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A Paradigmatic Social Movement?
Women's Movements and the Definition of Contentious Politics

While the relevance of a gender-based approach has begun to gain recognition in the sociology of social movements in France, studies of women's movements remain largely ignored. Yet in addition to its empirical contribution, research on women's movements is challenging a series of assumptions pervading social movements theory. Based on a non-exhaustive literature review at the crossroads between history, sociology, and political science, this paper argues that the study of women's movements challenges three great divides that are routinely rigidified by the sociology of contentious politics and activism: the frontiers between private and public, activism and non-activism, and movements and institutions.

For the last thirty years, women's and feminist movements have been a focus of research inspired by both the sociology of social movements and gender studies.[1] Spread across various disciplines in the social sciences, and particularly history, sociology, and political science, these studies have drawn from the divergent and complementary perspectives of each discipline, giving rise to a relatively autonomous field rich in cross-cutting issues.

Before discussing how this field of research has contributed to the analysis of social movements, it is important to define its boundaries since it does not strictly overlap with the body of work on gender in social movements. Most analysts of the women's movement believe that it differs from other movements (in which women may also participate) in that the category of women, defined as "a distinct constituency instead of, within, or against their other potentially competing allegiances and identities" (Ferree and Mueller 2004, 580), is central to its political identity. In a wide variety of historical and cultural contexts, women have organized as women (based on typically female roles as mothers, daughters, sisters, or wives) to pursue a vast range of goals, such as the abolition of slavery, the fight against alcoholism, prostitution, and poverty, promoting peace or nationalism, the protection of nature, or improvement in women's status. The very definition of the category of women is of

1/ We thank Olivier Fillieule for his insightful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

course one of the issues at stake for these movements, which maintain varied and often conflicting relations to this identity referent. The category of feminism is usually distinguished analytically from the women's movement. According to U.S. historian Linda Gordon, feminism can be defined as "a critique of male supremacy, formed and offered in the light of a will to change it, which in turn assumes a conviction that it is changeable" (Gordon 1986, 29). Regardless of how its boundaries are delineated, an issue that raises a great deal of controversy among both women's movements students and participants, the feminist movement can be seen as a narrower category than the women's movement: it is in part included in it (McBride and Mazur 2010), but not limited to it.[2]

Research on women's and feminist movements has developed and been received unevenly in the various disciplines and national contexts in which it has been conducted. Whereas in the United States, such studies have become benchmarks in the field of the sociology of social movements since the 1970s,[3] in France they have long remained confined to women's history (Godineau 1988; Klejman and Rochefort 1989; Bard 1995; Chaperon 2000; Gubin et al. 2004). Among the plethora of French sociological studies on social movements and activism since the 1990s, the issue of gender in social movements has gained growing – albeit belated and still fragile – recognition (Dunezat 2004; Cossy, et al. 2005; Fillieule, Mathieu, and Roux 2007; Fillieule and Roux 2009) in the wake of pioneering research (Maruani 1979; Kergoat et al. 1992). However, this is not the case with studies of the women's movement and feminism. Despite a series of recent studies and with few exceptions (Fillieule 2009), these are still poorly integrated into the theoretical discussions of the sociology of social movements in France today.[4]

The marginality of sociological studies on women's movements in France is no doubt due in part to political reasons, which are related to the lack of legitimacy granted to the identity of women and to feminist ideology in French politics. However, it also has to do with the fact that the study of women's movements hardly fits in a number of long-dominant frameworks in social movement theory. Do women's movements fall within the province of the "new

2/ Some movements and activists claim to represent feminism without referring to women as political actors, as was the case of pro-Republican suffragist groups at the beginning of the Third Republic or of some feminist men's groups in the 1970s. See Jacquemart 2011, 2012.

3/ This is especially true of the work of Jo Freeman, Verta Taylor, Suzanne Staggenborg, Lee Ann Banaszak, and Mary Katzenstein, to cite only a few of the best-known authors.

4/ The marginality of this research can be seen, for example, in a recent literature review proposed by two sociologists of social movements and activism and which, despite being particularly exhaustive in other respects, contains no references to categories of women's or feminist movements (Sawicki and Siméant 2009).

social movements" stemming from the post-materialist protests of the 1960s and 1970s, or do they pertain to older movements formed during the nineteenth century, such as the workers movement? Women's movements are also difficult to locate on the left-wing/right-wing political spectrum, and their history shows that they refer to a variety of ideological positions and use a wide range of means of action, from the most muted to the most boisterous. Moreover, it isn't any easier to situate women's movements participants using the insider/outsider distinction as feminist protests have occurred within dominant institutions (Katzenstein 1998; Banaszak 2010). Finally, women's movements cannot easily be reduced to the classic structure of social movement organization (SMO) (McCarthy and Zald 1977), which is situated outside mainstream institutions and asserts explicitly political and anti-establishment objectives. Finally, entities as varied as consciousness-raising groups, magazines, women's sections within political parties, shelters for abused women, and bureaucratic machineries in charge of women have all been studied as being part of the women's movement (Ferree and Martin 1995).

