Social Movements and Universities

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Fabio Rojas

Indiana University

Abstract: This chapter draws upon historical accounts and social science research to describe the complex relationships between movements and institutions of higher education. To understand the many movements found in higher education settings, I focus on a few key issues: insider/outsider status, movement goals, movement outcomes, and counter-movement responses. First, it is important to understand if movement activists are academic insiders or outsiders. Some movements are indigenous to higher education, such as student movements, while others have a tangential relation to the educational mission of colleges and universities. Second, movements may vary in their goals. The academic system itself may be a movement target or the movement may have non-academic goals. Third, movements may affect, intentionally or unintentionally, the university organization itself or it may “spill out” into non-academic domains. Fourth, universities, the state, and other actors may respond to university based movements, which results in the control or repression of movements and the emergence of new disciplinary regimes.
Introduction

Social movements go hand in hand with universities. Nearly every significant movement in the last century has had a significant relationship with the university system. The Civil Rights Movement, which transformed America, included highly influential student groups. The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee began with North Carolina students who supported a lunch counter sit-in (Carson 1981). Internationally, university students in Asia and Africa participated in decolonization and anti-authoritarian politics, such as the movement against the apartheid system in South Africa (Altbach 1984; Federici, Caffentzis, and Alidou 2000; Aspinall and Berger 2001). The May 1968 uprising in France stemmed from radical student committees at Nanterre and the Sorbonne (e.g. Touraine 1971; Gregoire and Perlman 1970). Later, the American conservative movement of the 1980s had roots in college Republican clubs of the 1960s and 1970s (Andrew 1997). In 1989, the Chinese democracy movement had strong roots in Beijing University (Zhao 2001).

The academic system itself is often changed by movements. The campus revolts of the 1960s led to Ethnic Studies, Women’s Studies, and other new areas of inquiry (Boxer 1998; Cole 2006; Rojas 2006, 2007; Olzak and Kangas 2008). Later, student movements would rise around issues such as gay rights (Van Dyke 1998), recycling (Lounsbury 2001), anti-apartheid actions (Soule 1999), and sweatshop activism (e.g., Featherstone 2002; Mandle 2000). Each movement demanded that the university should change its policies. Gay rights activism resulted in “LBGT” centers on campus. Environmentalists instituted campus recycling, while anti-apartheid and sweatshop activists succeeded in having universities divest from non-green enterprises.
How can one systematically understand this multitude of movements and their outcomes? What variation exists among movements and the universities they are connected with? How might this variation lead to a theory of movements in the university? The purpose of this chapter is to sketch an answer to these questions. This chapter’s main describes the panoply of movements in universities with a typology relying on two distinctions: insider/outsider status and relation to the academic mission. The typology captures much of the basic terrain of social movements in the higher education context. Movements are defined by the students and scholars who lead them (Rhoads 1998; Yamane 2001; Frickel and Gross 2005; Frickel and Moore 2005). Other movements are organized by people other than students and faculty, such as modern conservatism, which targeted universities in an effort to combat policies such as affirmative action (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996).

Another argument is that movements can affect the university itself or “spill out” into non-academic realms. In considering how movements affect universities, I rely on a model developed by W. Richard Scott (2008). Organizations have multiple levels such as individual practices, routines, subunits, policies, and entire multi-organization systems. It may also be the case that movements in universities affect the state, public opinion, or other institutions. Thus, movements should be understood in terms of how they affect educational institutions as well as other social organizations, which may even lead to “push back” and repression of movements (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996).

The subsequent sections explore these issues in detail. The next section starts by formulating a typology of movement-university interactions. The chapter then discusses examples of movements that represent the ideal types. Later sections discuss examples of
movements that affect the different elements of institutions of higher education and the issue of “push back” against movements. The concluding discussion asks presents hypotheses about social movements and universities that might inform future research.

A Typology of Movement-University Interactions

Movements and universities vary in at least two key dimensions: the activists’ relationship to the university and the movement’s goals. In other words, there is the issue of who is mobilized and the separate issue of what they want. Within academic settings, a movement may be staged by students and professors or by activists from beyond the academy. Similarly, a movement may have academic or non-academic goals. This typology surely simplifies things. Some movements, such as the labor movement, may include significant numbers of students and non-students, and may mix academic and non-academic goals. However, as a heuristic device, this typology assists in identifying themes and trends.

