Are social movements truly social? The prosocial and antisocial outcomes of social movements

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Abstract
A growing body of research demonstrates that U.S. politics has become increasingly polarized over the past few decades. In these polarized times, what potential roles might social movements play in bridging divides between, or perhaps further dividing, people across a variety of political and social groups? In this article, we propose a research agenda for social movement studies focused on the prosocial and antisocial outcomes of social movements. Although scholars commonly frame their work on the consequences of social movements in terms of social movements' political, economic, cultural, and biographical outcomes, we suggest a focus on two categories of social movement outcomes (prosocial and antisocial outcomes) that cut across prior theoretical categories, and we show how an emerging body of scholarship has documented such outcomes at micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis. We also consider how emerging scholarship has addressed the sociological question about the conditions under which social movements produce prosocial versus antisocial outcomes. As we argue, attention to prosocial and antisocial outcomes of social movements holds both theoretical implications for social movement research and practical implications for social movements navigating the United States' political and social divides.

1 | INTRODUCTION

By numerous measures, U.S. politics has become increasingly polarized over the past few decades. For example, longitudinal research by Pew Research Center shows that Republicans and Democrats are more divided now over their judgments of what the country's top issues should be than at any other point over the past 20 years (Jones, 2019). Similarly, polarization in attitudes about the extent to which government should provide aid to the poor, the severity
of racial discrimination, and the degree to which immigrants strengthen (or pose a burden to) the country has reached “record levels” (Pew Research Center, 2017). Finally, antipathy between the political parties is at a recent high, with 44% of Democrats reporting “very unfavorable” attitudes toward Republicans and 45% of Republicans reporting “very unfavorable” attitudes toward Democrats (Pew Research Center, 2017). As a result of such polarization, most voters report that they find it “stressful” to even discuss politics with people unlike themselves, much less befriend them (Pew Research Center, 2018). In these polarized times, what potential roles might social movements play in bridging divides between, or perhaps further dividing, people across a variety of political and social groups?

In this article, we review literature pertaining to the prosocial and antisocial outcomes of social movements, identifying roles that social movements have played in “building” and “burning” bridges between people of various social groups and considering the conditions under which social movements are most likely to produce such outcomes. Previous literature in social movement studies most commonly conceptualizes social movement outcomes in terms of four categories: (a) political or policy outcomes (e.g., Amenta, Andrews, & Caren, 2019), (b) economic outcomes (e.g., Giugni & Grasso, 2019), (c) cultural outcomes (e.g., Van Dyke & Taylor, 2019), and (d) biographical or personal outcomes (e.g., Passy & Monsch, 2019). Less frequently, scholars innovate by examining the impacts of social movements on educational, religious, or medical institutions (e.g., Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008) or exploring how one movement can impact another movement (e.g., Whittier, 2004). To our knowledge, few studies explicitly characterize social movement outcomes as prosocial or antisocial, but we synthesize literature on topics ranging from social movements’ role in societal desegregation to social movements’ role in generating political polarization to show how social movement outcomes research can be reconceptualized in this manner.

We conceptualize prosocial outcomes as outcomes that “build bridges” between people, or bring people together, and antisocial outcomes as outcomes that “burn bridges” between or divide people. We argue that we can observe prosocial outcomes at (a) the micro level, when social movement participants gain new social ties to people of different backgrounds or pursue future prosocial civic engagement or voluntary behaviors; (b) at the meso level, when social movement organizations “build bridges” between previously divided small groups or organizations; and (c) at the macro level, when previously divided social groups are brought together through social movement-induced policy changes or cultural changes. Conversely, we argue that we can observe antisocial outcomes at (a) the micro level, when social movement participants cut off social ties to people of different backgrounds or exhibit more hateful attitudes and behaviors (including hate crimes); (b) at the meso level, when groups that previously accepted or tolerated each other are pulled apart or when social movement organizations exacerbate existing conflicts between groups; and (c) at the macro level, when social movements sow seeds of nationwide disunity through their cultural work or inspire segregationist policies through their political work.

In the next two sections of the article, we begin by documenting the types of prosocial and antisocial outcomes of social movements that can be identified in past literature. Then, in a third section, we draw on insights from past literature to discuss the conditions under which social movements produce prosocial and antisocial outcomes. Finally, in the conclusion section, we reiterate our proposed conceptualization of prosocial and antisocial outcomes of social movements before providing a few preliminary suggestions for future research. As we argue, in this time of increasing political and social polarization, research on prosocial and antisocial outcomes of social movements holds important scholarly and substantive implications.