Yet it is precisely because of the difficulties in reflecting on the women's movement from within the routine framework of the sociology of social movements that studying them is so fruitful. In fact, beyond its empirical contribution, research on women's movements invites us to rethink the very definition and the borders of social movements and contentious politics. As Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier argue, women's movements studies have challenged a series of analytical dichotomies that have marked the dominant paradigms of social movement theory since the 1970s, such as the oppositions between "expressive and instrumental politics, identity and strategic activism, cultural and structural change, and rational and emotional action" (Taylor and Whittier 1999, 5).[5] Based on a non-exhaustive literature review comparing the contributions of English- and French-language studies, this paper aims to show how the study of women's and feminist movements challenges three divides that are often made excessively rigid by the sociology of collective mobilization and activism, distinguishing, for example, private from public, activism from non-activism, and movements from institutions.

First, we would like to focus on the historiography of women's movements. Although they do not fall within the disciplinary field of the sociology of social movements, these historical studies provide a

5/ These feminist critiques have mainly been directed at the paradigms that have dominated the sociology of social movements in the Anglo-American context, and they sometimes concur with criticisms of these theories in France (Mathieu 2004; Cefaï 2007; Sawicki and Siméant 2009; Agrikoliansky, Fillieule, and Sommier 2010).

valuable contribution, thanks particularly to the innovative way in which they look at the process of politicization. They show how a private identity, which is at first glance exclusionary of politics, can become a basis for active involvement and highlight the close link between *women's* activism (as women) and *feminist* activism (challenging gender inequality).

Second, drawing on research that belongs more directly to the sociology of social movements, we show how the concept of "social movement community" invites us to rethink the movement beyond activism. Forged from research on the second wave of feminism in the United States, this concept makes it possible to reflect on a continuum of activities that have a contentious dimension without being based on formal membership to a political organization, and invites us to reevaluate the role of collective identity as a lever of political protest.

Third, we call attention to the research body that has focused on the deployment of women's protest *within* institutions, whether state or other large institutions. In questioning the insider/outsider dichotomy and challenging the dominant visions of movement institutionalization (especially in terms of de-radicalization and cooptation), these studies help to bring institutions into the definition of contentious politics.

FROM PRIVATE TO POLITICAL, FROM WOMEN TO FEMINISM: THE POLITICIZATION DYNAMICS OF GENDER IDENTITY

As a central dimension of the women's history on both sides of the Atlantic, the history of women's movements has significantly enriched the sociological analysis of this topic. In particular, historical approaches have made a useful contribution to the analysis of politicization processes, if, like Jacques Lagroye, we use this term to mean the processes of political "requalification" of social activities, or the practical transgression of established borders between political and non-political activities (Lagroye 2003). Firstly, the history of women's movements has revealed the processes by which an assigned, private identity usually seen as a basis for political exclusion, has in fact constituted a lever for political participation. Secondly, by highlighting the overlaps and circulation between female and feminist commitments, these studies blur the commonly established boundaries between conservatism and progressivism, between tradition and disruption.

From Private to Political

In Europe and North America in the nineteenth century, the establishment of liberal states was based on a tightening of the gendered divide between public and private, with women being denied the right to vote and to be elected and being excluded from the sphere of political parties and public debate. The model of respectable femininity – attainable by white, married women of the middle and upper classes only – was based on the total investment of women in the domestic sphere as loving wives and mothers and guardians of religious and family values. However, this dominant ideology of separate spheres was shaken during the nineteenth century by the growing and multifaceted engagement of women in collective action, usually organized both *among* women and *as* women (Blair 1980; Epstein 1981; Michel and Koven 1990; Skocpol 1992; Hagemann, Michel, and Budde 2008; Auslander 2011). It was in the gap between public and private, in the space of social, religious, or civic commitments where their presence was tolerated, that women became active. They legitimized these public activities using the qualities attached to their gendered role in the private sphere, such as gentleness, altruism, virtue, and morality. These qualities were the foundation of the maternalist discourse that guided most public commitment by women in Europe and North America until the early decades of the twentieth century. For example, in the United States, from the mid-nineteenth century onward, hundreds of thousands of women, mainly from the middle and upper classes, became involved in a variety of women's social action organizations, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which fought to combat alcoholism and to improve men's morality, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, which was centered around cultural and civic activities, the National Congress of Mothers, which was involved in mothers' education, or, from the early twentieth century, the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), which brought together women involved in social reform activities and unionized workers. These women's organizations, which generally adhered to the discourse of sexual division between public and private, were nonetheless places of politicization for a growing number of women deprived of their political rights, excluded from party politics, and marginalized within the labor movement. Moreover, they played a major role in the definition of the emerging Welfare States (Skocpol 1992; Giele 1995). Similarly in France, social action ("action sociale") became a legitimate sphere of female involvement at the turn of the twentieth century. For women, in the context of political exclusion, the 1901 Associations Act therefore provided a means "to step into the breach of civic life," giving rise to a proliferation of women's organizations

