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The dynamics of nonviolence knowledge

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Abstract

Nonviolent action, despite its widespread use and successes, has received relatively little scholarly attention and financial support compared to military research and studies of conventional politics. Understanding the direction and content of knowledge about nonviolence is a project in the tradition of the sociology of knowledge that can help explain why the study of nonviolence has been marginalized, why misconceptions about it persist, why so much research in the area has been oriented to challenging regimes, and how nonviolence researchers are connected to nonviolence practice. This investigation leads to some suggestions for social movement scholars, in particular the value of studying agency and strategy, and the possibility of gaining insight by being involved in the movements being studied.

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Governments have enormous resources at their disposal and use some of them for research, development, training, and deployment of police and military forces, including advanced technologies. Military research and development is a multi-billion-dollar enterprise across the globe, with direct and indirect effects on numerous fields of study, such as computer science, oceanography, and psychology. Military priorities heavily shape knowledge at the very basic levels of funding and research priorities (Martin 2001: 13-42).

Despite the military's overwhelming advantage in resources, training, and technology, challenges to repressive regimes are sometimes successful, and they are most likely to be successful when relying on nonviolent action (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). Yet, despite its demonstrated successes, nonviolent action receives only a tiny amount of funding compared to military approaches. The same imbalance is replicated in scholarship, with more attention given to violence - wars, terrorism, genocide - than to nonviolent struggle. The relative lack of funding for and scholarly interest in nonviolent action are features of what can be called the dynamics of nonviolence knowledge.

Nonviolence research refers here to studies that conceptualize nonviolent action - rallies, strikes, boycotts, sit-ins, and other such methods - as a category distinct from both violent action and conventional political action - lobbying, campaigning, voting, etc. - and that analyze the theory and/or practice of nonviolent action. Nonviolence research includes studies of nonviolent struggles, strategic assessments of such struggles, the psychology of nonviolent action, and theories underlying nonviolent

methods, among many other topics. A considerable proportion of work in the area cites either Gandhi or Gene Sharp (1973, 2005) or their interpreters. As elsewhere, studies in the field can often be identified by their self-contextualization within the body of previous research, just as studies using political process theory, for example, would normally cite one or more of the key authors in the field.

Knowledge is taken here to refer to collectively shared and mutually endorsed understandings about the world, as embodied in texts and in the minds and behaviors of practitioners, teachers, researchers, and others involved. As knowledge, it has been validated by processes specific to its domain. Knowledge, in this view, is a social process or human accomplishment, and is wedded to specific practices for its creation, testing, and use (Pickering 1995). Knowledge relies on mutual trust among those involved in the area (Shapin 1995). To call it knowledge does not imply validity in any ultimate sense, but only a current agreement that is potentially open to supplementation, challenge, and revision. Knowledge is intermeshed with various systems of power, including economic, political, and social power, as argued by Michel Foucault and many others.

The sociology of knowledge is an attempt to understand how the nature, direction, and content of knowledge are influenced by the surrounding culture (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Gurvitch 1971; Mannheim 1936; Schutz 1962). Religious and political knowledge are commonly analyzed, but even scientific knowledge can be subjected to sociological analysis (Barnes 1974; Bloor 1976; Mulkay 1979). Note that pointing to social influences on knowledge does not necessarily imply that this knowledge is wrong any more than pointing to social influences on technology (MacKenzie and Wajcman 1999) implies that technology does not work.

The sociology of knowledge is largely a qualitative, interpretive endeavor; it does not usually proceed by postulating causal mechanisms and formally testing hypotheses. There are always multiple explanations for patterns in the development of ideas and seldom sufficient data to offer definitive conclusions. Instead, the usual approach is to propose connections between social structure and dynamics and the evolution of ideas, and then assess these connections according to whether they help make sense of patterns, emphases, and omissions in systems of knowledge.

