

CULTURE MOVES

IDEAS,

ACTIVISM,

AND

CHANGING

VALUES

THOMAS P. ROCHON

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Thomas R. Rochon

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For Lorraine, Deb, Lynn, and Tim

Super siblings, one and all

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PREFACE

We're not sure where we *want* to be. And we're not sure
where we're *going* to be. But we sure are a
long way from where we *were*!
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

THIS is a book whose moment of origin can be identified with precision. While rummaging around in an antique store a few years ago, I came across a copy of *Life* magazine from the week of my birth. Despite an initial feeling of umbrage that something my age could be labeled “antique,” it was striking how ancient the America portrayed in *Life* in July 1952 actually seemed. Among the feature articles was one titled “Reds Kidnap Enemy in West Berlin,” a reminder of the cold war fear and hatred that are now a fading memory. Another article previewed a movie about a justice of the peace who inadvertently “married” five couples one week before his appointment went into effect. Two years later the couples were informed that they were not legally married and each was presented with the opportunity to reaffirm or repudiate their wedding vows. Since divorce and cohabitation outside of marriage were both taboo subjects in Hollywood in the 1950s, this plot device was necessary to make possible an exploration of the circumstances under which couples might choose not to stay married after two years together.

The advertisements in *Life* in 1952 appear even more antiquated to the contemporary eye. Ads for cigarettes are prominent, with celebrity and athlete endorsements. We learn on the back cover that more doctors smoke Camels than any other brand. In consumer goods ranging from automobiles to appliances the message is that bigger is better, and the trait of efficiency is never mentioned as a selling point.

Still more remarkable than what was portrayed in this magazine is what was *not* portrayed: of the over three hundred people depicted in this issue of *Life*, only one was African American (Gordon Parks, a staff photographer), and none was Asian American or Hispanic. The all-white America portrayed in the pages of *Life* extended to photographs of military units in ads meant to encourage enlistments, group shots of people on golf courses, and the DuPont Company's sesquicentennial party for employees.¹

¹ For a more systematic analysis of trends in the portrayal of African Americans in magazine advertisements, see Humphrey and Schuman 1984.

The ultimate impression from reading these pages is of a United States that is white, middle class, and suburban, with an unlimited potential for increasing wealth, comfortable in the knowledge that it is without peer among nations. It is a Norman Rockwell image of America, but an image that is represented as reality rather than as a kitsch or nostalgic look at a largely fictional past.

Our image of America today is not the same as it was in 1952. We now have a different image of what we are as a country and a different image of what we ought to be. Some of the changes in our preoccupations are a direct response to historical events such as the collapse of communism, or to increased knowledge of the adverse health consequences of smoking. But much of the change is strictly a conceptual reevaluation of an unchanging reality. We are far more aware today of being a multiracial and multicultural society, and of the limits of the melting pot image that long dominated our perception of the American immigrant experience. Americans have learned to discuss openly the strains within marriages that lead to divorce. Energy efficiency has come to play a role in the purchase of most consumer durables, even though energy costs now take a far smaller portion of the household budget than they did in 1952.

It does not go too far to say that the United States is no longer the same country it was in 1952. The differences lie in our perception of reality as much as they do in the reality itself. Despite enormous objective gains during the past two generations in social equality and civil rights for a variety of minority groups, we are subjectively more conscious of the flaws in the American dream of equal freedom and opportunities. Despite historically unparalleled opportunities for women to participate in economic and political life, our awareness of limits to gender-blind equality is heightened rather than blunted. Despite equally impressive gains in the range of technologies available to us, we are subjectively more conscious of the ethical and environmental dilemmas of a high-technology society. American culture has developed a language for talking about these and other problems, and the policy implications of these concerns are among the most important issues being debated today.