(Diebolt 2001). Within the working class, where women's involvement was impossible or fraught with difficulties in unions dominated by men, women-only unions were formed in some sectors (for example, textiles), and women workers often protested among women and alongside their children, highlighting the roles assigned to them as wives and mothers (Perrot 1974; Frader 1996).

Studies of the contemporary period in a variety of national contexts have extended this historical perspective, showing how private identities and female roles that at first glance are the basis for exclusion from the public sphere continue to be important levers for women's politicization. Studying the "community resistance" movements of women against racism in South Africa, against the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile, or for the right to housing in Mexico and the United States, historian Temma Kaplan shows how the commitment of women mostly from the working class is rooted in the "networks of everyday life" (Kaplan 1990, 260), especially in women-only activities in which they are involved because of their gendered roles. For example, in the case of resistance movements against State violence under the Chilean dictatorship, women gradually developed relationships over the course of their routine search activities for their missing fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons (waiting at police stations, in front of army depots, etc.). The contentious repertoire of this movement drew on traditional female roles. For example, on March 8, 1984, the women mobilized against State violence undertook a massive distribution of red carnations on the market square of Santiago. Two years later, when driven by the police from a park where they were demonstrating, they improvised group dances in the streets, disrupting traffic in the city center.

Finally, in contemporary liberal states, the not-for-profit sector remains a preferred area for women's commitment, often in line with their gender roles. In France, particularly in the field of social and religious action, women-only organizations such as the Women's Civic and Social Union (*Union Féminine Civique et Sociale*) and French Girl Guides (*Guides de France*) count tens of thousands of members (Diebolt 2001). Studies on women's movements highlight the political and potentially protest-oriented dimension of these women's organizations, which, being situated in between the private and public spheres, are rarely taken into account by sociologists of social movements. More generally, the sociology and history of women's movements argues for the gap to be bridged between the study of protest and that of involvement in non-profit organizations, which were long considered to be two isolated fields split by the political/non-political dichotomy (Viguier 2013).

From Women to Feminism

In studying the forms of politicization of gender identity, research on women's movements also questions the dichotomy between conservative and progressive movements and between tradition and innovation. Women's movements research has explored from a historical and comparative perspective the continuums and overlaps between women's mobilizations based on gender roles and women's mobilizations that contest gender hierarchies and roles, rather than considering them as two mutually exclusive categories.

Consequently, the distinction raised in the introduction to this paper between women's and feminist movements is blurred as the focus shifts from discourse to activist practices and trajectories. Studies of conservative women's movements have shown that for the women involved, their commitment is an opportunity to get out of the domestic sphere and adopt roles that break with traditional gender assignments despite the views they outwardly support. This is what Magali Della Sudda showed in her study of the *Ligue Patriotique des Françaises* (LPDF), created in 1902 during the Dreyfus Affair to mobilize women against secular reforms and republican ideology, including feminism. As members of a mass women's organization that claimed 500,000 members in 1914 (far more than the feminist movement) and asserting a fiercely anti-feminist ideology, their activists were engaged in politics outside of suffrage, particularly through involvement in (men's) election campaigns, and they gradually negotiated and increasing independence from the male authority of the Church (Della Sudda 2007).

Several studies have also pointed to the role of women's mobilizations, which were often conservative ones, in the later emergence of feminist mobilizations. In the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century, the temperance movement, whose fight against the dissoluteness of men's morals was based on of the idea of women's moral superiority, contributed to legitimize women's intervention in the public sphere. This conservative movement constituted a recruiting ground for the suffragist movement, which had much narrower activist bases (Epstein 1981; Skocpol 1992; Giele 1995). In Quebec, Yolande Cohen pointed to continuities between the Women Farmers Circle (*Cercles des Fermières*), a female, rural, and conservative mass movement created in 1915, and the feminist movement of the 1970s. She argued that by promoting the role of women in nation building and by offering them a space for independent action, the *Cercles des Fermières* provided one of the bases of the contemporary feminist movement (Cohen 1992). In France,

Bibia Pavard's research on the struggle for the liberalization of contraception and later abortion from the 1950s to 1970s pointed out the transformation of the "Family planning" organization (*Planning familial*) from a women's group concerned with institutional respectability to an openly feminist and protest-oriented mobilization (Pavard 2010a).