Table 1 illustrates this classification and provides examples. The first two columns indicate activist identities and movement goals. Each row represents a particular combination of actors and goals, illustrated with examples. The first row shows examples of movements associated with academic insiders and that promote academic goals. One such example is the 1990s student movement for multicultural curricula (e.g., Rhoades 1998; Yamane 2001). Conversely, the last row shows examples of movements with a tangential relationship to the university. These movements, such as the campus recycling movement, were often associated with broader political trends that went beyond the
university (e.g., environmentalism) and brought policies that had no obvious academic content (e.g., recycling – Lounsbury 2001).

[Table 1 about here]

A related, but equally important, issue is movement outcomes. What do activists get for their trouble? How can movement outcomes be described? This is a vast topic that has attracted the attention of many scholars (e.g., Giugni 1998), but in this chapter, I provide a simplified description. First, a movement outcome may be described in terms of how much it changes the organizational and institutional dimensions of the university. Some may ask only for a few very specific policy changes, such as a single course, or a pay raise for graduate student instructors. In contrast, other movements may demand whole scale reconstruction of the higher education system and its values. Second, a movement’s outcome may be described as a spillover into domains outside higher education. A movement may create ideas and practices that affect the public at large.

Table 2 provides examples of different outcomes associated with movements in universities. Each row lists a different type of outcome. The top row indicates movement outcomes that affect the routines and practices within universities. The aforementioned campus recycling movement, for example, focused on one specific procedure within the university: waste disposal. There are broader organizational outcomes of movements, such as structural change in universities. The ethnic studies movement of the 1960s promoted entirely new academic programs. The broadest academic change is that which affects an entire university system. In the 1960s, the civil rights movement successfully
ended desegregation, which had been regular feature of college admissions in predominantly white colleges.

The bottom half of Table 2 describes movements that spill out into the broader society from the academic sector. In rough terms, movements may affect culture or formal institutions, such as the state. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but it is intended to draw attention to the complexity of movements in universities. Not only do they affect what happens in the higher education system, but they also ripple out into other domains. One example is the conservative legal movement. Forming within various law schools and economics programs, the conservative law and economics movement provided the intellectual resources that conservative elected officials needed to successfully defend policies and statutes from court challenges (Teles 2008). Thus, this intellectual movement within the university system was a vital element of the wave of policies associated with the Reagan-Bush administrations.

[Table 2 about here]

Surveying the Terrain: Student Movements

This section surveys student movements and describes their evolution in broad terms. It is difficult to make broad generalizations about student movements before the 20th century due to sparse historical documentation of early universities (Cobban 1971). There are, however, a number of scholars who have documented student activism in 19th and 20th century Europe. For example, European historians note that college students participated in nationalist politics in the interwar period (e.g., Altbach 1997; Judt 2005).
In Germany, university students founded organizations to discuss and promote liberal ideas in the 19th century. As revolutionary socialism became more prominent in 19th century Europe, it was not uncommon for intellectuals and student groups to participate in various socialist causes (Gouldner 1983).

Student activism in America appeared in the 20th century. By the 1930s, American student activism emerged in a form that is recognizable today (Altbach 1997; Brax 1981). College students frequently participated in movements of the left, such as labor, civil rights or ethnic rights, feminism, anti-authoritarianism, democracy, and peace. The American Youth Congress, an early 20th century student group, opposed racism and met in Washington, DC in officials from the Roosevelt administration. Cohen (1993) also points out the Left of the FDR era had its roots at various colleges. The “Old Left” organizations of the 1930s drew their leadership from students who ran leftist campus clubs.

After World War II, student activism continued to grow. In the 1950s, it was common to find political groups on American campus. Later, in the 1960s, student groups became key actors in American politics because they led movements that defined the era. One such group was the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which opposed the Vietnam War. SDS was important not only because it spearheaded the peace movement, its leaders became prominent in American politics (Adelson 1972; Gitlin 2003). Similarly, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee emerged from student politics to lead the fight against segregation (Carson 1981). Its leaders became prominent activists and elected officials, usually associated with the Democratic Party.
The rise of powerful student groups was not limited to the United States. Student groups established themselves in nearly every university system, often around similar issues. Notable examples include student groups that initiated the “May 1968” uprisings that nearly toppled the De Gaulle government in France (Touraine 1971; Gregoire and Perlman 1970), the anti-PRI student activists in Mexico (Poniatowska 1975; Rhoads and Mina 2001), and the 1968 student uprisings in Tokyo (Tsurumi 1975).

