THE STRATEGIES AND CONTEXTS OF SOCIAL PROTEST: POLITICAL MEDIATION AND THE IMPACT OF THE TOWNSEND MOVEMENT IN CALIFORNIA

Edwin Amenta, Drew Halfmann, and Michael P. Young

We contend that the collective action of state-oriented challengers is politically mediated, and that the impact of collective action will differ according to political contexts. More specifically, we argue that mobilization and limited protest will yield collective benefits in specified favorable political circumstances; more assertive action is required in specified less favorable circumstances. In addition to specifying these arguments, we go some distance toward appraising them, by examining the Townsend Movement, an American old-age pension challenger of the 1930s and 1940s, and the politics of old-age pensions in California. Historical, "similar systems," and regression analyses indicate that the movement had an impact on California old-age policy that varied according to the expectations of our political mediation arguments.

Social movements typically mobilize resources and engage in collective action in order to make an impact, but far more research addresses mobilization than impacts (see review in McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988; Crist and McCarthy 1996; Giugni 1998; for examples, see Gamson [1975] 1990; Piven and Cloward 1977; Klandermans and Oegema 1987; Isaac and Kelly 1981; McAdam 1982; Kitschelt 1986; Ragin 1989; Amenta, Carruthers, and Zylan 1992; Jasper and Poulsen 1993; Clemens 1993; Tarrow 1994: chap. 10; Amenta, Dunleavy, and Bernstein 1994; Burstein, Einwohner, and Hollander 1995; Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak, and Giugni 1995: chap. 9). Perhaps this is because the impacts of challengers involve more difficult theoretical and methodological issues than those surrounding mobilization. Mobilization may be necessary, but not sufficient to make an impact. Establishing that a movement had an impact is difficult. Even the meaning of "making an impact" is contested.

Here we confront the theoretical issues by addressing the question of what produces collective benefits for state-oriented challengers. We argue that the collective action of such challengers is politically mediated. To make an impact they must influence the calculations and actions of institutional political actors. Specifically, we argue that political circumstances influence the effectiveness of different sorts of collective action; the productivity of different sorts of strategies depends on the political context. Like others examining state-oriented

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challengers, we situate challenging activity and contentious politics in the political process (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 1996; Burstein et al. 1995). Our discussions build on arguments about political opportunity structures (Kitschelt 1986; review in McAdam 1996) and collective action strategies (Gamson 1990). Our arguments, however, go beyond this literature, which tends to focus on either political contexts or strategies—but not both.

We also address the methodological and research issues, by appraising our arguments with a focused examination of the depression-era old-age pension crusade led by Dr. Francis E. Townsend and old-age politics in the nation and in California, the home of the Townsend Movement. The Movement was based on the so-called Townsend Plan: a national, generous old-age pension for anyone age 60 or older who agreed to be retired and to spend the money quickly. At first most Townsend activity was directed at the national polity. Later the movement aimed at improving state-level old-age assistance (OAA) programs (Holtzman 1963; Putnam 1970)—the main source of aid to the American aged until 1950. The Movement eventually supported “baby Townsend Plans”—pensions like the Townsend Plan in individual states but for less money. Although no Townsend Plan ever passed, it seems possible that the movement influenced the programs that did exist. More mundanely, the Movement is useful for assessing our theoretical claims, for it engaged in various strategies of collective action in varied political circumstances.

Our analyses center on the influence of the Townsend Movement on public social spending policy for the aged. This policy was the main collective benefit pursued by the Movement and one of central importance for the aged people it sought to mobilize. We also examine the Movement’s different collective action strategies in different political contexts. First, we examine the impact of the Movement at the national level during its initial mobilization and its influence over the 1935 Social Security Act. Second, we examine different Townsend strategies regarding old-age assistance in California, 1934-1944, according to different political situations. Third, we make two comparisons of old-age policy in states that were similar in that each had a strong Townsend Movement. In one comparison, the Townsend Movement strategies of action were similar, while the political contexts varied. In the other comparison, we examine how Townsend Movement strategies varied while political contexts were similar. Fourth, we analyze California county-level data on the coverage of Old-Age Assistance (hereafter OAA), a key concern of the Movement. This research is unique in that it assesses the impact of a challenger while addressing other potential causal influences. Also, we employ unpublished and heretofore unknown county-level data on the Movement, culled from records of the California organizer John Cuneo (Mink 1959). Each of the analyses tend to support our political mediation arguments, which are detailed next.

