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**CROSS-TALK IN MOVEMENTS: RECONCEIVING THE CULTURE-
NETWORK LINK**

Ann Mische

Rutgers University

mische@rci.rutgers.edu

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ABSTRACT

This paper expands the discussion of culture and networks in the social movements literature by focusing on processes of political communication across intersecting movement networks. I draw upon recent work in political culture that shifts attention from the structural manifestations of culture (e.g., identities, frames) to the dynamics of communicative practices. This work examines “forms of talk” as well as the social relations constructed by that talk. While such an approach is inherently relational, few of these researchers have yet incorporated formal network analysis into their work. I take up this challenge by applying recent attempts to link network and discursive approaches to my research on overlapping youth activist networks in Brazil. I describe a core set of conversational mechanisms that are highly contingent on (and constitutive of) crosscutting network relations: identity qualifying, temporal cuing, generality shifting and multiple targeting. I discuss the ways in which these mechanisms are constrained by different kinds of relational contexts, as well as the ways in which they contribute to different kinds of network building in movements, including political outreach, coordination, and alliance-building. By focusing attention on *mechanisms of relation formation within social settings*, this approach can help us to bridge the divide between formal network techniques and a study of conversational dynamics.

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Ann Mische
Rutgers University

Relations in networks are about what people do in interaction. In social movement networks, people do more than simply exchange resources, transmit ideas, or develop identities, activities that many recent accounts of movement networks have described. Since most participants belong to a variety of social networks at once, they engage in myriad, complex negotiations among the multiple dimensions of their ongoing involvements, which are often embedded in overlapping network formations. These negotiations affect a wide range of relational processes, from recruitment and outreach to political coordination, dispute, and alliance-building. These relation-building activities in turn draw upon cultural practices of talk and communication within and across different kinds of movement settings.

There is a growing consensus – already verging on the taken-for-granted – that both networks and culture *matter* for social movement dynamics and outcomes. However, our understanding of the link between these is still relatively undeveloped. Most recent work exploring this link has stayed within a narrow, restricted understanding that focuses primarily on movement cohesion and solidarity-building, neglecting the wider range of relational processes that influence the growth, effectiveness, and influence of social movements. This limited approach is, I argue, the result of an inadequate understanding that tends to see both networks and culture in static and substantialist terms. What we need is a more dynamic conception in which social networks are not seen merely as locations for, or conduits of, cultural formations, but rather as *composed of* culturally constituted processes of communicative interaction. This means that we should shift our attention away from cultural forms such as “identities” or “frames,” toward the study of how these forms are shaped, deployed, and reformulated in conversation, as this unfolds across social movement forums over the course of movement development. Communication is a dynamic, fluid, interactive, and yet socially structured phenomenon that composes relationships both within and across the multiple network formations that give form and life to social movements.

While a series of recent studies has explored the communicative dimension of social movements, few of these researchers have yet incorporated formal network analysis into their work. And conversely, network analysts have been notoriously slow to unpack the cultural dimension of the “ties” they study or the processes by which these are generated, sustained, and transformed over time (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; Mische and White 1998). I argue that by reconceiving networks as multiple, cross-cutting sets of relations sustained by conversational dynamics within social settings, we gain important analytical leverage for understanding relation formation in social movements. This understanding highlights the multi-layered, contingent, and yet still patterned nature of relations within and across movements. By focusing on *mechanisms of relation formation in conversational settings*, this approach helps us to bridge the divide between formal network techniques and interpretive approaches to communicative interaction.

Moreover, such an approach can also provide insight into questions of interest to social movement analysts that neither network techniques nor cultural analysis, taken alone, are able to give. While network analysis can map different relational structures associated with episodes of mobilization, and cultural analysis can document the claims and categories upon which mobilization draws, what is lacking in either case is a way to understand the mechanisms by which both network structures and cultural forms change and evolve over time in response to contentious interaction. These changes, in turn, go on to influence the success or failure of important mobilizing processes such as recruitment, outreach, coordination, and alliance formation. Using examples from my research on Brazilian youth organizations, I describe a core set of communicative mechanisms that are highly contingent on (and constitutive of) crosscutting network relations: identity qualifying, temporal cuing, generality shifting and multiple targeting. I discuss the ways in which these mechanisms are constrained by different kinds of relational contexts, as well as the ways in which they contribute to network building and mobilizing processes in social movements. Finally, I suggest some challenges this revised understanding of the link between culture and networks poses for future empirical research.

1. Networks, culture, and social movements

By this time, it is commonplace to argue that political participation depends heavily on the existence of social networks. Studies of social movements, civic culture, and democratic processes have heralded the central importance of networks, both as conduits of information and resources, and as qualitative supports for the social and cultural ties essential to community-building, solidarity and/or collective action. Recent empirical studies have described the role of informal and organizational networks in the development of civic "virtues" and democratic practices (Putnam 1993, 1995; Somers 1993, 1994), as well as in the recruitment and mobilization of social movements, the development of collective identities, and the transmission of ideological and tactical innovations (Snow et al 1980; McAdam 1986, 1988; Friedman and McAdam 1992; McAdam and Paulsen 1993; Gould 1991, 1993a,b, 1995; Meyer and Whittier 1994; Mueller 1994; Tilly 1995a,b; Diani 1995, 1997). Moreover, the language of networks (and "networking") has long been part of the working vocabulary of social actors themselves, used both instrumentally as a means to political ends, as well as normatively, as a political value in itself, often in opposition to more traditional (i.e., centralized and hierarchical) organizational models.

Yet with this analytic and normative excitement about the role of networks in political processes, we also encounter a notable clouding of the question of what precisely networks represent, and what sorts of cultural processes take place across them. There are two important shortcomings to current approaches to the relationship between networks and culture in the social movement literature: (1) they provide an overly cohesive view of the cultural effects of network relations; and (2) they do not pay enough attention to processes of communication *across* (rather than just within) different kinds of movement networks.

Many recent studies have treated networks as privileged sites for the production of social cohesion and collective identity in social movements. Dense movement networks are commonly seen as fostering solidarity, trust, community, political inclusion, identity-formation,

and other (by implication) valuable social outcomes. The roots of this approach can be found in Melucci's (1989) description of the construction of collective identities in the "submerged networks" of everyday life, in which new, experimental worldviews and social relationships are developed by small groups in response to emergent tensions. While recent work on identity and networks has adopted a more structuralist formulation, the major focus of this work has remained on feelings of solidarity and group belongingness built around "valued identities," the construction of which becomes in itself one of the "ends" of participation in movements (capable of overcoming, among other things, the free rider problem of rational action theory [Friedman and McAdam 1992]). In this view, the principal value of social networks is that they provide densely relational sites for face-to-face interaction in which collective identities are formed.