Student movement groups often reflect the issues of the day and mirror broader social trends, such as college based Civil Rights groups (Carson 1981). However, in a few cases, movements inside universities may develop a hostile stance toward society and use unorthodox, and occasionally violent, tactics to enact radical social transformation. For this reason, universities can act as incubators for movements that trigger substantial unrest, rather than just mirror social trends. Perhaps the most infamous example is Peru’s Sendero Luminoso (“The Shining Path”). Started by philosophy professor Abimael Guzman in the 1960s, the Sendero Luminoso was a Maoist group that formed within the San Cristobal of Huamanga University. Convinced that Peru was a corrupt and decadent capitalist state, Guzman and his student followers waged class war within Peru. The group, in the 1980s and 1990s, violently tried to topple the Peruvian state (Gorritti 1999, Rochlin 2003). Other examples of extremist student groups that formed in universities include the Weather Underground, which split from SDS in 1969 (Varon 2004); the Black Panthers and the US Organization, which partially sprang from Oakland and Los Angeles college student politics (Ogbar 2004; Brown 2003); the notorious student gangs at the University of Havana of the 1930s, which included a young Fidel Castro (Thomas 1998); anti-Western student groups in Iran (Mirsepassi-
Ashtiani 1994); and recently formed anti-Chavez student groups in Venezuela (Suggett 2008).

There have been two recent developments that distinguish contemporary student activism from happened before the 1960s. First, conservative movements have asserted themselves on college campuses and they are not ephemeral anti-left groups. The most notable conservative movement organization is probably Young Americans for Freedom (Andrew 1997). Started in 1960, the group’s explicit goals are to defend the Constitution, individual choice, free markets, and the sovereignty of the United States. This organization is exceptionally important because it was the most prominent American alternative to left student politics and provided the conservative movement of the 1980s with the skills and infrastructure needed for electoral success (Andrew 1997). Former YAF members became lawyers, business leaders, and political activists. The rise of conservatives in the 1980s depended, in part, on the networks developed in colleges during the 1960s and 1970s.

A second change that merits attention is that students began organizing around academic reform (Rhoads 1998). It has always been the case that students have fought with faculty within colleges, but as noted by historians, it was rare for students to demand control over the content of the curriculum (e.g., Cobban 1971). Before the 20th century student-faculty conflict often focused on whether faculty could control the daily life of students (Veysey 1965; Altbach 1997). Students also wanted control over the quality and content of instruction (Cobban 1971). However, it was somewhat rare for students, before the 1960s, to make the university itself a target for sustained political action. In other words, students rarely demanded that universities change their mission. That began to
change with the 1960s and intensified throughout the 1990s. Students in the 1960s, for example, demanded new academic programs such as ethnic studies and women’s studies (Rojas 2007; Boxer 1998). Later, activists demanded multicultural courses in various universities (Bryson 2005; Yamane 2001).

Surveying the Terrain: Intellectual Movements and Academic Disciplines

Movements are not only the domain of students. Intellectuals and scholars may create their own movements. New disciplines and academic programs may emerge from contention among intellectuals and the attempt to gain control over the curriculum and research agenda of the university. For these reasons, there has been a renewed sociological interest in framing disciplinary change as a sort of social movement housed within the university system (Frickel and Gross 2005). Using the typology of Table 1, intellectual movements are mobilizations of insiders for the purpose of internal reform. The creation of new disciplines and academic specialties is now seen as highly analogous to a social movement. An aggrieved group of scholars work together because they view the existing disciplinary system as unjust or constrained. They appropriate the resources needed to institutionalize new ideas.

The history of the academic disciplines lends support for this view. An early study by Ben-David and Collins (1966) framed the rise of psychology in such terms. Frustrated by limited career opportunities and the belief that philosophy was ill suited for the study of the human mind, the first generation of psychologists broke off from the philosophical
profession. Similarly, Gross (2002) has characterized the split within contemporary philosophy, between analytic and heterodox philosophers, in the same way. Philosophers associated with the dominant analytical tradition viewed the mainstream as uncompromising and hostile to their ideas. In response, philosophers who specialized in other schools of philosophy, such as pragmatism, Continental philosophy, and feminism, organized break away groups, which even included protest during professional conventions. In reviewing this literature, Frickel and Gross (2005) postulate that certain conditions facilitate mobilization within disciplines. For example, if intellectuals begin to view the academic mainstream as illegitimate, they are more likely to mobilize. Intellectual movements that can acquire financial and symbolic resources are more likely to succeed in attracting adherent and possibly starting a new academic community. In summary, Frickel and Gross present intellectual as a social movement highly similar to those outside the intellectual world.

