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Agenda Building as a Comparative Political Process*

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An essential characteristic of any polity is the way that different groups participate in the process of policy formation. Previous analysis of strategies for influencing public policy has concentrated on the success and failure of attempts to influence decision makers' choices among policy alternatives. More recently the source of these alternatives and the processes by which they are defined for decision makers have been identified as crucial, if less visible, determinants of public policy.¹

In most communities, the number of potential public issues far exceeds the capabilities of decision-making institutions to process them.² Issues or their proponents must consequently compete for a place on the decision-making agenda. The process by which demands of various groups in the population are translated into items vying for the serious attention of public officials can appropriately be called agenda building.

Agenda building is a process ideally suited to comparative analysis. All communities must decide which issues will be the concern of decision makers. At the same time, there is great variety in the ways this is accomplished, and in the proportion of potential issues which eventually are seriously considered by the community leaders. Our goal is to develop a model and propositions, useful both across and within polities, which can account for variation in the ways issues get on the agenda and in rates of success at achieving agenda status.

* We wish to thank Barney Brown for his help in collecting and analyzing the case materials for this project.

¹ For example, see Roger W. Cobb and Charles D. Elder, *Participation in American Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda Building* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1975); and Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, "Two Faces of Powers," *American Political Science Review*, 56 (September 1962), pp. 947-952.

² As a result a system must develop filter or gatekeeping mechanisms which will determine which issues attain visibility. See David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: John Wiley, 1965), pp. 87-96. The problem is further compounded by issues continuing to survive in different forms once the initial issue has been resolved. See Charles E. Lindblom, *The Policy-Making Process* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968).

The Agenda-Building Perspective

The study of agenda building requires an understanding of the ways in which different subgroups in a population become aware of and eventually participate in, political conflicts, whether the issues are initiated by groups in the general public or by political leaders. The model must also account for strategies used to prevent the success of initiating groups.³

Two types of agendas can be distinguished: the public agenda consists of issues which have achieved a high level of public interest and visibility; the formal agenda is the list of items which decision makers have formally accepted for serious consideration. It can be found in such places as a court calendar, a legislative docket, or the list of cases to be heard by a tribal council. Not all items on the formal agenda receive serious attention from decision makers, however. For example, many bills introduced in the U.S. Congress have symbolic appeal for constituents, but are never considered in committees and consequently never reach the floor. Our interest in formal agenda items is limited to those issues that receive serious attention from decision makers, and does not include "pseudo-agenda" items.⁴ Agreement that an issue merits serious consideration of course does not imply that the outcome of this conflict will correspond to the goal of the issue's proponents or even that the outcome will be action in any form.⁵

³ Examples of strategies used for conflict containment include: Michael Lipsky, "Protest as a Political Resource," *American Political Science Review*, 62 (December, 1968), 1144-1158; Jack L. Walker, "A Critique of the Elitist Theory of Democracy," *American Political Science Review*, 60 (June, 1966), 285-295; and Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, *Small Town in Mass Society*, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960).

⁴ Cobb and Elder, pp. 14-16.

⁵ See Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, *Power and Poverty* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press 1970); Raymond E. Wolfinger, "Nondecisions and the Study of Local Politics," *American Political Science Review*, 65 (December, 1971), 1063-1081; and Frederick W. Frey, "Comment," *American Political Science Review*, 65 (December, 1971), 1081-1102.

The public agenda consists of all issues which (1) are the subject of widespread attention or at least awareness; (2) require action, in the view of a sizeable proportion of the public; and (3) are the appropriate concern of some governmental unit, in the perception of community members. An issue requires the recognition of only a major portion of the polity, not of all its members. Operational referents of terms such as "wide-spread," "sizeable," and "major portion," will vary not only cross-culturally; but also from community to community.⁶ Every local community will have a public agenda. If this community is subsumed in a wider political system there will be some overlap of items from the public agendas of communities at higher levels.

Issues typically arise in small groups. These groups are always concerned with expanding awareness of the issue, either because they want to promote expansion or because they want to prevent it.⁷ Such characteristics as social status, economic mobility, length of residence in a community and degree of residential separation are latent resources which, given the right conditions, can be used to promote group interest, unity and action.⁸ Given different resource bases, groups work to get an issue on the agenda in different ways.

The possibility of issue redefinition is an additional source of power inherent in the process of issue expansion. Redefinition involves the substitution of one issue for another, usually a more specific issue being redefined into a more general one.⁹ An extended expansion process is likely to include several redefinitions of the issues, as increasingly diverse groups become involved.¹⁰

⁶ See Matthew A. Crenson, *The Un-Politics of Air Pollution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), pp. 88–91; and Cecile Trop and Leslie L. Roos, Jr., "Public Opinion and the Environment," *The Politics of Ecosuicide* ed. Leslie L. Roos, Jr., (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 53–63.

⁷ E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), chapter 1.

⁸ For emphasis on a wide variety of characteristics, see: Robert L. Crain et al., *The Politics of Community Conflict: The Fluoridation Dispute* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969); Joseph Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963); Norman H. Nie, G. Bingham Powell, Jr. and Kenneth Prewitt "Social Structure and Political Participation: Developmental Relationships, Part I," *American Political Science Review*, 63 (June, 1969), 361–378; "Part II," 63 (September, 1969), 808–832; and Sidney Verba, Norman H. Nie and Jae-on Kim, "The Modes of Democratic Participation: A Cross-National Comparison," *Sage Professional Papers in Comparative Politics*, 2, No. 01-013 (Beverly Hills, Calif., Sage Publishers, 1971).

⁹ Schattschneider, chapter 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, chapter 4; James Coleman, *Community Conflict* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957); Peter Bachrach and Elihu Bergman, *Power and Choice: The Formation of*

Expansion is far from automatic. Opponents will actively attempt to contain expansion, in particular if the status quo is to their advantage. Second, those initially committed to a cause may become disillusioned as they perceive the conflict being redefined away from "their" interests. Finally, the proponents of an issue in many political systems face overwhelming odds of apathy and inertia among those they seek to involve.¹¹

Agenda building, then, is a problem particularly appropriate for comparative analysis. It occurs in every political system from the smallest to the largest, from the simplest to the most complex, while at the same time there are important variations in its form and structure. Despite the great variation possible in the history of any particular issue, we suggest four major stages which shape all issue careers: initiation, specification, expansion, and entrance. Three models of agenda building are also proposed to describe variation in origination of issues inside or outside government, and in the degree and direction of efforts to expand issues beyond the initiating groups. In the final section, we present two kinds of propositions: (1) cross-cultural propositions about agenda building which identify differences in the process across polities, and (2) intrasocietal propositions which identify effects on agenda building of different social, structural, and political positions within the same society.