2 | PROSOCIAL OUTCOMES OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

We begin by reviewing past literature on prosocial outcomes of social movements. As a way to organize our discussion of the variety of studies related to prosocial outcomes of social movements, as well as to underscore examples of specific empirical measures of prosocial outcomes, we show how scholars have identified prosocial outcomes at the micro level, meso level, and macro level.
2.1 Micro-level prosocial outcomes of social movements

First, at the micro level, scholars have shown that social movements can instill participants with prosocial attitudes (e.g., social trust, empathy, compassion, and solidarity) and inspire participants to engage in subsequent prosocial behaviors (e.g., volunteering or other prosocial activism) (see Table 1). Some emerging studies have shown that social movements facilitate immersive travel or establish “movement schools” (Isaac, Jacobs, Kucinskas, & McGrath, 2020) for the express purpose of instilling participants with prosocial attitudes. For example, Adler (2019) and Russo (2014) have both published studies of U.S. immigrant rights organizations that facilitate travel immersion programs, bringing U.S. citizens face-to-face with the harsh realities of life on the U.S.-Mexico border. Their studies show that people who participate in activities such as walking across hot deserts report higher levels of prosocial attitudes, specifically compassion and empathy toward immigrants. Additionally, Russo (2014) produces evidence that participants who report higher levels of empathy toward immigrants in turn engage in prosocial activities upon returning home; she writes of one participant who began volunteering at a local immigrant rights organization, where she was “involved in community education, abuse documentation, etc.” (p. 74), and another participant who left an administrative position in a hospital to become “a Spanish teacher for students with disabilities” (p. 74). However, Adler (2019) cautions that increased empathy does not always translate into action, as most of the participants surveyed did not engage in any volunteer work with immigrant populations upon returning home (p. 214).

Literature on the biographical consequences of social movements also provides evidence that participants in social movements sometimes engage in subsequent prosocial behaviors. Unlike with the prosocial actions reported by participants in travel immersion programs, the prosocial behaviors documented in this literature are unintended or secondary outcomes of social movement activism. For example, studies have shown that participants in left-wing 1960s movements often went on to pursue careers in the so-called helping professions; specifically, because participants internalized other-oriented values through the course of their activism, they often pursued subsequent jobs in teaching, counseling, and social work (see, for example, Coley, 2018, ch. 5; Cornfield, Coley, Isaac, & Dickerson, 2018; Fendrich & Tarleau, 1973; Klatch, 1999; McAdam, 1988; Pagis, 2018). Sometimes, movement veterans have even engaged in subsequent “occupational activism”—“socially transformative individual and collective action that is conducted and realized through an occupational role or occupational community” (Cornfield et al., 2018, p. 217)–as

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Types of prosocial and antisocial outcomes</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Micro level</strong></td>
<td><strong>Meso level</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Prosocial outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Social movement participants develop prosocial attitudes (e.g., social trust, empathy, compassion, and solidarity) and pursue prosocial behaviors (e.g., volunteering, subsequent prosocial activism).</td>
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<tr>
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when graduates of the 1960s Nashville civil rights movement went on to promote racial integration in their own workplaces (Cornfield et al., 2018).

Finally, scholars conducting research at the intersection of social movement studies and social network studies have shown that movements are capable of generating social capital (Diani, 1997; Tindall, Cormier, & Diani, 2012). Specifically, the more active one is in terms of social movement participation, the more diverse one’s network becomes and the richer one becomes in terms of social capital (Tindall et al., 2012). Social capital can be thought of as a prosocial outcome because it has been linked to both cooperation (Thoyre, 2011) and mutual trust (Putnam, 2000). People who acquire “bridging social capital,” or social ties to people from different backgrounds, may also be able to overcome prejudices that they have toward people of different racial groups, national origins, religious backgrounds, and so on (Aldrich, 2012). Combined with the studies on the impacts of immersive travel within social movements and the biographical consequences of social movements, these studies on social capital further demonstrate that social movements produce prosocial changes at the micro level.

2.2 | Meso-level prosocial outcomes of social movements

At the meso level, social movements mobilizing at a local level can bring together social groups who were previously divided along lines of age, race, nationality, social class, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, political identity, and other social differences (see also Gawerc, 2020). Specifically, scholars have shown that the work of social movements at the local level has brought together disparate social groups including working-class African-American activists and more privileged white activists (Beamish & Luebbers, 2009; Snarr, 2009); U.S. citizens and undocumented immigrants (Enriquez, 2014; Yukich, Fulton, & Wood, 2019); straight people and LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) people (Coley, 2014, 2020; Ghaziani, 2011); and Christians, Jews, Muslims, and other people of faith (Braunstein, Fulton, & Wood, 2014).