WHEN COLLECTIVE ACTION WINS COLLECTIVE BENEFITS: THE POLITICAL MEDIATION OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

We argue that the collective action of state-oriented challengers is politically mediated and propose that it is more likely to produce results when political actors see benefit in aiding challenging groups. In a democratic political system mobilizing large numbers of committed people is probably necessary to win collective benefits for politically under-represented groups. To make an impact, though, challengers usually need to do more than mobilize people. They must also engage in collective action that changes the calculations of relevant institutional political actors, such as elected officials and state bureaucrats; these actors need in turn to see a challenger as potentially facilitating or disrupting their own goals. Their goals might range from augmenting or cementing new electoral coalitions, to gaining in public opinion, to increasing the support for the missions of governmental bureaus. To secure new
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benefits, challengers will typically need help or complementary action from like-minded institutional actors or other movement organizations.

Collective Action Strategies and Political Contexts versus Strategies or Contexts

Our position differs from prominent work on the impact of social movements. On the one hand, it is often argued that collective action strategies and goals are either productive or unproductive of collective independent of political circumstances in which strategies are undertaken. In his landmark research Gannon (1990) argues along these lines and finds that limited goals and the use of “constraints” are likely to succeed, while “displacement” goals and strategies are likely to fail. He also examines the productivity of other strategies and of some characteristics of challengers—typically without regard to the political context in which the strategies take place. Those reanalyzing Gannon’s data (1990: appendix) argue along the same lines.

On the other hand, it is sometimes argued that once a challenger is mobilized the only thing influencing its impact is the political context or “opportunity structure,” as it is often called in the literature. For instance, Kriesel (1986) notably argues that a state’s “implementation capacities” determine whether mobilized challengers will win substantive gains. For McAdam (1983), a favorable political opportunity structure is a necessary condition for movement gains.

We build on and go beyond these arguments by suggesting more generally that in order to get results the strategies of state-oriented challengers need to fit the political situation (Jenkins 1995: 32). Different sorts of strategies are likely to be necessary to win collective benefits in different political circumstances. The basic ideas are simple: the more favorable these circumstances are, the less a mobilized challenger has to do to win collective benefits; the more difficult these circumstances, the more the challenger has to do. What this means is that less assertive strategies are likely to work only in the most favorable circumstances. More assertive strategies are likely to work in many circumstances, though in favorable ones they may waste resources and good will and backfire. These situations and circumstances are outlined in figure 1.

But it is crucial to go beyond these general claims to specify what constitutes favorable and unfavorable political situations and what constitutes more and less assertive collective action strategies. We undertake this problem of specification below, beginning with the political conditions. We focus on specific aspects of what others refer to more generally as political opportunity structures (POS) (see McAdam 1996). Unlike most of these scholars, however, we are concerned with the impact of movements rather than their mobilization. Also, we focus on more short- and medium-term influences of the political context than do many arguments concerning POS.