When we think about current political issues such as abortion, affirmative action, endangered species, and toxic wastes, we are likely to be struck by the political stalemate that often prolongs such issues without any clear resolution. Yet that sense of stasis conceals the fact that these are all issues of recent vintage. Nearly all educated people today have an awareness of the relationship between human activity and the natural environment that employs ideas familiar only to biologists forty years ago. Although the goal of completely erasing distinctive gender roles is contentious, no one today assumes without reflection that a woman's place is with her family, as was usually the case a generation ago. Issues of equity between majority and

minority groups now play a major role in public and private decision making. In 1952, however, America was still one year away from the path-breaking Baton Rouge bus boycott, two years from the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, and twelve years from the 1964 Civil Rights Act. It appeared then that segregation and exclusion would be the enduring form of American race relations. Contemporary debates about affirmative action may challenge some civil rights era legislation, but they also underscore the extent to which the language of integration and equal opportunity has become the only culturally acceptable language for discussing race relations.

These are all instances of cultural change, changes that are individually and collectively so fundamental as to constitute a remaking of American society in the span of a single generation. The specific changes that have occurred, particularly the reformation of race relations and the rise of feminism and environmentalism, are familiar to all of us. This book is a probe into the origins of these cultural changes, and the process by which new cultural values are diffused into the society. We will examine instances of cultural change drawn from the last 150 years of American history in order to develop a better understanding of the factors that aid the development of new value perspectives, that encourage broad social and political movements to champion these new ideas, and that ultimately lead to a reorientation of culture.

The investigation is divided into three sections. In the first section we will develop a picture of the process of cultural change. Chapter 1 will examine the nature of cultural change and its significance in producing fundamental shifts in public policy and everyday behavior. Chapter 2 will define the role of critical communities and movements in creating and spreading new cultural perspectives. In chapter 3 we will distinguish three variations on the process of cultural change and examine in some detail one instance of each type. The first three chapters provide an overview of how cultural values come to be transformed and of the role of critical communities and movements as agents of that transformation.

The second section of the book develops a microlevel theory to account for the question of why individuals devote themselves to movements for social and political change. In order to mobilize activists for collective purposes, movements must rely on a strong sense of group solidarity. And in order to turn mobilized activists into effective agents of change, movements must imbue them with a high degree of political skill and engagement. There can be no cultural change without group solidarity and political engagement; these are the subjects of chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

The third section of the book moves to the macrolevel of analysis. Chapter 6 examines structural changes in American society over the past fifty years that have made it increasingly easy for critical communities to develop and

for movements to organize. Chapter 7 shows that both the enduring principles of the American political system and recent changes within that system make possible the ready translation of new public concerns into altered governmental policies.

Our current state of knowledge about social and political movements is on a par with our understanding of earthquakes. Both are sudden events, variable in size but potentially massive, and predictable only in the loose sense that we can identify the conditions that make an upheaval highly probable at some unspecified future date. One goal of this book is to bring the study of movements up to speed with the study of earthquakes by improving our understanding of outcomes. The effects of an earthquake are immediately obvious, but movement impacts remain in many cases obscure and controversial. Particularly when movements are evaluated by their ability to change political laws and institutions, they often appear to have created a great deal of noise with a very small result. By shifting our gaze from changes in the law to changes in cultures, the impact of movement activity snaps into focus. Rather than the weak track record of most movement organizations in rewriting laws, we see instead their uniquely powerful ability to mobilize activists and create controversy about ideas that were once consensus values in the culture. The final chapter of this book explores the link between movements and cultural change, drawing conclusions about movements and about the process of cultural change itself. The final chapter also connects this theory of cultural change to theories of agenda setting in the policy process.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing this book has caused me to delve into an unusually eclectic range of scholarly work. I have relied heavily on the research and data collections of others, and in so doing I have been struck by the range and quality of contemporary scholarship on American politics and society. To those scholars who have left their datasets in public archives, particularly the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), I owe a special debt of gratitude: Donald Matthews and James Prothro for their "Negro Political Participation Study"; M. Kent Jennings and Richard Niemi for their three-wave Youth-Parent Socialization Study; William Gamson for his survey of challenging groups; and Warren Miller and the team of scholars behind the series of American National Election Studies. To these social scientists and to all those whose names appear in small print in the footnotes I offer my deepest respect and appreciation.