Social movements have different rationales for engaging in bridge building work. Most of the time, scholars have considered bridge building to be an unintended or secondary outcome of social movement activism. Specifically, in their efforts to mobilize diverse social groups to achieve other desired goals, movement leaders may find they must build bridges between mobilized groups who are wary of each other (see, for example, Beamish & Luebbers, 2009; Braunstein et al., 2014; Enriquez, 2014; Snarr, 2009; Yukich et al., 2019). Nevertheless, bridge building can also be conceptualized as a primary, intended goal of social movement activism. For example, in his work on LGBTQ activism at a Christian university, Coley (2014) shows that a student group called Bridge Builders engaged in rallies, sit-ins, and prayer walks in an effort to win official recognition and promote LGBTQ inclusion at their school. Coley (2014) provides evidence that the group’s efforts ultimately bridged structural holes between LGBTQ and Christian communities: the school’s University Ministries agreed to officially sponsor the LGBTQ group, bringing a Christian organization and an LGBTQ organization together in an unprecedented partnership, and Bridge Builders succeeded in drawing many non-LGBTQ students of faith to its meetings and events.

Considerable literature on meso-level prosocial outcomes of social movements focuses on identifying types of social movement actors who specialize in bridge building. Scholars have shown that bridge building can be facilitated by “bridge leaders,” activists devoted to bringing new voices into a movement (Isaac & Christiansen, 2002; Robnett, 1996). Although bridge leaders are themselves micro-level actors, they bridge meso-level divides, including divides between competing organizations or different communities. For example, writing about the Southern civil rights movement, Robnett (1996) discusses the role of women “bridge leaders” such as Ella Baker and Septima Clark who provided an “intermediate layer of leadership” between the formal leaders of civil rights organizations and grassroots groups, arguing that these bridge leaders mobilized participants in small cities and rural communities whom civil rights leaders based in large cities could or would not reach (p. 1661). Similarly, in their study of how the Southern civil rights movement shaped labor unions, Isaac and Christiansen (2002, p. 727) highlight “bridge activists” such as Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph who “linked rank-and-file black workers to the white union leadership, and ...
generally connected the civil rights movement's agenda to the organized labor movement." In addition to the work of bridge leaders, bridge building can also be facilitated by "bridging organizations," groups that exist for the purpose of resolving divides between social movement organizations representing disparate constituencies (e.g., Brecher & Costello, 1990; Mayer, 2009; Roth, 2003). For example, Mayer (2009) highlights the work of blue-green coalitions that bridge social class-related divides between labor and environmental organizations, while Roth (2003) writes about the Coalition of Labor Union Women, which sought to place women's issues on the agenda of traditionally male-dominated unions.

Scholars have also identified distinct processes that facilitate social movement bridge building. With the exception of studies highlighting the role of protest itself (e.g., Coley, 2014), scholars generally highlight behind-the-scenes organizational work that facilitates bridge building: for example, studies show that activists can construct "diverse and interactive spaces that allow individuals to engage across their different social locations" (Enriquez, 2014, p. 155); practice “inclusion monitoring,” in which activists identify “who is and who is not at the table” and invite those who seem to be excluded (Snarr, 2009, p. 82); and on rare occasions engage in "expulsion" by removing group members who are seeking to stir up divisions in the group or violate basic rules and norms of the group (Beamish & Luebbers, 2009, p. 667). Additionally, activists can facilitate bridge building through cultural processes, including developing a “group style” that is friendly to people of marginalized backgrounds (Yukich et al., 2019); accentuating shared identities (e.g., promoting working-class identity and downplaying racial/ethnic or gender differences) (Cornfield, 1989); practicing "ideology translation," in which activists "help those with different but relatively complementary beliefs understand each other for improved collaboration" (Snarr, 2009, p. 77); developing "shared stories of outrage" (Beamish & Luebbers, 2009, p. 668); and engaging in shared meaningful rituals, such as collective prayer (Braunstein et al., 2014). Altogether, these studies highlight the prosocial changes that social movements bring about at the meso level and the specific actors and processes implicated in such meso-level prosocial changes.

