In the decade following 9/11, anti-Muslim organizations that had previously been dismissed as extremists experienced a triumph any social movement organization leader would find enviable. During this time period, the narratives of fringe groups such as the Middle East Forum (MEF) and the Center for Security Policy (CSP) came to dominate the American conversation about Islam. This feat ultimately yielded them an influx of resources and extraordinary influence in the mass media, political circles, and the court of public opinion. In Terrified: How Anti-Muslim Fringe Organizations Became Mainstream, sociologist Christopher Bail offers an explanation of how these former fringe groups managed to work their way to the center, as well as a vivid map of the cascading effects of their cultural visibility.

Circulating the distorting arguments prof ered by fringe anti-Muslim organizations has had wide-reaching impact that could fill a book in and of itself, and Bail takes these outcomes seriously. But at its heart, this is a book about how collective actors create cultural change. Its research design allows fresh insights for those grappling with such questions.

Bail examines the successful anti-Muslim groups in the context of the cluttered organizational terrain from which they emerged, a landscape rife with groups wrangling for media attention. Cleverly using plagiarism-detection software to compare the press releases of 120 organizations attempting to shape American understandings of Islam with journalists’ language used in their coverage of Islam, Bail demonstrates that most organizations failed to influence coverage and those that succeeded were disproportionately anti-Muslim and emotional in their appeals. In fact, he finds that organizations using fear or anger in their communications were almost ten times more influential than those who did not. The effect was magnified for anti-Muslim groups; when they used fear or anger, their press releases were thirty times more likely to influence media conversations about Islam than the releases that did not. Overall, Bail finds that although more numerous, pro-Muslim/antiterrorism messages were marginalized, while fringe anti-Muslim conspiracy theories and fearmongering gained entry.

Bail argues that this complicates a common belief about movements and media: the notion that groups who succeed do so because they have messages that resonate. In Terrified, he finds that the groups in the spotlight are not there because their messages resonate with existing narratives. Indeed, American attitudes toward Muslims actually improved in the two years after 9/11—but rather that their messages come to resonate because they are in the spotlight. But how do they get there in the first place? Bail argues that fringe groups owe this media success to the presence of crisis, which he believes gave them an opportunity to exploit the emotional bias of the media.

Bail’s findings press far beyond questions of media influence. Importantly, he uses social network analysis to show the realignment of the organizational sector after 9/11, charting fringe anti-Muslim groups’ movement from the periphery into more central positions over time. While in 2001, fringe organizations had no prominent board members, by 2007 they have key public figures providing them with valuable inter-organizational ties. These mainstream links do not appear to domesticate the fringe; on the contrary, the ideas from the fringe appear to diffuse into the mainstream. The number of organizations producing anti-Muslim messages increases over time.

Drawing on social psychology, Bail sees shared emotions as central to the formation of these interorganizational networks. This is somewhat less persuasive than most of the assertions made in Terrified, but regardless of the driving force, fringe groups undoubtedly increase influence, supporters, social connections, and financial support between 2001 and 2008. This swelling helps fringe anti-Muslim organizations create and distribute their own media such as documentary films, television specials, websites etc. highlighting the looming threat of Islam. In time, this steady drumbeat created the impression that their once-fringe arguments were correct, helping the organizations gain the appearance of legitimacy. It also appears to have shaped public opinion.

Bail uses big data to show that the shift in mediated public discourse on Islam coincides with a steady increase in negative posts on twitter and Facebook, as well as an increase in anti-mosque activity.

In a context where fringe groups have (1) driven the dominant narratives and (2) established themselves as the presumptive experts, it makes sense that they would enjoy influence in the policy arena. But the extent of their political influence is worth a double take. Bail shows that anti-Muslim organizations managed to insert themselves so centrally into the national conversation that between 2010 and 2012, lawmakers...
introduced bills in 32 states opposing Islamic law, 29 of which included verbatim phrases supplied by anti-Muslim organizations’ model legislation. Not only are fringe organizations at the political center—in some cases, even receiving government funding—they successfully vilified mainstream Muslim organizations. Chapter six highlights a number of jaw dropping examples of anti-Muslim propaganda being taken seriously enough to land mainstream Muslim organizations in the crosshairs of criminal investigations.