Models of Agenda Building

Analytically we identify three different models of agenda building depending on variation in the four major characteristics of issue careers: initiation, specification, expansion, and entrance.¹² The first, the *outside initiative* model, accounts for the process through which issues arise in nongovernmental groups and are then expanded sufficiently to reach, first, the public agenda and, finally, the formal agenda. The second, the *mobilization* model, considers issues which are initiated inside government and consequently achieve formal agenda status almost automatically. Successful implementation of these issues often requires, however, that they be placed on a public agenda as

American Population Policy (Lexington, Ma: Heath, 1973); Lewis A. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1956); and Paul Peterson, "British Interest Group Theory Reexamined," *Comparative Politics*, 4 (April, 1971), 381–402.

¹¹ Crain, *The Politics of Community Conflict*, pp. 226–227.

¹² Nelson Polsby has also investigated the sources of successful issue initiation and found two general strategies which he has called "inside" and "outside" patterns of access. Nelson W. Polsby, "Policy Initiation in the American Political System," in *The Use and Abuse of Social Science*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1971), pp. 296–308.

well. The mobilization model accounts for the ways decision makers attempt to implement a policy by expanding an issue from the formal to the public agenda. The third, the *inside initiative* model, describes issues which arise within the governmental sphere and whose supporters do not try to expand them to the mass public. Instead these supporters base their hopes of success on their own ability to apply sufficient pressure to assure formal agenda status, a favorable decision and successful implementation. In this model, initiating groups often specifically wish to prevent an issue from expanding to the mass public; they do not want it on the public agenda. A more detailed discussion of each of these models in terms of the four general characteristics of initiation, specification, expansion, and entrance, will provide a framework for cross-cultural investigation of these important variations in the policy-making processes.

Outside Initiative Model.

(1) *Initiation* is the first phase of this model. It is the articulation of a grievance in very general terms by a group outside the formal governmental structure. For example, for many years old people in America complained about their generally poor financial condition, and in particular about the financial crises caused by extended illness. The degree of organization of a group which considers itself aggrieved is highly variable. Individuals who share concern about an issue may or may not be united by other concerns. They may also be more or less visible to others in the society as a distinct category. The degree of visibility may be related to the group's previous experience and success in articulating issues.¹³

(2) *Specification*. General grievances may be translated into specific demands in a variety of ways. Demand articulation may or may not be the basis of a specialized role. In Bushman or Pygmy society, for example, no individual specialists have the function of translating diffuse grievances into specific demands,¹⁴ a role which labor leaders, for instance, perform in many industrial societies. Members of groups which share grievances may or may not be united in their articulation of them. Diverse demands can be derived from a common

grievance and may be expressed by various members of a group.¹⁵

Precedence for specific demands by a group may have more than one source. The group itself may or may not have experience with the articulation of demands; and the wider society to which demands are expressed may or may not have heard similar issues expressed by other groups. In most African countries during the 1950s, for example, there were often many different groups presenting similar demands for political independence and competing with each other for public support.¹⁶

(3) *Expansion*. In order to be successful in getting on the formal agenda, outside groups need to create sufficient pressure or interest to attract the attention of decision makers. Typically this is done by expanding an issue to new groups in the population and by linking the issue with pre-existing ones. The dilemma for the group which originally initiates the issue is that while expansion is crucial for success, it may lead to losing control of the issue entirely as more powerful groups enter the conflict and the original participants grow less important.

In discussing issue expansion, Cobb and Elder identify four different groups that can become involved in a conflict as an issue expands beyond its original participants. Different strategies are necessary to involve each of these groups in the controversy, as they have different levels of initial interest in the particular issues and different levels of involvement and interest in public affairs in general.¹⁷

The first individuals likely to become involved in an issue as it expands beyond the immediate initial participants are the members of the *identification group*, those people who feel strong ties to the originators of an issue and who see their own interest as tied to that of those raising the issue. The members of the identification group are not only the first to be mobilized but are also most likely to support the position of the originators. At the same time, the identification group is not likely to be particularly large, and success in reaching the public agenda usually requires further issue expansion. A typical example of the expansion of an issue to members of an identification group is the definition of a controversy in terms of regional, ethnic, or religious interests.

¹³ For example, see James B. Christoph, *Capital Punishment and British Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) pp. 26–33; Jennie-Keith Hill [Ross], "The Culture of Retirement" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Northwestern University, 1968); and Jennie-Keith Ross, "Social Borders: Definitions of Diversity," *Current Anthropology*, 16 (March, 1975), 53–72.

¹⁴ See Lorna Marshall, "Sharing, Talking and Giving: Relief of Social Tensions Among !Kung Bushmen," *Africa*, 31 (1961), 231–246; and Colin Turnbull, *The Forest People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961).

¹⁵ See Crenson, *Un-politics-of-Air Pollution*, pp. 42–44; Josephs Himes, "The Functions of Racial Conflict," *Social Forces*, 45 (September, 1966), 1–10; and Ronald Inglehart, "The Silent Revolution in Europe: Intergenerational Change in Post-Industrial Societies," *American Political Science Review*, 65 (December, 1971), 991–1017.

¹⁶ For example, see Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana: 1946–1960* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), and Richard Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

¹⁷ Cobb and Elder, *Participation in American Politics*, pp. 103–109.

