It should be noted that this exercise in no way amounts to a rigorous "test" of these three models. Given the complexity of the processes under examination and the broad time frame adopted in this study, even a rough approximation to the experimental model of scientific inquiry is impossible. Instead, I am simply presenting evidence that I think allows for a comparative judgment of the empirical merits of these three models as regards the single example of insurgency analyzed here. My claims are modest, indeed. Nonetheless, on the basis of this evidence I will argue that the black movement is more consistent with a political-process than with a classical or resource-mobilization interpretation of insurgency.

The mix of these empirical and theoretical objectives is reflected in the structure of the book. Chapters 1 through 3 contain discussions and critiques of the three models of social movements mentioned earlier. The classical model is critically examined in Chapter 1. Resource mobilization comes in for the same treatment in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3 the political process model is outlined and proposed as an alternative to these two models. In Chapter 4 the empirical implications of all three models are discussed and outlined to afford a basis for the empirical analysis to follow. In Chapters 5 through 8 the focus is largely empirical, with each succeeding period in the development of the movement analyzed in chronological order. The period from 1876 to 1954 is discussed in Chapter 5 as a means of providing the reader with an understanding of the historical context out of which the movement developed. In Chapter 6 the crucial period (1955–60) of movement emergence and white reaction is analyzed. The period popularly conceived of as the heyday of civil rights protest, 1961–65, is the focus of attention in Chapter 7. Finally, in Chapter 8, the complex period from 1966 to 1970 is analyzed in an attempt to shed light on the much-neglected topic of movement decline. Chapter 9 presents a synthesis of the empirical findings and theoretical themes contained in the previous eight chapters. Specifically, the analytic utility of all three models of insurgency will be assessed in light of the study's empirical findings. In turn the practical implications of those findings for insurgency in contemporary America will also be discussed.

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Political Process and the Development of
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S.5 - 19

1 The Classical Model of Social Movements Examined

During the past twenty years the accuracy of the pluralist model as a description of the American political system has been increasingly questioned. Yet pluralism represents more than just a description of institutionalized politics in America. In addition, the model is important for what it implies about organized political activity that takes place *outside* the political system.

The pluralist view of social movements follows logically from the way the model characterizes institutionalized politics. The central tenet of the pluralist model is that, in America, political power is widely distributed between a host of competing groups rather than concentrated in the hands of any particular segment of society. Thus Dahl tells us that, in the United States, "Political power is pluralistic in the sense that there exist many different sets of leaders; each set has somewhat different objectives from the others, each has access to its own political resources, each is relatively independent of the others. There does not exist a single set of all-powerful leaders who are wholly agreed on their major goals and who have enough power to achieve their major goals" (1967: 188–89).

This wide distribution of power has favorable consequences for the political system. The absence of concentrated power is held to ensure the openness and responsiveness of the system and to inhibit the use of force or violence in dealing with political opponents. With regard to the openness of the system, Dahl writes that "whenever a group of people believe that they are adversely affected by national policies or are about to be, they generally have extensive opportunities for presenting their case and for negotiations that may produce a more acceptable alternative. In some cases, they may have enough power to delay, to obstruct, and even to veto the attempt to impose policies on them" (1967: 23). The implication is clear: groups may vary in the amount of power they wield, but no group exercises sufficient power to bar others from entrance into the political arena.

Once inside the arena, groups find that other organized contenders are attentive to their political interests. This responsiveness is again a product of the wide distribution of power characteristic of the pluralist system.

Groups simply lack the power to achieve their political goals without the help of other contenders. Instead, they must be constantly attuned to the goals and interests of other groups if they are to establish the coalitions that are held to be the key to success in a pluralist system.