Terrified will be provocative for social movements scholars, as he shows that anti-Muslim fringe organizations’ surge in resources, support, and influence cannot be dismissed as a logical-if-jingoistic kneejerk reaction born of irrational fear nor a reasonable response to increased threat. In other words, their ascendance is not the result of an advantageous political opportunity structure born on September 11. Nor can differences in resources explain their dominance. Most mainstream Muslim organizations had larger membership rosters, more political connections, and fatter coffers than their anti-Muslim counterparts.

Bail theorizes that this case illustrates an evolutionary process by which collective actors create cultural change. It is unclear whether this will prove true in other contexts; the 9/11 attacks were a unique crisis and these organizations were trying to shape narratives on a subject with which Americans had little familiarity. And social movement organizations have made emotional appeals in the aftermath of other crises with less dramatic results. But regardless, Terrified is a methodologically sophisticated, richly detailed, empirical account of a remarkable transition of great consequence. Bail’s effective analysis and description of the extent to which these organizations have shaped American (mis)understandings of Islam is, in and of itself, worth reading as a case study of media influence. It is reading that should not be missed by scholars interested in social movements, culture, media, religion, or politics.


Shannon Elizabeth Bell
University of Kentucky

Hahrie Han’s How Organizations Develop Activists is a wonderful example of scholarship that answers David Meyer’s (2005) call for research that is conducted in “pursuit of answers to questions that are important to people trying to change the world” (p. 193, “Scholarship that Might Matter” in Crouteau, Hoynes, and Ryan, eds. Rhyming Hope and History: Activism and Social Movement Scholarship). The core question of Han’s book, why some civic organizations are “better than others at ‘getting’—and keeping—people involved in activism,” is of critical importance to resource-strapped social movement organizations working to make the most out of their recruitment efforts. It is exciting to read an academic book that is of such direct usefulness to activists and students of social movements alike. This book advances both theory and practice.

Han conducted her study in two phases. First was a series of comparative case studies of local chapters within two national civic organizations (one organization focused on the environment and the other focused on health care). In all, there were six matched pairs of local chapters, three that were demographically similar chapters from the environmental organization and three that were demographically similar chapters from the medical organization. The major difference between the paired chapters was their ability to inspire activism among would-be constituents and members. In other words, one chapter in each matched pair was a “high-engagement chapter” and the other was a “low-engagement chapter.” Han’s meticulous work controlling for extraneous factors that could have influenced the varying levels of success between the high-engagement and low-engagement matched pairs allowed her to conclude, with a good level of certainty, that the different approaches to recruitment and member development she observed were responsible for the variation between the levels of engagement. Phase 2 of the research consisted of field experiments with online activism in which she tested hypotheses generated from the first phase of the research to assess the effectiveness of the organizational strategies she observed.

Through her case studies, Han found that the most effective chapters combined what she calls “transformational organizing” with “transactional mobilizing” (p. 8). The difference between these two approaches lies in the distinction between organizing and mobilizing. While mobilizers aim to expand the numbers in their group by focusing their efforts on those who “already have some latent interest,” they do not spend time trying to cultivate members’ aptitude for action (p. 7). In contrast, organizers seek to transform those they recruit into leaders and committed activists. The most successful chapters did both mobilizing (expanding numbers) and organizing (growing leaders). The low-engagement chapters, on the other hand, either solely focused on mobilizing or acted as what Han calls “lone wolves”—activists
who work to build the power of their organization “by leveraging information—through legal briefs, public comments, and other forms of research advocacy,” rather than building the power of the organization through the people they recruit (p. 10).

Approaches that the high-engagement chapters’ organizers took to nurture and build members’ desire to become more deeply committed to and involved in the work of the organization included relationship-building, creating a sense of community among participants, and planning work activities that fostered dedication. I found this insight to be one of the most important from the book. Organizations that spend time creating bonds among their members have higher levels of participation because activists “develop commitment not only to the chapter but also to the other individuals within it” (p. 160). In other words, as Han so clearly states, “The commitment to activism . . . is borne not only of commitment to the issue, but also of commitment to other people” (pp. 25-26). This insight resonates with the words of activists across a number of movements, such as the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project volunteers Doug McAdam interviewed for his book Freedom Summer, or the activist-women fighting irresponsible coal mining, whose stories are told in my (2013) book, Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed: Appalachian Women and the Fight for Environmental Justice. Individuals such as these who become deeply imbedded in a network of like-minded people passionately working toward a common cause describe their experiences as being transformational and their fellow activists as “family.” Fostering these kinds of connections among members of an organization is critical to inspiring commitment.