Intellectual change may be due to outsiders. Social movements with few connections to universities or colleges may demand academic concessions. One notable example is the Christian progressive movement of the late 19th century. Haskell (1977) discusses how Christian progressives imagined a social science promoting virtue and decency in American society. They formed a professional association with its own journals and conferences. By the late 1880s, the Social Science Association lobbied research universities for academic programs. Though they failed, they created the environment for future disciplines in the university. The American Economic Association and the American Historical Association both broke off from the Social Science Association to become the main professional organization of each discipline in America.
Scholars have also examined the political organizations of scientists who mobilize on behalf of issues outside the university. In this case, the university is used as a resource in a larger political campaign. The university may give activists legitimacy, or it may provide physical resources (e.g., a place to meet) and financial resources. A key study on this topic is Moore’s *Disrupting Science: Social Movements, American Scientists, and the Politics of the Military, 1945-1975* (2008). Based on case studies of scientist-run public interest groups, Moore shows how scientists negotiated the tenuous relationships between the academy, the state, and the public. Moore’s study focuses on how scientists operated in the boundary between the state and the university and how each generation of scientists built on previous generation of campus activism. The university provided not only authority for that movement, but also provided a link to the state via government contracts and consultation. These two resources, authority and state contacts, became a valuable resource for scientists mobilizing against nuclear weapons, the Vietnam War and other issues.

**Surveying the Terrain: Outsiders Target the University**

Universities can be homes for student-based activism or the site of worker-driven organizational change. However, universities can also be the target of social movements that are not primarily identified with education. Social movements can choose higher education as a battleground on which they can make a symbolic point. For example, in the United States, conservative political groups have often targeted colleges and entire university systems in an attempt to promote preferred social policies (Andrew 1997).
Teles’ (2008) recent work on legal conservative activism documents how lawyers strategically litigated against various universities to overturn affirmative action policies and campus speech codes. The goal, in many cases, was to use one student’s grievance to set a precedent for further legal activism outside the academy. A decision against affirmative action in law school admissions, for example, could be used to justify litigation against race-based awards of government contracts. Similarly, conservative activists successfully promoted a 1998 California referendum that banned the use of race as a criterion in public university admissions decisions. It was hoped that this tactic could then be used to prohibit the use of race in other public policy, though there is little evidence that this has happened (Pusser 2000).

Outsiders also use the university as a stage and launching pad for activism. For example, it is common for movements to recruit college students. Nearly every major social movement has, at one time, attempted to recruit students into its ranks. Numerous examples abound. The Civil Rights movements had important student groups, as do the labor movement, feminist organizations, and peace groups. Teles (2008) provides a recent informative example, The Federalist Society, the conservative legal association. Created by law students, the Federalist Society provides opportunities for outsiders to visit law schools and gather support for their own causes. Law students often get their first organized exposure to conservative legal activism through this organization. Activists litigating political “hot button” cases often rely on their contacts within the Federalist society to acquire the expertise needed to press the case.
Organizations can be described as having multiple levels (Scott 2008). Perhaps the most basic elements are practices and daily routines of the organization. An intermediate level is the organization itself. An organization can be described in terms of its units, policies, goals, and overall structure. The organization itself may be embedded in a larger environment, which includes other similar organizations. This larger environment has often been called the “organizational field.” These multiple social systems are governed by institutions, which are the stable rules, formal and informal, that reflect the social consensus behind an organization. Social movements transform the university by changing any of these different elements of the organization (Davis, McAdam, Scott, and Zald 2005).

The social movements of the 1960s are responsible for much change in the organizational structure in American higher education. At that time, there were many movements for new courses and departments, such as Ethnic Studies, Black Studies, and Women’s Studies (Rojas 2007; Boxer 1998; Olzak and Kangas 2008; Brint, Turk-Bicakci, Proctor, and Murphy 2009). In some cases, the effects were obvious and direct. Universities adopted new courses in response to activist students and faculty. The establishment of these academic programs is the stamp that the 1960s left on university organization.

In other cases, movement outcomes are more indirect and can be seen at the level of practice. Once again, curricular reform movements of the 1960s provide an instructive example. Without new course or departments, faculty members in a wide range of fields
a introduced ethnic or gender focused material into their courses. For example, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a large growth in the application of feminist theory to issues in literary criticism, history, and the rest of the humanities. This was often couched in terms of the feminist mobilization of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Similarly, the rise of the ethnic studies movements of the late 1960s was soon followed by a wave of courses in traditional departments on the topic of African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and other American minorities (Cole 2006; Brint, Turk-Bicakci, Proctor, and Murphy 2009).