I have also had in the past few years a large number of fascinating conversations with scholars from a variety of disciplines on the subject of movements, critical communities, and cultural change. For their insightful suggestions and commentaries on particular chapters or sections of the book, I

thank particularly Delwin Brown, Harry Eckstein, Susan Imbarrato, Barbette Knight, David Meyer, and Bruce Snyder. Russell Dalton, John Geer, Daniel Press, Robert Putnam, and Sidney Tarrow read entire drafts with the blend of criticism and encouragement that you only get from a scholar-friend. An anonymous reviewer of the manuscript for Princeton University Press opened my eyes to a number of important issues and set a standard for constructive criticism. Kim Lane Scheppele brought fresh insights and solutions to knotty organizational problems in the manuscript at a late stage, helped me overcome the inertia needed to drag the project across the finish line, and gave me an improved title to boot. None of this advice would have helped me had I not also enjoyed the skilled research assistance of Jason Abbott, Mimi Constantinou, Chris Hoene, Dietlind Stolle, and Stephen Wood, all of whom sometimes knew what I was looking for better than I did.

Academics are fortunate in the guildlike system that provides intellectual homes on the road, wherever you might happen to be. Many of the ideas here were first put to paper during a year spent on a teaching Fulbright at the Kobe University School of Law, while I was musing on the institutional features that encourage movements and cultural change in the United States but discourage them in Japan. I am particularly grateful to Professor Ichiro Miyake for inviting me to Kobe in 1992–1993 and for allowing me to present my preliminary ideas and findings at a conference there. A first draft of this book was completed during a five-month term as Visiting Fellow in the Board of Environmental Studies at the University of California Santa Cruz. The significance of critical communities for the process of cultural change became apparent to me while admiring the work of the interdisciplinary Board of Environmental Studies. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude particularly to Daniel Press for arranging that visit, for his unflagging enthusiasm about the project, for introducing me to the scones at the College Eight Café, and for allowing me to be honorary *tonton* to his daughter Isobel. I am also grateful to the John Randolph and Dora Haynes Foundation, whose funding of a related project on successive generations of environmentalist thought enabled me to pull together many of the environmental examples in this book.

In between the genesis in Kobe and the final push in Santa Cruz was a long middle period of writing and revising during which I relied constantly on the critiques and encouragement of John Geer. Geer was a pit bull during two long weekends in his home, at which we took turns shredding each other's work-in-progress. John's book came out before mine, a fact I can only attribute to his having been a more thorough and critical reader than I was. I owe John a major debt of gratitude, dwarfed only by my debt to Marie, Megan, and James Geer for their willingness to have two political scientists in the house at the same time.

I dedicate this book to my brothers and sisters, who grew up with me in

an America different from the one we know today. Our testament to the significance of cultural change is that we are all living lives that would have been highly unusual in our parents' generation. The ties of family affection between us have been the one constant on which we can rely.

DATA SOURCES

Data used in this book, when not derived from content analyses generated by the author, come from one of the following five sources:

American National Election Study series. Use is made here of the surveys from presidential election years between 1952 and 1992. These data are made available through the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research.

Gallup poll data. These data are available through a variety of publications by the Gallup Poll, including most prominently the annual volume titled *The Gallup Poll—Public Opinion* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources).

Gamson data on challenging groups. These data were collected by William Gamson. Information about this dataset, and the data themselves, are published in Appendixes B through E in Gamson (1990).

Negro Political Participation Study, 1961–1962. Donald Matthews and James Prothro are the principal investigators for this study. These data are made available through the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR #7255).

Youth-Parent Socialization Study. M. Kent Jennings and Richard Niemi are the principal investigators for this study. These data are made available through the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR #9553).

PART ONE

Theoretical Perspective

Chapter 1

ADAPTATION IN HUMAN COMMUNITIES

A state without the means of some change is without the
means of its conservation.

—Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the
Revolution in France*

One who is late to reform will be punished by history.

—Mikhail Gorbachev, at the fortieth and final anniversary
celebration of the German Democratic Republic,
October 1989

THERE ARE times in the life of any human community when change is the only course of action that will permit continuity. Abraham Lincoln said that a house divided against itself cannot stand. Karl Marx wrote of the class contradictions that would bring down capitalism. Betty Friedan referred to “the problem with no name” that made life unbearable for the American housewife. Authors of *The Limits to Growth* wrote of the “overshoot and crash” pattern that would result from continued resource depletion. Each of these perspectives is an assertion that the existing social and political order must at times be adapted, if it is not to be overthrown. We must change in order to survive. Edmund Burke (the conservative’s conservative) and Mikhail Gorbachev (the reforming Communist) agree that if you try to preserve everything, you end by saving nothing.