In the tradition of the sociology of knowledge, my aim here is to offer preliminary comments on the content, form, and uses of knowledge about nonviolent action. To approach this topic, I address several questions concerning research into and the practice of nonviolent action. These form the basis for the discussion in the following sections. Why has nonviolent action been marginalized in research and public discourse? Why do misconceptions about nonviolence persist? Why, in nonviolence research, is there such an emphasis on challenges to repressive regimes? What are the relationships between theory and practice for nonviolence researchers? I conclude with some tentative suggestions for how social movement scholars can benefit by increased awareness and consideration of ideas from nonviolence research.

WHY HAS THE STUDY OF NONVIOLENT ACTION BEEN MARGINALIZED?

Given the impressive successes of people power (Ackerman and DuVall, 2000), it might be expected that academic nonviolence research would be a huge enterprise, but this is not the case. Those with long experience in nonviolence research are acutely aware of the marginal place of the field within the academy. It is true that there is far more nonviolence research in recent years than previously, and it might even be said that the field is in the process of being mainstreamed (Chenoweth and Cunningham 2013; Roberts and Garton Ash 2009). Even so, within social movement studies, nonviolent action has a relatively low profile compared to frameworks such as resource mobilization and political process theory.[1]

There are several possible explanations for why nonviolent action has little academic visibility. These include the orientation of scholars to the state (and hence, following Max Weber, to the state's monopoly on legitimate violence: see Porter 1994; Tilly 1992), the hegemony of the idea that violence can only be overcome by superior violence (Schock 2003; Summy 1994), the emphasis in social science on structure rather than agency (Jasper 2006), and the connection between the status of academics and the power and wealth of their patrons. Regarding the final explanation, military-related research is massively supported by governments, and research on established institutions and conventional political action - government, elections, policy, laws - is a staple in thousands of universities. In comparison, nonviolence-related research has few patrons with status or money.

These potential explanations can be related to ideas, within class theory, about the emergence of a class of intellectual workers, as a modification of the traditional Marxist picture of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Barbara and John Ehrenreich (1979) described a "professional-managerial class" composed of salaried mental workers not owning the means of production, with interests distinct from both the working and ruling classes (see also Derber, Schwartz, and Magrass 1990). Alvin Gouldner (1979) analyzed the "new class" based on intellectual skills, including the "culture of critical discourse," to which entry requires a certain sort of education and communicative capacity that can be used, in a collective fashion, to increase income and autonomy (see also Goulder 1985). George Konrád and Ivan Szelényi (1979: 32), in a similar analysis, stated "Intellectuals, then, are the monopolistic proprietors of knowledge which society accepts as having cross-contextual validity and which it uses to orient its members." They looked especially at the Eastern European intelligentsia's acquisition of power under state socialism.

The role of intellectuals in revolutions has long been noted (Nomad, 1932, 1959). A common theme is that some aspiring intellectuals, seeing their career aspirations blocked by traditional elites, form radical parties that seek power through revolution, in the model of Marxism-Leninism (Gouldner 1979, 1985). In the anarchist critique of Marxism, revolutionary politics relying on armed struggle is led by intellectuals to serve intellectuals, with workers providing both the troops and the rationale.

The location of nonviolence knowledge can be understood in the context of the new class and the role of intellectuals in revolutionary struggles. Nonviolent action, involving mass participation and not being dependent on a vanguard party, does not provide an easy platform for intellectuals to take a lead role either in the struggle or in a post-revolutionary society. Few of the leaders of nonviolent movements who also have made prominent contributions to thinking about nonviolence - Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. are the most well-known examples - have had aspirations to

become government leaders.[2] This reluctance may be contrasted with figures such as Lenin and Mao who made intellectual contributions and became rulers of post-revolutionary states.

The idea of the new class helps to explain the marginalization of nonviolence in the academy. The new class is partly dependent on the state for its power, hence the orientation of intellectuals to the state. Many academics gain status and resources by orienting their research to patron groups, primarily governments and corporations (Mukerji 1989; Schmidt 2000; Silva and Slaughter 1984); there is much less to gain through studying nonviolence, because patrons are few or impecunious.