It is worth mentioning how professors interpreted these curricular changes. Multiple commentators have noted that later generations of students and faculty did not approach multicultural or feminist courses and departments with the same fervor as the generation of the 1960s (Bryson 2005; Yamane 2001; Rojas 2007). At the height of these curricular reform movements, new courses were often seen as part of a larger effort at wholesale social change. For example, Black Studies activists often claimed that Black Studies departments could train students to work in poor inner city areas. However, these motivations were soon amended, or even replaced, by academic professionalism. Students and professors in the 1990s and later were much more likely to see Black Studies as another academic specialty, much like Russian Studies or chemistry (Rojas 2007).

An important question is which universities are most likely to respond to movement activism. Which universities will create new programs or institute new courses? A number of recent studies have addressed this question with systematic data on universities. Rojas’ (2006, 2007) analysis of the black studies movement shows that
adoption of Black Studies in one university is strongly linked with student protest and the creation of similar programs in other universities. Cole (2006) shows that ethnic colleges (e.g., tribal colleges) are ten times as likely to adopt “ethnocentric” courses as mainstream colleges. Olzak and Kangas’ (2008) joint analysis of ethnic studies and women’s studies courses shows that the demographic profile of colleges is highly correlated with creation of these programs. Interestingly, Olzak and Kangas show that there is an asymmetric effect at work. Institutions with women’s studies programs are likely to have ethnic studies, while the converse is not true. These findings suggest that a movement will be successful if their proposals resonate with the identity and mission of the college.

What happens when the movement and university have differing goals? One possibility is that faculty and staff will reformulate new policies and structures so that they have more traditional goals. This might be called the “cooling out” effect of institutions. In general, it is very difficult for a movement to resist this tendency. Administrators control budgets and may reward students and faculty when they propose or enact changes that are consistent with traditional academic standards. More subtly, administrators may only approve faculty hiring or student admission into new programs only if they eschew a movement’s more radical tendencies. There are also external pressures. Even if administrators completely endorse a movement’s goals, faculty may have trouble getting published, attracting research grants, and building a profile as a legitimate researcher.

For these reasons, the emergence of ethnic studies, and other disciplines arising from movements, merits continued attention from researchers. Despite the pressures to
adopt a mainstream stance, these movement inspired disciplines retain an important element of radicalism and have institutionalized it to a great degree. Academic programs and other formalized spaces, such as research centers, that exist within them mainstream, yet retain strong identifications with the movements that spawned them, have been called “counter-centers,” to indicate their tenuous position (Rojas 2007).

**Change Spanning the University System: Reforms, Exits, and Start-Ups**

It is often the case that a movement’s goals and impact will not be confined to specific organizations. Political mobilization may target the broader environment in ways that go beyond structural change in a single college or university. The higher education environment itself may be the thing that is thought to be in need of change. Such efforts may be classified, broadly, as changing the “institutional environment.” A movement may change the higher education system by altering or amending the rules that govern organizations. Another possibility is that movement activists find the traditional academic field completely inflexible, which may lead to their exit. I call these two options “institutional reform” and “exit.”

This chapter has already addressed numerous examples of institutional reform. The Civil Rights movement is perhaps the most well known example. Over a period of thirty years, Civil Rights activists worked to change a very basic feature of American education: racial segregation. Through a complex series of court battles, legislative pushes, and protests, students, lawyers, and scholars managed to open up American colleges to students of all backgrounds. Affirmative action may be an example of field
wide reform (Rhoads, Saenz, and Carducci 2005). Counter-movements may also attempt to reverse changes in the moral framework for higher education. As noted earlier, conservative legal activists have tried to reverse or ban affirmative action policies in universities through court actions and state referenda (Teles 2008). These efforts have resulted in substantial policy changes in Texas, California, Michigan, and elsewhere. At the present, however, it is not evident that mobilization around these issues has resulted in wholesale reversal of the college admissions practices created in the 1970s and 1980s.

Intellectual movements may also engender institutional reform. Academics may change what is viewed as legitimate to teach and research across the higher education system. Much disciplinary change can be viewed in this way. When scholars and academics view existing disciplines as limited or inadequate, they may resort to political mobilization within the university system. The result can be a new discipline, which affects what is viewed as a proper domain of study in many universities.