The Strategies and Contexts of Social Protest

A key aspect of the political context is the orientation of the regime in power toward the goals of the challenger. We would expect a favorable regime to amplify the impact of a challenger’s mobilization and collective action, while an unfavorable regime would dampen it. For state-oriented challengers seeking collective benefits through sustained public spending, the position of the regime on higher taxation is key. In the 20th century, U.S. Republican regimes have tended to oppose automatic, programmatic spending claims because they imply higher taxation. Since Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal, Democrats outside the South have tended to be “reform-oriented”—more open to taxation and claims requiring taxation on
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Figure 1. Collective Action Strategies Expected to Produce Collective Benefits, Given the Configuration of Political Regimes and State Bureaucrats in Democratic and Program-Oriented Politics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Bureaucrats</th>
<th>Strong and aligned with challenger’s interests</th>
<th>Weak or opposed to challenger’s interests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regime aligned with challenger’s constituency</td>
<td>Sheer Mobilization, Limited Protest</td>
<td>Sanction or Urge Creation of State Bureaus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected Officials</td>
<td>Sanction or Displace Elected Officials</td>
<td>Highly Assertive Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime opposed to challenger’s constituency</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

relatively well-off people (Amenta and Poulsen 1996). In other countries, parties can be similarly categorized (Hicks and Misra 1993). Although challengers can sometimes change views, often parties have long-standing commitments to other groups whose interests and goals may conflict with those of challengers (Klandermans and Oegema 1987).

Another important part of the political context comprises the missions, activities, and powers of state bureaus in charge of domestic programs related to the challenger. We argue more broadly than Kitschelt (1986) that programs related to a challenger’s interests will be more easily generated when relevant state actors are present and have initiative, talent, and power. Domestic bureaucrats may see the creation of collective benefits for a group as advancing the mission of their bureau and may intensify the impact of challengers by their own actions. Conversely, the absence of such proficient state actors may make the public believe that new programs, especially those that involve public spending, will be mismanaged and waste money (Orloff 1993). Not all implementation capacities will work to the advantage of challengers, however. If important and powerful state bureaus have missions that oppose the claims of a challenger, we would expect them to diminish the impact of a challenger’s collective action.

If the political regime is supportive and the domestic bureaucrats are professionalized and supportive (depicted by the upper left box of figure 1), limited protest as evidence of mobilization is likely to be sufficient to provide increased collective benefits. The challenger needs merely to demonstrate that it has support. Organizing additional members might serve this purpose. This might be done by rallies, petitioning, public awareness campaigns, or minor lobbying. A reform-oriented regime is likely to use this evidence of mobilization and modest protest as a confirmation of the beneficiary group’s importance in an electoral coalition. Domestic bureaucrats are likely to portray the mobilization as indicating the need for the
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augmentation or greater enforcement of its program. If the regime hopes to add to its coalition or if domestic bureaucrats have a mission that is not yet realized, we expect those groups best mobilized will win the greatest benefits in public policy for their constituencies.

By contrast, achieving collective benefits through public policy is likely to be more difficult if neither a supportive regime nor administrative authority exists, a situation depicted in the bottom-right box of figure 1. When a regime opposes the challenger or sees no benefit in adding its beneficiary group to its coalition, and when state bureaucracies in the area are hostile or absent, the sorts of limited protest listed above are likely to be ignored or have at best limited effect. Some political actors may dust off old proposals or think about new ones, possibly as a tactical reaction to delay action until the challenge dwindles (Lipsky 1968). But given the circumstances, a challenger only engaged in limited protest would seem unlikely to influence the content of legislation or its passage and thus have a minimal impact on the provision of collective benefits.

We argue that as political circumstances become more difficult, represented by movement from the upper-left box to the bottom-right box of figure 1, more assertive or bolder collective action is required to produce collective benefits. By more assertive we mean employing sanctions, similar to Gamson’s (1990) constraints, a form of negative sanction. We also argue that collective action, however assertive, will be more likely to have an impact when it is focused on the provision of collective benefits for constituencies. For state-oriented challengers, collective action involving electoral sanctions might range from statements of endorsement in electoral contests to bids to replace the regime through a new political party.