It is worth noting briefly the tactics some mainstream scholars use that marginalize the study of nonviolence in the academy. The first is to ignore nonviolent action; in history, for example, there is an abundance of scholarship about wars but comparatively little about nonviolent movements (Bartkowski 2013).[3] The second is to denigrate nonviolence as a soft topic, as fluffy, or as partisan.[4] The third is to treat agency by masses - including the choices made by nonviolent campaigners - as insignificant compared to social structures and historical trends. For example, in conventional accounts of the collapse of the Soviet Union, nonviolent action is almost invisible, with scholars focusing on government leaders, international relations, economic developments, and class dynamics (Summy 1995). The paradigms for what is considered high-quality work in sociology and political science discriminate against conceptualizing nonviolent action as a form of struggle qualitatively distinct from both violence and from conventional social and political action. Another tactic for marginalizing nonviolence research is to incorporate peace studies programs - the most logical home for nonviolence researchers - in units, especially political science and international relations, whose orientations constrain the interdisciplinary dimensions of peace studies. Finally, there are few jobs for scholars whose specialty is nonviolence research. Some of those prominent in the community of nonviolence scholars obtained their jobs by studies in more mainstream areas.[5]

In summary, the marginalization of nonviolence research can be linked to the location of intellectuals in relation to powerful patrons, an example of how knowledge development is affected by its social context. Despite the obstacles, though, in recent years there has been an upsurge of scholarly interest in the area, a development that would be worth investigating in its own right.

WHY DO MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT NONVIOLENCE PERSIST?

Schock (2003; 2005: 6-12) has usefully itemized numerous common misconceptions about nonviolent action, among them that it equates to passivity, that any action not involving violence constitutes nonviolent action, that it is the same as regular political action, that it is the same as pacifism, that it assumes opponents will not use violence, and that its success depends on opponents being benign. Some of these misconceptions seem to be highly persistent. The question is why. Here I offer several possible explanations, some of them speculative, that might warrant further investigation. I look in particular at the misconceptions that nonviolent action is passive resistance and that ruthless violence will always overcome nonviolent opposition.

Ideas about violence and nonviolence might be connected, in the spirit of evolutionary psychology, with the structure of human groups in the tens of thousands of years prior to agriculture, industry, and the development of modern weapons. In hunter-gatherer groups in which the group leader was the dominant male, there might be an association between authority and superior strength, leading to an assumption that these are automatically linked. Similarly, in contemporary families, a typical configuration is that the father has both authority and greater physical strength than children, so children may assume that authority and physical superiority coincide.

Another explanation looks to the developments in the past several hundred years that have transformed societies: the rise of the nation-state, modern bureaucracies, secret police, standing armies, capitalism, and an elaborate division of labor (e.g., Jacoby 1973; Tilly 1992). Although all these social arrangements had precedents, the scale, pervasiveness, and power of these structures are historically new. Most examples of mass nonviolent action are similarly recent in historical terms, with the struggle in Hungary in the middle of the 1800s often cited as an influential precedent (Csapody and Weber 2007). Although there were prior instances of nonviolent action, it seems plausible to look for associations between changing social structure and the rise of nonviolent action as a distinct approach to struggle - and for misconceptions about it. The modern nation-state, with its bureaucracies, militaries, and police, enabled great concentration of power in the hands of rulers. If states are based on a monopoly over legitimate violence, it is useful for rulers to encourage the belief that violence is inevitably superior. Furthermore, subjects will see that the ruler is both the source of ultimate authority and the possessor of superior violence, and may assume that these two have a necessary connection. There is a congruence here between the relation of the ruler and subject and between the father and child: subjects and children are dependent on an authority figure for protection, and dare not challenge authority due to its superior capacity for violence. That rulers are sometimes called fathers of their countries makes this connection explicit.

The psychological processes of projection and introjection may be relevant. In projection, a person denies some aspect of their self and attributes it to others, for example when men deny their homosexual urges, see them in others, and condemn or even attack those others. Subjects in a state may project their sense of agency and power to the ruler, thereby cementing their dependency. In a parallel process of introjection, rulers may take on the agency and power of their subjects (Lichtenburg 1994). Electoral politics ritualize this process, as citizens look to their leaders as the solution to their problems: "politics" is commonly seen as necessarily involving governments, and addressing social problems is commonly pursued by attempting to convince or pressure politicians or administrators to take action. When citizen agency is projected onto political leaders, the idea of nonviolent action to challenge rulers or to directly address social conditions is anomalous.