My one disappointment is that the book’s experimental design and findings (phase 2 of the research) were not reported completely. Han conveys that the experimental component of the project revealed that online campaigns that reached potential activists with messages that “reinforced their identities as activists” were more successful in recruiting people for action than campaigns that did not use such identity-reinforcing language (p. 148). However, Han only briefly summarizes these findings, and points the reader to an unpublished manuscript for more detail on this phase of the research. I think this was a missed opportunity, as experimental designs are fairly uncommon in social movement research, and this component of the project could have broadened the appeal and reach of this book. However, even without the more complete version of the experimental phase, Han’s book is of great value.

In sum, Hahrie Han’s How Organizations Develop Activists is an accessible, interesting, and important book that social movement scholars and activists will find compelling and worthwhile. The clear prose, careful research design, and valuable insights about the most effective strategies for recruitment and retention in civic organizations make it a book that is appropriate for both undergraduate and graduate-level classes, as well as social movement organizations seeking to improve the commitment and engagement of their members.


Karim Jetha
University of Georgia

As we hear more in the news about violent extremist groups in the Middle East successfully using social media to increase the reach of their recruitment efforts abroad, it is clear that understanding the role of emotion in online activity has become both theoretically and practically very significant. In writing Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics, Zizi Papacharissi introduces a theoretical model that helps us understand the relevance of sentiment to the mobilization of crowds. In so doing, she contributes a valuable new lens through which reactivity, searchers can make sense of online political activity. The book begins by contextualizing affect as a quasi-emotional driver of human action. In this first chapter, Papacharissi briefly introduces antecedents and consequences of online affective delivery and explains how affect is constrained and enabled by audiovisual media and other affordances of digital platforms. Here, she introduces the idea of “affective publics,” which she defines as “those networked public formations that are mobilized and connected or disconnected through expressions of sentiment.” Papacharissi argues that new media technologies allow people to participate in and emotionally identify with political events in new ways and that this identification can have important implications on movement outcomes. For example, people can now tell their own stories, share audiovisual content, and add to or transform existing online content.

The next three chapters offer illustrations of the role of affective publics in the context of the Arab Spring movements, the Occupy movement, and everyday political activism. In each of these chapters, the author analyzes a sample of tweets with particular hashtags (#egypt, #ows, and daily trending hashtags) and uses a mixed methods approach.
approach to carefully analyze each dataset. In her analysis of #egypt and #ows, Papacharissi uses a tweet frequency analysis to map the rhythms of storytelling over the course of the protest, a social network analysis to understand the role of crowd-sourced elites in curating the flows of information, and a qualitative discourse analysis to understand conversational patterns among users. In the aggregate, the author argues, the analysis suggests that the storytelling infrastructure of the platform and the framing practices of its users produce an affective news that connects users to each other and to the protest event. She follows her analysis of #egypt and #ows with a brief content analysis of tweets associated with various trending topics on Twitter to highlight the importance of play and performativity in everyday political action.

Papacharissi concludes the book with a set of inductively derived characteristics of affective publics: First, affective publics are context dependent; their sociomaterial qualities and digital footprints vary based on the features of the platform and external events. Second, affective publics may not always consist of high-engagement, high-commitment activists—though, sometimes, they can be. Third, affective publics consist of a blend of fact, opinion, and emotion in a blended and effuse stream. Fourth, the democratic nature of many digital platforms suggests that affective publics may present viewpoints that are underrepresented in traditional media sources. Finally, the impact of affective publics is largely symbolic and often represents a liminal step in activist activity.

These five characteristics constitute the majority of the book’s theoretical contribution and represent a rich set of propositions as to the role of affect, emotion, and storytelling in online activism. Although many of these propositions will be relatively intuitive for scholars of social movements and online activism, future researchers will find Papacharissi’s investigation into her cases very useful as they seek to find further evidence of causal relationships involving affect.

Understanding the drivers of online group behavior is an exceedingly complex endeavor and this book is a significant step forward in our understanding of the role of affect in this context. One limitation of its introduction of affect as a concept, however, is its underreliance on social psychology as a reference discipline in the first chapter. Within the last three decades, researchers in social psychology have advanced a number of models that link affect to behavior using mediating mechanisms that would be implicated by those digital platforms used by online activists. Such a foundation would be of great assistance to scholars that wish to quantitatively test the theory Papacharissi introduces with this book.