While dense interpersonal ties are certainly essential at certain moments in the construction of movement solidarity, this account is problematic on several accounts. On a substantive level, it tends to focus on the positive social potential of network ties, stressing social cohesion and neglecting the role of networks in relations of power, influence or political dispute.¹ It also tends to direct attention to the density of relations within movement networks, rather than the overlap or mutual influence across multiple types of ties. Recently, social movement theorists have begun to pay attention to the fact that people belong to multiple networks, and therefore have multiple possibilities for collective identity formation. Studies by Roger Gould (1991, 1993a,b, 1995) and Doug McAdam (1996, 1988) show how pre-existing solidarities – including friendship or neighborhood ties and organizational affiliations – are critical to recruitment and mobilization (see also Fernandez and McAdam 1989). Most of this work, however, has remained anchored in the cohesion framework. While some exploratory attention has been given to possible conflicts between different kinds of ties (McAdam and Paulsen 1994), the main thrust of such work is to show how diverse network affiliations reinforce each other in the construction of new collective identities and movement communities, primarily through direct interpersonal contact.

However, there are important aspects of social movement mobilization and influence that cannot be accounted for simply in terms of social connectedness. For example, how do small, tight-knit groups of activists succeed (or fail) in multiplying their influence beyond their own ranks? How do new ideas enter into movement communities and challenge them to reevaluate projects and practices? What gives certain leaders or organizations greater opportunities for mediation or control of relations between groups? How does network structure influence internal disputes in movements as well as external alliance-formation (and how do these processes in turn reflect back upon networks)? At certain times in the life of a movement, "bridges" (or the lack of them) may be more important than dense, close knit ties (Granovetter 1973; Burt 1992); moreover, important problems (as well as opportunities) are posed by the overlap between multiple types of ties and affiliations, and the diverse projects and practices actors bring with them into cross-network interactions.

¹This focus on cohesion is surprising, given the strong attention to power and conflict within resource mobilization and political process approaches, as well as attention in the social networks literature to how networks shape relations of power and exclusion, influence and control (see Knoke 1990). Perhaps because culture has been left out of the picture for so long, now that it is "coming back in" to social movement theory it is seen primarily in terms of community, solidarity, etc., rather than recognized for its crucial role in the larger process of contention.

A step toward addressing these questions can be seen in recent work that views networks not just as sites for the production of movement solidarity, but also as conduits for the transmission of identities, repertoires, and frames across different kinds of movements. Meyer and Whittier (1994) describe “spillover” effects between feminist and peace movements, arguing that these are influenced by four mechanisms of transmission: organizational coalitions, overlapping movement communities, shared personnel, and changes in political opportunity structures. This suggests the important role of both bridging relations (brokerage, alliance-making) and overlapping organizational memberships in facilitating communication and influence across movements. However, they do not detail the structural dynamics of this influence, depicting relations between the two movements mostly in incremental terms. Additional problems emerge when we move beyond simply looking at “influence” or “diffusion” across movements, and attempt to specify the dynamics of intersecting movement relations.

The multiple ties and memberships often noted among activists are not merely sites for the production and transmission of resources, identities, and frames. They also pose important challenges (as well as opportunities) in day-to-day communication within and across movements. Activists belonging to multiple networks and organizational sectors must negotiate the different identities, projects, and styles of participation associated with their various involvements. Overlapping memberships may support processes of interest to social movement analysts, such as recruitment, coordination, and alliance formation. They may encourage innovative repertoires and new hybrid forms of political participation. But they may also lead to tensions or disputes, when actors’ diverse identities and commitments interfere with each other and impede mobilization or coalition building. We need to examine the communicative mechanisms by which actors steer their way among their various affiliations (and associated identities and projects) as they construct alliances, coordinate activities, and battle over vision and strategy.

2. Communicative practices in movement settings

To address these questions, it is not enough to simply “fill in” network approaches with the analysis of cultural forms such as identities, repertoires, or framing processes. The deeper problem with both the production site and transmission belt approaches described above is that they are on shaky ontological grounds when we look at the actual processes by which relations and meanings are generated and transformed. In both perspectives, cultural forms such as identities and frames flow through (or are generated by) previously structured networks, leaving primary causal force with the structural properties of the relational system. The networks take on a substantial, reified quality, removed from the actual dynamics of interaction. And culture in turn becomes reified into a “package” whose content becomes an autonomous thing that resides in or travels across equally static and autonomous network formations.

Certainly it is possible to study formal network morphology as abstracted from the content of “ties” or the processes by which they are generated (Cohen 1989). And it is equally possible to study cultural forms according to the formal properties of language and discourse, as recent work in the sociology of culture has demonstrated (Alexander and Smith 1993; Spillman 1995; Kane 1997). The formal logics of social relations and cultural structures do not map straightforwardly onto each other, but have a degree of relative autonomy that can be studied independently (Alexander 1988; Emirbayer 1997). Yet without conflating social networks and

cultural forms, it is possible to direct our inquiry at the logic of connection between them. To do this, we need to shift the angle of vision away from networks or culture per se, toward an analysis of how these come together in interaction. In other words, we should not see networks merely as sites for or conduits of cultural forms, but rather we should look at how both of these are generated in social practices, that is, by the dynamics of communicative interaction.

Communication in social movements does not only involve language; it also involves talk. As Gary Fine points out, “[m]ovement actors are awash in talk” (Fine 1995 p. 142); activists talk about the problems with the existing society as well as the nature and shape of the alternative society that they believe they are working for; they debate issues of tactic and strategy; they trade war stories and gossip about fellow activists; they plan events, negotiate logistics, and distribute responsibilities. Recently Charles Tilly (1998) has echoed this observation by describing social movements (and contentious politics more generally) as composed of an ongoing “conversations” among movement actors, between movements and challengers, between activists and their publics. Tilly stresses that such conversations are based on “incessant improvisations” and yet constrained by the previous history of relations of actors; they involve contingent maneuvers and shifting deployment of these relations in ways that go on to reshape these relations themselves. “Conversation in general shapes social life by altering individual and collective understandings, by creating and transforming social ties, by generating cultural materials that are then available for subsequent social interchange, and by establishing, obliterating, or shifting commitments on the part of participants” (Tilly 1998, p. 10).²