Consider the condition of race relations in 1950. The United States of America, the world’s first mass democracy and the recently anointed leader of the free world, had a domestic social order that placed its African-descended citizens in a marginalized social, economic, and political status not readily distinguishable from the conditions of serfdom in medieval Europe. Nonwhite citizens averaged three years less education than whites.¹ Among those under thirty the gap was closer to four years, and even these figures do not take into account differences in expenditure and quality found between schools for white children and schools for black children. Average income

¹ Statistics on the effects of segregation and environmental exploitation presented in the next pages are from the *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975), except where other sources are noted in the text.

among nonwhites in the labor force was 50 percent that of whites. Inequality pervaded every sector of the economy: while 22 percent of white farmers were tenants rather than owners of their land, this was true of 64 percent of nonwhite farmers. Whites lived to the age of sixty-nine, on average; nonwhites did not quite live to the age of sixty-one. There were two nations in America: one was white and the other was not.

Already in 1950 a careful observer would have noted a number of strains in this system of race relations. African Americans were moving to cities in the north and west, escaping rural poverty with factory jobs and slowly increasing the number of black professionals trained as doctors, lawyers, and ministers. These trends contributed to a growing demand for racial equality.

The price of racial discrimination to American society was also growing. The postwar wave of industrialization and the shift toward a service economy required a skilled labor force that could little afford to exclude a large segment of the population. Regional politicians could still get elected by playing the race card, but any leader with national aspirations was aware of the power that would come from attracting black voters if it could be done without alienating other supporters. And, as the number of independent third world states began to mushroom, American diplomats realized that their influence was hobbled by the state of race relations back home.

The end of Jim Crow was morally desirable, it was ever more strongly demanded, it was economically functional, it was strategic good sense for political parties in competition for black voters, and it would assist the American democracy in its global competition against Soviet socialism. Yet, racial segregation and exclusion were woven throughout the social and political fabric of the nation. Efforts to enact effective civil rights bills went nowhere in the Congresses that gathered during the 1950s (Sundquist 1968: 221–286). To many observers at the time, change seemed both necessary and impossible.

Much the same story could be told with respect to environmental protection in the year 1965. Over the previous twenty years, the population of the United States had increased by 46 percent and the per capita standard of living had grown by 85 percent. In unprecedented numbers and with unprecedented affluence, Americans were consuming resources as never before. But the environmental costs of intensified production can be severe. In 1910 farmers used 6 short tons of fertilizer per 1,000 cultivated acres. In 1965 the use of fertilizers was up to 29 short tons per 1,000 acres. Pesticide production grew sixfold, from 50,000 tons to 300,000 tons, between 1945 and 1960 (Bosso 1987: 63). Although some air pollutants such as soot and smoke appeared to be under control, the period 1940 to 1970 saw an increase of over 60 percent in the amount of volatile organic compounds (one of the principle components of ozone) and sulfur oxides released into the air. In that same period, nitrogen oxide levels in the atmosphere nearly tripled

(Bryner 1993: 47–61). These trends are disturbing enough, but to a biologist the ultimate indicator of environmental health is the maintenance of biological diversity. The twentieth century has seen a dramatically increasing tempo of extinctions, recently estimated at between forty and one hundred species per day (Owen and Chiras 1995: 340).

The warning signs of unsustainability in the exploitation of resources and the destruction of natural habitats were unmistakable to anyone who cared to look in 1965. The outlines of what needed to be done were becoming known, but it was far from clear whether the necessary steps in environmental protection and restoration could be taken. An ecologist surveying in 1965 the heedless and even joyful destruction of the environment by the impressive American economic growth machine would be forgiven for concluding that “You can’t get there from here.”