2.3 | Macro-level prosocial outcomes of social movements

Finally, beyond the micro and meso levels, social movements can bridge divides that exist in the wider society, far beyond the confines of the local communities in which they often organize, by inducing policy changes that incorporate marginalized groups into the wider society or cultural changes that lead to increasing tolerance and acceptance of marginalized groups. The role of social movements in bridging societal divides can perhaps be most clearly seen in desegregationist civil rights campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s. Biggs and Andrews (2015) provide convincing evidence that, even after accounting for factors that increase the likelihood of protests occurring in the first place (e.g., “local movement infrastructure, supportive political environments, and favorable economic conditions”), the occurrence of sit-ins significantly increased the odds of desegregation in cities across the U.S. South (p. 416). The success of the nonviolent civil rights movement in desegregating the South has in turn been linked to outcomes such as the integration of African-Americans into Southern state legislatures (Andrews, 1997).

Similarly, the LGBTQ movement has been unusually successful in bridging societal divides related to sexuality and gender identity, at least when measured by changes in straight people's opinion toward the LGBTQ community. Garretson (2018) documents how ACT UP pressured newspapers to provide more coverage on the AIDS crisis and lobbied the Democratic Party to adopt a pro-gay rights platform. Coupled with lesbian and gay people's increasing willingness to come out to family members, friends, and colleagues, such activism contributed to shifts in the general public's feelings toward lesbian and gay people. As public attitudes began to change, so did public policy, resulting in changes in marriage, adoption, and employment nondiscrimination policies and the increasing integration of LGBTQ people within mainstream social institutions (Garretson, 2018).

In a final relevant study, Rochon (1998) highlights the work of “critical communities” in bringing about macro-level cultural changes that we have classified as prosocial. He defines critical communities as mutual interaction groups that “have developed a sensitivity to some problem, an analysis of the sources of the problem, and a
prescription for what should be done about the problem" (p. 22); social movements, he argues, "coalesce around the perspectives developed in the critical community [and] reformulate those perspectives into terms that will be effective in mobilizing activists and winning social and political allies" (p. 31). He notes that critical communities worked to develop the idea promoted by civil rights activists that segregation was immoral or the idea promoted by women's rights activists that women are equal to men, sentiments soon adopted by a majority of the general public. Rochon's study thus further demonstrates the idea that social movements can produce prosocial changes at the macro level, leading to greater societal incorporation of marginalized groups.

3 | ANTSOCIAL OUTCOMES OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

In addition to exploring prosocial outcomes of social movements, scholars have identified a range of antisocial outcomes of social movements. Again, to organize our discussion of antisocial outcomes and to highlight specific empirical examples of antisocial outcomes, we show how social movements induce antisocial outcomes at the micro, meso, and macro levels.

3.1 | Micro-level antisocial outcomes of social movements

At the micro level, movements can foster antisocial attitudes in participants (e.g., social distrust, discord, indifference, disdain, hatred, and disunity) and inspire participants to engage in subsequent antisocial behaviors (e.g., self-segregation or withdrawal, violence, hate crimes, and terrorism). White supremacist groups, fundamentalist religious movements, and other far right-wing movements are arguably textbook examples of movements that generate antisocial outcomes. With regard to antisocial attitudes, Simi, Blee, DeMichele, and Windisch (2017) show how white supremacists become, quite literally, "addicted to hate" (p. 1167). Specifically, participants in white supremacist groups begin to exhibit certain neuropsychological changes (e.g., involuntary positive responses to hate music or negative responses to certain people of color) that they find difficult to shake even once they leave hate groups.

Emerging research on the Christian nationalist movement in the United States has documented a web of right-wing Christian organizations promoting the ideas that "the United States [is] a Christian nation" and "the federal government should advocate Christian values" (Whitehead & Perry, 2020, p. 8). Whitehead and Perry (2020) show that millions of U.S. voters now agree with these notions and, in turn, express antisocial attitudes such as opposition to same-sex marriage, gender nonconformity, interracial marriage, and immigration by Muslims and other non-Christian groups into the United States. Given the prevalence of antisocial attitudes among Christian nationalists, Perry and Whitehead (2020) conclude that the Christian nationalist movement is a proto-fascist movement.

With regard to antisocial behaviors, scholars have shown that hate groups can lead participants to cut off ties from other people or social institutions. For example, Futrell and Simi (2004) demonstrate that many white power movement members develop such hate for people of different political, religious, and social backgrounds that they withdraw from relationships with nonmembers (e.g., by cutting off ties with family members who disagree with their racism) and entire social institutions (e.g., by homeschooling their children to protect them from what they perceive as forced multicultural, liberal education). Bridge burning tactics are also frequently used by terrorist groups and movements (Crenshaw, 1981; Hegghammer, 2013), millenarian religious groups and movements (Barkun, 1974; Festinger, Riecken, & Schachter, 1956), and jihadist groups and movements (Hafez & Mullins, 2015). Crenshaw (1981) and Hegghammer (2013) argue that such groups tend to seek a homophilous perspective and experience, create self-reinforcing group commitments that accelerate recruitment, devise costly induction activities, and require training that occurs in immersive and isolated settings. To facilitate the achievement of these goals, such groups often use psychological mechanisms such as peer pressure and groupthink to foster feelings of guilt and discourage
attention to outside influences, thereby inhibiting adherents' or converts' desire and capacity to return to mainstream society (Crenshaw, 1981, pp. 964–5).