It is through these conversations that what we commonly describe as “network ties” – e.g., friendship, assistance, exchange of ideas, resources, or support – are co-constructed and take on meaning and weight within the practical operations as well as the legitimizing lore of social movements. While a few recent studies have highlighted this conversational, talk-centered dimension of social movements (Klandermans 1988, 1992; Gamson 1992, 1995; Gamson, Fireman and Rytina 1982; Johnston 1991, 1995), only rarely have these been situated within the concrete, relational settings of social movement forums (although see Fine 1995; Polletta 1998). The recent focus on collective action frames (Snow et al 1986; Snow and Benford 1988, 1992; Ellingson 1995; Babb 1996) moves in this direction by examining how activists construct different kinds of interpretive links between pre-existing and movement-based schemas of thought and action. As originally formulated by Snow et al (1986), the framing perspective draws on Goffman’s theory of how joint definitions of the situations are constructed by actors co-engaged in conversations. Unfortunately, much of the conversational thrust of Goffman’s concept has been lost in subsequent analyses that tend to see collective action frames in primarily cognitive, content-laden terms.³

² Note that Tilly uses “conversation” in a broadly metaphoric sense, to refer not only to “talk” or even to face-to-face interaction, but rather to communicative process more generally. He does this to distinguish his relational ontology from others focusing on instrumental reasoning or on inner psychic processes. While I largely focus in this paper on conversational processes that take place within the context of talk in movements, it is important to keep in mind that not all communication is reducible to face-to-face conversation, and that most of the conversational mechanisms that I describe have analogues in relational processes occurring outside of the realm of face-to-face interaction. The specification of these analogues awaits future study.

³ Recently, the analysis of collective action frames has come under criticism from many scholars from within and outside of the framing literature: that frame analysis is prone to reification and pays inadequate attention to agency and emotion (Benford 1997); that it is overly ideational, (McAdam 1996); that it is overly instrumentalist

However, there are a few recent studies that focus explicitly on the communicative dimension of culture in movements. For example, Marc Steinberg (1998, 1999a, b) advocates a dialogic approach to discourse in social movements, arguing that the recent literature on collective action frames tends to depict these as stable meaning systems that can be unproblematically transmitted between speakers and targets. Drawing upon Bahktin's theory of "speech genres," Steinberg draws attention to the multivocality of discourse and its embeddedness in wider fields of ongoing communication. Likewise, Paul McLean (1998) stresses the fluid and multidimensional character of political communication by returning to Goffman's early conception of "keying" practices, in which actors signal which of many possible frames (or definitions of the situation) is being invoked in a given instance. McLean argues that such practices have a network dimension, in that what are often being "keyed" are specific relations between actors – i.e., friendship ties, patron-client relations, relations of deference, familiarity, or respect. Other researchers have argued that we need to look beyond the content of discourse in order to examine the specific social and institutional *settings* in which conversation is produced. Both Nina Eliasoph (1996, 1998) and Paul Lichterman (1995a,b, 1996, 1999) have shown how the expression of identity, commitment, and public concern varies systematically according to the particular group settings in which conversation takes place. This is due to shifts in what Goffman calls conversational *footings*, defined as shared assumptions about "what talk itself is for in a situation" (Eliasoph 1996, p. 268).

What these authors have in common is an insistence that the effects of culture on collective action (and vice versa) are not simply a matter of language or discourse as such, but rather of the interactive context in which discourse is enacted. We can sum up the theoretical implications of their arguments in the following four points: 1) communication involves a jointly constructed definition of the situation, whether this is understood as a discursive genre, a conversational footing, or a style of relation-building; 2) because there are multiple possible ways any situation can be construed, meanings are inherently multivocal, unstable, and ambiguous in interpretation (although this ambiguity can increase or decrease in different contexts of interaction); 3) one of the tasks of discourse is the construction of social relations, which are themselves shifting and multilayered; and 4) potential meanings and relations can be activated or deactivated, made visible or invisible, by individuals and groups within the constraints of social settings.

While such an approach is inherently relational, most of these authors do not employ formal network analysis in their work. However, they do provide important clues as to how this might be done. Relations are constructed through discourse, which cues not only the type but also the terms and scope of those relationships – what kind of rights and obligations they entail, how they relate to other sorts of relations the actors may be embedded in. While network analysts have traditionally left the cultural content of "types of ties" as a sort of black box encasing the ones and zeros of their data matrices, recently some of them have begun to draw

and strategic in conception (Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Zald 1996); that it retains a dichotomous understanding of culture and structure (Polletta 1996, 1999); and that it is inattentive to the dialectical relationship between discourse and event (Ellingson 1995).

attention to the discursive nature of network ties.⁴ Recently, Harrison White and his colleagues (White 1992, 1995; Mische and White 1998) have argued that bundles of narratives and discursive signals define *network domains*, i.e., specialized fields of interactions characterized by clusters of relations and associated sets of stories. Such network-domains have a temporal as well as a relational dimension, structured not only by identities, but also by *narratives* (Somers 1992, 1993; Polletta 1998) about where actors are coming from and where they are going to. Actors are continually switching back and forth across network domains (and associated social settings) in their day-to-day lives.

For social movement activists, this means not only moving among the multiple organizations and institutional spheres to which they belong, but also among the (often overlapping) roles and relations that these imply (e.g., organizer, strategist, cheerleader, advisor, recruiter, negotiator, not to mention student, family member, drinking buddy, romantic partner). In social settings, such relations may be foregrounded or backgrounded, put into “play” or strategically suppressed, according to the logic and demands of the local context. This relational play happens discursively, through signals or cues by which some relations (and accompanying narratives) are “keyed” and/or “articulated” (linked together) in different ways. By tracking such signaling mechanisms as they occur *in conversation*, we can observe processes of relation formation, maintenance, and transformation – that is, of the generation and reconfiguration of networks – as well their effects on the life of the movement.

3. From mapping to mechanisms: linking networks and culture

If these approaches give us a new conceptualization of the link between networks and culture, we are still faced with the challenge of locating these phenomena – and charting their conditions and effects – in empirical social process. Here we find a strong tension between mathematical mapping techniques and ethnographic or textual analysis, since each involves a necessary reduction of the other. Whereas formal mapping techniques and related network-analytic routines allow researchers to see overall structural patterns that surpass the viewpoint of any given actor (or “node” in a network), they lose the multi-textured, contingent, and often ambiguous “give and take” of actual interaction. On the other hand, more qualitative methodologies can help to preserve the richness of local context, but ignore the global topography. I want to argue not only for the complementarity of these approaches, but also for the development of new techniques that make possible their integration. The goal of this integration is not to uncover static structures governed by general laws that apply to all cases, but rather to find a set of general communicative mechanisms that organize action across a variety of different movement contexts.