Isolating and measuring the effects of affect in online networks also requires researchers to carefully consider the affordances of the digital platform used by the movement; these features constrain and enable all of their users’ affective deliveries on the platform. Papacharissi focuses her examination of affect on Twitter because of its role as a contemporary storytelling medium and the useful affordances it provides activists (such as hashtags, for example). As a result, we are limited by the affordances of one platform (which operationalizes its messaging capabilities in a very specific way). While the author’s analyses across the various case study contexts are both useful and relevant, they may have been more theoretically meaningful if the cases varied the available affordances to begin to understand what facets of the technology are relevant.

Despite these critiques, Affective Publics is an important book for individual- and mesolevel scholars of online activism. Future researchers in many disciplines will certainly use Papacharissi’s theoretical groundwork to push forward our collective understanding of online activism.


Lynne M. Woehrle
Mount Mary University

The authors of Democratizing Inequalities set out to problematize the belief in public participation as a simplistic social good. With this collection of research-based studies and theoretical assessments of the field of participation and democracy studies they have thoughtfully and thoroughly achieved their goal. Since the volume is designed to deconstruct contemporary policymaking norms, it does not provide the reader with very many answers or alternate options. It does, however, effectively move to the forefront a much-needed conversation regarding the relationship between political participation and democracy. As multiple contributors to the volume show, scholars need to more carefully assess their assumptions about how “good” and “effective” change is made in communities. Just bringing people into a conversation, for example, does not mean that the outcome will truly address the problems faced by a given community. In fact, this volume clearly illustrates that participation
that is orchestrated from the top-down can actually increase inequality and ensure that the least powerful members of society are excluded from the process.

This collection of interesting research studies does a good job of exploring the paradoxes of participatory approaches to community change. For example, the chapters raise important questions such as: Is the rise of deliberative processes a sign that the state is more interested in power sharing, or is it a mechanism for conflict avoidance by the state when it comes to resource allocation decisions? Is democracy functioning better in a time when people in a community are invited to participate in planning sessions, envisioning sessions, and opinion forums? Is the state increasingly swayed by the citizens who attend these events? If so, then how might access to power be skewed to citizens who are educated, politically engaged, and have time to attend? How as researchers are we to identify the “good” participatory processes and the ones that have “failed”? The contributors offer interesting insights into how individuals and elites understand participatory processes. Indeed, it is clear that people appreciate being asked for their input. The chapters, however, also underscore the fact that whether (or how) citizen input affects outcomes at the end of the day remains a mystery.

The volume’s strength—and weakness—is that the editors and contributors emphasize the need for a more critical analysis of participatory processes. The authors provide important and, at times, provocative questions for the field of deliberative participation to consider. For example, the volume echoes a growing chorus of practitioners who question the value of “giving voice” to citizens, when voice is all they are given. The focus on the problems of participatory processes, however, is also a weakness of the book. Because it overwhelmingly emphasizes the down sides of public deliberation as a means of change, the volume obscures the well-established positives of participatory processes.

While a few of the studies do discuss the potential positives of participatory processes, the volume would be richer—and more classroom friendly—if it had included one or two case studies focused on how disempowered people effect meaningful change through a deliberative process. The volume also would have benefited from a more global approach. It would have been nice to see research from scholars outside the United States and Europe, particularly since this might raise interesting questions regarding the impact of gender norms, social conflict, colonialism, and nondemocratic political systems on deliberative methods of change. Finally, and relatedly, the volume would be improved with a discussion of whether this move to more participation is really anything new. Several authors in the volume allude to Western traditions around dialogue, but the volume does not unpack these traditions or what they mean for participatory processes over time. Integrating research on non-Western traditions would be very helpful in this regard. In traditional social and political structures before colonialism, deliberation was a common method of community decision making. In fact, some traditional societies were very nonhierarchical and highly collaborative. Using crosscultural analyses would be a useful way to systemically unpack and assess the perceived rise in participatory processes.

Overall, this volume is well worth the read. Scholars who practice and research public participation will be interested in the collection. That said, researchers studying the role of social movements in policy shifts or how institutional structures expand and limit change will find plenty to like about this volume too. The volume clearly illustrates the complexities of democracy and deliberative politics. It shows us that, despite participatory processes, we have yet to perfect democracy. The book challenges us consider whether deliberative processes achieve what we want them to.