Hateful attitudes can also lead to violence. Ellis and van Kessel's (2009) research on Nigerian "campus cults" shows how formerly progressive fraternities fighting for students' and citizens' rights were infiltrated by military and governmental forces who turned these groups into violent, paramilitary youth gangs. Because "campus cults" were closed rather than open, served private interests rather than the common good, and utilized violence to achieve their goals, Ellis and Kessel (2009, p. 222) describe them as representing an "antisocial... perverse, and destructive aspect of a student movement that is otherwise social in its orientation."

Although scholars have typically focused on right-wing movements that lead to antisocial outcomes, it is important to note that left-wing movements can also instill antisocial attitudes or behaviors. For example, Klatch (1999) and Gitlin (1987) write of the antiwar group Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the 1960s. SDS began as a relatively inclusive, nonviolent group. However, as the U.S. government escalated its bloody war in Vietnam, the SDS split into factions such as the Weatherman (or Weather Underground) and Progressive Labor. The Weatherman sought to "bring the war home"; early on, this led the group to plot mass murder, building bombs that they intended to place inside a library at Columbia University and at a dance for noncommissioned army officers and their spouses in New Jersey. However, several members of Weatherman accidentally killed themselves building a bomb, so they did back off from this plan and ultimately opted for a bombing spree of non-occupied buildings throughout the United States (Klatch, 1999, ch. 7; Gitlin, ch. 17). The other SDS faction, Progressive Labor, focused on promoting working-class consciousness and instigating rebellion among working-class youth in the United States. Due to their single-issue obsession with working-class unity, however, leaders became highly intolerant of and discriminatory toward any members who urged the organization to address women's and LGBTQ issues. For example, Klatch (1999, ch. 7) interviews one gay Progressive Labor member who was asked to join the U.S. army, ostensibly so he could attempt to organize working-class men who were fighting overseas in Vietnam; however, that member soon learned that Progressive Labor leaders had in fact sent him to Vietnam to die, simply because he had dared to come out as a gay man. These examples further underscore the idea that social movements sometimes foster antisocial attitudes and behaviors among their participants.

3.2 Meso-level antisocial outcomes of social movements

At the meso level, movements can instigate or exacerbate divisions among social groups along the lines of age, race, nationality, social class, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, political identity, and other social categories. In work on the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), McVeigh and colleagues highlight how local Klan chapters disrupted the cohesion of many communities throughout the United States. Specifically, as the 1960s-era Klan worked to organize white Protestant men to promote racist and xenophobic policies, the Klan itself quickly became a "takeoff issue"—a subject of heated debate—in the local communities in which it organized (McVeigh, Cunningham, & Farrell, 2014, p. 1148). People who sympathized with the Klan's racist agenda began to associate only with others who similarly supported the Klan, while people who were skeptical of the Klan began to associate only with others who opposed the Klan (McVeigh et al., 2014, p. 1148). McVeigh and Cunningham (2012) conclude that "Klan activism of the 1960s disrupted community cohesion and undermined generalized trust," which in turn "shatter[ed] any semblance of a communitarian spirit that would otherwise inhibit crime, violence, and disorder" in those local communities (p. 849).

In the case of the Hindutva (Hindu nationalist) movement in India, Shani (2005) shows how Hindutva groups severed an alliance between Dalits (people who have historically been excluded from the traditional caste system) and Muslims. Shani finds that during a riot in Ahmedabad in the 1980s, which started as an inter-caste riot in response to the Gujarat government's decision to increase the representation of marginalized groups in educational and other governmental organizations, Muslims and lower caste Hindus fought together against the upper castes. Their marginal class positions played an integral role in this harmony. However, before and during a second riot in
1985, Hindutva organizations took active initiatives to break the allegiance between Dalits and Muslims (Shani, 2005). Dalits were offered help in the form of financial relief, weapons, and protection against police (Shani, 2005). By the 2002 Godhra riot, Dalits were actively engaged in killing Muslims (Shah, 2002).