In short, there are times when human communities face the need to adapt, and to do so quickly. But adaptation does not occur automatically just because it is needed. The institutions of human society are constructed in the first instance for continuity. As Fernand Braudel put it, a cultural mentality is a “*prison de longue durée*” (cited in Tarrow 1992: 179). Families and schools pass on cultural values between generations. Social and economic institutions teach entering members appropriate roles and then enforce them. Bureaucracies generate standardized rules and then apply them. Politicians seek the stance of the median voter and cluster tightly around that position. Negotiations between legislative committees, regulatory agencies, and interest groups are structured in policy networks that typically remain undisturbed for long periods of time.

This is not only a tolerable state of affairs but a necessary one, for routinization is an essential element of any highly organized social system. And yet, the more extensive the interdependencies among humans become, the more substantial the need to maintain adaptive capabilities. In order to prosper, in order even to survive, we must constantly remake our society by refashioning the roles and behaviors of the people who compose it.

When we think of the sources of adaptation in human communities, we are likely to think in the first instance of government. In doing so, we view politics as the locus of what Karl Deutsch (1963) has called the steering capacity of society. Political change is the result of a constant process of learning, and policies evolve in response to a continual monitoring of social conditions and demands.

Political processes can indeed identify the need for change, translate these needs into new policies, and enforce compliance with those policies. Certainly in the examples of race and the environment, looming crises led to bursts of legislation. Modern civil rights legislation made its tentative beginnings in 1957 and culminated with the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965. Environmental laws in the late 1950s and the early 1960s mandated study of

the problems of air and water pollution, leading to the flood of legislation that began with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969–1970. In both the civil rights and environmental areas, new governmental agencies were created. These extensions of the bureaucracy were given broad mandates involving significant additions to governmental power.

For example, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is among the youngest of governmental regulatory agencies, having commenced operations in 1972. Today it employs the greatest number of lawyers of any regulatory agency, whose job is to write and enforce the largest single body of federal regulation. Twenty years after the inception of the EPA the United States spent 2.4 percent of its GDP, \$140 billion, on environmental protection and cleanup (Hahn 1994). The translation of environmental concern into a massive body of regulation shows that change in cultural values can effectively reshape political institutions and the allocation of resources.

These departures in political organization and activity are instances of what Baumgartner and Jones (1993) have identified as punctuated equilibrium in policy making: periodic bursts of rapid change when all previous bets are off, when authority is taken from some and given to others, when policy networks are broken up and reconstituted with new participants, when policy making comes to be based on a new set of premises and purposes.

The proximate conditions of political innovation have come to be increasingly understood. Based on a wide variety of case studies, Kingdon (1984), Polsby (1984), and Baumgartner and Jones (1993) identify circumstances in which innovations reach the political agenda. These involve new currents of thought within communities of policy experts, political leaders looking for new issues, and shifting patterns of media attention. Because of the stickiness of institutional routines, policy adaptation often proceeds only by changing the participants in the process. This can occur by importing existing solutions to fit new problems (Kingdon 1984), by bringing in new experts with different ideas (Polsby 1984), by expanding the types of interest groups involved in policy consultation (Walker 1991), or by shifting the political jurisdictions within which a policy issue is handled (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Incremental change is the norm, but the political process has means of circumventing the normal barriers to rapid adaptation.

These understandings of the potential for innovation within political institutions leave untouched the question of where the impulse for rapid change comes from. All of the scholars just cited refer to the incentives for innovation built into a political system that features regularly scheduled electoral contests between rival leaders. But this answer begs the question of when and why voters will provide politicians with the incentive to make new issues central to their campaigns. Stokes (1992) has pointed out that electoral campaigns are conducted in terms of valence (consensus) issues whenever possible. And Geer (1996) has observed that leaders seeking an issue to

differentiate themselves from rivals will publicly back major policy innovation only if they are persuaded that the public is prepared to support the new initiative. In other words, a burst of political innovation to address some basic issue will occur only if there are clear signals from the electorate demanding those changes.

The puzzle of political innovation, then, is to understand the root impulse that sets into motion the adaptive potential of the political system. In their insightful account of innovation in policy agendas, Baumgartner and Jones (1993: 237) recognize that

there are powerful forces of change that sweep through the entire system. These are not controlled or created by any single group or individual, but are the result of multiple interactions among groups seeking to propose new understandings of issues.

. . . Leaders can influence the ways in which the broad tides of politics are channeled, but they cannot reverse the tides themselves.