Other research puts into perspective the frontier between women's and feminist movements, based on studies of the circulation and multi-positionality of activists. In the 1980s, American historian Nancy Cott was already drawing attention to the overlap between "social feminism" (women's involvement in social reform activities in the name of the specific qualities of women), and "hardcore feminism" (activism specifically focused on equal rights between men and women), while these two categories were considered by U.S. historiography at the time to be mutually exclusive (Cott 1989). In a similar perspective, network analyses conducted by Naomi Rosenthal and her colleagues drew attention to the multi-positionality of the leaders of U.S. women's associations in the field of reform and equal rights at the turn of the century (Rosenthal et al. 1985). In France, research on the development of the first wave of feminism showed that the National Council of French Women (*Conseil National des Femmes Françaises* – CNFF) was the result of a convergence between a few mixed pro-Republican feminist groups, with a very restricted activist base, and an variety of philanthropic women's groups that asserted the specificity of women's roles (Offen 1984; Klejman and Rochefort 1989; Bard 1995). This circulation between philanthropic commitments and feminist mobilization is particularly noticeable when focusing on activist trajectories (Battagliola 2009).

More contemporary women's movements are also often the springboard for a transition from a "female consciousness" to an "oppositional consciousness", i.e., the basis for discourses and practices that challenge the gendered hierarchy (Kaplan 1982, 1990). Temma Kaplan showed how the Chilean organization Women for Life, even if it initially brought together women who refused to identify themselves as feminists (but just as women defending the values of life) ended up publishing in 1989 a list of legal reforms they saw as necessary for improving the status of women.

The concept of "free space," which was developed by sociologists who had worked on the history of the women's movement, sheds light on the ways in which a feminist identity was constructed within women's collectives (Evans and Boyte 1986). All-female environments, which often promote and display the "women" identity

(church groups, book clubs, and sewing groups, for example) can be considered as "free spaces" and thus become places of transformation from gender awareness to oppositional consciousness (in Kaplan's terms).[6] Feminist politicization can also emerge in places of female sociability that at first glance are non-contentious and far from the political sphere, as illustrated in particular by the involvement of several contemporary social- and religious-sector women's associations in the French campaign for gender parity in political office (Bereni 2007). These reflections on the politicization of social roles assigned to women, which are mostly based on historical studies of the first wave of women's mobilization, lead us to rethink the division between public and private, the non-political and the political. In turn, a focus on the processes of politicization questions the boundaries of activist groups and hence the restriction of the sociology of social movements to a sociology of "activism". This reflection on both organizational and identity dimensions has been particularly advanced by the concept of the "social movement community."

FROM ORGANIZATION TO SOCIAL MOVEMENT COMMUNITY

Introduced by Steven Buechler in a study of the first two feminist waves in the United States (Buechler 1990), the notion of a "social movement community" was subsequently employed in research on the contemporary women's movement after the second wave, including studies by Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier of the lesbian feminist community (Taylor and Whittier 1992) and by Suzanne Staggenborg on the feminist community of Bloomington, Indiana (Staggenborg 1998). Motivated by a desire to overcome the organizational bias of resource mobilization theory, this notion went beyond the sole issue of mobilizing structures and helped to rethink the cultural component of mobilizations through reflection on collective identity (Taylor and Whittier 1992; Reger and Taylor 2002).

Beyond the Organization

Within the sociology of social movements, resource mobilization theory has long given precedence to a restrictive definition of organizations, identified with the model of the "social movement organization," that is, a structured and hierarchical entity, including

6/ For an analysis of the forms of politicization of female identity within supposedly apolitical women's groups in working class neighborhoods in France, see Hamidi (2010).