Efficacious political interaction also requires that groups exercise tactical restraint in their dealings with other contenders. Any attempt to exercise coercive power over other groups is seen as a tactical mistake. Lacking disproportionate power, contenders are dependent on one another for the realization of their political goals. Thus, according to the pluralists, the exercise of force is tantamount to political suicide. A broad distribution of power, then, insures not only the openness and responsiveness of the system but its restrained character as well. "Because one center of power is set against another, power itself will be tamed, civilized, controlled and limited to decent human purposes, while coercion . . . will be reduced to a minimum" (Dahl, 1967: 24). In place of force and coercion, the system will "generate politicians who learn how to deal gently with opponents, who struggle endlessly in building and holding coalitions together . . . who seek compromises" (Dahl, 1967: 329).

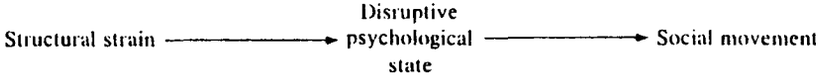
If the pluralist portrait is accurate, how are we to explain social movements? Why would any group engaged in rational, self-interested political action ignore the advantages of such an open, responsive, gentlemanly political system? One possible explanation would be that the group in question had simply made a tactical mistake. Yet the regularity with which social movements occur makes it difficult to believe that, as a historical phenomenon, they represent little more than a consistent strategic error made by countless groups.[1] However, pluralist theory implies another logical answer to the question. Movement participants are simply not engaged in "rational, self-interested political action." Accordingly their departure from the "proper channels" is not seen as evidence of tactical stupidity so much as proof that the motives behind their actions are somehow distinct from those leading others to engage in "ordinary" politics. This answer represents the underlying assumption of the "classical" model of social movements.

The Classical Model

As referred to here, the classical theory of social movements is synonymous with a general causal model of social movements rather than with any particular version of that model. For analytic purposes, the following variations of the model have been subsumed under the general designation of classical theory: mass society, collective behavior, status inconsistency, rising expectations, relative deprivation, and Davies' J-curve theory of revolution. No claim is made that these models are interchangeable. Each

possesses features that are unique to the model. However, the idiosyncratic components of each are relatively insignificant when compared to the consistency with which a general causal sequence (see fig. 1.1) is relied on in all versions of the model to account for the emergence of social movements. This sequence moves from the specification of some underlying structural weakness in society to a discussion of the disruptive psychological effect that this structural "strain" has on society. The sequence is held to be complete when the attendant psychological disturbance reaches the aggregate threshold required to produce a social movement.

Figure 1.1 Classical Model

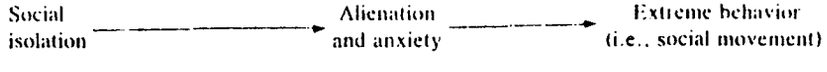


The various versions of the classical model agree on this basic sequence and differ only in their conceptualization of the parts of the model. That is, a variety of antecedent structural strains have been held to be casually related to social movements through an equally wide range of disturbed "states of mind." To appreciate the similarities underlying these various formulations, it will help to review briefly a number of them.

Mass Society Theory

According to proponents of this model, the structural condition known as mass society is especially conducive to the rise of social movements.[2] "Mass society" refers to the absence of an extensive structure of intermediate groups through which people can be integrated into the political and social life of society. Social isolation is thus the structural prerequisite for social protest. The *proximate* causes of such activity, however, are the feelings of "alienation and anxiety" that are supposed to stem from social "atomization." Kornhauser tells us that "social atomization engenders strong feelings of alienation and anxiety, and therefore the disposition to engage in extreme behavior to escape from these tensions" (1959: 32). This sequence is diagramed in figure 1.2.