In work on religious movements in Latin America, Bot (1999) demonstrates how the rise of evangelical Protestant movements (and in particular Pentecostal movements) in Latin America in recent decades has also resulted in "the disintegration of the fabric of community" (p. 172). Specifically, as evangelical Protestants have sought to convert indigenous people and Catholic people to their more fundamentalist religious faith, they have turned communities throughout Latin America into sectarian "ersatz" communities in which ... bitter inter-community strife and intolerance for other beliefs and practices are the norm" (p. 171). Altogether, these examples show that social movements sometimes generate divides among groups of people who previously accepted or tolerated each other, contributing to the deterioration of community life.

3.3 | Macro-level antisocial outcomes of social movements

In addition to these micro- and meso-level outcomes, at the macro level, movements can sow seeds of regional, national, or international polarization through their cultural work, and they can inspire exclusionary and segregationist policies through their political work. For example, social movement scholars have shown that hate groups such as the KKK have shaped the policies of the Republican Party and Democratic Party. As McVeigh (2001) has documented, the 1920s-era Klan claimed not to be committed to any single political party, but in practice they tended to support politicians associated with the Republican Party, since Republican politicians were more likely to be white Protestants and more likely to adopt anti-immigrant, anti-machine, and pro-prohibition political stances. As a result, the Klan lent strong support to GOP presidential candidate Calvin Coolidge, who was running on a platform of strict anti-immigration policies in 1924 (McVeigh, 2001). The Klan not only worked to support anti-immigrant candidates on the Republican side but also worked to prevent pro-immigrant candidates from running for office on the Democratic side. For example, the Klan interfered in the 1924 Democratic Convention, preventing Al Smith, a Catholic, pro-immigrant, anti-prohibition candidate, from gaining the Democratic nomination (McVeigh, 2001).

The 1960s-era KKK similarly promoted Republican candidates who endorsed segregationist and anti-immigrant policies. In fact, McVeigh et al. (2014) conclusively demonstrate that the 1960s-era Klan played a major role in the political realignment of the Southern United States, which went from being solidly Democratic prior to the 1960s to increasingly Republican in the decades after the 1960s. They find that, even into the 1990s, Southern counties where the 1960s-era Klan was active tended to be more Republican than Southern counties where the 1960s-era Klan had not been active.

Generalizing from cases such as the KKK, McAdam and Kloos (2014) argue that the rise and fall of social movement activity in the United States is associated with the growth or decline in ideological gaps between the Republican Party and Democratic Party. Throughout the nation’s history, a wide variety of national-level movements have intersected with—and powerfully (re)shaped—political discourse, policy, and governance. For example, the rise of abolitionist movements was associated with the founding of the Republican Party, and the rise of labor movements was associated with the passage of New Deal policies in the 1930s. In the postwar years of the 1940s and 1950s, social movement activity waned, leading to increasing ideological overlap between the Republican Party and Democratic Party (McAdam & Kloos, 2014). As the 1960s unfolded, social movement activity again spiked. On the one hand, civil rights mobilization pushed the Democratic Party left of center; on the other hand, the resurgence of white nationalism/supremacy as a backlash response to the Civil Rights Movement pushed the Republican Party right of center. As the two parties diverged, the GOP in particular reduced its efforts to court centrist voters, instead choosing to court the more extreme wing of their constituency who voted for Wallace in the 1968 election cycle (McAdam & Kloos, 2014, p. 23–25). For example, Nixon and Reagan extensively used racially coded language (dog-whistling) to make racially motivated appeals to voters. McVeigh and Estep (2019) argue a similar dynamic was
at play in the election of Donald Trump. Thus, social movement groups can encourage political parties to align with movement agendas, including the antisocial agendas of racist and xenophobic movements, which can in turn lead to greater political polarization.

4 | ACCOUNTING FOR THE PROSOCIAL AND ANTISOCIAL OUTCOMES OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Social movement scholars have helpfully identified a range of social movement-induced prosocial and antisocial outcomes at the micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis. But what societal conditions facilitate or constrain social movements' bridge building and bridge burning work? In other words, as scholars carry out research addressing why social movements succeed or fail in their attempts to bring about prosocial or antisocial outcomes, what other types of explanatory variables might be linked to these outcomes of interest? Although comparatively fewer studies speak directly to this question, scholars have suggested that certain political, economic, cultural, and ecological conditions can facilitate prosocial and antisocial outcomes.