Attention groups are groups in the population which are likely to be aware of a conflict early on, and which can be mobilized relatively rapidly whenever an issue enters the group's sphere of concern. Whereas identification group involvement centers on the group affiliations of the combatants, attention group participation tends to be more dependent on the issues involved in a conflict.¹⁸ Because attention groups are highly interested in public issues, they often become involved in controversies regardless of the wishes of the identification group. Thus, for example, an agricultural protection group in France may quickly become involved in a conflict which begins with a consumers' group arguing that agricultural protectionism increases food prices. From the perspective of the consumers' group the involvement of the agricultural group is a mixed blessing. Their entrance into the controversy is, needless to say, on the other side. At the same time, their interest and involvement is useful in attracting attention to the issue and in increasing public knowledge about it. In some controversies, expansion of an issue to various attention groups in the population is sufficient to attain formal agenda status and serious consideration from decision makers. In other situations, further expansion to the mass public may take place first.¹⁹

Within the mass public, Cobb and Elder distinguish between the *attentive public* and the *general public*. The former usually comprise a small minority of the population and include those people who are most informed about and interested in public issues. While they have strong views on many public issues, members of the attentive public may be far from united. Thus, as an issue expands and attracts more attention and as more members of the attentive public become involved, they are likely to be drawn into *both* sides of the controversy. Furthermore, because they have strong views on most public matters, they are likely to be among the least persuadable elements of the population once an issue gets defined in a particular manner, whatever the efforts of the early participants.

In contrast, the general public is the last group to become involved in controversies. Its interest in most issues is likely to be short lived; effective and sustained involvement of the general public in an issue is relatively rare. At the same time, when issues can be defined broadly enough, the involvement of the general public is often crucial in forcing decision makers to place an item on the formal agenda.²⁰

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹⁹ Peterson, "British Interest Group Theory Re-examined," pp. 381-402.

²⁰ Cobb and Elder, *Participation in American Politics*, pp. 107-108.

A good example of an issue which was effectively expanded to the general public is that of independence in many African and Asian countries in the 1950s and early 1960s. In many countries, independence movements led by relatively small, educated elites were successful in forcing the colonial powers to consider seriously the possibility of political independence only after large numbers of the general public became involved in mass movements.²¹

In many traditional societies, disputes arising among community members provide a large number of issues which vie for a place on the formal agenda, and studies of the legal process by anthropologists provide a wide range of cases for comparative analysis. Among the Arusha in Tanzania, for example, individuals do not usually bring cases directly to the entire community for settlement. Instead they must expand their issue to other community members who might support their side in a dispute or present their case to a formal tribunal; these attention groups may be age-sets or kinship groups.

Among the Arusha, resolution of a case depends upon the relationship between the disputants. Cases involving age-mates are heard before an age-group enclave, intra-parish disputes are presented to the parish assembly, while disputes between members of the same lineage are heard by a lineage conclave. Finally, when disputes remain unresolved through all the lower levels, they may eventually be taken to the courts.²² There are a number of potential arenas in which a dispute may be heard and resolved, or in our terms, within Arusha society there are a number of formal agendas. Once an issue is on the public agenda it can relatively easily reach the formal agenda also, probably in part because there are several of these available.

(4) *Entrance*. Success in issue expansion may place an issue on the public agenda. It then becomes a problem that concerns a relatively large number of people who view it as an appropriate focus for formal action. Entrance represents movement from the public agenda to the formal agenda, where serious consideration of the issue by decision makers can take place.

The difficulty of making this transition varies widely across political systems. For the Arusha, as we have seen, public agenda status makes highly probable formal consideration of an issue. Among the Bushmen entrance is such a minimal problem that the public-formal distinction almost disap-

²¹ For example, see F. M. Bourret, *Ghana: The Road to Independence 1919-1957* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960).

²² See Philip H. Gulliver, *Social Control in an African Society* (Boston: Boston University Press, 1963), pp. 173-275.

pears. An individual speaking loudly about some concern can attract the attention of others in a cluster of huts; and they will often join in immediately to try to resolve the problem.²³

In many industrial societies, on the other hand, the movement between the two agendas is far from automatic, as some issues can remain stalled between the two for long periods of time. Particularly in situations where *any* decision is likely to arouse great opposition from the public, governments often refuse to give an issue any serious consideration whatsoever. In effect, there is a decision to make no decision, or what Bachrach and Baratz describe as a nondecision.²⁴ The idea of a nondecision, in our view, is most applicable to issues which achieve public, but not formal agenda, status. Issues which attain neither public nor formal agenda status can also be viewed as nondecisions in the sense that Bachrach and Baratz use the term, but in effect represent trivial and non-interesting examples. Questions such as the treatment of American Indians by the United States government for many years represent the latter, not in terms of the intrinsic importance of the issue, but because it was never expanded sufficiently to the public agenda and therefore never required any decision *not* to make a decision. In contrast, civil rights issues, or public financing of medical insurance were on the public agenda in America many years before attempts to place them on the formal agenda had any success. These two sorts of issues present very different problems in the study of agenda-building. In the case of the Indians, the question is why expansion to the public agenda was unsuccessful, while in the case of civil rights or public medical insurance we would be interested in the problem of moving from the public to formal agenda. Although we do not have the space to consider this problem here, such an analysis must include the resources, interests, and strategies not only of the proponents of an issue, but also of opponents seeking to contain the issue expansion and to keep the issue off the formal agenda.

Strategies. Strategies of conflict expansion are crucial to outside groups seeking to place their issue on the formal agenda. Two general problems of strategy are apparent in the stages we have identified: (1) the movement of an issue from a small core associated with the stages of identification and specification to a larger public associated with the expansion stage, and (2) the movement from expansion to entrance. Often the same strategies are used at both stages, although this is not always the case, and at times it is useful to

distinguish between expansion strategies (associated with [1]), and entrance strategies (associated with [2]). Expansion to new groups enhances the possibility of attaining public agenda status, which will, it is hoped, create sufficient pressure on authorities to force their serious consideration of the issue. Groups seeking expansion of their issue must compete with other groups demanding attention for other issues, as well as with opposition forces trying to limit expansion.

Expansion strategies can aim at existing, relatively small groups in the population, such as interest groups, or they can work directly for mobilization of the mass public. Another variation is to create particular small groups whose goal is the promotion of a specific issue in the wider public. The major advantage of such a group is that it is not associated in the public mind with any other issues which may produce opposition by association. At the same time, because it is not associated with other pre-existing issues, its possibilities in terms of issue expansion are also more limited as it does not draw on pre-existing cleavages and combatants.

In seeking to achieve issue expansion a group with a grievance has two primary assets: (1) the characteristics of the issue itself, and (2) the financial and material resources as well as personal commitment of group members and their organization. Each provides different opportunities to groups seeking to place an issue on the public agenda.