*Peter Hart-Brinson*  
*University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire*

Although sociologists dominate the study of social movements, other disciplinary perspectives are essential because they engage theoretical questions sociologists typically ignore and call our attention to interesting cases that might otherwise manage to escape it. Christina Dunbar-Hester’s ethnography of a low-power radio advocacy organization does precisely this. Dunbar-Hester engages theoretical questions about the relationships among technologies, politics, and activism through a descriptive analysis of her fieldwork with the Prometheus Radio Project; in the process, her case touches on questions about what social movement organizations do when they win significant policy victories and how activists negotiate identities as political opportunity structures change.

Contemporary social movement scholarship understandably focuses on how communication
media (especially new digital media) shape the dynamics of contention, function as a resource for activists and their opponents, and communicate movement frames to elites and bystander publics. By contrast, Dunbar-Hester’s book offers social movement scholars a different way to think about the relationships among communication technologies, politics, and activism. Her case not only focuses on the old medium of radio—and a deliberately low-power (note the dual technical and political meanings) version of an old medium—it also examines how communication technologies themselves become the objects of contestation and meaning making. Of course, media are often the subject of political contestation, as recent mobilizations around “net neutrality” illustrate; but the case of low-power radio brings our typical assumptions about the significance of media technologies into much starker relief.

Dunbar-Hester studies two groups of media activists in Philadelphia between 2003 and 2006, focusing mainly on Prometheus Radio Project, a nonprofit group whose work spanned two fronts: they both advocated for the cause of low-power FM (LPFM) radio in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and U.S. Congress, and also travelled the country helping community groups start their own LPFM radio stations. Dunbar-Hester terms them “propagators” (xi), the veritable Johnny Appleseeds of low-power radio, who saw themselves as planting both radio stations and the seeds of a new democratic social order. For them, LPFM was not just a technical artifact or a means to disseminate information, much less a government policy program; it was a way to democratize technology and create egalitarian social relationships in small communities.

In the first chapter, Dunbar-Hester masterfully traces the political and cultural heritage of the group, from the ham radio tinkerers of the early twentieth century to the microradio movement of the 1990s, and situates the debate over LPFM in the context of previous radio policy debates. In the ethnographic heart of the book, she analyzes how group participants enact “geek” and “activist” identities, articulate a set of ideological beliefs and values about technology-centered activism, and negotiate collective and organizational boundaries through different kinds of work. Woven throughout the book is a critical account of the various paradoxes of the group’s work: how the group’s effort to democratize technology reproduced gender, racial, and class inequalities, despite their reflexive striving to prevent it; and how they simultaneously viewed LPFM technology as liberating and yet refused to work with religious groups.

The case of the group itself is extraordinary. The Prometheus Radio Project emerged from a previous social movement group, Radio Mutiny, which was part of a national movement of unlicensed pirate radio broadcasters; but a combination of repression (which shut down their radio station) and preemption (which created a new legal outlet for it) caused them to change their tactics. It is striking to read how activists simultaneously maintained their countercultural, leftist, and sometimes-anarchist tendencies, while at the same time walking the halls of Congress, working with FCC regulators, and winning U.S. Supreme Court cases. Even more shocking, perhaps, is that the group helped win significant policy victories for their cause. Similarly, descriptions of the continual tinkering of “geek group” and the communal “barnraisings” of new LPFM radio stations conjure an image of hypothetical Amish hackers—a twenty-first century incarnation of the appropriate technology movement.

To her credit, Dunbar-Hester does not let the unique case get in the way of analysis. She is not blind to the group’s shortcomings and in fact uses one of them to highlight what is theoretically so important about the case. In the final chapter, she documents the group’s brief, but unsuccessful foray into the community wireless movement. They were lured, in part, by the analogical similarities between FM radio and Wi-Fi technologies, but they abandoned efforts to work cooperatively with other groups after it became clear that the political meanings that they had vested in radio technologies did not translate into the realm of the internet and were not shared by others. The ethnography therefore demonstrates clearly how the impact of communication technologies are never settled, how old and new technologies coexist dialogically with each other, and how we attach symbolic and political meanings to technological artifacts.

Although Dunbar-Hester does not engage deeply with the core theoretical concepts and debates that most social movement scholars have come to expect, she nonetheless makes a significant contribution by showing that technologies are not just means to ends and that political contests surrounding technology are ongoing and fertile grounds for activism. As social movement scholarship on the internet and social media advances, showing us how movement dynamics are shifting in the twenty-first century, we may gain unexpected insights by examining twentieth-century technologies and how social movements continue to give them life.