It is advantageous for rulers to convince subjects that challenges are fruitless or that operating outside normal channels is illegitimate. For rulers to be effective in this process of persuasion, it is better for them not to acknowledge the power of nonviolent action, indeed not to even recognize it. Political leaders may be subject to self-deception (Trivers 2011), unconsciously refusing to understand nonviolent action so they can more convincingly persuade others that the only options are conventional political action, violence, or acquiescence, and that superior violence is

always victorious. This process may help to explain the difficulty that politicians and police have in understanding egalitarian social movements.

Finally, it is noteworthy that popular culture reinforces standard beliefs about violence. A great number of Hollywood films pit good guys against bad guys, with the good guys - often a lone hero - triumphing through superior violence. Portrayals of collective nonviolent action as a strategic choice are rare, so assumptions about the necessity and superiority of violence are reinforced. Although popular culture plays a role in perpetuating beliefs about violence, the commitment of Hollywood and other media to these beliefs remains to be explained. Popular culture may simply be expressing and reinforcing standard ideas about hierarchy, power, and social change.

In summary, there are several possible social and psychological explanations for the persistence of misconceptions about nonviolence. However, evaluating these explanations would require considerable further investigation.

WHY THE ORIENTATION TO CHALLENGNING REGIMES?

Within the nonviolence movement - both theory and practice - there has been an emphasis on overthrowing repressive governments, with far more attention to this challenge than to the processes of social change *after* a ruler is deposed. Nonviolent strategists can be very savvy in organizing to topple repressive rulers (*Bringing Down a Dictator* 2002) but there is relatively little specific theory and practice for ensuring that successor governments foster human rights and a continued process of democratization and citizen empowerment. Instead, the role of people power sometimes seems to be over after a repressive government is overthrown. One way to respond to this shortcoming is to return to the Gandhian emphasis on building an alternative society, using the constructive program (Chabot and Sharifi 2013). However, although many in the field are aware of and concerned about building alternatives and maintaining citizen empowerment after a change of government leaders, neither the theory nor the practice for doing this is well-developed compared to what is involved in challenging governments. Sharp's (2010) book on challenging dictators has been translated into many languages and used as a manual by activists across the world (Dobson 2012: 233-235), but there is no equivalently popular manual presenting a Gandhian approach to change. This is not a criticism of Sharp's influential work but rather an observation about how theory and practice have been oriented to repressive governments: many theorists and activists have taken up Sharp's approach - especially its regime-challenging aspects - but fewer put effort into turning the Gandhian approach into an effective movement.

This comment requires a major qualification: within India and a few other countries, Gandhi has been and remains a central influence. Indeed, in total there may be more Gandhian writing than writing in the Sharpian mold. For example, there are several Gandhian journals, mostly notably *Gandhi Marg,* but no current major scholarly journal presenting a pragmatically oriented approach to nonviolence. However, a considerable proportion of the articles in Gandhian journals are about Gandhi and Gandhiism - biography, philosophy, history, psychology, economics - with relatively little that is oriented to current campaigns. Gandhi is more often treated as a guru, whose life, works, and ideas are scrutinized in great detail, than as an inspiration for

new thought that can stimulate action that in turn can stimulate research and insight (Weber 2012).

The attention in nonviolence research to repressive regimes can be related to the influence of mainstream sociology and political science and their paradigms for social change, which emphasize structure more than agency. Furthermore, little of the attention to agency addresses strategic encounters (Jasper 2006, 2014). Nonviolent action as a strategic choice has been neglected when social movements are studied from the outside, looking primarily at structural explanations rather than complementing this with an understanding of their strategies from the perspective of activist agency (Zunes and Kurtz 1999).