Cobb and Elder offer a series of propositions suggesting how *issue characteristics* are likely to affect expansion. They suggest that the more ambiguously defined, the greater the social significance, the more extended the temporal relevance, the less technical, and the less available any clear precedent, the greater the chance that an issue will be expanded to a larger population.²⁵ Through public statements as well as private discussions, leaders of the grievance group, particularly at the outset of the conflict, have a great deal of freedom in their definition of the issue and in determining its characteristics.

At the same time there is no assurance that outside groups or the public will fully accept the grievance group's definition of the issue. There is virtually always some change in the definition of the issue as it expands to public groups.²⁶ One good example in recent years is the women's liberation movement which has usually tried to characterize its cause in terms of equality, human potential, and freedom. At the same time, opponents refuse to accept this definition and substitute such

²³ Marshall, "Sharing," pp. 231-246.

²⁴ Bachrach and Baratz "Two Faces of Power," pp. 947-952.

²⁵ Cobb and Elder, *Participation in American Politics*, pp. 112-113.

²⁶ Crenson, "Un-politics of Air Pollution," pp. 58-75.

specific and negative symbols as "lesbians."

An important strategy in issue expansion is to associate a particular issue with emotionally laden symbols which have a wide acceptance in the society.²⁷ In America both the civil rights and women's liberation movements have stressed the symbols of equality; in Ireland, groups seeking independence for Ulster have stressed the notion of a "united free country."

The use of these relatively familiar and positive symbols in connection with a new issue helps to develop an initial favorable reaction in the mass public, which might otherwise be hostile or skeptical. At the same time this is a way of saying to the established authorities that the group does not pose any particular threat to the government and in fact is working within the context of the existing framework. It is a way of preventing government harassment and opposition at a time when public support for the group or issue is not very strong.²⁸

In addition to the issue characteristics and emotional symbols used in defining an issue, a grievance group has at its disposal the material resources as well as the energy and commitment of its members. How a group utilizes these resources in seeking to attain public agenda status can vary greatly. Some will choose to invest a great deal of their resources in trying to obtain widespread public attention through the mass media, while others are more likely to work in private for the support of existing attention groups. The use of expansion strategies is partially determined by the types of interests a group reflects. A group with a minimum of financial resources but with a large following tends to use the outside initiative strategy. Given no other resources, their only hope is to attract sufficient external support to reinforce their own position.²⁹

In general, we would expect that the greater the resources a group expends, the greater its chances of success. At the same time, it is important to recognize that success is not likely to be a simple function of resources expended, and in fact, unless the issue characteristics are also considered, large resource expenditure can produce small returns. A striking example of this is the pro-United Nations

campaign launched in Cincinnati in 1947. Despite a large number of messages in all the media, survey results showed that virtually no one in the city was even aware that the campaign was being waged, much less changed their views on the organization.³⁰

One of the most frequent weaknesses of organizations seeking to expand an issue is that their campaigns "convince the convinced," rather than bringing in new groups who have no opinion on the issue or who see no connection between the issue and their own concerns. Frequently the commitment and enthusiasm of grievance group members blind them to the symbols which would be most effective in attracting additional supporters.

Strategic choices, not always consciously made, are also important as grievance groups, or more properly, coalitions working to expand an issue to the public agenda, also seek entrance to the formal agenda. At the same time, they must be aware that the strategy used in getting on the formal agenda may affect the way in which the issue is decided. Although we discuss four different strategies for attaining entrance, these may also be used in the expansion stage; in some cases the distinction between the stages is analytic rather than temporal, i.e., they may occur simultaneously. Four basic strategies are: (1) violence and threats of violence;³¹ (2) institutional sanctions, such as withholding votes, money or work;³² (3) working through brokers such as political parties and interest groups; and (4) direct access.³³ The method(s) a group chooses will depend on its position(s) in the society, the importance of the issue to the group, the length of time that an issue has remained on the public agenda without moving to the formal agenda; and the group's estimate of the probability of attaining a position on the formal agenda as a result of each strategy.

In evaluating the outside initiative model, three key considerations are: the type of issue being discussed (e.g., how threatening is it to the established groups in power), the extent to which a group is isolated in making its claims (e.g., is it running out of options to advance its cause?), and the length of time lag in attaining formal agenda status once it is on the public agenda. In general, we expect that a) the more important the issue, b) the more isolated the original grievance group, c) the longer

²⁷ See Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1964); and *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence*, (Chicago: Markham, 1971); and Richard Merelman, "Learning and Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review*, 60 (June, 1966), 548-561.

²⁸ For example, see William A. Gamson, *Power and Discontent* (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey, 1968); and "Stable Unrepresentation in American Society," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 12 (November-December, 1968), 15-21.

²⁹ Michael Lipsky, *Protest in City Politics: Rent Strikes, Housing and the Power of the Poor*, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1971), p. 7.

³⁰ Shirley A. Star and Helen MacGill Hughes, "Report on an Educational Campaign: the Cincinnati Plan for the United Nations," *American Journal of Sociology*, 55 (January, 1950), 389-400.

³¹ See H. L. Nieburg, "Violence, Law, and the Informal Policy," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 13 (June 1969), 192-209.

³² See, for example, Lipsky, *Protest in City Politics*, pp. 175-181.

³³ Cobb and Elder, *Participation*, pp. 151-159; and Crenson, *Un-politics*, pp. 133-158.

the issue has been on the public agenda, and d) the lower the likelihood that the authorities will consider the issue on their own, the more likely that the entrance strategies will include the use of violence or threats of violence along with institutional sanctions, and the less likely that formal agenda status will be achieved through the use of brokers and direct access.