To move from the primarily descriptive techniques of formal network analysis to a focus on mechanisms in social interaction requires that we view the topographical maps produced by formal techniques as the result of many local, contingent, and intersecting relational processes. Here I build upon recent discussions of mechanisms in sociological theory (Elster 1989;

⁴ Recent attempts to bridge the culture-network divide include Anheier, Gerhards and Roma (1995); Ansell (1997); Bearman (1993); Brint (1992); Carley (1992, 1993); Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994); Emirbayer (1998); Erickson (1988; 1996); Franzosi (1998, 1999); Gould (1995); Martin (1999); McLean (1998); Mische (1996, 1998); Mische and Pattison (2000); Mohr (1994); Mohr and Duquenne (1997); Wiley and Martin (1999).

Stinchcombe 1991; Hedstrom and Swedberg 1998) as well as recent attempts by social movement theorists to expand the understanding of mechanisms beyond the framework of methodological individualism (Tilly 2000; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 2001). The latter define mechanisms as “a delimited class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations” (McAdam et al, 2001, p. 17). The point of this focus on mechanisms is to allow for mid-range generalizations about regularized patterns of interaction that allow for contingency and contextual specificity at both local and larger-scale levels.⁵

Mapping multiple relations

Formal network analysis can point toward mechanisms by showing us how different kinds of relationships (with their accompanying discursive processes) concatenate in systematic ways, both reflecting and influencing the dynamics of communicative interaction. There are a variety of network techniques that allow us to analyze the intercalation of multiple types of ties, most notably blockmodeling techniques (White, Boorman and Breiger 1976) that locate “equivalence classes” among actors tied to third parties, as well as role algebras (Boorman and White 1976; Pattison 1993), which allow us to study links (or “entailments”) between multiple sets of relations. When applied straightforwardly to ties between actors or groups (e.g., kinship, friendship, advice, resource exchange), such methods can be used in conjunction with cultural analysis to look for correspondences or associations between network structures and discursive forms. For example, Peter Bearman (1993) uses blockmodeling techniques to show how the changing structure of kinship and patron/client relations created the “structural prerequisites” for the emergence of abstract religious rhetorics, which went on to influence elite participation in the English Civil War.

We can also take an approach that more directly highlights the conversational dimension of social ties. For example, if one hypothesizes that political alliance-building across groups is facilitated by informal friendship relations as well as political discussion among leaders, one could look at the intercalation of, say, four types of ties among movement leaders from different organizations, all of which imply a certain kind of communication: “discuss politics with,” “plan events with,” “negotiate alliances with,” and “drink beer with.” These might sort out into different leadership blocks for which these types of communication intercalate in similar ways, thus mapping the communicative role structure among movement leaders across a multi-organizational field. One could then see whether these blocks can be characterized by categorical attributes – such as group membership, leadership rank, class position, or other identity markers – as well as by different ways of talking politics.

Such an approach could allow us to locate structural patterns that point toward the conversational dynamics associated with different clusters of ties, hence lead us from mapping to mechanisms. For example, we might test the hypothesis that top leaders share more cross-group

⁵ As McAdam et al (2001, p. 21) argue, “Big structures and sequences never repeat themselves, but result from differing combinations and sequences of mechanisms with very general scope.” Elster echoes this focus on contingency and uncertainty when he states “mechanisms are *frequently occurring and easily recognizable causal patterns that are triggered under unknown conditions or with indeterminate consequences. They allow us to explain but not to predict*” (Elster 1998, p. 45, italics in original).

political discussion and/or beer-drinking ties than lower level activists, suggesting a mechanism by which informal conversation among leaders smoothes over the negotiation of inter-group relations. Or we might examine the hypothesis that there is more flexible, multivalent talk (as opposed to rigidly ideological discourse) when friendship ties mediate political negotiation, suggesting a mechanism by which friendship has a “loosening” or flexibilizing” effect on political discourse.

Exploring complex conjunctures

While these extensions of network techniques are based on a conversational understanding of political culture, they remain blind to one element that scholars like Eliasoph and Lichterman have noted is extremely important to political communication: its location in social settings. Settings can be defined analytically in a number of ways: as the organizational context in which talk happens, as the group of individuals who are present, as the kind of activity they are engaged in, as the physical location of that activity, or as a particular episode or event. Usually, these different components of social settings are associated in regularized ways. So an alternative analytical strategy is to explore how different *conjunctures* of setting-defining elements – individuals, groups, activities, events – are associated with particular kinds of talk and ties.

There are a variety of ways to do this mathematically, many of which build on the insight of Ronald Breiger (1974) into the duality of the affiliation relationship. In its most well known formulation, this approach exploits the Simmelian observation that relations between individuals are determined by the groups they belonged to, and conversely, that relations between groups are determined by the individual members they have in common. A number of notable studies have applied these procedures to the analysis of recruitment, mobilization, and alliance-making across multi-organizational fields, including Rosenthal et. al. (1985), Fernandez and McAdam (1988), Bearman and Everett (1993), Diani (1995, 1998) and Osa (2001).

We can incorporate a communicative dimension by extending this analysis to include not only persons and groups, but also discourse, practices, and social movement events. One way to do this is through an algebraic technique known as Galois (or “concept”) lattices (Freeman and White 1993; Wille 1996). Galois lattices are ideal for exploring what I am calling conjunctural associations because they display the dual relationships between elements in a two-mode data matrix in a simultaneous graphical form. Lattices map relations of inclusion and intersection between associated subsets of two (or more) sets of elements. Each node on a lattice can be treated as a particular conjuncture of elements, ordered in relation to other possible conjunctures in a given associative field. This is a very flexible exploratory technique that can be extended to many kinds of cultural and historical analysis, as recent work by Mohr and Duquenne (1997) and Schweizer (1993, 1996) has shown.