The emphasis in much nonviolence research and practice on repressive governments also reflects an orientation to challenging "bad rulers" who repress human rights and fair participation in electoral politics. Less attention is given to challenges to systemic exploitation and oppression, such as the inequality generated by neoliberal economic policies, commonly called "structural violence." Many activists and scholars are aware of and active in addressing these issues, but infrequently through the lens of nonviolence ideas. For example, the most common scholarly critiques of neoliberalism, from Marxist or other left-wing perspectives, look to state intervention as the primary solution. Activists, most recently in the Occupy movement, have used methods of nonviolent action, but seldom as part of an articulated nonviolent strategy to transform neoliberalism. In essence, methods of nonviolent action are used - for example protests at meetings of government leaders or international bodies - but without much in the way of an overall nonviolent strategy. Such neglect of strategy has parallels with the way anti-regime struggles lack a theory of social transformation after leadership change, aside from adopting the standard neoliberal model.

Much of political science is oriented to the state, with attention to governments, elections, politicians, and government policy. This emphasis can be related to new-class theory: political science as a discipline receives status and patronage from the state, far more than alignment with disadvantaged groups. A considerable proportion of current nonviolence theory and practice, including several of the most important recent contributions in the field (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Nepstad 2011; Schock 2005), has the same sort of orientation: the emphasis is on challenging repressive governments. This orientation can be related to Gene Sharp's consent theory of power, which sees power as a relationship in which one party can withdraw consent through noncooperation (Sharp 1973: 7-62; Sharp 1980: 21-67, 309-378). Sharp's model applies more readily to societies that are organized hierarchically, with rulers at the top; he regularly refers to rulers and subjects. Sharp's approach thus meshes with the current emphasis, in theory and practice, on challenging repressive governments. However, it does not apply nearly so well to systems in which power is distributed differently, for example in patriarchy, capitalism, and bureaucracy (Martin 1989; McGuinness 1993). In such systems of stratified domination, many individuals are subordinate in some circumstances and superordinate in others. Hence, quite a few of the signature methods of nonviolent action, such as massive rallies, strikes, and sit-ins, require considerable adaptation to be relevant to challenges to patriarchy or bureaucracy. Another way of looking at this is to say that systems of distributed power have, through their structures, already constrained agency into certain channels, and conventional thinking about these

systems has developed in ways that do not draw on or inspire insights and action analogous to nonviolent action in its conventional arenas.

It is predictable that governments do not want to support development of the capacity of their own citizenry to take direct action, as this would increase the possibility of challenges to the system of governance itself. Resistance to citizen empowerment helps explain why governments have only rarely sponsored promotion of skills in nonviolent action. Most the efforts in nonviolent action training have come from within social movements, supplemented by supportive groups such as War Resisters' International (WRI 2014) and CANVAS (Centre for Applied NonViolent Action and Strategies) (e.g., Popovic, Milovojevic, and Djinovic 2007).

A related example of governments' resistance to nonviolent alternatives is their responses to a proposed alternative to military defense using nonviolent means, called by several names including civilian-based defense, nonviolent defense, social defense, and defense by civil resistance. Advocates of this alternative (e.g., Boserup and Mack 1974; Drago 2006; Ebert 1968; Martin 1993; Niezing 1987; Sharp 1990) can point to a few spontaneous uses of popular nonviolent action to defend against military invasion, notably in Germany in 1923 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. A few governments, including those of Sweden, Netherlands, Lithuania, and Slovenia, at some point displayed interest in social defense, but no society has made systematic preparations for defending itself nonviolently while getting rid of armed defense. The one known simulation of civilian-based defense was organized by peace activists (Olson and Christiansen 1966). Most of the writing and action concerning social defense occurred from the 1950s to the 1980s; after the end of the cold war, even this limited activity declined.

From the point of view of most western governments, challenging repressive regimes means applying methods of nonviolent action *somewhere else,* usually against a stigmatized government. Supporting foreign struggles is far more likely to be congenial than supporting a nonviolent alternative to military defense, something that threatens to undermine leaders' own power. This preference then feeds into priorities for research in the social sciences and for nonviolence research as well.