A good example to illustrate these points is the political conflict in France which culminated in the uprising of May, 1968. Students, some workers, and other left wing political groups had demanded a number of reforms in French society, particularly in its educational system, for a number of years. The government of General de Gaulle, which itself had instituted a number of changes and reforms in France since coming to power in 1958, was moving too slowly or not at all as far as these groups were concerned. Following the violence and the restoration of order in 1968, the French government moved quickly to initiate reforms in numerous areas of social policy. While the rioters and their tactics were widely denounced, there was a far greater acceptance of the need for widespread internal reforms which the uprising highlighted. Thus, violence and threats of its continuation were successful in placing on the formal agenda a number of issues which had been on the public agenda for years, but had never before received serious government attention, despite many earlier attempts through both brokers and direct access.³⁴

Outside initiative model: summary. The outside initiative model applies to the situation in which a group outside the government structure 1) articulates a grievance, 2) tries to expand interest in the issue to enough other groups in the population to gain a place on the public agenda, in order to 3) create sufficient pressure on decision makers to force the issue onto the formal agenda for their serious consideration.³⁵ This model of agenda building is likely to predominate in more egalitarian societies. Formal agenda status, it should be recognized, however, does not necessarily mean that the final decisions of the authorities or the actual policy implementation will be what the grievance group originally sought. Quite the contrary, either outright rejection of the grievance group's position or its widespread modification are not only possible but frequently occur.

³⁴ For a review of the events, see Bernard E. Brown, *The French Revolt: May, 1968*, (New York: McCaleb-Seiler Publishing Company, 1970).

³⁵ The stages we identify in each model are analytic and not necessarily temporal. For example, efforts to achieve entrance may in fact occur prior to expansion, although successful entrance usually requires that expansion take place before it. This argument is similar to Smelser's "value added" model for studying collective behavior. See Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press, 1962).

Mobilization Model. The mobilization model describes policies and programs which decision makers want to move from a formal to a public agenda. These issues have been placed on the formal agenda either by the decision makers themselves, or by people with direct access to them: there has been no preliminary expansion to various publics. This expansion becomes necessary, after some decisions, in order to implement them. The mobilization model, employing the same stages as the outside initiative model, describes the process through which decision makers try to promote the interest and support needed for implementation of these issues. Mobilization is necessary when a policy requires widespread, voluntary compliance. Decision makers may lack the resources, institutional or financial, or both, to implement their policy without mobilization. Mobilization may be needed because in a given cultural context, coercion is inappropriate, impractical, or simply too expensive. In a mirror image of the outside initiative model, then, the mobilization process shows decision makers trying to expand an issue from a formal to a public agenda.³⁶

(1) *Initiation.* When a new program or policy is announced by a prominent political leader, it is automatically on the formal agenda; in many political systems this announcement also represents the end of the formal decision-making phase, since the new program is also official government policy. While there may be a good deal of debate within the government before announcement of the new program, there is typically little public interest or knowledge. The source of the initiative is the political leader. This model is often found in countries where great social distance between leaders and followers is expressed by differences in education, speech, life style and world view, or by attribution of supernatural powers to the authority.

Obvious examples are government initiated development programs found in most countries in Africa and Asia. President Julius Nyerere's Arusha Declaration in Tanzania in 1966 presented both the ruling political party and the nation as a whole with a sweeping set of proposals which, in effect, became official government policy at the moment they were announced. Nyerere argued that industrial development in Tanzania could not be achieved in the near future. Instead the party and government needed to recognize that the country's greatest need and greatest potential were in village development.³⁷ Programs of self-

³⁶ For illustrations, see Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1962); and *Modernization Among Peasants: the Impact of Communication* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969).

³⁷ For a presentation of his views, see Julius Nyerere, "The Arusha Declaration and TANU's Policy of Socialism

reliance for both the nation and local communities were required, and there would be severe restrictions on capital accumulation and wealth, particularly by politicians. Large banks and businesses within the nation were to be nationalized and the capital they produced used in financing local development.³⁸ "Other nations aim for the moon, while Tanzania aims at the village," concluded the President.

Another issue which requires mobilization of the public is population planning. Often there is widespread ignorance of a plan even after it is announced. The problem for the nation's leadership is making the plan visible to large segments of the population.³⁹

(2) *Specification*. The announcement of a new policy, such as the Arusha Declaration in Tanzania or the War on Poverty in the United States, usually provides few concrete details. Following the initial announcement political leaders and their associates begin spelling out what is expected of the public in terms of cooperation or support, material resources, work, or changes in behavior patterns. Through specification the leaders hope to make the program clearer to the public, at the same time both building support and letting citizens know what is required of them. In a study of Tswana in South Africa, Schapera reports that chiefs often presented to the public assembly laws drawn up in prior consultation with their advisers.⁴⁰ In one particular case, Isang, chief of the Kgatla, felt that there was an excess of beer drinking. He called a meeting of his close advisers and the local ward-heads who voted to support the chief's proposal to curb beer brewing and drinking. The decision was then presented to the public, although the popular assembly was not asked to discuss and approve the law. It was assumed that its acceptance by the ward leaders represented public approval.⁴¹ Compliance with the law depends upon the local actions of the ward-heads as the chief alone is unable to implement new law effectively. Thus, in this situation, a political leader places an issue on the formal agenda and insures that it will be heard. Then, before a group of lower political authorities, the public specification takes place. Its implementation, however, will

further depend upon local actions and public support.

(3) *Expansion*. Even though the new programs may become government policy as soon as they are announced, implementation is often contingent on public acceptance and changes in behavior, which may range from the payment of new taxes to the donation of labor to the community. Under Nyerere's program, rural communities in Tanzania were asked to hold meetings to discuss ways in which they could meaningfully implement programs of self-reliance.⁴² Rural meetings and resulting programs required a prior support for the program in general, and an understanding, at least by local leaders, of ways in which it could be implemented. The problem is not at all trivial, because one of the most important barriers to the implementation of general development programs on the most local level is that no one is very sure what they mean in local terms. There may be several political meetings where everyone applauds the leaders for their new policy, but no consequent tangible changes at the village level.

To attempt to combat this problem, political leaders who initiated the new program try to expand the issue to new groups in the population in the same way that outside grievance groups seek expansion of their issue in the outside initiative model. The purpose is the same. It is an attempt to draw additional participants into the effort to implement the program, as particular groups are shown how the program is relevant to them. The issue begins with the identification group, which in this case consists of political leaders who announce the new program. They first take the issue to attention groups, seeking their public statements of support as well as explaining in a more private setting what the new program means, and how the group should participate in its implementation. Attempts at informal and formal cooptation of leaders of specialized elites are often part of mobilization efforts.⁴³

This aspect of mobilization can also be illustrated in Tanzania. In the period immediately following the announcement of the Arusha Declaration, local branches of the political party, as well as women's organizations, labor unions, ethnic groups, and other existing groups in the society pledged both their public and private support to the program and began taking steps to implement it. This is not to suggest there was no opposition. Because of Nyerere's control of the party and government as well as his widespread popularity, however, opposition was more private than public. For example, many political officials

and Self-Reliance," in *African Politics and Society* ed. Irving Leonard Markovitz (New York: Free Press, 1970).