This is not to say that all disciplinary change occurs in the same way. Intellectual movements may have an entire discipline in mind as they mobilize. For example, the rise of American studies might be viewed in such a light (Wise 1979). Early on, intellectuals were specifically searching for a discipline that would draw on historical and humanistic approaches to American history. At other times, disciplinary change may emerge piecemeal, as programs at individual universities start and then form an entire academic field. An example of such change was the early movement for computer science (e.g., Aspray 1999). Administrators often tried to place computer science in traditional engineering, mathematics, and library science programs. As computing become more commonplace, and more universities housed mainframe computers and computer science
research groups, computer science coalesced as a discipline in the 1960s and 1970s after mobilization by emergent computer scientists.

Institutional exit is the most radical alternative for social movement. It may the case that activists believe that their intellectual or educational goal simply can’t be accomplished within the existing academic system. They may try to create organizations, student groups, and professional associations that exist independently of the traditional university system. One example can be drawn from the history of ethnic studies. For a few years in the late 1960s, activists attempted to establish all-black colleges such as Nairobi College and Malcolm X Liberation University (Van Deburg 1992; Fergus 2009; Belvin 2004). The justification was that traditional academia could not accept a complete re-alignment toward Africa or African Americans. The colleges, which only briefly existed, were designed to channel students toward social work in inner cities and Africa. Conservative universities are another informative example. Feeling that mainstream academia did not pay enough attention to Christian values, Liberty University and Patrick Henry College were created to promote conservative viewpoints. Unfortunately, there is relatively little research on these institutions. Though documentation of such efforts is sporadic, there is evidence to suggest that many movements consider, and occasionally enact, higher education outside the traditional system.

**Spill Out and Unintended Consequences**

Movements in higher education settings may have important effects outside the academy. One important effect stems from how movements use universities as launching
grounds for broader actions. Perhaps the two most sensational cases were the May 1968
protests that nearly toppled the De Gaulle government (Touraine 1971; Gregoire and
Perlman 1970) and the 1989 Tiananmen Square movement (Zhao 2001). In each case,
universities acted as an incubator for a movement that strongly questioned the legitimacy
of the state. Following a period of cultural and political liberalization, student groups
emerged in the hothouse environment of the university. Then, students used the
distinctive physical landscape of the university campus to stage demonstrations that could
be hard for the state to control. The May 1968 students used the narrow streets of Paris to
block police access and the Tiananmen protesters coordinated without hassle because
Beijing campuses tended to be demarcated from the rest of the city with high walls. In
time, the growing student movement joined other groups, such as workers and
intellectuals. Similar processes have been documented in the Civil rights case where
campus groups exploited the environment of Black colleges in the 1950s and 1960s
(Polletta 1999; Lowe 2007). In each of these three cases, the university based mobilization
resulted in massive confrontations with the state. These studies suggest that there are
distinctive features of university organization and physical layout that are conducive, in
certain circumstances, to mass movement mobilization.

Another important consequence is the effect that movements have on the wider
political culture. Here, it is difficult to measure how university based movements
generate broad change, but particular cases are suggestive. For example, the Civil Rights
movement fought many battles over school segregation, which became a model for
demanding equality in other circumstances. Anti-war scientists are another useful
example (Moore 2008). It is plausible to think that the actions of scientists, especially in
Europe, were contributing factors to the public’s desire to limit the proliferation of nuclear weapons in Europe. These examples show the need for systematic study. When do university based movements spill out into the public consciousness? How durable are these cultural changes? Does the fact that ideas emerge from academic contexts give them more or less legitimacy for the public?

The unintended consequences of university movements are another unexplored area. At least two are worth mentioning. First, university movements may change the lives of those that participate in them (McAdam 1988). Research on activists often shows that they continue to participate in politics and that student activism is often the first stage in a political career. This suggests that, for certain students, campus activism is a gateway into a longer political career. This is a prominent theme in biographical accounts of civil rights activists. College students were recruited into activism via campus organizations, which then helped these individuals begin a lifelong habit of political activism.

Second, successful political mobilization may undermine educational organizations by altering the reason for their existence. For example, the Civil Rights and Women’s movements may have inadvertently accelerated the contraction of historically black colleges and women’s colleges (Thomas and McPartland 1984; Miller-Bernal and Poulson 2007). A major reason for the existence of these institutions was race and gender based segregation. With the end of legal segregation, these higher education sectors have often faced debilitating declines in enrollments. Successful mobilization may change the institutional environment that justifies particular organizations.
Shutting Down Movements and Regulatory Build Up

Social movements in higher education may trigger repression by the state, university leaders, and other actors (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). Repression itself may change institutions of higher education and in society at large. The “push back” against movements may include changes in popular opinion, new regulations of campus life, and changes in the state itself. For these reasons, any account of movements in universities must also include a description of movement-countermovement dynamics.

