a social movement coalition (like the debate about legalizing marijuana, an issue few Tea Party groups engaged), there were clear differences in definition and emphasis. Because larger movements appear more promising and powerful, there is a tendency both inside and outside a movement to find unanimity less tortured than it really is. At critical stages, generally in response to change in political circumstances, groups at the national and local level are willing to join forces on particularly salient (often threatening) issues. In these cases, the impending war in Iraq unified a reasonably diverse peace movement
coalition and President Obama’s proposed health care reform united a more divided Tea Party movement—both in opposition.

When the battles to prevent a war or expanded health insurance failed, groups did not desert each other so much as turn their efforts to other, more promising or threatening issues, and what each group considered most urgent differed. Political entrepreneurs seeking to maximize influence will try to project a greater unity than they could actually generate. Although activist groups may continue to claim the allegiance of others across the nation, in actual effort, the movement coalitions fragment over time, in response to both their own internal dynamics and their (changing) judgments about a dynamic political landscape.
REFERENCES


Walgrave, Stefaan and Dieter Rucht, eds. 2010. The World Says No to War: Demonstrations against the War in Iraq. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.