In my research on the 1992 Brazilian impeachment movement (Mische 1998), I use lattices to examine conjunctures of activists, organizations, and/or their projects as these come together *at public events*. I explore how events serve as settings for cross-group communication and mediation, which in turn contribute to the convergence of cross-sectoral coalitions. In a recent extension of this work (Mische and Pattison 2000), Philippa Pattison and I use a tripartite

version of lattice analysis to map changes in the presence of organizations and/or their projects at events during different stages in Brazil's impeachment movement. In the early stage, organizations tended to meet in sectorally segmented settings in which opposition was linked to the particularistic projects of labor, student, or professional organizations. As the movement converged, groups came together in increasingly broader combinations, leading to what we call the *interanimation* (to borrow a term from Bakhtin) of the discourse in play at movement events. In the final stage, the discourse simplified considerably, reflecting a *suppression* of public discourse as a broad coalition of radical, moderate, and elite actors restricted their discussion to a narrow cluster of projects related to citizenship and public ethics. In this way, the lattice mapping techniques allowed us to locate two general sociocultural mechanisms – interanimation and suppression – by which coalitions are negotiated among other otherwise contentious sets of movement actors.

4. Cross-talk in action: exploring the Brazilian case

An obvious objection to the mathematical techniques described above is that they only show the changing topography of discursive relations across groups, not the actual dynamics of communication within social settings. Another way of examining the network implications of talk in movements is through a more micro-level analysis of conversational mechanisms as they play out within and across particular movement contexts. Again, such analysis can combine interpretive techniques, using ethnographic and textual data, with more quantifiable analyses of patterns of conversational exchange. Here I will provide a few brief exploratory examples of communicative mechanisms from my ethnographic research on Brazilian youth activism in the 1990s, in order to suggest directions for more systematic research.

In my research, I encountered a context in which diverse organizational and interpersonal networks were superimposed in a highly complex and interwoven set of social movement communities.⁶ Most of the Brazilian activists I studied belonged to more than one organization at once: nearly all of the student activists also belonged to political parties and/or factions; many had previous or continuing experience in church, community, or professional organizations; many of them had also accumulated multiple positions in internal coordinating bodies nested within these distinct movement sectors. Young people often knew each other from several of these forums; they may have had different relative positions in each. Moreover, the organizations themselves had complex relationships ranging from exchange of resources or advice to ideological formation or co-participation in alliances and events. The different relationships implied by these multiple affiliations influenced each other in complex ways, requiring a holistic approach to the study of relation building that is attentive to how multiple dimensions of relations are activated and deactivated through a variety of conversational mechanisms.

⁶ During my fieldwork in Brazil (1993-1997), I conducted participant observation with eight different youth organizations, including student, religious, pre-professional, anti-discrimination and business organizations. I also accompanied the youth branches of several political parties, including the Worker's Party (PT), the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), and the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB). In addition to observations at meetings and events, I collected taped interviews with over 70 activists as well as 350 questionnaires with information on organizational trajectories, time management strategies, social networks, and personal and collective projects.

The four conversational mechanisms that I describe below all represent means by which actors jockey over the multiple dimensions of their memberships, identities, and projects in order to build relations with other actors. In that sense, these culturally constituted network-building mechanisms help to explain how ties are constructed and sustained – whether those ties are with new recruits, with fellow group members, or with external allies or opponents. While these can be considered “strategies” or “practices” (or what Goffman [1959] calls “techniques”) from the point of view of the individual actors,⁷ they can be seen as “mechanisms” from the perspective of explanatory theory-building: they consist regularized local processes that recur across many different kind of contexts and which contribute to higher-level relational process: e.g., in this case, social movement recruitment, coordination, and coalition-building.

The first two represent what I call “compartmentalizing” mechanisms, since they represent attempts by actors to discursively segment elements of their multiple identities and projects as a way of building ties with other actors. The second two represent what I call “conflation” mechanisms, since they depend upon the discursive fusion of diverse dimensions of projects and identities in order to heighten the multivocality of discourse, again as a way of constructing relations with other actors.⁸ All four mechanisms indicate that solidarity-building is not the only cultural dimension of movement networks; rather, actors use conversational mechanisms both to build ties with other actors and to jockey for their own (and their groups’) positions in an often conflictual and competitive multi-organizational field.

Identity qualifying

One way that network affiliations are signaled discursively is through “identity qualifiers” – cues as to which aspect of an actors’ multiple identities and involvements are active “right now,” in a particular set of utterances. McAdam and Paulsen (1993) refer to such cues as “aligning statements” by which actors associate themselves with particular reference groups. When people belong to multiple groups, they frequently need to switch back and forth between different identities that might be “in play” within a movement context. My interviewees would often herald what they were saying with the phrase “as” (in Portuguese, *como*), as in, “as a representative of the students” or “as a member of the Worker’s Party” or “as a youth pastoral coordinator.” A given conversation might contain several such switches, as the activists felt it necessary to discursively compartmentalize their identities in order to indicate which of their various organizational hats they were wearing at that moment. We can see this mechanism at work in the following quote from the president of the National Student Union (UNE), who was also a militant in the Communist Party:

⁷ Whether these are conscious strategies or taken-for-granted practices is an empirical question and most likely can be understood as a matter of degree. Certainly some of the mechanisms described here are deployed by actors as premeditated tactics, while others are imposed by the cultural logic or “scripts” of a particular relational setting, or by the emergent definition of the situation co-constructed in interaction.

⁸ These conflation and compartmentalization mechanisms are similar to the cognitive mechanisms that Zeruabavel (1993) describes as “lumping” and “splitting,” or what Harrison White might call “coupling and decoupling.” What distinguishes these from purely cognitive mechanisms is that these mechanisms are employed by actors within the play of social interaction, in the interest of relation-formation, bringing them out of the head (or the text) and into the situational dynamics of interaction.

I want to make clear that this is a personal position. *As president of UNE*, I represent the interests of Brazilian students, and I have broader positions. UNE does not defend socialism, nor the armed revolution. *I am a socialist by conviction*, but at the congress of UNE, I was against the inclusion of the socialist banner in the program. (Lindberg Farias, *Folha de São Paulo* 8/31/92, italics added)

This statement illustrates the discursive juggling act many youth leaders performed as they articulated the projects of the multiple organizations to which they belonged. Although dominated by leftist leaders, the National Student Union was trying to build ties to more mainstream students by supporting educational reform and defense of students' interests, not a communist revolution. As a Communist Party member, the UNE president was clearly engaged in projects that surpassed the "intermediary" goals of the student union (including a fierce dispute for control of that organization with other partisan youth). And yet *while preserving his identity as a communist* (and therefore his ties to his co-partisans), he was able to compartmentalize that identity and say, in effect, "for these purposes (representing *students*), being a communist doesn't matter." Note, however, the qualifier that he considered his convictions "as a socialist" to be more "personal" than his positions as president of UNE, and therefore on a different discursive footing. This raises the question of whether his audience will decide *not* to set aside consideration of his communist convictions, causing his attempt at relation-building to break down. When successful, these types of identity qualifiers allow actors to strategically segment different dimensions their multiple involvements while still maintaining them in play, in this case contributing both to external recruitment and outreach as well as to internal cohesion and interpartisan disputes.