The same imagery of irresistible forces is often used in connection with social change as well as political change. Four black college students sat in at a segregated lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, in February 1960. Their protest spread quickly and permutated to such forms as "sleep-ins" in the lobbies of segregated motels, "wade-ins" at restricted beaches, and "kneel-ins" at segregated churches. By the time the protest wave subsided in the spring of 1961, more than 3,500 young people had been arrested during sit-ins held in seventy-five towns and cities across the South and in the border states (Fishman and Solomon 1970: 144). Segregationist practices that in January 1960 appeared to be firmly entrenched were being abandoned six months later. Desegregation occurred first in a trickle of public facilities in twenty-seven Southern cities and counties, and then in a flood of chain store lunch counters across the South (Oppenheimer 1989: 179).

Both the audacity of the sit-ins and—paradoxically—the sense they created of being an irresistible force for change are best conveyed by the then president of North Carolina A&T, whose students began the sit-in movement. Looking back on the events, Dr. Warmoth Gibbs felt a sense of relief at his passive response to the sit-in demonstrations, of which he did not personally approve. "I could just as easily have done something foolish. I could have tried to stop it. I could also have jumped in front of an oncoming freight train with about the same result" (cited in James 1993: 126).

This book is a study of irreversible tides and oncoming freight trains. What causes tidal forces to sweep periodically through the political system, disrupting long-standing policy networks and widely accepted understandings of policy issues? What are the circumstances that enable public demands for reform to gain the momentum of a runaway freight train?

The one-word explanation for these events is "crisis." Public recognition

of a crisis generates demand for a political response; it represents an opportunity for bureaucratic agencies and policy advocates to put forward their cherished proposals. Crisis divides old allies and makes possible new coalitions. For political leaders, crisis loosens the normal constraints on action by creating expectations of the kind of leadership that is normally hemmed in by institutional routines.

Crisis is the one word answer, but crisis is not an adequate answer. Crises are not simply exogenous events, and sometimes they are not events at all. Crises are rooted in interpretations of events, imputations of causality that carry with them claims that the events will be recurrent. The breakup of an oil tanker off some pristine coastline is a disaster. The disaster becomes a crisis only when connected to the idea that oil dependence, ship construction, the choice of sea lanes, and the training of crews will lead to repeated spills. Crises are a matter of interpretation. As Nelson Polsby (1984: 168) has succinctly stated, crises are a social product.

In pointing to crises as the source of “irreversible tides of political change,” we are simply pushing our questions one step back. If we are to understand the primitive energy that moves the political process into the mode of innovation, we must know how crises come about. Specifically, we must understand where the ideas and interpretations that turn disasters into crises come from. We must understand how some interpretations rather than others come to be the center of widespread public attention and debate. We must know something about the circumstances under which citizens mobilize behind demands that the crisis be resolved. Finally, we must understand how political institutions are prodded to respond to new demands, translating the public perception of crisis into a set of proposals for policy reform.

This book will attempt to answer these questions. We will have occasion to consider such diverse issues as how claims of crisis get formulated and publicized, why people become involved in movements for change, and what makes powerful social and political institutions receptive to new ideas and demands. Fortunately, many of these issues converge on a single overarching question: How do cultural values change? Under what circumstances do people come to adopt a new set of beliefs and expectations with regard to some topic? If we can trace the origins and spread of new ideas that create or reshape public concerns, then we will have understood the source of the tidal waves that remade American social and political life on so many fronts in the second half of the twentieth century.

The argument of this book, in a nutshell, is that political and social transformation both occur in response to rapid cultural change. The creation of new values begins with the generation of new ideas or perspectives among small groups of critical thinkers: people whose experiences, reading, and interaction with each other help them to develop a set of cultural values that is out of step with the larger society. The dissemination of those values

occurs through social and political movements in which the critical thinkers may participate, but whose success is determined to a far greater degree by the course of collective action in support of the new values. Together, critical communities and movements are sometimes able to initiate changes in cultural values that represent a truly original break from past ways of thinking about a subject.