a number of members (as distinct from external supporters), and upholding explicit political goals (McCarthy and Zald 1977). It was to overcome this organizational bias that in 1990, Buechler put forward the concept of "social movement community," defined as "informal networks of politicized individuals with fluid boundaries, flexible leadership structures, and malleable divisions of labor" (Buechler 1990, 42). Analyzing the second wave of the American women's movement, Buechler showed that the feminist social movement community cannot be reduced to a set of organizations oriented toward legal reform, such as the National Organization for Women (NOW). Alongside these organizations, informal groups of the women's liberation movement are part of a feminist community that cannot easily be grasped in terms of the classic resource mobilization paradigm. The emergence of this concept is related to reflection conducted by the movement's activists themselves: organizational issues have been a particular matter for debate within the women's movement because the definition of alternative organizational forms is claimed as an integral part of the project of emancipation (Buechler 1990, 61). Beyond the U.S. case, many studies of radical feminist groups of the second wave reveal common organizational features, such as the rejection of any formal structure (reflected, for example, in the refusal to appoint representatives, or, in France, by the refusal to adopt the legal framework of the 1901 Associations Act that is yet very common for organized civil society groups), and the promotion of horizontal organization and of the "sorority" concept (Freeman 1975; Picq 1993; Whittier 1995; Staggenborg 1998).

Political Protest, Daily Life, and Collective Identity

While the concept of social movement community was initially developed to grasp the "continuum of organizational forms" (Buechler 1990, 62) activist structures take, from the most "formal and goal-oriented" to the most "informal and amorphous" (Staggenborg 1998, 181), the ways in which Suzanne Staggenborg, Nancy Whittier, and Verta Taylor use this concept are even further removed from the resource mobilization paradigm. Their work paved the way for bringing into the field of social movements studies a variety of groups, places, or social networks that had previously not – or only rarely – been considered as possible mobilizing structures because they don't fit into the traditional forms of organized protest (Staggenborg 1998, 181-2).

Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier define the social movement community as "a network of individuals and groups loosely linked through an institutional base, multiple goals and actions, and a collective identity that affirms members' common interests in opposition to dominant groups" (Taylor and Whittier 1992, 107). For her part, Suzanne Staggenborg includes in the social movement community "all actors who share and advance the goals of a social movement: movement organizations; individual movement adherents who do not necessarily belong to SMOs; institutionalized movement supporters; alternative institutions; and cultural groups" (Staggenborg 1998, 182).

Two significant shifts should be highlighted here. First, it is no longer a question of only extending the field of activist organizations under study but of reflecting on the social movement beyond activism understood in its narrow sense as active participation in a political group. The social movement community encompasses a multitude of groups and individuals united by a common identification (which takes various forms) with feminism. Women's health centers, feminist music festivals, shelters for abused women, university gender studies departments, and feminist bookstores are all organizations that belong to a feminist community and whose activities, even though they have an activist dimension, are not limited to that approach. In fact, the activist approach hybridizes with other repertoires of action, such as providing services to women (legal information, information on contraception, abortion and health care, accommodation, etc.), producing knowledge (women's studies departments), and organizing cultural activities (a feminist bookstore organizing conferences, feminist theaters, or art galleries). The individuals involved in these social spaces (customers, users, patients, spectators, but also nurses, doctors, lawyers, librarians, teachers, researchers, actors, visual artists, etc.) are likely to identify subjectively with feminism but not necessarily and without defining themselves strictly as "members" or "activists" of a feminist organization, however informal. It is true that the coexistence of highly diverse principles of action in these women's movement communities causes internal tensions as the activist or political approach competes with the scholarly, "cultural," and "social" approaches, and more generally with a "professional" status (Champy and Israël 2009).

Second, by distancing themselves from an organizational prism, these authors have been led to give a central role to culture and collective identity in the construction of a social movement community. As Whittier underlines, although the feminists of Columbus (Ohio) clearly staged protests and launched petitions, "their collective

efforts for social change have involved culture, identity, and daily life as much as direct confrontation with the State" (Whittier 1995, 21). Here, the social movement community approach can be linked to the work of European theorists on "new social movements," who highlighted that the main issue at stake for many protest movements emerging in the 1960s and 1970s was to challenge assigned identities and produce new ones and not simply engage in political confrontation with State structures (Melucci, Keane, and Mier, 1989).

Far from considering collective identity as a reified set of positions that can be considered outside of social practices, for which some research concerned with this dimension has been criticized, using the community as a starting point has the advantage of allowing processes of identity construction to be systematically indexed to a set of "everyday tactics" and "life experiences" (Reger and Taylor 2002, 100). The feminist movement community is in practice embodied in a variety of social activities over the course of which collective identities emerge, persist, and evolve, from participation in a concert to working in a library. Continuously challenged and renegotiated, identity is based on subjective affiliations, beliefs, practices, and places of socialization and are far from being fixed in a common ideology (Staggenborg 1986; Whittier 1995; Rupp and Taylor 1999). Ultimately, an analysis in terms of community invites us to reconsider the very definition of the movement, emphasizing an approach by identity – through a non-essentialist one – rather than an approach by organizations. As such, it echoes Jane Mansbridge's analyses, which call for feminist commitment no longer to be thought of in terms of membership in an organization but of a sense of accountability to a "feminist community" (Mansbridge 1995).[7]