Temporal cuing

A second way in which actors construct relations discursively is through what I call "temporal cuing," that is, keying into a particular temporal dimension of the "projective narratives"⁹ of a potential interactive partner. Relation formation involves cuing into the temporal scaffolding of other individuals and groups, since relations are ostensibly formed to "do something" together in the foreseeable future, whether that means engaging in ideological debate, forming an alliance, or planning a joint campaign. Here the focus shifts from identity markers (which define boundaries of inclusion and exclusion) to narrative construction, i.e., the temporal formatting of the stories actors tell each other about their histories, purposes, and capacity to intervene. The temporal dimensions of political relations are signaled discursively through a variety of discursive markers, including temporal "deictics," (contextualizing references such as verb tense and temporal adverbs [Hanks 1992; Levinson 1983]); narrative genre (e.g., utopian elegy vs. practical strategizing); and more mechanical processes involving calendars and timetables.

⁹ This discussion of projective narratives builds upon earlier work (Mische 1998; Emirbayer and Mische 1998) on how actors' projections about the future influence their actions, including their ability to coordinate those actions with others. Projects can be defined as "*evolving, imaginatively constructed configurations of desired social possibility, accompanied by an implicit or explicit theorization of personal and/or collective capacity to act to achieve that possibility*" (Mische 1998, p. 46-47). Here I am interested in collective projects as expressed in the public narratives of organizations, which help to embed those organizations in space and time (Somers 1992).

As groups build ties with other actors, they use such markers to signal which aspects of evolving projects are relevant to the interaction at hand. This may involve the temporal compartmentalization of different dimensions of a group's projective narratives; for example, actors may connect with potential alliance-partners on the short term dimension of their projects while strongly disagreeing with them on the long term, or vice versa. In Brazil, this sort of temporal cuing was evident in the facility the Communist Party youth had in negotiating alliances with their ideological enemies, the Social Democrats, by keying into flexible, short-term narratives of democratic reform, while provisionally compartmentalizing these from their longer term revolutionary projects. This was in marked contrast to the Workers' Party youth, whose long-term vision of socialism was in crisis while their shorter-term narratives were paralyzed by internal dispute, decreasing narrative flexibility and making them rigidly purist as interaction partners. By failing to engage in effective temporal cuing practices, the Worker's Party consistently lost out to their Communist rivals in disputes over student movement alliances and leadership, despite their broader ideological appeal. Here we see that that it is not merely ideological content that determines group affinities, but more importantly, it is *the manner in which each group constructs political time* that has a critical influence on its capacity to form communicative ties with other groups.

Generality shifting

A third communicative mechanism that is important for relation formation is what I call "generality shifting," in which speakers slide up or down levels of abstraction in regards to the generality or inclusiveness of identity categories. While the previous two mechanisms worked by compartmentalizing different dimensions of actors' identities and projects, this one works by conflating broad and narrow interpretations of discursive categories and building on their ambiguity. Actors learn to play off of the multivalence of such categories as they attempt to build alliances and generate public support. An example is the narrative play surrounding the categories of "student" and "civic" during the 1992 Brazilian impeachment movement. When activists claimed that the *students* were at the forefront of the *civic* coalition to impeach the president, there was intentional ambiguity in the reference. The category of "student" could refer to the hundreds of thousands of (mostly non-activist) high school and college students who hit the streets, or it could refer to the more restricted sub-field of the organized student movement and its associated projects and disputes. The coupling of the broader and narrower definitions of the "student" identity allowed student leaders riding the crest of the movement to claim credit for the youth mobilization on behalf of student organizations. Likewise, "civic" could refer to the loose array of sectorally differentiated organizations (community, professional, labor, and business, as well as "student"), each with their own competing projects and demands, or it could be given a more restricted definition, referring to a provisional coalition on issues related to the "common good."

These distinctions are not simply a matter of definition for the analyst; rather, the manner by which the actors themselves slide between narrower and broader self-designations is a critical component of coalition formation. This dual dynamic – of the general and the particular, the civic and the sectoral – works to build relations in a public arena, while also maintaining particularistic identities in a sort of eager latency. By encasing discourse within a ritualized mantle of generality that still lets competing projects peek out from time to time, actors establish

a collective footing that allows for joint action while preserving the possibility of a narrower, self-interested spin (e.g., when reported to one's home base, or in subsequent discussions with the media). Such publics create new possibilities for coordination and coalition-building among contending actors, while also threatening to break down into the "merely" particular projects and identities of which they are composed. By using categorical ambiguity to create a provisional unity in heterogeneous movement settings, generality shifting can contribute to processes of mobilization and alliance formation in a multi-organizational field.

Multiple targeting

We can locate a fourth mechanism for discursive tie construction: "multiple targeting," in which speakers aim their talk at many different audiences at once. Like generality shifting, this mechanism builds directly on the multivocality of discourse by conflating different possible discursive meanings; it exploits the fact that it is not always possible to segment one's audiences and thus the same words will often be interpreted from multiple points of view. This can be considered the inverse of the "robust action" described by Padgett and Ansell (1993), in which central actors maintain strategic ambiguity by segmenting their multiple networks. Social movement activists are often faced with situations in which segmentation breaks down – often purposefully so, when they attempt to construct broad-based alliances or when they invite people with different degrees of involvement to movement-building events. Leaders are usually aware that their words will be heard differently by new recruits than by battle-worn faction leaders, representatives of the media or emissaries of allied groups (not to mention the occasional academic researcher). The ability to infuse one's discourse with multi-layered cues is an important leadership skill on which the success of coordination and alliance-building may often rest.

I often witnessed such dynamics in my ethnographic work, as sub-groups spun off in different combinations and then came back to state positions to the wider plenary. An example is a national meeting of the youth of the Workers' Party, which was called to coordinate strategies for an upcoming national student conference. Most of the youth belonged to disputing internal factions as well as state or regional youth commissions; many also had additional affiliations in specialized student associations; gay rights, feminist, or black groups; or urban or agrarian popular movements. That meant that the youth were charged with *hearing* the discourse expressed at the meeting on multiple levels, just as speakers were charged with targeting it to multiple audiences. High-level leaders summoned each other into segmented huddles, after which they would return to the floor to signal the results of the negotiation through new discursive positionings. These needed to be carefully gauged with the appropriate degree of ambiguity to satisfy both their own faction members and those in competing factions – as well as high-level party leaders and outside observers – all without scaring off the unaligned. This of course was a tricky task that often threatened to break down, raising interesting questions about the conditions under which strategic ambiguity fosters consensus-building and when it dissolves into dispute or polarization, thus influencing emerging network structures within the movement.