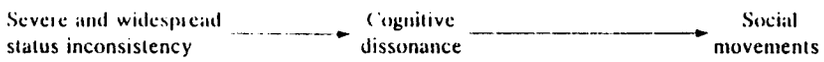
Figure 1.2 Mass Society



Status Inconsistency

Another version of the classical model is status inconsistency (Broom, 1959; Laumann and Segal, 1971; Lenski, 1954). Like "mass society," the term "status inconsistency" has both an objective and subjective referent. Objectively, status inconsistency refers to the discrepancy between a persons's rankings on a variety of status dimensions (e.g., education, income, occupation). If severe, we are told, this discrepancy can produce subjective tensions similar to those presumed to "afflict" the "atomized" individual. For some proponents of the model, these tensions are explainable by reference to the theory of cognitive dissonance. Geschwender, for example, writes: "Dissonance is an upsetting state and will produce tension for the individual. This tension will lead to an attempt to reduce dissonance by altering cognitions . . . or deleting old ones. Attempts to alter reality-based cognitions will involve attempting to change the real world. . . . The set of circumstances described by the 'status inconsistency' hypothesis would produce varying intensities of dissonance and dissonance-reducing behavior according to the degree of discrepancy between relevant status dimensions" (Geschwender, 1971b: 12, 15). As diagrammed in figure 1.3, status inconsistency is thus another variant of the basic causal sequence moving from structural strain, to discontent, to collective protest.

Figure 1.3 Status Inconsistency

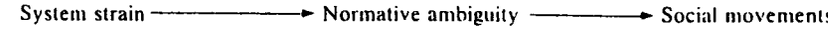


Collective Behavior

Collective behavior is the most general of all the classical models.[4] As a result, it approximates the causal sequence outlined in figure 1.1 quite closely. The model, as proposed by such theorists as Smelser, Lang and Lang, and Turner and Killian, does not specify a particular condition, such as status inconsistency or atomization, as the presumed structural cause of social movements. Instead, any severe social strain can provide the necessary structural antecedent for movement emergence. Thus, according to Smelser, "some form of strain must be present if an episode of collective behavior is to occur. The more severe the strain, moreover, the more likely is such an episode to appear" (1962: 48). Such strains are the result of a disruption in the normal functioning of society. The precise form this disruption takes is not specified, but frequent mention is made of such processes as industrialization, urbanization, or a rapid rise in unemployment. Indeed, any significant social change is disruptive in nature and therefore facilitative of social insurgency. Joseph Gusfield captures the essence of this argument: "We describe social movements and collective action as responses to social change. To see them in this light emphasizes the disruptive and disturbing quality which new ideas, technologies, procedures, group migration, and intrusions can have for people" (1970: 9).

In this model, then, social change is the source of structural strain. Social change is described as stressful because it disrupts the normative order to which people are accustomed. Subjectively this disruption is experienced as "normative ambiguity," which we are told "excites feelings of anxiety, fantasy, hostility, etc." (Smelser, 1962: 11). Once again, the familiar causal sequence characteristic of the classical model is evident in the theory of collective behavior (see fig. 1.4).

Figure 1.4 Collective Behavior



These brief descriptions of various classical theories demonstrate that, despite superficial differences, the models are alike in positing a consistent explanation of social movements. Specifically, all versions of the classical model seem to share three points. First, social movements are seen as a collective reaction to some form of disruptive system strain. Such strain creates tensions which, when severe enough—when some aggregate "boiling" point or threshold is reached—trigger social insurgency. Movement emergence is thus analogous to, and as inexorable as, the process by which water boils.

Second, despite the emphasis on system strain, the classical model is more directly concerned with the psychological effect that the strain has on *individuals*. In this view, individual discontent, variously defined as anxiety, alienation, dissonance, etc., represents the immediate cause of movement emergence. Some versions of the model account for discontent on the basis of the personal malintegration of movement participants. Such accounts depict movement participants as anomic social isolates. However, even if one discounts hints of personal pathology, the individual remains, in empirical analysis, the object of research attention. As seen in these formulations the social movement is an emergent group of discontented individuals.