Perhaps the most notable recent example of repression is the Chinese state’s actions during the 1989 movement. After weeks of open challenge, movement sympathizers within the Chinese Politburo were over-ruled, leading to violent repression (Zhao 2001). The catastrophic end of the democracy movement is not the only outcome of the repression. The Chinese state tightened its grip over the universities to prevent another challenge. Zhao reports that a number of counter-movement reforms were instituted by the Chinese state. Students were more closely monitored by party representatives, the Chinese state re-introduced mandatory military service, and students were no longer allowed unrestricted access to foreign academic materials. In short, the repression of the student democracy movement resulted in a re-definition of the relationship between the state and the university.

Movement repression by authorities inside the university system is an important, but unexplored topic, though there are a few early studies (e.g., Lammers 1977). Accounts of student strikes provide some evidence about the ways administrators target movements. A common theme is that administrators rely on the disciplinary system of the
university to undermine or control movements. *The Time of the Furnaces* (Anthony 1971), written by a former student activist, recounts how California State College administrators suppressed black student demonstrators by employing harsh sanctions. Even when disciplinary rules are lax, administrators will try to introduce stronger rules before confronting a movement (Rojas 2010). It is also the case that administrators will also try to defuse movements through less sensational means such as giving partial, or complete, concessions in the hope that disruption will stop. Furthermore, administrators may view the university as a place for students to explore ideas and exercise free speech. These views may create additional variation in the response to activism. Because this area of research is undeveloped, there is no current theory about the conditions under which administrators will resort to repression, concession, or join with activists.

Interestingly, more can be said about the repression of intellectual movements because disputes among scholars are well documented. A key insight is that the rewards of the academic system go to those who publish in well regarded journals and university presses. Thus, much conflict revolves around the production, dissemination, and recognition of research (e.g., Gross 2002; Harris 1993). For these reasons, administrators rarely respond to intellectual movements by directly manipulating or controlling them. Instead, conflict centers aggrieved intellectuals and the discipline’s mainstream. Incumbent intellectuals can exercise numerous strategies for controlling or otherwise affecting insurgents within their discipline. One simple strategy is exclusion. Mobilized intellectuals may have their research ignored or rejected by the editors of journals and university presses (e.g., Gross 2002). This tactic, framed as adherence to quality or an enforcement of intellectual boundaries, has the effect of suppressing the careers of
intellectuals not-aligned with the mainstream. Another tactic is de-legitimization. Prominent intellectuals may provide a discourse that frames insurgents as anti-intellectual or incoherent. For example, a number of mainstream scientists have taken great efforts to de-legitimize creationists who seek college credit for their courses or publication of their writings (Binder 2002; Numbers 2006).

**When Do Movements in Universities Succeed or Fail?**

This review shows the wide range of movements in universities and their impact. Much effort was expended in simply describing the nature of social movements and their relation to higher education. However, one may develop hypotheses about the efficacy of movements. The first hypothesis is that social movements are no more or less successful than their allies in the non-academic realm. This might be called the “correlation hypothesis.” The success of a movement is correlated with the success of non-academic counterparts. Perhaps the most prominent example is the Civil Rights movement. Black student activism in the 1950s and 1960s was enabled by the broader success of Civil rights politics in American society. As the Civil Rights movement matured, there were more opportunities for students to learn from activists off-campus.

In contrast, there may be a decoupling between academic movements and their off-campus allies. The higher education environment is distinct and there might be no direct link between success inside and outside the higher education system. For example, social conservatism has had remarkably little success within contemporary mainstream academia. As mentioned earlier, creationists, and others, have had a very difficult time in
getting universities to accept their ideas as legitimate science (Binder 2002; Numbers 2006). Even though that movement has substantial resources, there is little evidence showing that these resources – money, robust movement networks, and organizations – have any currency within the academy. Perhaps the networks and ideas that permitted social conservatism to be successful in the American electoral politics have no validity among the constituencies of the university.

Then there are movements which do not have any counterpart outside the academy. The intellectual movements discussed in a previous section fit this description. For example, the movement of psychologists breaking away from professional philosophy in the 19th century has no counterpart outside the academy. There are other hypotheses that can be developed for such movements. One might be called the “Kuhnian” hypothesis: intellectual movements are most likely to succeed at times of perceived intellectual or academic crisis (Kuhn 1962). These crises might be the intellectual analogs of “political opportunities” (e.g., elections, wars) that shape other movements. This hypothesis suggests that Kuhn’s account of intellectual change might be a somewhat routine aspect of academic disciplines. Academic communities will occasionally have moments where old ideas and institutions come into question. Departing from Kuhn, there is no reason to believe that such crises are linked to theory falsification. Instead, crises may be political (i.e., disputes over authority within a discipline) or organizational (i.e., there are not enough resources for all groups within a profession). The result is a movement that modifies or secedes from a discipline.