Understanding the Continuity of Social Movements

Theorists of the social movement community concept have shed new light on the temporality of social movements, revealing some blind spots in the theory of mobilization cycles which, in Verta Taylor's words, often portray the "immaculate conception" view of social movements that "have supposedly come out of nowhere" (Taylor 2005, 229). It is precisely because the social movement community is based on a set of networks and practices rooted in the everyday and because it includes organizations and social spaces that are not focused on activism only that this notion helps

7/ Although it does not use the concept of social movement community directly, Marion Charpenel's work highlights the discursive construction of the boundaries of the field of women's advocacy through the work on collective memory that is deployed within it (Charpenel 2012).

us understand the continuity of social movements from one peak of mobilization to another. From this point of view, social movement communities function as "abeyance structures," a concept developed by Verta Taylor (Taylor 2005) to denote the set of structures that bridged the gap between the two large waves of feminist mobilization in the United States.

Employing the social movement community concept, Staggenborg's monograph on the feminist community of Bloomington, Indiana clearly illustrates the continuity of feminist protest in the 1980s during a period of political hostility to and general decline of social protest movements (Staggenborg 1998). In this small university town, the first women's movement community appeared in the late 1960s thanks to a wider social movement community (far left, civil rights, environmental protection, opposition to the Vietnam War) from which it gradually gained independence through the creation of specific political organizations (Bloomington Women's Liberation, Lesbian Liberation, and the local branch of NOW). After a brief downtime, the feminist community experienced a revival in the 1980s – even as progressive movements as a whole were in a phase of decline – around a multiplicity of structures and activities whose primary purpose was not necessarily or solely political but also cultural, social, educational, or scientific, namely creating a women's library and newspaper, opening a shelter, organizing "Take Back the Night" marches, celebrating March 8, and the conference of the National Women's Studies Association. The persistence of this social movement community helps to understand the conditions for the emergence and forms of a new peak of feminist mobilization in the 1990s, which the metaphor of the "third wave" often causes to be considered in terms of a break.

THE MOVEMENT WITHIN INSTITUTIONS: UNOBTRUSIVE MOBILIZATION

Intra-Institutional Mobilizations

The shift in focus from the social movement to the social movement community has led some theorists to point to the role of institutions as a vehicle for the movement's continuity. The community includes structures housed by institutions or that are highly institutionalized, such as university departments of women's studies, and the community's structures are also likely to benefit from institutional funding that helps ensure their sustainability, especially

in low ebb periods. However, the interweaving of the movement and institutions has not been targeted by research based on the concept of social movement community, in particular because of a focus on the movement's most radical and anti-institutional fringes. From this perspective, these studies do little to challenge the dominant view of social movements, forged in the 1960s and 1970s against the backdrop of a new round of mass protests and according to which protesters are situated outside of institutions (with the status of outsider), use an unconventional tactical repertoire and mobilize head-on against institutions (primarily the State). Over the last fifteen years, other studies of contemporary women's movements have run counter to this dominant definition, pointing to the variety of relations between feminism and institutions not only in terms of the modes of action used, from the most spectacular to the most discrete (Costain 1992; Banaszak 1996; Banaszak, Beckwith, and Rucht 2003; Pavard 2010a), but also in terms of the very place of protest.

Since the first wave, feminist activists have carried out their struggles in a variety of institutional locations, particularly as part of their professional occupations or in a number of international organizations (Thébaud 2006). Yet during the second half of the twentieth century, the gradual opening up of institutions from which women had long been totally excluded offered them increased opportunities to assert a specific and sometimes dissenting voice from the inside (Katzenstein 1998). As a result, institutions as restrictive as political parties (Lovenduski and Norris 1993; Achin 2005; Bereni 2006; Bargel 2009; Pavard 2010b), labor unions (Maruani 1979; Pochic and Guillaume 2010), universities (Lagrave 1990; Giraud 2005), public administrations (McBride Stetson and Mazur 1995; Revillard 2007), religious institutions (Katzenstein 1998; Latte Abdallah 2010; Béraud 2011; de Gasquet 2011), and even the army (Katzenstein 1998) have all constituted arenas of mobilization for the women's movement. While recognizing the unequal and gendered nature of bureaucratic organizations (Acker 1990), these studies have highlighted their lack of internal consistency and the possibility of creating niches, or habitats, for protest even within seemingly the most uncompromising institutions (Katzenstein 1998).