Third, in all versions of the classical model, the motivation for movement participation is held to be based not so much on the desire to attain political goals as on the need to manage the psychological tensions of a stressful social situation. The functions ascribed to movement participation by various classical theorists support this contention. For the mass

society theorist the movement offers the atomized individual the sense of community he lacks in his everyday life (Arendt, 1951: 316–17; Kornhauser, 1959: 107–13; Selznick, 1970: 263–66). Selznick, for example, notes that for individuals in mass society:

> The need to belong is unfulfilled; insecurity follows and, with it, anxiety-laden efforts to find a way back to status and function and to a sense of relationship with society.
>
> But these efforts are compulsive: enforced by urgent psychological pressures, they result in distorted, pathological responses. There arises the phenomenon of the Ersatzgemeinschaft, the "substitute community," in which essentially unsatisfactory types of integration—most explicitly revealed in fascism—are leaned upon for sustenance (Selznick, 1970: 264).

Similarly, proponents of the status inconsistency model describe movement participation as one means by which the individual can reduce the dissonance produced by his inconsistent statuses (Geschwender, 1971b: 11–16). In a more general sense, the same argument is advanced by collective behavior theorists. The social movement is effective not as political action but as therapy. To be sure, movements are not unrelated to politics. Indeed, Smelser explicitly tells us that they frequently represent a precursor to effective political action (1962: 73). Nonetheless, in themselves, movements are little more than crude attempts to help the individual cope with the "normative ambiguity" of a social system under strain. The "therapeutic" basis of movement participation is implicitly acknowledged by Smelser in his discussion of the "generalized beliefs" that underlie collective behavior: "collective behavior is guided by various kinds of beliefs. . . . These beliefs differ, however, from those which guide many other types of behavior. They involve a belief in the existence of extraordinary forces—threats, conspiracies, etc.—which are at work in the universe. They also involve an assessment of the extraordinary consequences which will follow if the collective attempt to reconstitute social action is successful. The beliefs on which collective behavior is based (we shall call them *generalized beliefs*) are thus akin to magical beliefs" (Smelser, 1962: 8).

Movement participation is thus based on a set of unrealistic beliefs that together function as a reassuring myth of the movement's power to resolve the stressful situations confronting movement members. Movement participants, we are told, "endow themselves . . . with enormous power. . . . Because of this exaggerated potency, adherents often see unlimited bliss in the future if only the reforms are adopted. For if they are adopted, they argue, the basis for threat, frustration, and discomfort will disappear" (Smelser, 1962: 117). The message is clear: if the generalized beliefs on which the movement is based represent an inaccurate assessment of the political realities confronting the movement, it is only because they function on a *psychological* rather than a *political* level. The same can be said for the movement as a whole.

Weaknesses of the Classical Model

The classical model has not been without its critics (Aya, 1979; Currie and Skolnick, 1970; Gamson, 1975; Jenkins and Perrow, 1977; McCarthy and Zald, 1973; Oberschall, 1973; Rogin, 1967; Rule and Tilly, 1975; Schwartz, 1976; C. Tilly et al., 1975; Wilson and Orum, 1976). In general, I agree with the wide-ranging criticisms advanced in these works. The critique offered here, however, is limited to a discussion of the three general tenets discussed in the previous section.

Social Movements as a Response to Strain

The first proposition, that social movements are a reaction to system strain, is problematic because of the implicit assertion that there exists a simple one-to-one correspondence between strain and collective protest.[5] We are asked to believe that social movements occur as an inexorable response to a certain level of strain in society. But since widespread social insurgency is only an occasional phenomenon, we must conclude that system strain is also an aberrant social condition. The image is that of a normally stable social system disrupted only on occasion by the level of strain presumed to produce social insurgency. However, as others have argued, this view of society would appear to overstate the extent to which the social world is normally free of strain. The following passage by John Wilson represents an important corrective to the imagery of the classical model. "The lesson to be learned for the purposes of studying social movements is that since societies are rarely stable, in equilibrium, or without strain because change is constant, the forces which have the potential of producing social movements are always present in some degree. No great upheavals are needed to bring about the conditions conducive to the rise of social movements because certain tensions seem to be endemic to society" (Wilson, 1973: 55). If, as Wilson argues, the structural antecedents of social insurgency are "always present in some degree," then it becomes impossible to rely on them to explain the occurrence of what is a highly variable social phenomenon.[6] At best, system strain is a necessary, but insufficient, cause of social movements.