The methods by which we can "capture" these kinds of mechanisms empirically vary considerably. Ethnographic research seems key for observing many of the mechanisms described above, which could be noted in observed speech during meetings or informal

exchanges, as well as interviews with activists. However, it would also be possible to systematize such observations, either through observational coding (using audio tapes, video tapes, or real time coding sheets) or through the use of content analysis techniques, which could locate discursive signals such as aligning statements, temporal markers or sliding categories. Many of these mechanisms also appear in written texts, such as organizational documents, speeches or letters, which would make the analysis of discursive relation formation possible for historical researchers as well (for an innovative example, see McLean 1998). These data could then be crossed with network data on different kinds of ties or affiliations, or on the relational composition of social settings, in order to locate the network conditions under which these mechanisms come into play. Where this approach differs from standard content analysis techniques is that we are not just interested in discursive content, but rather the “play” of discourse in interaction, its role in the construction of relations, its sense of footing, its appropriateness to a setting, its intended audiences and temporal structure.

5. Embedding mechanisms: building relations in movements

One challenge of this approach will be to combine this sort of setting-based observation of conversational dynamics with the formal mapping techniques described earlier, that is, to find a way of relating a bird’s eye view of structure with a close analysis of action on the ground. Both network topography and setting-based dynamics matter for social movement processes; they can be understood as different analytical moments of the same phenomena. While topographical mapping techniques locate particular settings (and their different analytical components) within larger structural contexts, the study of conversational dynamics shows us how these play out amidst the contingent interplay of real social interaction. The kinds of mechanisms sketched above provide a bridge between these, offering a middle level of generalizability that taps into both formal and interpretive methodologies.

There are two directions of influence between conversational mechanisms and formal relational structures that interest us here. One is the way that embeddedness in relational contexts facilitates or constrains the use of different kinds of mechanisms, while the other is the way in which these mechanisms “loop back” to affect the formal topography of relational contexts. Here I can offer a few exploratory hypotheses as to how these two kinds of influence might affect relation-building processes of interest to social movement analysts, such as recruitment, outreach, and alliance-building.

Mechanisms in context

All four conversational mechanisms described above would appear on the surface to imply a high degree of strategic mobility. Actors deploy these mechanisms in the attempt to build relations with other actors, whether through the compartmentalization of different aspects of their identities and narratives, or by conflating these identities and narratives through the strategic use of ambiguity. But actors are not free to conflate and compartmentalize in any way they want; rather their capacity to do so is limited by their location in different kinds of relational contexts, including institutions, networks, and settings of interaction.

One important constraining factor may come from the *institutional logics* (Friedland and Alford 1991; Powell 1991) of the overlapping organizations with which an actor is affiliated. Some organizational identities (and/or their accompanying projects) may be more easily segmented and/or conflated than others, due at least in part to their characteristic cultural forms or “logics” of interaction. For example, in the Brazilian case, political party membership could be readily combined with some forms of participation – such as student, labor, or popular movements – but less easily combined with others, such as religious, professional, or business or other “civic” organizations. This was due in part to the highly instrumental, competitive logic of the political parties, as well as their strongly combative narratives, which clashed in various ways with the practices and narratives of the more moderate, non-partisan groups. This leads to a number of interesting hypotheses. Political party members who also belong to groups with strong non-partisan logics might be compelled to make frequent use of compartmentalizing mechanisms, in order to reassure their audiences that their partisan hat (and its accompanying competitive logic) has been provisionally suppressed. On the other hand, when speaking to more hardcore student or labor audiences (in which almost everyone belongs to political parties), activists might feel less compelled to segment their partisan identities and be more likely to use conflation mechanisms such as generality shifting and multiple targeting, in which student and partisan narratives could be ambiguously intertwined. These hypotheses suggest ways in which the institutional logics of intersecting organizations may affect the kinds of mechanisms used by actors to maneuver among them.

A second source of constraint may come from the structure of *overlapping organizational networks*. Since not all movement contexts contain as high a degree of organizational overlap as in the Brazilian case, it is important to examine how the degree and range of overlap influences the manner and frequency with which these mechanisms are used. Even in the Brazilian case, there was considerable variation in the distribution of affiliations. Some activists (such as many top leaders) belonged to a wide array of organizations, often reaching across different institutional sectors (e.g., partisan, student, religious, and/or professional). Others only belonged to one or two, limiting maneuverability across networks and their ability to employ the mechanisms described above. One possibility is that activists at the intersection of many overlapping organizational networks (or alternatively, leaders of organizations that are highly central in the multi-organizational field) may develop greater adeptness at using compartmentalizing and/or conflation mechanisms in order to manage their multiple relationships, in contrast to less embedded or more marginalized actors, whose discourse may be comparatively univocal as a result. An alternative possibility is that it may in fact be marginalized groups attempting to construct bridges to more central, mainstream actors who are more likely to employ these mechanisms, in their attempt to submerge or obfuscate the more objectionable dimensions of their identities and projects (see McLean 1998).

A third possible constraint on the use of these mechanisms comes from the logic and composition of the *interaction setting* itself. Certain settings require different genres of conversation; it makes a difference if one is talking at a protest rally, a church meeting, a backroom planning session, a private rendezvous or a public bar. In addition, we need to pay attention to the identities and affiliations of interaction partners: do they belong to one’s own group, to opposing groups, or to target groups such as the media or potential allies? How homogenous or heterogeneous is the audience? Here we have to keep in mind that it is not just

networks or memberships that matter, but also how these relations are represented, activated or suppressed in social settings. One hypothesis might be that leaders facing more complex, relationally heterogeneous (“cross-group”) audiences would use more conflation mechanisms – either playing off of the nested levels of generality of seemingly inclusive categories, or infusing discourse with ambiguous statements that could be interpreted differently by various audiences. In contrast, those speaking to simpler “in-group” audiences might use less ambiguous, more univalent discourse, while those speaking to “out-group” audiences might be more likely to employ compartmentalizing mechanisms in order to mediate differences.

From mechanisms to networks

If the examples above represent possible ways in which relational contexts influence the use and effectiveness of conversational mechanisms, we still need to examine the other side of the coin: how mechanisms concatenate into network structures, and how these formal patterns in turn go on to influence the course and impact of social movements. Here I provide a few suggestions as to how we might build upon the mechanisms described here in order to theorize about some of the broader relational processes of interest to social movement analysts.