Lisa Leitz
Chapman University

Most definitions of social movements involve distinguishing movements from political parties and advocacy groups or PACs. This holds true even though movements and these other political entities often engage in the same tactics (such as lobbying and voter registration), movements require parties to make state-level changes, and many participants work within both of these two fields. Understanding the ways that movements affect and are affected by formal politics is at the crux of much of the work examining political process/opportunity theories. Little of this work, however, has examined individuals (and organizations) as simultaneously identified with both types of organizations. Those who identify with a political party and a social movement constitute the “party in the street.” By considering movements and parties as identities, Heaney and Rojas examine these fields as not only competing over resources and issues, but also over loyalties from their shared members. *Party in the Street* puts forward “partisan mobilization theory” to illuminate why the election of elites supportive of movement goals leads to movement decline rather than success as political opportunity theory would suggest.

By examining the case of the antiwar movement in the United States after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Heaney and Rojas demonstrate the important role of Democratic Party affiliation in the growth and decline of antiwar activism. While the antiwar movement agenda and Democratic Party interests allied during the years of a Republican controlled Congress and President Bush’s presidency, Democrats’ gains beginning in 2006 led to a dramatic drop in both protest events against American military force used abroad and in the numbers of people who engaged in the antiwar movement. Movement leaders later used broad tactics and mobilization strategies during the “surge” in Iraq. However, political polarization about issues, candidates, and parties had reduced the proportion of Republicans in the antiwar movement and the ability of liberals to work with conservatives, even if they agreed about opposition to the war. All this led to movement decline. This was true even as public opinion about the war deteriorated. Heaney and Rojas demonstrate the decline occurred because individuals and organizations closely aligned with the Democrats left the movement and the activists that remained were divided between giving the Democrats a chance to make good on their promises about Iraq and a more radical element, whose messaging was less palatable to the public.

The sheer volume of hypotheses tested and the many methods used to address *Party in the Street*’s research questions are impressive. Heaney and Rojas expertly utilize interviews, participant observations, media and organizational materials, and surveys that allowed network and regression analyses to make the case that while people care about issues and their identification with social movements matter, so do their connections to traditional politics. As the authors explain, in the U.S. the strong two-party system limits the effects of movements, and many people have their feet in both party politics and movement activism in an effort to forward change. While the bulk of the analysis focuses on the antiwar movement in the U.S., they also provide suggestive evidence of links between movement mobilization levels for the Occupy Movement and the Tea Party that coincide with political party power variations.

Early chapters demonstrate that those invested in particular social or political issues have a right to be tired of the duplicity of politicians and party elites. The data presented here sadly demonstrates that, although many Democratic politicians professed an opposition to the Iraq War, their actions when in power were not different from Republicans on foreign policy. This supports a pessimistic view of politics where politicians lie to get votes, are incapable, due to bureaucratic and policy intricacies, to do anything on an issue, or simply unwilling to waste their political capital on the issue. Political optimists have reason to take heart in at least some of the books conclusions as well. While voter participation has declined in the U.S., people see their political actions as going beyond the ballot box and elections and are using the additional range of tactics, typically used by movements, to make their voices heard.

Heaney and Rojas are careful to address a wide variety of alternative explanations for many of their conclusions. However, there are a few places where critical readers may leave with more questions than answers. One of the questions that stayed with me, is whether they really have the data to conclude that identity salience was the deciding factor for declining attendance at and existence of antiwar actions. In their analysis of people who at any point identified as both peace activists and Democrats, the variables to repre-
sent each identity, declining involvement in anti-war activities and whether a person remains in the Democratic Party, are not equivalent. A decline in actions may or may not correspond with a decline in identity salience. Like research that breaks new ground, Party in the Street highlights issues worthy of further study. The defining conclusion of this book is that authors looking to examine social movements should not attempt to understand mobilization/demobilization—and likely most other movement factors—without examining organizational, coalitional, and individual ties to political parties (and other intersectional identity categories).

The compelling questions and clear, engaging style of this book could appeal to a wide audience of activists, politicians, and students in addition to scholars investigating social movements, democracy, and American politics. Individuals seeking political or cultural change must grapple with the competing allegiances that develop due to intersectional identities, an area still ripe for further research. This book suggests the need to further develop and test nuanced social psychological theories of mobilization and political decision making.