Civil rights offers a clear illustration of the process. The civil rights movement is today remembered primarily as a dramatic series of protests against segregation linked to a leader whose birth is now celebrated as a national holiday. But if we think of the outcome of the movement as having ended racial segregation, we are getting at best only half of the story. The process of cultural change involves a change of mentalities as well as a change of laws. Prior to the civil rights movement, the language of minority group rights was not part of the vocabulary of politics. The cultural impact of the civil rights movement was to foster widespread acceptance of a language of rights that has since been applied (with varying success) to other ethnic minorities, to women, to gays, to people with handicaps, to endangered species, and to animals in research laboratories. The spread of a group rights discourse, for all the political controversy connected to it, is testimony to the rapidity of changing values. These were not matters of public debate at the end of World War II. They are central and highly contested matters of public debate at the end of the twentieth century.

In short, America today is fundamentally different from America fifty years ago, and the root of that difference lies in changed cultural values. It is the goal of this book to offer some ideas on how and why this extraordinary burst of cultural change has come to pass. For that reason, the best place to begin is with an examination of the nature of cultural values themselves.

CULTURAL VALUES

Culture consists of the linked stock of ideas that define a set of commonsense beliefs about what is right, what is natural, what works. These commonsense beliefs are not universal, but are instead typically bounded by time as well as by space. Today's orthodoxy may be the heterodoxy of yesterday and tomorrow. Although cultural change is not usually perceptible from day to day, when we look over a longer time span it becomes apparent that even the most fundamental assumptions about morality and the standards by which quality of life should be evaluated are subject to change. Anthony Downs (1972: 45) offers a vivid illustration of the extent of cultural change with his observation that "One hundred years ago, white Americans were eliminating whole Indian tribes without a qualm. Today, many serious-minded citizens seek to make important issues out of the potential disappearance of the whooping crane, the timber wolf, and other exotic creatures."

How does a society move from indifference about the fate of human beings to concern about the timber wolf? How did child labor, poverty among the elderly, disenfranchisement of women, and racial segregation undergo a transformation from conditions viewed as natural or inevitable to being considered tragedies that society could and should remedy? How has the current of individualism in American culture come to be modified by a pervasive concern for group rights, as manifested in the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the gay rights movement, and others?

Much cultural change occurs during explosive upheavals, followed by a lengthier period in which new concepts are diffused through the society and assimilated into patterns of individual and institutional behavior. Karl-Werner Brand (1990) cites periods of "general cultural crisis," such as the 1830s, the end of the nineteenth century, and the 1960s. These are times of widespread rejection of mainstream culture and experimentation with alternative values and ways of living. Aristide Zolberg refers to "moments of madness," those occasions when people come together and demand a transformation of society. Such change occurs in a "torrent of words [involving] a sort of intensive learning experience whereby new ideas, formulated originally in coteries, sects, etc., emerge as widely shared beliefs among much larger publics" (Zolberg 1972: 206).

Brand and Zolberg each evoke an image of explosive rapidity in cultural change. In fact, cultural change seems to occur at two speeds, slow and fast, with relatively little in between. Rapid cultural change occurs during periods of social unrest and protest. Sidney Tarrow (1995: 94) has developed the concept of protest cycles as periods that "produce new or transformed symbols, frames of meaning and ideologies that justify and dignify collective action." These cycles of protest lead to the development of new cultural symbols, give prominence to new issues, and mobilize new social groups. They are also the occasion for innovation of new forms of protest.

The phases of rapid and slow change are both illustrated in figure 1-1, using the cases of support for Prohibition and willingness to vote for a woman as president of the United States. The "normal" condition of slow cultural change is found in support for Prohibition, which has ebbed gently away since the mid 1930s ($b = -.44$). Similarly, readiness to vote for a qualified woman for president increased at a gradual rate for most of the period from the mid 1930s to 1970 ($b = .76$).²

Gradual changes in beliefs may be modeled as the product of Bayesian updating and generational replacement. For Bayesians, the evolution of

² Ferree (1974) points out that responses to the question of whether one would be willing to vote for a qualified woman for president cannot be taken as a literal statement of voting intentions. It is instead a measure of willingness to admit prejudice (generally to a female interviewer). This makes the question valuable as a measure of cultural change precisely because it taps the strength of the cultural norm that any (native-born) citizen who is qualified can become president.