In summary, the orientation to government found in much conventional social science has influenced nonviolence research in a similar direction, so there is more attention to toppling repressive foreign governments than to processes of citizen empowerment that can persist following changes in government leaders, and that can be applied directly to western societies. Nevertheless, as many in the field recognize, citizen participation in nonviolent action empowers civil society more than armed struggle, thereby improving prospects for freedom subsequently (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Sharp 1973: 777-799). Nonviolent research and practice has been restricted in developing concepts and methods that can be applied more readily to systems of power that are more complex, such as capitalism, patriarchy, bureaucracy, and the domination of nature.

HOW DO NONVIOLENCE THEORY AND PRACTICE CONNECT?

To probe connections between theory and practice in the nonviolence field, it is useful to begin by listing possible roles that investigators can fill in relation to the objects of their study:

- *Observer/analyst*, who collects information and develops theory without directly interacting with the thing studied
- *Experimenter*, who sets up controlled situations, typically to manipulate variables and observe responses
- *Intervener*, who disturbs a naturally occurring situation to see what happens
- *Participant-observer*, who is part of the process being studied
- *Critic*, who analyzes others' ideas
- *Advocate*, who champions particular ideas
- *Educator*, who assists others to develop their understanding and skills
- *Activist*, who joins actions and learns from them

Each of these investigator roles is the subject of extensive commentary. The observer/analyst and experimenter roles are the primary ones used in the natural sciences. In the social sciences, there is much research using the observer/analyst approach, but also significant contributions from interveners and participant observers, the latter sometimes in what is called action research (e.g., McIntyre 2008; Touraine 1981; Whyte 1991).

The roles of critic, advocate, educator, and activist are often thought of as separate from research proper, reflecting a central dichotomy in thinking about research, namely that research and practice are separate. In the sciences, this is the distinction between research and development, but the distinction is problematical in every field. New knowledge is often stimulated by practice, indeed made possible by practice. For example, research into drugs may be stimulated by observations about naturally occurring substances. Furthermore, the roles of critic, advocate, and educator are part of the ecology of fields of study, enabling the circulation of and engagement with ideas essential to the development of knowledge systems. The processes of criticism, advocacy, and education can transform knowledge through simplification, clarification, shifting of emphasis, highlighting new questions, and sometimes development of new ideas and methods. Creation of new knowledge can be seen as part of an ensemble of processes by which knowledge - embodied in knowers and practices - is shaped and transformed.

In the nonviolence field, there are numerous examples fitting every one of these roles. The most famous nonviolence figure of all, Gandhi, played several roles (Brown 1987; Dalton 1993). As a leader of nonviolent campaigns in South Africa and India, he was an activist, advocate, and educator. In his writings, he saw himself as both an observer and experimentalist in social dynamics: the subtitle of his autobiography is *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Gandhi 1940). Although Gandhi never wrote a systematic exposition of his ideas in the style of academic research, he was highly influential in the development and dissemination of nonviolence knowledge through the many roles he played (Weber 2004).

Several of the prominent interpreters of Gandhi's theory and practice fit more neatly into one or two of the roles. Joan Bondurant's (1958) book *Conquest of Violence* is widely recognized as one of the best articulations of the philosophy and practice of Gandhian nonviolence. She was not known as an activist or a prominent advocate.

The role through which she had greatest influence was observer/analyst: she observed Gandhian practice, extracted and clarified the key concepts involved, and expressed these in her book. Gandhi, for all his many contributions, never wrote any single articulation of his ideas so intellectually cogent.

Gene Sharp is widely seen as the leading figure in the nonviolence research field. His contributions include several immensely influential books (e.g., Sharp, 1973, 1980, 2010). Sharp could be classified as a pioneering observer/analyst. However, it is important to recognize his other roles. During the Korean war, Sharp was a conscientious objector to military service and spent time in prison: he was an activist. For much of his career, he was a tireless advocate for nonviolence, giving talks around the world.