Austin Choi-Fitzpatrick
University of San Diego

Social movement research is still wrestling with the ways new technology has upended social relations and transformed politics. There is no doubt that it has changed how people engage in collective action. Websites are new platforms and spaces for groups to spread the word. Mobile phones and social media are new channels for awareness raising, witness bearing, and political mobilizing. Along the way we have tended to focus on technological affordances as a movement resource, with less attention to online mobilizations themselves.

In other words, there is much to learn about where collective action emerges. This is exactly where Jessica Beyer’s new book makes its greatest contribution. Data from a four-year online ethnography yields a comparative assessment of political mobilization in fourapolitical online communities: Anonymous’s campaign against the Church of Scientology, The Pirate Bay’s leadership in support of file sharing, World of Warcraft’s ability to secure cooperation while reducing mobilization, and IGN.com’s facilitation of conversation while reducing mobilization.

Expect Us is motivated by a deceptively simple observation: people gather online to play, but they stick around to talk about life and politics, and to do things together, including politicized collective action. This fact raises a number of questions, the most central of which involves the role of rules. A political online emerges in cases like Anonymous and The Pirate Bay because of site features that allow for collective discussions.

Case studies across all four spaces suggest political mobilization occurs under particular conditions: when anonymity is high; when informal regulation is high (but formal regulation of speech is low); when opportunities for small-group interactions are low; and when conflicts between online and offline social and legal norms emerge. These factors obtain for both The Pirate Bay and Anonymous, both of which see mobilization during the study. These factors are missing in both World of Warcraft and IGN.com, neither of which saw any mobilization.

The lesson is clear: not all online spaces are created equally. The discussion of the factors contributing to nonmobilization are thoroughly convincing—Beyer’s ethnographic data leave the reader convinced that mobilization is nearly impossible in the online game platform World of Warcraft (WoW), for example. There are no conflicts between online and offline norms, and if there were, small groups to discuss this conflict are structurally unavailable, direct communication is monitored, and there is no anonymity. Taken together, site structure reduces political risk taking. These are the very factors that make WoW a civil place appropriate for broad use. They are also the factors that eliminate dissent.

The implications for regulators, service providers, and movements cut two ways. It appears that in order to have a genuine digital public square we might have to put up with a digital back alley in which all manner of unsavory activities transpire. Similarly, in order to have a vibrant movement society at work in new digital worlds we must put up with a host of uncivil political projects. The specter of awkward movements—as Francesca Polletta and colleagues put it a decade ago (Mobilization 11: 475)—is raised to the power of online anonymity.

This book is recommended for its empirical data and theoretical observations, but also for its methodological approach. In an illuminating appendix Beyer describes her online ethnographic style as “deep holistic watching” while acknowledging that online ethnographies have been more accepted in communications and internet studies than in political science (and sociology, I might add). The study treats each of these four com-
munities as cases amenable to comparative analysis. Beyer clearly describes the process through which she coded her key conceptual frames, especially in relation to anonymity, regulation, and spatial divisions online. This appendix should be of considerable use to those interested in designing similar studies.

Expect Us convincingly shows that online spaces have an architecture that shapes political communication online. The question remains, however, how these online factors intersect with the kind of offline mobilization that moves the needle politically. It is unclear if we are witnessing a “coalescing into a transnational social movement focused on freedom of information” or the occasionally coordinated efforts of trolls who do it for the lulz. Beyer recognizes this quandary, pointing out that Anonymous’ successful 2010 protests over WikiLeaks servers were followed by a failed effort to analyze WikiLeaks’ data (Operation Leakspin). The reason for this is that “political mobilization depends on both . . . participation [and] entertainment value.”

Expect Us makes an important contribution to movement scholarship. In particular it upends the notion that mobilization relies on close and pre-existing social networks. It also bears witness to the enduring political potential that lies within everyday social and cultural practices (here video games and chat rooms). The next step will be for a fresh round of social movement scholarship to build on these observations in order to ask compelling questions about the conditions under which new digital spaces and technologies take the crucial next step politically.

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. $29.95 (Paperback).