Scholarship most commonly emphasizes the political-economic conditions that facilitate prosocial and antisocial movement outcomes. For example, research shows that rising economic prosperity and declining economic inequality seem to lay the groundwork for social movements promoting social integration and inclusion. For example, in his book on public opinion towards gay rights, Garretson (2018) draws on global survey data to affirm prior findings that “the dominant predictor of liberalism toward homosexuality at a national level is the economic development of a country” (p. 215) (see also Andersen & Fetner, 2008). Conversely, scholarship on antisocial outcomes shows that growing economic inequality—coupled with perceived reductions in political power—seem to lay the groundwork for social movements oriented toward social exclusion. For example, scholars have developed power devaluation theories (Dietrich, 2014) and status politics theories (Gusfield, 1963) to explain why some social movements work to generate antisocial outcomes. Power devaluation theories suggest that certain movements are responses to a weakening of economic or political exchange power (Dietrich, 2014), whereas status politics or status anxiety theories indicate people turn to “extreme” movements due to fear or anxiety as a response to minority groups’ increasing economic or political power (Gusfield, 1963). McVeigh (2001) adds that the chances of the emergence of antisocial movements increase when both economic and political power decrease simultaneously. Usually, scholars apply power devaluation and status politics theories to conservative or right-wing movements, including the KKK, as such movements tend to be engaged in defensive forms of collective action that seek to protect the existing social order and its attendant benefits (Dietrich, 2014; McVeigh, 2001).

Scholars have also highlighted cultural conditions that facilitate prosocial or antisocial outcomes. For example, discursive opportunities—mass media narratives that foster social movement mobilization—can lay the groundwork for social movements’ prosocial and antisocial work. Within the literature on bridge building, Ghaziani (2011) addresses the puzzle of why LGBTQ activists today seem “motivated less by drawing boundaries against members of the dominant group and more by building bridges toward them” (p. 99); for example, he notes that LGBTQ student groups have increasingly adopted names that emphasize alliance or commonality with the broader society (e.g., Gay-Straight Alliances or Gender and Sexuality Alliances). He argues that many LGBTQ activists currently focus on building bridges with the larger society because of a “post-gay cultural sensibility” promoted by the mass media; this “post-gay cultural sensibility” suggests that LGBTQ and straight people are essentially the same and that homophobia (in particular) is no longer a significant issue, meaning that LGBTQ people should not construct collective identities that emphasize differences from mainstream society (p. 104). (This cultural sensibility, of course, marginalizes LGBTQ people of color, working-class people, and others who cannot, or will not, fit into the mainstream.) Rochon (1998) similarly argues that social movements succeed in their efforts to promote societal integration when the mass media diffuses prosocial beliefs and values developed within critical communities (pp. 176–177). Conversely, within the literature on bridge burning, Koopmans and Olzak (2004) demonstrate that mass media attention
to right-wing violence in Germany had the effect of diffusing a "model for successful public action to others who share the same goals" (p. 223). This model of successful right-wing action, in turn, inspired subsequent racist and xenophobic mobilization and violence.

Finally, some social movement scholars have recently argued for an "ecological" approach to the study of social movements, examining how movements' interactions with other allied movements and counter movements can influence each of the movements' efforts and outcomes (Zhang & Zhao, 2019). Addressing a puzzle similar to Ghasani's (2011), Bernstein (1997) shows that LGBTQ movement organizations' interactions with anti-LGBTQ organizations influence whether LGBTQ activists seek to "underscore their similarities to...the majority" in society or emphasize their differences with the rest of society (p. 531). Specifically, she shows that LGBTQ movements that encounter "organized opposition" from anti-LGBTQ movements and that lack elite political allies are much less likely to attempt to build bridges with the larger society (p. 540). To our knowledge, little other research seems to explicitly apply an "ecological" approach to understanding social movements' prosocial or antisocial outcomes, suggesting a direction for future research.

5 | CONCLUSION

In an era of increasing political polarization, what role might social movements play in either bridging or exacerbating divides between people? In this article, we have proposed a new way to conceptualize social movement outcomes, arguing that scholars should consider how their research can shed light on the prosocial and antisocial outcomes of social movements. Through a creative review of existing scholarship, we have shown that social movements have indeed played roles in bridging social divides: at the micro level, social movements can lead their participants to adopt prosocial attitudes, such as compassion and empathy, which can, in turn, lead participants to engage in prosocial behaviors, such as altruistic civic activities; at the meso level, social movements can bridge structural holes between previously disparate social groups; and at the macro level, social movements can facilitate greater public acceptance and political incorporation of marginalized groups. At the same time, social movements can further divide social groups: at the micro level, social movements can lead participants to adopt more hateful attitudes and behaviors (including hate crimes); at the meso level, social movements can divide social movement groups that previously tolerated each other; and at the macro level, social movements can generate widespread political and social polarization. Given that social movements have been linked to both prosocial and antisocial outcomes, we also addressed the question of the conditions under which social movements generate such outcomes, discussing how distinct political, economic, cultural, and ecological conditions could potentially facilitate social movements' bridge building and/or bridge burning work.