Many other prominent nonviolence researchers and educators have had personal experience with nonviolent action. For example, Robert Burrowes, author of the often-cited book *The Strategy of Nonviolence Defense: A Gandhian Perspective* (1996), was previously Australia's leading nonviolent activist. James Lawson, a strategist close to Martin Luther King, Jr. during the US civil rights movement, now plays an important role as an educator about nonviolent action. Janet Cherry, an activist against apartheid in South Africa, now works as an academic and is active on a range of issues. In contrast, Erica Chenoweth, co-author of the highly influential book *Why Civil Resistance Works* (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011), entered the field as a skeptic about nonviolence, without any special personal involvement. William Dobson, an experienced journalist, spent two years interviewing people in repressive regimes - politicians, bureaucrats, and citizen activists - and produced the insightful book *The Dictator's Learning Curve* (2012).[6] Personal involvement in nonviolent action is not a prerequisite to contributing to knowledge development in the field, any more than personal experience in terrorism is a prerequisite to researching it.

Nonviolent action as a practice preceded the development of explicit nonviolence theory. As previously mentioned, one of the earliest well documented major nonviolent struggles was in Hungary, 1850-1867. The Hungarian people refused to pay taxes or serve in the army, boycotted Austrian goods and celebrations, and used the Hungarian language while feigning lack of understanding of German to assert their independence within the Austrian empire (Csapody and Weber 2007). Half a century later, Finns used a similar suite of methods from 1898-1905 to oppose domination by the Russian empire (Huxley 1990).

These and other people's struggles were seen by some observers as inspirational and as models for campaigning. They were part of the mix of ideas and exemplars that led Gandhi to develop his strategy of *satyagraha* in South Africa.

In many domains, practice precedes and inspires theory. For example, in science, the steam engine was developed before the science of thermodynamics that explains its operation (Ziman 1976: 23-26). In warfare, wars had occurred for centuries before analysts such as Clausewitz (1832) made a mark by systematizing insights about it. In nonviolent action, it is certainly true, as theory and practice stimulate each other, but practice often precedes formal theory. The campaigns in India led by Gandhi stimulated theoretical contributions by numerous figures, including Richard Gregg, Joan Bondurant, and Arne Naess (Weber 2004). The U.S. civil rights movement helped stimulate the spread of nonviolent action training, taking ideas about

nonviolence to various movements, such as the movement against nuclear power (Epstein 1991).

Many research fields depend on a synergy between theory and practice, with theory being developed to explain observations and new observations made to test theory. So far, nonviolence theory has largely developed during or after actual uses of nonviolent action, and this pattern seems likely to continue. However, as more people and more sectors of the population become aware of nonviolence ideas, there is a greater potential for trying out the principles of nonviolent action in new domains. Civilian-based defense is one such possibility.

An ongoing tension for scholars is whether to orient research towards understanding or practical application. Maxwell (1984) noted that most research is oriented to acquiring knowledge about the world, in what he calls the "philosophy of knowledge," but argued that it should be reoriented to the task of addressing issues of concern to humans and the environment, in a "philosophy of wisdom." Maxwell's philosophy of wisdom would be a normatively oriented enterprise, at variance with much current research. A philosophy-of-knowledge orientation is dominant in studying social movements, where much of the research is oriented to understanding from the outside, so that there is little that activists use for their campaigning (Croteau, Hoynes, and Ryan 2005).

Nonviolence scholars are sometimes accused of advocacy, as if this is a special problem in the field. This comment about advocacy reflects an assumption that "real scholarship" is non-partisan. To this, it can be noted that numerous fields of study involve advocacy as an implicit assumption: medicine assumes advocacy of good health and law assumes advocacy of justice. Terrorism researchers typically approach their topic as trying to learn how to oppose terrorism: few seek insights on how to become a more effective non-state terrorist. Similar commitments are found throughout the social sciences. To this can be added the tendency for researchers to advocate for their favored views, often strenuously so, something well documented in the sciences (Mitroff, 1974).

Most nonviolence researchers can be categorized as involved in Maxwell's philosophy of wisdom, with a goal of providing insight into tools people can use against repression and oppression. This is a different motivation than pursuing knowledge for its own sake, and hence distinguishes nonviolence research from much mainstream scholarship.