Recruitment and outreach: One of the things activists do through the compartmentalizing and conflation mechanisms described above is to reach out to people outside of their own movement organizations, whether for purposes of recruitment or fund-raising, or simply to improve relations with the public and/or the media. They do that knowing that many potential recruits, donors, or sympathizers are not likely to agree with *all* the dimensions of their identities and projects. To do this, they have to signal which of these are most worthy of their audiences’ attention and support, even if this means sidelining important aspects of their own self-understanding. Or alternatively, it means becoming skilled at exploiting the ambiguity and multivalence of broad categories, so that outsiders see their own concerns reflected in the discourse of a movement, even if the activists themselves have a different interpretation. The ability of activists to use the mechanisms described here could therefore have an important effect on a movement’s ability to gain supporters, thus influencing its success or failure.

These processes might affect the network structures of social movements in different ways. One hypothesis is that movement actors who fail to successfully compartmentalize potentially objectionable aspects of their identities and projects (e.g., the fact that most student movement members belong to partisan factions, or that they are working to overthrow the system) will reinforce their marginality, leading to the creation of dense activist ghettos, isolated from mainstream networks. On the other hand, those who too completely adapt to the discourse of outside targets will lose their internal adherents and become absorbed by mainstream networks, thus losing any independent leverage and becoming drained of challenging power. In contrast, actors skilled in using the compartmentalizing mechanisms of identity qualifying and/or temporal cuing might be more likely to appeal to outsiders without losing their distinctive identity and vision. In network terms, compartmentalization may allow actors to become effective *network bridgers* between radical enclaves and mainstream networks, thus having greater success not only in movement growth but also in internal longevity and (perhaps!) the ability to challenge existing power structures.

Alliances and coalitions: While political opportunity structures and imminent threats or dangers may provide conditions for coalitions (Staggenborg 1986), those alliances must be talked out and built up discursively. The discussion above suggests that there may be certain types of talk across organizations (and certain types of settings in which that talk plays out) that make some attempts at alliance building more likely to succeed than others. Leaders must know when to jockey for inclusion of their particularistic projects in a coalition, and when to suppress these and focus on more consensual issues. Likewise, they must know how to make strategic use of broad, multivalent umbrella-type categories (like citizenship, nationalism, democracy, socialism, brotherhood, or community), even though they know that their coalition-partners may have very different interpretations of what these terms mean, as well as of the intermediary steps by which they should be pursued over time. These sorts of coalition-building processes are mediated by the discursive mechanisms described above, although the conditions underlying when they work and when they fail is a compelling theoretical and empirical question.

One possible network implication is that actors who are adept at using the strategic ambiguity involved in conflation mechanisms might become central actors in alliance networks, since these mechanisms enhance their ability to simultaneously maintain relationships with many heterogeneous actors at once. By playing on categorical ambiguity or the multivalence of discourse, conflation allows actors to make their words do distinct work with many different kinds of audiences, thus enhancing their *network centrality*, along with their leadership, influence, and control in the multi-organizational field (Diani 1998). They may also be more effective at using this kind of ambiguity to build broad-based coalitions, contributing to the construction of a provisional unity among heterogeneous or conflicting actors (i.e., so-called “strange-bedfellow coalitions”). On the other hand, actors who remain wedded to particularistic categories or demand strict interpretations of their collective project (thus denying the ambiguity that makes them useful) might find themselves marginalized or excluded from alliance networks or broad-based coalitions, which might (positively or negatively) affect the overall success of the mobilization.

7. Further challenges

The conversational mechanisms described here contribute to processes of relation-formation that may be critical to the breadth, effectiveness and impact of a movement. In this way they build networks, conceived dynamically as sets of jointly constructed relations (and associated narratives) held in play over an extended period of time. These relations can be studied from a bird’s eye perspective using formal techniques that abstract from local context, or they can be studied by searching for on-the-ground mechanisms that play out amidst local contingencies. I have argued that these two approaches can be complementary – that formal mapping can point toward local mechanisms, while the study of mechanisms can suggest formal patterns at a more global level.

Yet to marshal this combination of mapping and mechanisms into effective substantive theory-building, there are difficult challenges that researchers face. One challenge is the problem of *scope conditions*: certainly not all of the mechanisms described above work equally well in all circumstances. The frequency and/or effectiveness of these mechanisms in

contributing to recruitment, outreach, or alliance building might vary according to different kinds of political opportunity structures, stages in a protest cycle, ideological positions, or forms of movement organization. Some sorts of relations, identities or projects might be more (or less) susceptible to compartmentalization or conflation; certain hats may not come “off” as easily as others, and some meanings many defy ambiguous interpretations. Thus the broader social, political, and cultural conditions under which these mechanisms contribute to the life of a movement represent an important area for future theory and research.

Another important challenge is the question of *measurement*. While the research proposed here stresses contingency and context, it still makes a claim to move beyond thick description to find pattern in complexity in the search for (at least partially) generalizable mechanisms. To that end, ethnographic or textual analysis must often be complemented by data reduction techniques of various kinds. Observational and textual coding schemes can be used either in conjunction with qualitative data analysis programs or with formal analytical procedures such as network and lattice analysis, or alternatively with other sorts of relational scaling techniques such as MDS or correspondence analysis. Other techniques such as time series or sequence analysis (Abbott and Hrycak 1990) might help to capture the temporal dynamics of these processes; these might be used together with more interpretive forms of narrative analysis to clarify the temporal structure of collective projects (for a good overview the use of formal techniques in cultural analysis, see Mohr [1998]). None of these techniques relieve the researcher of her hermeneutic responsibilities; interpretation is involved at all stages of research, from observation and data collection to coding strategies, selection of analytic techniques and discussion of results. These techniques are merely heuristic tools that allow us to move beyond the specificity of the case (and the perspectives of the individual participants) toward an expansion of the analytical toolkit of social movement theory.

The approach outlined here moves significantly beyond current treatments of the relationship between culture and networks in that it sees networks not as channels or conduits for cultural forms, but rather as themselves constituted by cultural processes of talk and interaction. Network relations are co-constructed through ground-level conversational mechanisms, which concatenate into more into more or less firmly constituted “structures” that go on to influence social movement in systematic ways. Recognition of the co-constituting character of networks and culture can help to move us toward a deeper understanding of the dynamic, contingent, and multilayered character of social movements and of social process more generally.

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