Research on State feminism has made a key theoretical contribution to these questions on intra-institutional feminist mobilization. The first studies of the feminist presence within the State focused on the experience of women pursuing feminist goals as part of their administrative work, particularly in Australia and the Nordic countries, where jobs and services specifically tasked with improving the status of women were established early on. Hester Eisenstein pointed to the

double accountability that unites Australian "femocrats" both to the authority they work for and to the women's movement, from which they generally come (Eisenstein 1995). While their intra-institutional position does cause some tensions, they often define themselves as the bearers of an activist message within the bureaucracy (Sawer 1990). From the mid-1990s, this approach based on female actors was supplemented by work focused on institutions from the perspective of public policy analysis. The structures responsible for women's policies that were created in many countries from the 1970s onward (McBride Stetson and Mazur 1995; McBride and Mazur 2010) were central to this perspective. These are generally weak institutions, located on the fringe of State structures. Indeed, a number of them have only a strictly advisory status (tasked, for example, with research and consultancy), and when they do have a decision-making capacity, they usually have only limited means for carrying out their mission and often see their role defined mainly in terms of coordinating the work of other government actors (this policy was formalized in the 1990s with the process of "gender mainstreaming," sanctioned by the United Nations and the European Union). The comparative study by the Research Network on Gender Politics and the State (RNGS), coordinated by Dorothy McBride and Amy Mazur from 1995 to 2010, identified the conditions in which, despite this structural weakness, these bodies could promote feminist goals within the State and influence the definition of public policies (McBride Stetson and Mazur 1995; McBride and Mazur, 2010).

The Intersection of Movements and Institutions

Some research studies have helped challenge the dominant assumption that social movements are by definition situated outside of institutions.

While many studies of State feminism have been conducted from the perspective of public policy analysis, interacting little with the issues treated by theorists of social movements, some have taken a more direct sociological perspective and helped challenge the dominant assumption that social movements are by definition situated outside of institutions (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). This is the case, for example, of Mary Katzenstein's research on feminist mobilization in the army and the Catholic Church in the United States since the 1970s (Katzenstein 1998), and of Lee Ann Banaszak's studies of feminist activists in the higher echelons of the U.S. federal bureaucracy since the 1960s (Banaszak 2010). Both of these authors

challenge the association that is often automatically made between the *place* of protest (inside or outside of institutions), its *methods* (more or less confrontational), and its *goals* (more or less radical). As Banaszak writes, "the term 'insider' is often used loosely to delineate not just location inside the State but a combination of conventional tactics and goals of limited reform" (Banaszak 2010, 8). Yet as Banaszak knows, feminists championing the cause of women at the highest levels of the State may have the "status of outsider" because "exclusion from the polity is not completely synonymous with location" (Banaszak 2010, 8). Even while working in and for the State, they have sought to challenge (sometimes radically) the unequal structure of gender relations, including as they are manifested in State positions and practices. Similarly, Katzenstein pointed out the multiple allegiances – discursive, "organizational," and "financial" (Katzenstein, 1998) – in which feminists in the army and the Catholic Church are caught, allegiances that position them at once inside and outside of the institutions. The mobilizations studied by these sociologists therefore blur the insiders-outsiders dichotomy. In the words of Banaszak, feminists of the American bureaucracy form a "movement-State intersection," defined as "a network of movement actors or organizations [that] is located within the State" (Banaszak 2010, 8).

The activists in question have directed part of their efforts toward the internal workings of institutions. Katzenstein, for example, shows how feminists in the U.S. Army, united in organizations such as Women Military Aviators, campaigned to win (in 1991) women the right to engage in combat aviation (Katzenstein, 1998). However, feminist activism within institutions has also consisted of providing support to external feminist organizations. Banaszak examined how the presence and strategies of activists in the senior U.S. federal bureaucracy fueled the emergence and deployment of the second wave of feminism. The activism of these feminist bureaucrats and the resources accessed through their status as insiders (information, networks, facilities, etc.) played a crucial role in the initial development of NOW (National Organization for Women), the main liberal feminist organization of the second wave, which was created in 1966. At the same time, these insider feminists, most of whom were trained a lawyers, became involved in "cause lawyering" by discreetly initiating and supporting the first cases against sexual discrimination presented to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). As a result, through almost invisible actions, they were able to actively contribute to the creation of a new feminist movement and to the legal, political, and social recognition of the paradigm of gender equality (Banaszak 2010).