What is missing in the classical model is any discussion of the larger political context in which social insurgency occurs. Movements do not emerge in a vacuum. Rather, they are profoundly shaped by a wide range of environmental factors that condition both the objective possibilities for successful protest as well as the popular perception of insurgent prospects.

Both factors, as we will see, are important in the emergence of organized protest activity. Together they comprise what Leites and Wolf have termed "cost push" factors in the generation of a social movement (1970: 28). By overlooking these factors, classical theorists are guilty of suggesting that the absence of social insurgency is a simple product of low levels of strain and discontent in society. This ignores the distinct possibility that movements may die aborning, or not arise at all, because of repression or rational calculations based on the imbalance of power between insurgents and their opponents. As Schattschneider reminds us, "People are not likely to start a fight if they are certain that they are going to be severely penalized for their effort. In this situation repression may assume the guise of a false unanimity" (1960: 8).

In short, the insistence that strain is the root cause of social movements has resulted in an overly mechanistic model that conceives of social movements as the result of a fixed and linear process rather than as the interplay of both "cost push" and "demand pull" factors. In John Wilson's view, the classical model "is based on the assumption that circumstances establish predispositions in people who are in turn drawn toward certain outcomes—more specifically, that structural conditions 'push' people into protest groups. But social movements are not a simple knee-jerk response to social conditions" (1973: 90). Wilson is right. Social movements are not simply a "knee-jerk response" to system strain. Rather they emerge and develop as a product of the ongoing interaction of organized contenders within a shifting politico-economic environment. In Chapter 3 this theme will be developed more fully. For now, the important point is that social movements are not, as the classical theorists contend, only the product of factors endemic to the aggrieved population (alienation, dissonance, etc.). The characteristics and actions of opponents and allies, as well as those of movement groups, must be taken into consideration in accounting for any specific social movement. Insofar as classical theorists have failed to do so, they have diminished the utility of their model.

Individual Discontent as the Proximate Cause of Social Movements

While system strain, however defined, is seen by classical theorists as the structural cause of social movements, the motive force behind social insurgency remains some form of individual discontent. This atomistic focus is problematic on a number of counts.

Perhaps the most glaring weakness of this second proposition is the assertion that movement participants are distinguished from the average citizen by some abnormal psychological profile. In extreme versions of the model, nothing less than severe pathological traits are ascribed to movement participants (Hoffer, 1951; Lang and Lang, 1961: 275–89; Le Bon, 1960; McCormack, 1957). While perhaps effective as a means

of discrediting one's political enemies, such formulations are less convincing as scientific accounts of social insurgency.[7] Maurice Pinard summarizes a number of objections to these models:

> we do not see how such political movements could recruit a disproportionately large number of people characterized by pathological personality traits. For one thing, deep psychological traits are not necessarily translated into political beliefs, and the connections of these two with political action is not as simple as is often implied. Moreover, people affected by these traits are relatively few in the general population. . . . If such a movement were to draw only on such people, it would be small indeed and very marginal (Pinard, 1971: 225).[8]

By other accounts, movement participants are not so much distinguished by personal pathology as social marginality. This is the case with status inconsistents who, by virtue of their discrepant rankings on a number of status dimensions, are held to be poorly integrated into society. Similarly, mass society theorists attribute movement participation to the "uprooted and atomized sections of the population" (Kornhauser, 1959: 47). However, impressive empirical evidence exists that seriously challenges the assumption of individual malintegration. Especially significant are the many studies that have actually found movement participants to be better integrated into their communities than nonparticipants. Two examples will serve to illustrate the point. A study of the personal characteristics of participants in a right wing group in the early 1960s showed members to have higher rates of organizational participation, as well as higher incomes, levels of education, and occupational prestige, than a comparable national sample (Wolfinger et al., 1964: 267–75). In a finding more relevant to this study, Anthony Orum discovered participation in black student-protest activity to be highly correlated with integration into the college community (1972: 48–50).[9]

