
Review Article

When movements anchor parties: Electoral alignments in American history

Daniel Schlozman, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2015, \$29.95, ISBN: 9780691164700

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In *When Movements Anchor Parties*, Daniel Schlozman engages a broad swath of American history, discussing the relationship between political parties and social movements from the abolition of slavery to Occupy Wall Street. While this work addresses a wide range of issues across the disciplines of political science, sociology, history, and law, I focus this review on the implications of Schlozman's book for interest groups and advocacy. One of Schlozman's significant contributions is that he offers an historical examination of numerous interest groups and the leaders that guided them. Some of these actors often escape the attention of contemporary scholars, such as John L. Lewis in the Congress of Industrial Organizations, Richard Viguier at Young Americans for Freedom, Charles McCune in the People's Party, and Andy Stern in the Service Employees International Union. In conducting this examination, Schlozman adds markedly to our understanding of interest groups in historical context. This contribution is notable, in part, because the study of interest groups has strong bias toward research on contemporary politics. Scholzman offers a greater appreciation of how interest groups fit into the larger story of the American polity, while at the same time stimulating questions worthy of new research.

Schlozman's core argument is that party-movement alliances depend crucially what he calls "anchoring groups." In using this concept, Schlozman is referring to something in the nexus between an interest group and a social movement. An anchoring group need not necessarily be confined to a single, formal interest group. It may be an amalgam of several groups in a social movement. It must include formal organizations that have resources they are able to devote to politics. For example, Scholzman does not see the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) acting alone as the anchoring group for the labor-Democratic alliance. Rather, he reports that different groups in the labor movement have played the role of anchor. Sometimes, it was AFL-CIO, but other times, it was the United Mine Workers (UMW), the United Auto Workers (UAW),



or the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). Likewise, the anchoring group for the Christian Right varied over time. Sometimes, it was Young Americans for Freedom. Other times, it was the Moral Majority or the Christian Coalition.

The concept of an anchoring group is more specific than a movement, which may lack the necessary coherence to guarantee an alliance, but is more general than a single organization, since key organizations may come and go. To some extent, an anchoring group is akin to what David Truman (1951) referred to as an “active minority” within a movement. It consists of an elite set of actors who trade roles back and forth among themselves as contingencies arise. If the movement is unable to continually regenerate these brokers, then the alliance is likely to die.

Which groups anchor an alliance depends largely on the roles of individual leaders of interest groups and their ability to simultaneously meet the needs of both parties and groups. Richard Viguerie rose to prominence because he figured out how to use direct mail as a tool that would earn profits for his organizations and mobilize foot soldiers for the party. Andy Stern became a player during the presidency of Barack Obama by invigorating mobilization among health care workers (especially nurses) to support expansion of federal support for health care insurance. These individuals matter not only because of who they represent, but also because of their personal talents and abilities to reach across the troublesome divide between movements and parties.

Schlozman’s concept of the anchoring group raises some questions about the way that we study interest groups and social movements. The interest group field has placed enormous emphasis on the formal organization (e.g., American Medical Association, Sierra Club, U.S. Chamber of Commerce) as the fundamental unit of analysis in many studies. Yet if anchoring groups transcend formal organizations, then the research methods for studying them must depart from typical ways of studying interest groups. While Schlozman does not say so explicitly, his analysis suggests that there may be underlying networks of movement elites that serve to coordinate anchoring groups. Consequently, interest group scholars may be well advised to study both formal organizations and their supporting networks. More formally, scholars should recognize that there may be multiple institutional manifestations of the same “group” interest. Such an analysis may help to explain why anchoring groups persist when individual organizations become scandalized or defunct. That is, the Christian Right did not become any less important to the Republican Party when the Moral Majority dissolved. New organizations from the movement surfaced to take its place, and are likely to do so in the future.

Schlozman’s analysis appropriately focuses on the party-movement dynamic in observing the behavior of anchoring groups. Indeed, this type of focus is necessary for the book to span such a wide range of movements and time periods. Yet the scholar of interest groups and advocacy may want to know more about the anchoring groups themselves and how they relate to one another. What are the characteristics of groups that tend to become (or fail to become) anchoring groups?



How much is this status contingent on the personal skill of individual entrepreneurs versus how much depends on the structural position of the group in the polity? How do anchoring groups cooperate or compete with one another – or with other organizations – to influence the party?

Tea Party organizations are presently competing with Christian Right organizations to anchor the Republican Party. At same time, elements of the Christian Right are coopting some Tea Party organizations to maintain their status within the anchoring group. As a constellation of local organizations, Tea Party chapters may be dominated by anti-tax libertarians or they may be led by former Christian Coalition members, depending largely on the regional context. In some sense, then, the Tea Party has become a next institutional manifestation of the Christian Right as an anchoring group. The nature and strategies of interest groups and activists as they seek to anchor parties is a worthy subject of inquiry for scholars of interest groups and advocacy.

Another possibility for extending Schlozman's analysis is to couple the concept of anchoring group with the concept of "radical flank" from social movement studies. A radical flank is a group at the edge of a movement that provides a threat to the establishment, thus making more moderate groups within the movement appear more reasonable to policymakers (Freeman 1975). One possible hypothesis is that anchoring groups operate in tension with radical flanks. Instead of focusing only on the anchoring group to understand the alliance, scholars might also ask what effect the radical flank had on the alliance. These two types of organizations, in juxtaposition to one another, may interact in their relevance to political outcomes. Perhaps radical flanks destabilize anchoring groups and make it less likely for alliances to survive; but perhaps the reverse is true.

After considering anchoring groups and radical flank groups, it seems plausible to continue theorizing the roles by organizations that support the party-movement alliance. What is the role played by media, such as Fox News in the Christian Right-Republican alliance? How do national party organizations (e.g., Republican National Committee, Democratic National Committee) and ancillary party groups (e.g., College Democrats, College Republicans) serve or undermine alliances. By theorizing how different types of groups affect alliances, scholars could move toward a more general theory of the relationship between groups and parties.

Scholarly specialization has, in recent years, led interest groups, social movements, and political parties to be studied separately. Yet each of these types of organizations represents a way for the same strategic actors to attempt to pursue their ends in politics. *When Movements Anchor Parties* is a welcome addition to a growing literature that seeks to erode boundaries in understanding between these organizational types (see also Mudge and Chen 2014; Heaney and Rojas 2015; McAdam and Kloos 2014; and Skocpol and Williamson 2012). By adding the concept of the anchoring group to the conversation, and documenting its relevance



with historical rigor, Daniel Schlozman has offered a theoretical foundation on which scholars are likely to build for years to come.

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