³⁸ See John Hatch, *Tanzania: A Profile* (New York: Praeger, 1972), pp. 195-197.

³⁹ For a description of such a campaign, see Jason Finkle, "Politics, Development Strategies and Family Planning Strategy in India and Pakistan," *Journal of Comparative Administration*, 3 (December, 1971), 259-295.

⁴⁰ See Isaac Schapera, *Tribal Innovators: Tswana chiefs and social change, 1795-1940* (New York: Humanities Press, 1970).

⁴¹ Schapera, p. 27.

⁴² Hatch, *Tanzania*, pp. 197-198.

⁴³ For example, see Frederick J. Fleron Jr., "Cooptation as a Mechanism of Adaptation to Change," *Polity*, 2 (Winter, 1969), 176-201.

privately grumbled about their salary cuts and the restriction on house ownerships. Nonetheless, they publicly supported the policy and personally complied with it.⁴⁴

Often, the opposition of a crucial attention group can mean the failure of a mobilization effort. In the instance of birth control, the position of key religious groups, particularly the Catholic Church, can determine the program's fate. Church opposition in Malaysia led to the ultimate failure of the program in the late 1960s, even though less than 2% of the population was Catholic. The Church was highly mobilized, had articulate leaders and was strong in urban areas where the program was focused. Even the opposition of a major attention group, however, does not guarantee defeat for a program. In the Philippines, a birth control campaign also launched in the late 1960s was more successful even though the Church did not endorse the endeavor. While the percentage of Catholics was higher in the Philippines than in Malaysia, the Church was undergoing a series of power struggles which meant that all other issues were subordinated in importance. The government was able to exploit a power vacuum by encouraging different factions in the Church to vie for power while implementing its population program.⁴⁵

A second target for issue expansion is the attentive public. In situations where policies are initiated by political leaders, as we have outlined in the model, expansion to a well-informed attentive public is relatively easy. The announcement of a new program almost always attracts the attention and interest of members of the attentive public. Prominent officials have much easier access to the agenda of public discussion than outside grievance groups. What is more problematic, however, is how the attentive public will react to the new program. The French Education Minister knows that a series of proposals for educational reform will be a topic of discussion and concern among the attentive public, while at the same time, he is far less sure of their support for his proposals.

The presentation of the new program to the attentive public, as well as to various attention groups, is crucial, because in effect they become the links between the political leaders and the mass public. These people are likely to be key opinion leaders who channel not only information, but, even more importantly, their opinions about the worth of the program to the rest of the population. For the government program to be implemented successfully, efforts both by attention

groups and by the attentive public are necessary. Their acceptance of the program followed by inaction is the equivalent of a nondecision to ignore the government's priorities and, in effect, to kill the program.

(4) *Entrance*. The problem of entrance is one of moving from the formal to the public agenda, as a significant portion of the public comes to recognize the program of the government as dealing with an important problem (even if they disagree with the specific ways in which the government proposes to deal with this problem).⁴⁶

Strategies. The same strategic assets are available to the government, as it seeks to expand the issue to the public agenda, as are open to grievance groups in the outside initiative model: (1) issue characteristics, and (2) material resources.

While the material resources of governmental groups initiating a policy are almost always larger than those of outside grievance groups, the characteristics of the issues as they are presented to the public remain a crucial element in whether or not the policy is successfully implemented. Of great importance is the association of the new program with known and accepted emotional symbols while, at the same time, the public is persuaded that the new program "is not just more of the same old thing." It must be new enough to be exciting, but traditional enough to be understood and to produce positive affect in the population. In India and Pakistan, attempts to win public support for a population control effort in the 1960s were largely unsuccessful because of the type of campaign used. The issue was defined in terms of long range gains focusing on complex statistics which made it difficult to gain public acceptance.⁴⁷ What may have been needed was definition of the issue in terms of more immediate benefits, such as better nutrition for a smaller number of children.

In addition to the problem of issue definition, mobilization efforts may fail because of faulty planning. Often, bureaucrats in various parts of the country have insufficient information about national issues to gain access to public agendas at the local level. Bureaucrats may also become jealous of their prerogatives and maintain their power at all costs. Mobilization efforts can fail if there is a poor information exchange and if national leaders are unable to convince bureaucrats that local level implementation of programs would be in their own self-interest.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Expansion from formal to public agenda on the national level may be followed or accompanied by a public to formal agenda-building process as the issue is placed on lower-level agendas.

⁴⁷ Finkle, "Development Strategies" pp. 259-295.

⁴⁸ See Aaron Wildavsky, "Why Planning Fails in Nepal," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 17 (December, 1972), 508-528.

⁴⁴ Hatch, pp. 199-205.

⁴⁵ For example, see Gayl Ness and Hirofumi Ando, "The Politics of Population Planning in Malaysia and the Philippines," *Journal of Comparative Administration* 3 (December, 1971), 296-329.

Organizational structure also influences the extent to which mobilization efforts are successful. If there is some structural mechanism which enables leaders to meet with representatives from the various groups or regions frequently, it can help bridge the gap between formal announcement and public awareness. In Liberia, the government announced a Unification Policy in the late 1960s and it was able to reach local public agendas in part because the local chiefs had access to the government through frequent Executive Council meetings and served as a bridge between national and local officials. The campaign also stressed the use of positive symbols such as "equality" and negative symbols referring to the enemies who were opposed to the Unification Program.⁴⁹

Mobilization model: summary. The mobilization model describes the process of agenda building in situations where political leaders initiate a policy, but require the support of the mass public for its implementation. Announcement of a new program automatically places an issue on the formal agenda, and in fact may represent the end result of governmental decision making as well. The crucial problem is to move the issue from the formal agenda to the public agenda. The mobilization model is most likely to appear frequently in more hierarchical societies, and in those where supernatural powers attributed to the leader emphasize the distance between him or her and the followers.