The lack of supportive evidence is not the only empirical weakness associated with the claim that movement participants are social isolates. Indeed, attempts to document the more general proposition that participation in social insurgency is the product of particular psychological factors have traditionally foundered on a host of empirical/methodological deficiencies. For one thing, classical theorists have frequently inferred the presence of the presumed psychological state (alienation, dissonance, anxiety) from objective, rather than subjective, data. Thus, after comparing income, education, and occupational levels for whites and nonwhites, Geschwender concludes that, as an explanation for the emergence of the civil rights movement, " 'the Status Inconsistency Hypothesis' . . . is consistent with the data examined" (1971c: 40). His conclusion is empirically unwarranted, however. Wilson explains why:

> Status inconsistency is intended to describe the processes and product of social interactions in which perceptions, impressions, and responses to these play an important part in influencing attitudes. Underlying the whole model is a motivational scheme in which the perception of certain attitudes helps produce certain outcomes. And yet nowhere is data presented on these motivations. Despite the fact that the model contains crucial social-psychological variables, reliance is made exclusively on objective indexes of inconsistency (John Wilson, 1973: 80).

More damning is the consistent failure of classical theorists to document an aggregate increase in the psychological condition they are attempting to measure. The various versions of the classical model rely for their explanatory power on just such an increase. The claim is that social movements arise *only* when a certain level of psychological strain or discontent is present. This threshold can be conceived either as an increase in the proportion of the aggrieved population "suffering" the specified psychological state, or as an increase in the intensity of the psychological stress associated with the condition. Either way, a demonstrated increase in the presumed causal condition remains a basic requirement of any reasonable test of the model. Unfortunately, this "basic requirement" has been almost universally ignored.[10] In summarizing the findings of relative deprivation studies, a proponent of the model has remarked: "practically all of these studies fail to measure [RD] relative deprivation . . . over a period of time" (Abeles, 1976: 123). Instead, the usual approach has been to measure the degree of relative deprivation (or any of the subjective states deemed significant) in a specified population at a given point in time. On the basis of this analysis, the conclusion is drawn that relative deprivation is causally related to the protest activity of the population in question. But nowhere have we been shown data reporting comparable levels of relative deprivation *over time*.[11] That a certain proportion of the population is judged to be relatively deprived (or alienated, status inconsistent, etc.) at any point in time is hardly surprising. Indeed, it is likely that the incidence of these psychological conditions is relatively constant over time. If so, reliance on them to account for social insurgency is problematic indeed.

Finally, classical theorists have generally been remiss in failing to measure the incidence of these psychological conditions among comparable samples of movement participants *and* nonparticipants. Geschwender, for example, in the study discussed above, based his support for the status inconsistency hypothesis on aggregate data for the entire nonwhite population of the United States. Such data, however, are inadequate to test the theory. Insofar as movement involvement is held to stem from status inconsistency, a comparison of the proportion of status inconsistents among movement participants *and nonparticipants* is required to assess the explanatory worth of the model. If we were provided with such a breakdown, we might very well find that the proportions were not significantly different. This was the case in one study that serves as a significant exception to the methodological weakness under discussion here. In his study of protest activity among black college students, Orum divided his sample into participants and nonparticipants and then compared the two groups on a variety of background variables. On the basis of this analysis, Orum concluded that: the "theory . . . of rising expectations, received no support in our data. Finally, the . . . interpretation, that the civil rights movement arose largely as a means of expressing the discontent of middle-class Negroes, who feel relatively deprived, was not confirmed" (1972: 45).

Orum's findings also illustrate what is perhaps the most serious, yet least acknowledged, weakness associated with the assertion that movements are a product of particular states of mind. While models based on personal pathology or social marginality have come under increasing fire, the same atomistic focus survives intact in less extreme formulations of the classical model. Geschwender illustrates this focus: "He [the Negro in America] is not experiencing as rapid a rate of occupational mobility as he feels he is entitled to. He is not receiving the economic rewards which he feels he has earned. As a result, he is becoming increasingly status inconsistent . . . He feels relatively deprived and unjustly so. Therefore, he revolts in order to correct the situation" (1971c: 42).