Michael Biggs
University of Oxford

Elections can provoke protest when the process or the outcome is deemed illegitimate. A significant step in the emergence of the modern social movement in the eighteenth century was the campaign for “Wilkes and Liberty.” John Wilkes, a radical Member of Parliament, was eventually expelled for opposing the government and the king; support from London’s populace forced Parliament to accept his reelection. In recent decades, especially since the end of the Cold War, elections have become fundamental for a state’s legitimacy. This has produced genuine democratization; it has also led authoritarian rulers to clothe themselves in the trappings of democracy. Protest against manipulated elections is therefore common. Occasionally it even overturns the results, as happened in Georgia’s “Rose Revolution” in 2003 and Ukraine’s “Orange Revolution” in 2004.

Beaulieu’s book presents original data on multiparty elections in 118 developing countries over three decades, from 1975 to 2006. It examines two facets of electoral protest: boycotts of the election, and demonstrations following the vote. Of the 765 elections, 7% were boycotted by most of the opposition, while 9% were followed by mass demonstrations organized by opposition parties.

The book theorizes a bargaining game between the incumbent and the opposition. A sequence of decision points follow the incumbent’s decision to hold an election. The opposition decides whether to participate in the election or to boycott it, depending on the degree of manipulation they expect. The incumbent then decides how much to manipulate the result. After the election, the opposition decides whether to accept the outcome or to hold demonstrations. Finally, the incumbent decides whether to reform the electoral system; reform can be designed to either enhance or undermine electoral democracy. This bargaining game has the virtue of clarity and parsimony. It is commendable for explicitly modeling the decision of state elites as well as potential protesters.

The empirical analysis begins with the causes of electoral protest. A major boycott most likely occurs in states where the executive is less constrained and in countries with lower literacy rates, controlling for per capita GDP. Beaulieu interprets literacy as measuring the information available to both sides: with less information, they find it harder to reach a tacit agreement over the degree of manipulation that the opposition will tolerate. Mass demonstrations are more likely after the incumbent won, of course, but also respond to several other factors. Demonstrations are most likely where the opposition holds few legislative seats (in the year before the election) and is fragmented (no one party has a majority of the opposition seats). They are least likely where the opposition holds many seats and is fragmented. The presence of international observers increases the probability of demonstrations.

The book then turns to the immediate consequences of electoral protest. According to logistic regression, major boycotts do not reduce voting turnout. The author advances two hypotheses that could explain this puzzle. First, the incumbent may inflate the number of recorded
voters. Secondly, the opposition may treat the boycott as a means to undermine the election’s legitimacy in the eyes of international audiences rather than to dissuade citizens from voting. Demonstrations after the election are subject only to bivariate analysis. Where the opposition initiated demonstrations, the probability of the incumbent leaving power increases from 16% to 28%. The lack of multivariate analysis, however, is curious, because the “Color Revolutions” in the former Soviet bloc have attracted so much attention from social scientists and policymakers. Beaulieu’s data could be used to situate these famous cases within a more extensive context. Do they represent an increasing trend or are they exceptional?

The book concludes by analyzing the longer-term consequences of electoral protest, on legislative reforms of the electoral system. Authoritarian and democratic reforms are each treated as separate binary variables for logistic regression; multinomial logistic regression would seem more appropriate. Democratic reform is more likely after a boycott accompanied by “international reaction,” defined as comments on the election by a Western “democracy-promoting state” or an international organization like the European Union. Authoritarian reform is more complex. It responds to many variables, including interactions between boycott and demonstration, and between demonstration and international reaction.

The book’s quantitative analyses are interspersed with brief case studies. Lengthy appendices document the coding of boycotts, post-electoral demonstrations, and electoral reforms. The list of postelectoral demonstrations strangely omits the protest in Yugoslavia in 2000 that ousted Milosevic and inspired subsequent Color Revolutions. The author should be congratulated on presenting the underlying data, which will enable other social scientists to build on the results reported in the book.

Further analysis could overcome the limitations of the analytical framework, which treats every election as an independent event. The dataset contains, on average, half a dozen elections in each country. This longitudinal structure could be exploited to examine change over time. For example, one could analyze the change in turnout between one election without a boycott and the next one that is boycotted. This follows the logic of Beaulieu’s theoretical model, because the interaction between incumbent and opposition does not start anew at each election; each side knows how the other has acted in previous rounds. Longitudinal analysis would still treat states as independent. Mark Beissinger shows how the Color Revolutions were connected in his article, “Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions,” Perspectives on Politics, 2007—not cited in the book). Opposition parties emulated success elsewhere. They were also aided by foreign activists —like those from the Serbian Otpor!—sponsored by the United States. To fully understand electoral protest, it will be necessary to trace diffusion across states as well as interactions within them.