Inside Access Model. A third model describes the situation in which it is easiest to be successful in achieving both formal agenda status and implementation of the proposed policy with the fewest changes. In this model policy originates within a governmental agency, or within a group which has easy and frequent access to political decision makers. As in the mobilization model, the issue reaches the formal agenda relatively easily because of the position of the initiating group.

The inside access model significantly differs from the mobilization model, however, in that the group originally articulating the policy does not seek to expand the issue to the public agenda—i.e., it does not try to force decision makers to place it on the formal agenda (as in the outside initiative model) or to build support for its implementation (as in the mobilization model). Instead expansion is aimed at particular influential groups which can be important in the passage and implementation of the policy, while at the same time, the initiators try to *limit* issue expansion to the public because

they do not want the issue on the public agenda. Instead they seek a more "private" decision within the government, and generally stand to be defeated when the issue is sufficiently expanded to include public groups that might be opposed to it. Bureaucrats are also often afraid that the public will misunderstand a technical problem if it becomes a matter for public debate.⁵⁰

This strategy, for example, was used in the early phases of the American supersonic transport (SST) conflict in 1971 and is often attempted by groups seeking potentially controversial defense contracts in the United States. Similarly, highly placed bureaucrats in developing countries often adopt this attitude. They suggest that the public does not (and cannot) understand the technical issues involved in development planning; development is then best left in the hands of those people who do know what is going on (themselves).⁵¹

(1) and (2) *Initiation and specification.* An "inside" group, meaning a group or agency within the government, or a group with close ties to governmental leaders, may articulate a grievance or a new policy proposal. Following the initial statement of a problem, which is aimed primarily at other governmental leaders and decision makers, the originating group or agency makes a series of concrete proposals. Despite their close ties to the decision makers, the originating group is not yet assured of success, for typically, more issues are presented to top leaders than they can possibly consider. Thus, in order to give their issue a higher priority, its initial advocates seek limited issue expansion. Groups using the inside access model tend to be more homogeneous than groups attempting to advance their cause using the other two patterns. Because of their privileged position, inside groups tend to be closer knit in background, mores and goals; such congruence is an asset in attempts to attract support.⁵²

(3) *Expansion.* Limited issue expansion means that the policy initiators might seek to involve an identification group and selected attention groups, both of which may help create the feeling of urgency and importance necessary to attain a quick and favorable response from decision makers. This is done in a relatively private setting as the attentive

⁵⁰ For example, see Lewis Anthony Dexter, "Congressmen and the Making of Military Policy," in *New Perspectives on the House of Representatives*, ed. Robert L. Peabody and Nelson W. Polsby (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963), pp. 305–324.

⁵¹ See, for example, Lucien W. Pye, *Politics, Personality and Nation-Building: Burma's Search for Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962); and James Scott, *Political Ideology in Malaysia* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1968).

⁵² G. William Domhoff, *The Higher Circles: The Governing Class in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), pp. 111–155.

⁴⁹ Thomas P. Wrubel, "Liberia: The Dynamics of Continuity," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 9 (July 1971), pp. 189–204.

public may be only dimly aware that the issue is being considered at all, and the mass public is totally unaware of its existence. The supporters of the proposal feel that selective pressure from groups close to the decision makers is preferable to public pressure, which may create a situation in which they lose control over the issue.⁵³

In a parliamentary system, for example, one ministry can easily become involved in a problem that concerns one or more additional ministries. High-ranking civil servants, or even the ministers themselves, may then approach officials in the other ministries seeking support for their proposals. A second example is the efforts of an interest group seeking special favors from government to approach either officials in a ministry where it has particularly close ties or members of the legislature who can be expected to work behind the scenes in its interest.

(4) *Entrance*. Entrance means attaining formal agenda status. It does not mean that the issue is on the public agenda. In general, entrance is not spectacular and public. Violence and threats of violence are almost never employed. The preferred strategies for attaining entrance are through direct access or through brokers. Institutional sanctions may be used against individuals resisting the program, although what is more likely is the use of special favors and the payment of money to those who cooperate.⁵⁴

Strategies. Expansion strategies are aimed at bringing in identification and attention groups which can be crucial in assuring support for the program, and at the same time, avoiding expansion to the attentive and mass publics. The road to the formal agenda is not through the public agenda. In Illinois, for instance, the Corps of Engineers planned to build a dam site which would require bulldozing certain property valued by conservationists. Conservationists found out about the intentions of the Corps and made the issue public, stressing that other alternatives were not explored, that the benefits did not override the costs, and that the proposed dam was not economically justified. As a consequence, the Corps retreated and proposed a more limited alternative. Ordinarily, those trying to reach a formal agenda

through inside channels will not fare as well if the issue becomes public, regardless of the symbolic ploys at their disposal.⁵⁵

In comparison with expansion strategies under the outside initiative and mobilization models, the inside access model places greater emphasis on tangible, as opposed to symbolic, rewards for those groups and individuals supporting the proposals.⁵⁶ In attracting support, the initiating group employs bargaining and administrative language styles, as opposed to hortatory and legal ones. At the same time there may be a large-scale organizational commitment to behind-the-scenes action to obtain support for the proposal. Logrolling, or agreements between groups to support each other's proposals, also occurs.⁵⁷ Not all policies that originate within the governmental units necessarily fit this model. When governmental leaders as well as civil servants, believe that passage and implementation can only occur if sufficient pressure is brought from outside on other political leaders, they will attempt to involve the public in an issue through the processes described in the outside initiative model.

Inside access model: summary. The third model describes a pattern of agenda building and policy formation which attempts to exclude the participation of the public. Proposals arise within governmental units or in groups close to the government. The issue is then expanded to identification and attention groups in order to create sufficient pressure on decision makers to place the item on the formal agenda. At no point is the public greatly involved, and the initiators make no effort to get the issue on to the public agenda. On the contrary, they try to keep it off. The inside access model will occur with greatest frequency in societies characterized by high concentration of wealth and status.

Agenda levels and combinations of agenda-building models. In the previous discussion, and in the propositions which follow, the models are treated separately. These are conceptual rather than empirical models; most occurrences of agenda building will certainly be more complex, combin-

⁵³ See Bruce Hannon and Julie Cannon, "The Corps Out-Engineered," in *The Politics of Ecosuicide*, pp. 220-227.