Social movements are thus viewed as emergent collections of discontented *individuals*. But to adopt this perspective requires that we ignore a fact that, on the surface, would appear to be obvious: social movements are *collective* phenomena. Obvious or not, classical theorists are guilty of failing to explain the collective basis of social insurgency. They offer no explanation of how individual psychological discontent is transformed into organized collective action. Rule and Tilly make the same point when they criticize Davies' variant of the classical model for treating "as automatic precisely what is most problematic about the development of revolutions: the transition from uncoordinated individual dissatisfactions to collective assaults on the holders of power" (1975: 50).

Quite simply, social movements would appear to be collective phenomena arising first among those segments of the aggrieved population that are sufficiently organized and possessed of the resources needed to sustain a protest campaign. Isolated individuals do not emerge, band together, and form movement groups. Rather, as numerous studies attest, it is within established interactional networks that social movements develop (Cameron, 1974; Freeman, 1973; Morris, 1979; Pinard, 1971; Shorter and

Tilly, 1974; C. Tilly et al., 1975). According to Shorter and Tilly, "individuals are not magically mobilized for participation in some group enterprise, regardless how angry, sullen, hostile or frustrated they may feel. Their aggression may be channeled to collective ends only through the coordinating, directing functions of an organization, be it formal or informal" (1974: 38).

Social Movements Represent a Psychological Rather than a Political Phenomenon

By claiming that the motive force behind movement participation is supplied by the disturbing effect of particular "states of mind," classical theorists are arguing that the proximate cause of social insurgency is psychological rather than political. Indeed, we are really being told that the movement as a whole is properly viewed as a psychological rather than a political phenomenon. Social movements are seen as collective attempts to manage or resolve the psychological tensions produced by system strain. In contrast, "ordinary," or institutionalized politics, is generally interpreted as rational group-action in pursuit of a substantive political goal. The contrast is clearly visible in the relationship that is presumed to exist, in each case, between the problem or strain to be resolved and the means taken to resolve it.

In the case of institutionalized politics, a straightforward relationship between the problem and the means of redress is assumed. If, for example, a government contract vital to the economic well-being of an area were terminated, we would expect the representatives of the affected constituency to initiate efforts to prevent the anticipated recession. Moreover, our interpretation of these efforts would, in most cases, be straightforward. In addition to ensuring their political survival, the elected officials of the region are simply trying to provide their constituents with jobs.

All of this may seem so obvious as to fail to merit such extensive attention. The important point is that classical theorists deny this straightforward link between problem and action when it comes to social movements. In fact, in some versions of the model, there is no logical connection whatsoever. Mass society theory provides us with such an example. According to proponents of the model, widespread isolation is the basic structural problem, or "strain," underlying social insurgency. The social movement is an attempt to resolve this problem, but it is, at best, an indirect attempt. To illustrate the point, let us return to our hypothetical example. Suppose, in addition to the institutionalized efforts of the area's elected officials, a protest movement emerged among workers who had lost their jobs as a result of the contract termination. How should we interpret their actions? Surely the workers are also engaged in instrumental political action designed to insure their means of livelihood. Not so, according to the mass society theorists. Quite apart from the movement's stated politico-economic goals, the primary motivation for participation remains psychological. Kornhauser is explicit on this point: "mass movements appeal to the unemployed on psychological . . . grounds, as ways of overcoming feelings of anxiety and futility, and of finding new solidarity and forms of activity" (1959: 167). Clearly, the functions ascribed to movements by Kornhauser are universal. That is, all movements offer their members a sense of community and an escape from the tensions engendered by social isolation. In this sense, movements are interchangeable. Following Kornhauser, the unemployed workers could as easily have solved their "problems" by joining a fundamentalist religious group as by engaging in political protest. The implication is clear: the political content of the movement is little more than a convenient justification for what is at root a psychological phenomenon.