Whether their actions are directed toward the inside or outside of the institution, these activists have to deal with the system of constraints and resources specific to each institutional framework, resulting in the creation of unique repertoires of action. Katzenstein shows how the different institutional frameworks of the army and the Catholic Church helped shape two distinct forms of feminist institutional protest, one moderate and modeled on interest group politics (in the army), the other (in the Church) more radical and discursive (Katzenstein 1998). Banaszak's study also highlights constraints on the actions of feminist bureaucrats and explains the tactics they employed to overcome them, the first being to act "under the radar" (hence their actions' invisibility). When the orientations of the administration in office at the time proved openly hostile to feminism, as with the Reagan administration in the 1980s, they put certain agendas on standby in order to focus their activist energy on other, less closely surveyed or less controversial areas of feminist politics. Behind the mask of neutrality, they were in some instances able to offer feminist organizations the discursive resources they needed to defeat the policies they were officially expected to defend.

Our own work ties in with these studies, which address the feminist presence in terms of intersection (rather than opposition) between movement and institution (Bereni and Revillard 2011). Anne Revillard's research on the authorities responsible for women's policies in France and Quebec since the 1960s has shown that these institutions can in some cases be described as activist institutions, with specific repertoires of action and social change objectives consistent with those promoted by feminist organizations acting outside the State. In Quebec, the role played by the Council on the Status of Women and the Women's Secretariat in implementing major reforms in favor of women in family law clearly illustrates this configuration of a government activism (Revillard 2007, 2009). Rather than being mere intermediaries for the mobilization of civil society, State institutions responsible for equality policies can act as a driving force within the women's movement, especially during periods of declining activism. On the basis of a study of the campaign for political equality in the 1990s in France, Laure Bereni developed the concept of a "field of women's advocacy," defined as the configuration of organizations promoting the status of women in very different social spheres, either inside or outside of institutions (associations, party-related, bureaucratic, and academic environments, etc.). Again, the institutional sites of advocacy for women (namely bureaucratic bodies responsible for equality, women's sections in political parties or elected bodies, centers for research on gender studies, etc.) are not seen as reflections or as allies of an external

movement but as full-fledged components of an overarching network or group, linked by activist multi-positionalities, organizational interlocking, and places of convergence (conferences, events, etc.) (Bereni 2012). While the associations section of the field of women's advocacy, which are composed of women's and feminist associations within civil society, is a key force in the struggles carried out by this field, it is not necessarily its center of gravity. The arrival of political equality on the governmental and legislative agenda in France in the late 1990s sparked the growing involvement of sections that were institutional (public bodies dealing with women's rights), electoral, and party related (women's sections in parties, networks of female politicians), and academic (networks of academic specialized in women's issues) within the field of women's advocacy in the campaign for equality alongside the women's and feminist associations of civil society (Bereni 2007).

More generally, these research perspectives invite a reassessment of the criteria on which the common opposition between reformist and radical, or conventional and confrontational actions is based. Indeed, while protest actions that involve occupying public space (demonstrations, sit-ins) are generally perceived as more radical than the subtler forms of mobilization (lobbying, filing grievances in court, routine bureaucratic work, institutional awareness campaigns, etc.), this research shows that the latter type of action can have an equally radical impact in terms of the changes it is likely to stimulate, challenges that are not only political (as in their impact on the making of law and public policy) but also cultural and social (since they change daily behaviors). Ultimately, these studies of the forms and effects of the movement's presence in institutions promote a non-substantialist vision of collective action. In opposition to any pre-ordained classification of actions (publication of a governmental report or petition) or of actors (institutions or movement), renewed attention must be paid to the meaning actions take on for the protagonists involved so as to evaluate their contentious dimension and their impact in context.

CONCLUSION: RETHINKING CONTENTIOUS POLITICS

Whether it analyzes the process of politicization from a historical perspective, focuses on the integration of non-(exclusively) activist dynamics into the field of social movements using the concept of social movement community, or studies the intersection between

movement and institutions, research on the women's movement raises theoretical issues that are central to the current renewal of the sociology of social movements. Stemming from largely separate empirical fields (the women's movement at the turn of the twentieth century, radical feminism of the second wave, intra-institutional feminist struggles), the three lines of analysis explored in this paper converge in defense of a fluid vision of collective mobilization (Gusfield 1981). Yet this fluidity does not entail abandoning any theoretical claims. On the contrary, it is important to draw the necessary theoretical conclusions from the continuity observed empirically between categories usually analyzed separately: movement and institution, activism and non-activism, commitment and professional activity, and private and public. Research on women's movements therefore invites conceptual decompartmentalization by means of a de-indexation of the definition of social movements from political organizations, activism, and civil society (that is, all that falls outside of political institutions). It also argues of a decidedly interdisciplinary perspective, breaking down barriers between the sociology of social movements and related fields, such as social and political history, the sociology of associations, and public policy analysis.

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