⁵⁴ This resembles very closely the literature on political corruption; for example, see James C. Scott, *Comparative Political Corruption* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972); "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," *American Political Science Review*, 66 (March, 1972), 91-113; Arnold Heidenheimer, "The Analysis of Administrative Corruption," in *Political Corruption: Readings in Comparative Analysis*, ed. Arnold J. Heidenheimer (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1970); and Jeremy Boissevain, "Patronage in Sicily," in Heidenheimer.

⁵⁶ For examples of such cases, see Andrew Hacker, "Pressure Politics in Pennsylvania: The Truckers vs. The Railroads," in *The Uses of Power: 7 Cases in American Politics*, ed. Alan Westin (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962); and Edward Furash, "The Problem of Technology Transfer," in *The Study of Policy Formation*, ed. Raymond Bauer and Kenneth Gergen (New York: Free Press, 1968).

⁵⁷ Peterson, "British Interest Group Theory Re-examined," pp. 381-402.

ing models as well as levels of agendas. In most societies, an issue may potentially appear on many agendas. Attempts to achieve agenda status for any issue may be aimed at one of these agendas at a time, in different possible sequences, or at some or all of them simultaneously. Since the three models of agenda building may also occur in various combinations during the history of any issue, many permutations of agendas and agenda building are possible. An issue which reaches higher level decision makers via either inside access or outside initiative, for example, may in a second stage be transmitted by them, through mobilization or inside access efforts, to lower level agendas of local communities or associations. Many issues take the opposite route, from lower level to higher level agendas; and some groups try to put their concerns before several different sets of decision makers at the same time.

III. Agenda Building and Comparative Politics

The outside initiative, mobilization and inside access models describe three ways in which the public can influence the structure of political agendas. Initially, we hypothesize that examples of all three models can be found in any society, although there will be clear tendencies for some types of polity to favor one of the models over the others. A second area for comparative analysis is variation in the rates of success at achieving agenda status in different political systems, a variable which we would also expect to be related to the model of agenda building predominant in a system. A third important problem in agenda building is variation in the process within a single political system, which then can be compared to patterns in other polities. Here research might focus on the strategies that different groups utilize depending upon their position in the social structure. A fourth area of concern is development of generalizations about the agenda-building process across both polities and models in order to identify common factors influencing conflict expansion, mobilization of group interests, and ultimate success or failure in attaining agenda status. Some examples of these four types of propositions follow.

Occurrence of the models across societies

Are there agenda-building styles that tend to dominate in different political systems? We think so, although we are less certain about the exact nature of this dominance. In addition, if it exists, this dominance will probably be more marked in distinguishing successful attempts to achieve formal agenda status than those which fail. As mentioned earlier, one of the most important clusters of variables is the structure of wealth and status

in a society; agenda access is expected to vary with patterns of stratification:

- (1) The more egalitarian a society, the more likely that the outside initiative pattern will predominate;
- (2) The greater the concentration of wealth and status in a society, the more likely that the inside access pattern will predominate;
- (3) The greater the social distance between political leaders and followers, or the more political leaders are seen as endowed with special insight or supernatural powers, the more likely that the mobilization pattern will predominate;
- (4) The more complex the social structure and economy of a society, the less likely that any single pattern will predominate.

Variation in success rates across societies

Success refers to placing an issue on the formal agenda for serious attention by decision makers, not necessarily to emerging victorious after the decision-making stage. So far our reading of case materials suggests that achieving agenda status is more problematic in modern nations than in small face-to-face communities. In addition:

- (1) The greater the social homogeneity of a community, the higher the success rates in achieving agenda status;
- (2) The greater the rate of internal migration and population increase in a community, the more difficult it will be to attain agenda status;
- (3) The greater the number of potential agendas on which an issue can be placed, the more likely that success rates will be high;
- (4) The less potential issues require redistribution of material resources in a society, the higher success rates will be.

Intergroup variation in patterns within societies

Some of the most important variations in the agenda-building process are a result of differences in social and political positions across groups within any society. As a result, these groups utilize different means of trying to achieve agenda status.

- (1) Groups that are relatively weak in material resources, but potentially large in numbers are most likely to succeed in using the outside initiative pattern;
- (2) The more isolated the original grievance group (i.e., identification group), the more likely the group will be to utilize violence or threats of violence in trying to place the issue on the agenda;
- (3) The greater the extent to which regions or neighborhoods are economically or ethnically homogeneous, the more mobilizable their residents will be in agenda conflicts;
- (4) The more a group represents lower status interests in a society the more likely it is to use the outside initiative pattern; the more it represents upper status interests, the more likely it is to use the inside access pattern.

Cross-model generalizations

Finally, there are aspects of the agenda-building process that hold across models and across societies.

- (1) Issues may move from the public agenda to the formal agenda after a time lag under the outside initiative model. The relationship between the length of time an issue is on the public agenda and the probability of its reaching the formal agenda is curvilinear;
- (2) The greater the proportion of unsuccessful issues (issues not achieving formal agenda status), the higher the level of discontent and political instability in a community;
- (3) The greater the time gap between the achievement of public agenda status and the achievement of formal agenda status, the greater the level of political instability in a community.

These hypotheses about agenda building remain untested so far, although we hope that they will eventually be examined through two major strategies. The first is the coding of existing cases from a wide number of political systems ranging from

traditional societies studied by anthropologists to small community studies in western societies, to studies of national policy making. Building up a large sample will permit relatively rapid confirmation or refutation of the hypothesized relationships in our scheme. Second, the development of an adequate understanding of agenda building requires the collection of original data in a wide variety of settings chosen to make possible development of generalizations on both cross-cultural and intrasocietal levels.

Although the effort needed is great, it is important. Previous studies of participation in policy formation have focused on the success or failure of attempts by various groups in a population to influence decision makers' choices among policy alternatives. The concept of agenda building makes possible investigation of participation in the less visible but crucial processes by which these alternatives are defined for decision makers. The strategies used by various groups competing to place issues on the agenda and the factors which influence their success or failure reveal patterns of participation in policy formation obscured by a focus on the decision-making process alone.