Finally, it is worth drawing attention to an issue that may affect the success of all types of movements in universities – resource dependence (Pfeffer and Salancick 1978).
As noted multiple times, the university itself has resources that facilitate movements. There are meeting spaces, funds for student clubs, and a captive audience of potential converts. Therefore, success may be linked to the movement’s integration and exploitation of the universities resources. These hypotheses do not exhaust all possibilities, but are presented to convey the need to develop a comprehensive theory of how academic movements achieve their outcomes.

Implications for Higher Education Research

The study of movements in university settings has implications for higher education research and organizational analysis. First, research in this area draws attention to the fact that student movements and intellectual politics have important effects. Rather than being disorganized and ephemeral happenings, movements can be sustained actions that introduce, intentionally or unintentionally, policies, ideas, and curricula into the academic system. Second, movements may be a natural source of change in academic settings. Students, or outsiders, will likely find some aspect of the university to be illegitimate and mobilize around the issue. Similarly, disputes among intellectuals may be translated into collective action, leading to change in academic programs and disciplines. In either case, contentious politics appears to be a constant force for change in universities. A third issue is that movements define how the university system relates to the broader polity. As discussed in the section on “spill out,” movements can have important effects on states and popular opinion. Conversely, states, and the public, may
move to censure or regulate the university because of student movements. Movement politics affect the tone of the relationship between universities and the state.

A different question for education researchers is how movements affect the basic structure of the higher education system. Though movements have been an important presence in the academic system since the 1800s, possibly earlier, there appears to be little evidence that the fundamental structure of academia has changed because of them. Movements may add disciplines, or occasionally create a new college, or alter access to higher education, but the system of colleges, departments, and disciplines remains the same. This is consistent with Burton Clark’s (1986) observation that academia is a loosely coupled and highly adaptable system. Since universities are interchangeable bundles of programs and departments, it is easy to add another without disrupting the entire system (Weick 1982). Education researchers can ask if this is indeed a correct characterization or if there is substantial structural change due to movements. If not, then researchers should specify the mechanisms that allow the higher education system to remain unaltered in the face of repeated challenges.

**Conclusion**

Social movements are important because they change universities and society. For this reason, it is very important for higher education researchers to develop a well-supported theory of movements in the university. Such a theory, I suggest, must address the diversity of movements stemming from universities and the many ways that they change educational institutions and the larger culture. This chapter has presented an initial step in this path of inquiry. A taxonomy of movements and their outcomes is useful
because it presents a list of “variables” to be examined through research. It is not the final stage of research; a successful research program will explain how these variables are related. Explaining how universities, movements, and social change are related will establish a strong, and much needed, link between research in higher education and related fields such as sociology, political science, and history.

References


Table 1. Typology of Movement-University Relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activists</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Characterization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Heterodox Philosophers (Gross 2005)</td>
<td>Intellectuals challenging disciplinary or professional system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Non-Academic</td>
<td>Scientists against Nuclear Weapons (Moore 2008)</td>
<td>Using the university as symbolic and social resource in politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Academic</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Chinese democratization 1989 (Zhao 2001)</td>
<td>Using the university as a launching pad for anti-communist party activism</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19th Christian progressives demanding early social science programs (Haskell 1977)</td>
<td>Outsiders demand representation in the academy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Academic</td>
<td>Non-Academic</td>
<td>Conservative legal activists challenging university affirmative action policies (Teles 2008)</td>
<td>Making the university a symbolic example</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Vietnam War Activists (Gitlin 2003)</td>
<td>University as a source of rank and file student activists</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Environmentalists demanding campus recycling (Lounsbury 2001)</td>
<td>Movement encourages universities to adopt ideologically favored policies</td>
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</table>

Table 2. Dimensions of University Based Movement Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement changes…</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inside Higher Education</td>
<td>Recycling movement, multiculturalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices</td>
<td>Ethnic Studies, Disciplinary Mobilizations, Feminism/women's centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Structure</td>
<td>Civil Rights movement/college desegregation, affirmative action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field of Higher Education</td>
<td>Conservative legal activism, Gay Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Student pro-democracy groups, decolonization politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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