CONCLUSION

Nonviolent action, as a distinctive approach to waging conflicts, is widely used in all sorts of contexts, yet until recently it received relatively little attention from scholars. To understand this and other features of the dynamics of knowledge about nonviolent action is a project in the sociology of knowledge, a study of how systems of knowledge can be related to social factors.

If nonviolence knowledge is thought of as a mass of ideas propelled into new areas while being channeled in various ways, it can be helpful to speak of propelling influences and channeling influences. The most important propelling influence is

actual nonviolent campaigns, providing experience, information, and inspiration for trying to understand how these campaigns work and how they can become more effective. Important channeling influences, that push nonviolence knowledge in particular directions and away from others, include the widespread assumption that unrestrained violence will always triumph over nonviolent action, the orientation of scholars and the media to the state, and the emphasis in social science on structural explanations and the associated neglect of agency and strategy. These influences have led to the marginalization of nonviolence research in the academy; an emphasis on challenging repressive governments instead of struggles after a change in government leaders; and, more generally, relatively little application of nonviolence theory to complex power systems including patriarchy, capitalism, and bureaucracy.

There are several ways that social movement scholars can gain inspiration from the issues addressed by nonviolence research. The first is to give greater consideration to the agency of activists, as advocated by Jasper (2006, 2014) and others. Agency is, in a sense, the centerpiece of nonviolence theory and practice: attention is focused on actions, choices, and strategy. Social movement scholars are in a good position to integrate the role of agency with that of social structures, and thus add insight to studies of nonviolent action.

A second and related implication is for social movement scholars to pay more attention to strategy, which might be thought of as agency organized for achieving a goal. For example, as well as studying the impact of repression on movements, the impact of movement strategic choices on outcomes can be studied. Many nonviolence theorists and campaigners emphasize the importance of thinking and acting strategically (Ackerman and Kruegler 1994; Sharp 2005; Helvey 2004; Popovic et al. 2007), taking into account resources, beliefs, plans, and coordination on both sides of a conflict. Nonviolence researchers have mainly looked at strategy by challengers. There is much to be learned about strategy adopted by governments (and others) in response to or in anticipation of nonviolent challenges, and social movement scholars are in a good position to do this.

Thirdly, some social movement scholars might find it useful to link their studies more directly to activist practice. A considerable proportion of nonviolence research has direct relevance to nonviolent action, providing insights that can be taken up by activists, a consequence of the orientation to agency and strategy. Some social movement scholars may wish to orient their investigations so they are more directly relevant to activists and possibly become more involved with the movements they are studying; if so, they can observe what has been most useful in this regard in nonviolence research, as well as the pitfalls of involvement.

This analysis shows the value of reflecting on a knowledge system - in this case knowledge about nonviolent struggle - in the light of various factors that can shape its direction and content, including funding, status, and movement dynamics. So far, nonviolence knowledge has developed in several characteristic ways due to its threat to dominant institutions - states, militaries, and large corporations, among others - and its strong connection with practice. By reflecting on these influences, there is a potential for attentive activists and scholars to modify their own analyses and interventions to become even more insightful and effective.

NOTES

1 The following Google Scholar citation counts on prominent works are indicative: Doug McAdam (1999), *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*: 4,717; Gene Sharp (1973), *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*: 1,203; Sidney G. Tarrow (1994), *Power in Movement*: 7,924. Counts taken 7 April 2015. I thank Justin Whelan for suggesting such a comparison.

2 Kenneth Kaunda is a possible exception and an example of how a well-intentioned national leader can go wrong. Aung San Suu Kyi, Lech Wa??sa, and Nelson Mandela sought or obtained political office and made contributions to nonviolent practice, but are not known as original thinkers on nonviolent action.

3 Two obvious exceptions are the Indian independence struggle and the U.S. civil rights movement.

4 Nonviolence researchers can recount various informal comments to this effect.

5 Examples include Antonino Drago, whose primary field is the history of science, and Stephen Zunes, whose work in politics and Middle Eastern studies was more important earlier in his career.

6 The accuracy of some of Dobson's statements, especially in relation to the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, has been questioned (ICNC 2012).

Acknowledgements

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