We conclude with caveats about our conceptualization of prosocial and antisocial outcomes, along with suggestions for future research. In general, past scholars have characterized movements that generate prosocial outcomes as movements that contribute to the common good and movements that generate antisocial outcomes as movements that contribute to the deterioration of society. However, it must also be acknowledged that even extremist groups may produce outcomes that could be categorized as prosocial—as when fundamentalist religious movements seek to bridge economic divides in their communities at the same time as they demonize cultural outsiders (Davis & Robinson, 2012)—and movements that strive to bring various social groups together may engage in actions that could be categorized as antisocial—as when movement actors exclude and expel members who simply are not committed to movement goals (Beamish & Luebbers, 2009). Thus, we recommend scholars avoid equating prosocial outcomes with "good" movements and antisocial outcomes with "bad" movements (see Wieviorka, 2005, however, for a conceptualization of what he calls "anti-movements").

We also recommend that scholars critically consider potential downsides of social movements' seemingly positive bridge building activities. Recently, scholars such as Feng (2020) and Luna (2016) have developed a critique of the bridge building literature. Feng (2020) cautions that the bridge building literature's focus on micro-level discursive practices that can bring disparate social groups together (such as developing new group styles, constructing new
identities, and practicing ideology translation) can lead to a “romanticized outlook of bridging” that suggests that “difference can be ‘transcended,’ that ‘bowling together’ will bring us together” (p. 2). Feng (2020) argues instead that movements that seek to bridge divides in society need to challenge deeply entrenched inequalities and work to transform social structures, a process that will inevitably require ruffling feathers. Similarly, Luna (2016) warns that movements that seek to transcend differences between members by building a single collective identity—a seemingly prosocial task—risk “silencing or even reproducing … privilege within a movement organization,” as when they neglect addressing some members’ prejudices in the interest of maintaining group harmony (p. 785).

How should scholars move forward in their future research on prosocial and antisocial outcomes of social movements? In addition to keeping the previous caveats in mind, we suggest several directions. First, although previous literature has helpfully identified a range of prosocial and antisocial outcomes at the micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis, future researchers should consider more explicitly assessing the conditions under which social movements produce prosocial and antisocial outcomes. Extant literature has certainly identified some political, economic, and cultural factors shaping social movements’ bridge building or bridge burning efforts, but we still lack extensive understanding of ecological and other conditions that shape such work. Second, and related to the goal of identifying conditions that facilitate social movements’ prosocial and antisocial outcomes, social movement scholars should consider employing comparative research designs that would allow them to more conclusively identify conditions that seem causally linked to social movements’ prosocial and antisocial outcomes. Currently, the vast majority of research we reviewed employed single case study designs. Through a comparison of two or more movements, researchers might find that multiple movements that bring about prosocial outcomes mobilize under very different political conditions but very similar economic conditions, the kind of finding that would help researchers understand the conditions that seem most crucial to social movements’ bridge building work. Third, most research on the prosocial and antisocial outcomes of social movements is focused on social movements in the United States, so researchers could consider analyzing more movements outside the United States (including the Hindu nationalist movement discussed here; see Das & Whitham, 2019; Shah, 2002; Shani, 2005). Many countries beyond the United States are also experiencing heightened polarization, and social movements hold the potential to ease, or further exacerbate, their social divides.

Finally, although our focus in this article is on prosocial and antisocial outcomes of social movements, future research could also more explicitly consider how social movements deploy prosocial or antisocial frames, identities, strategies, and tactics in the process of mobilizing people, or how social movements’ targets use prosocial or antisocial rhetoric to defend themselves against social movements. For example, in two rare studies that deploy these terms, Thomas et al. (2010) have proposed a way to conceptualize social movement activities as prosocial or hostile, and McDonnell and King (2013) have explored how businesses deploy prosocial claims as a way to respond to social movement boycotts. In an era of increasing political and social polarization, we believe that continued exploration of prosocial and antisocial dynamics within social movements is both timely and crucial.

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ENDNOTE
1 For a similar conceptualization, see Thomas, Smith, McGarty, and Postmes (2010), who categorize entire movements as “prosocial” when they “promote inter-group cooperation, social harmony, and/or social equality,” and who categorize entire movements as “hostile” when they “promote inter-group aggression, prejudice, or hostility” (p. 20).


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