We have thus come full circle. I began the chapter by raising the issue of the relationship between the pluralist view of the American political system and the classical model of social movements. At the heart of the issue was the puzzling question of how to account for social movements in the face of the open, responsive political system described by the pluralists. Why would any group engaged in rational political action ignore the benefits of this system in favor of noninstitutionalized forms of protest? The classical theorists have provided an answer to this question: movement participants are not engaged in rational political action. Instead, the rewards they seek are primarily psychological in nature. The logic is straightforward. Social movements represent an entirely different behavioral dynamic than ordinary political activity. The pluralist model, with its emphasis on compromise and rational bargaining, provides a convenient explanation for the latter. Social movements, on the other hand, are better left, in Gamson's paraphrase of the classical position, to "the social psychologist whose intellectual tools prepare him to better understand the irrational" (1975: 133).

This distinction, however, raises serious questions about the accuracy of the classical model. It suggests, for example, that we need not take seriously the political goals of the movement. The substantive demands voiced by participants are more accurately viewed as epiphenomenal since the movement is, at root, a vehicle by which members resolve or manage their interpsychic conflicts. According to Kornhauser: "Mass movements are not looking for pragmatic solutions to economic or any other kind of problem. If they were so oriented, their emotional fervor and chiliastic zeal . . . would not characterize the psychological tone of these movements. In order to account for this tone, we must look beyond economic

interests to more deep-seated psychological tendencies" (1959: 163).

And what of the participants in these movements? Are they aware of the "true" motivation behind their involvement? If not, how can we account for these periodic exercises in mass delusion? If, on the other hand, it is argued that they are aware, what explanation is there for their conscious rhetorical distortion of the "true" nature of the movement? Smelser offers the following explanation: "The striking feature of the protest movement is what Freud observed: it permits the expression of impulses that are normally repressed. . . . The efforts—sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious—of leaders and adherents of a movement to create issues, to provoke authorities . . . would seem to be in part efforts to 'arrange' reality so as to 'justify' the expression of normally forbidden impulses in a setting which makes them appear less reprehensible to the participants" (Smelser, 1973: 317).

The ideological implication of Smelser's account is none too flattering. At the same time, however, adherence to such a position makes it extremely difficult to explain the substantive impact social movements have had historically. If movement participants are motivated only by the desire to express "normally forbidden impulses," or to manage "feelings of anxiety and futility," then we would hardly expect social movements to be effective as social change vehicles. In fact, however, movements are, and always have been, an important impetus to sociopolitical change. The American colonists defeated the British on the strength of an organized insurgent movement. Mao, Lenin, Khomeini, and Castro all came to power as a result of similar movements. An incumbent president, Lyndon Johnson, was forced from office and this country's policy on Vietnam altered as a result of the antiwar movement. And through the collective protest efforts of blacks, the South's elaborate system of Jim Crow racism was dismantled in a matter of a decade. Are we to conclude that such significant historical processes were simply the unintended byproducts of a collective attempt at tension management? The argument is neither theoretically nor empirically convincing.

In summary, classical theorists posit a distinction between ordinary political behavior and social movements that is here regarded as false. At root, this distinction is based on an implicit acceptance of the pluralist model of the American political system. Michael Rogin has cut to the heart of the matter: "Having denied the importance of a problem of power, pluralists do not treat mass movements as rational forms of organization by constituencies that lack power. . . . since the pluralists stress that power is shared in a pluralist democracy, movements that do not accept the normal political techniques of that society must be dangerous and irrational" (Rogin, 1967: 272–73). By assuming that all groups are capable of exercising influence through institutionalized means, the pluralists have

made of social movements a behavioral phenomenon requiring "special" explanation. The classical theorists have, in turn, obliged with a host of such explanations based on any number of social psychological determinants. If, however, one rejects the pluralist model in favor of either an elite or Marxist view of power in America, the distinction between rational politics and social movements disappears.