The following examples, though far from exhaustive, give a sense of the possibilities of applying greater sanctions. Making public statements of endorsement is only mildly assertive. Contesting the electoral prospects of individual legislators is more so. Picketing legislative or administrative offices or engaging in public campaigns to replace administrators is similarly assertive. In some U.S. states, moreover, institutional actors can be bypassed by way of an initiative, which, if the initiative is far-reaching, can be more assertive than contesting elections. With the initiative, a challenger can potentially put its issue on the agenda, specify the proposal, and lead the campaign to have it voted into law, delivering great collective benefits in the process. Equally assertive but more difficult is when a challenger seeks to elect its own leaders or adherents by way of a new party—an activity designed ultimately to displace current parties. Such a strategy might result in transforming the political context the challenger faces. More assertive than that would be attempts to interrupt state institutions entirely by various means of mass turmoil.

Challengers also benefit by targeting their actions to fit the administrative or legislative context. If the relevant state bureaucratic actors are present and either supportive or neutral and the political regime is not supportive of the challenger’s group, collective action will be most productive if it focuses on elected officials. Such action might induce those who would otherwise be indifferent or hostile to legislation to support it or at least not to challenge it. If the political regime is supportive or neutral and domestic bureaucrats are either absent or hostile to the challenger’s constituency, bureaucratic capabilities must be created or existing bureaucratic actors must be sanctioned. They might respond by providing feasible proposals that increase the collective benefits to the group represented by the challenger.

When both the political regime and the relevant state bureaucracy are unfavorably disposed to the challenger’s constituency, we expect that the most assertive strategies will be needed to win collective benefits. The most direct way to overcome these circumstances is for challengers to take political power through democratic processes, as through initiatives or through creating new parties. In addition, less assertive electoral strategies would work better than limited protest, which would be better than minor educational or informational
campaigns. We do not deny that assertive strategies might also produce results in relatively favorable political environments. But they might backfire, too, and are likely to waste energy and resources better used for other purposes. Our main point, though, is that acquiescent strategies in unfavorable environments would not likely work.

It is important to note that we are not theorizing why challengers employ the strategies that they do. Especially, we are not arguing that optimal matches of strategy and situation will inevitably or even typically happen (see Cohn 1993: 5). Challengers usually need to make decisions quickly and with limited information. They may employ strategies that match the political situation of their founding, but become unable to change readily when political circumstances do (Valocchi 1991). Some movements may employ some strategies and rule out others as matters of moral commitment or taste (Jasper 1997; chap. 10). National or international challengers working in several polities at once may employ a standard strategy across polities that is appropriate only to some of them. Indeed, we argue below that in its early years the Townsend Movement in California mismatched strategy and context.

It is also worth comparing our arguments more specifically with prominent ones about the impact of state-oriented challengers. Like Gamson (1990), we argue that challengers often require help to achieve state-oriented goals and specify the kind of help that can be advantageous. We also argue that assertive "displacement" activity, such as starting a new political party or presenting new programs designed to overthrow old ones, can yield collective benefits. Like Kitschelt (1986), we argue that implementation capacities are important to challengers, but disagree that a lack of such capacities will doom challengers to only symbolic successes. Our arguments are similar in form to those of Piven and Cloward (1977), who first argued that a certain form of collective action (mass turmoil by the poor) was likely to produce results under certain conditions (electoral upheaval). However, unlike them we specify a range of political conditions and movement strategies.

Understanding the Impact of Social Movements

We conceptualize the impact of challengers as securing new collective benefits for the challenger's beneficiary group. Like those following Gamson (1990), we focus on new benefits (see, e.g., Ragin 1994). But unlike them we think it is possible for a movement to win something important for its beneficiary group even if the challenger's program was mainly rejected, as was the case for the Townsend Movement. Also, in ascertaining whether a challenger has an impact it is important to go beyond showing that new benefits took place during the challenger's existence—the preliminary solution adopted by Gamson (1990) and his research team. Instead scholars need to demonstrate that the challenger brought about the new benefits—that they would not have happened without the intervention of the challenger. We do this through several standard approaches: historical examinations of the plans of state actors before and after the challenger's mobilization and collective action; comparisons of programs for which there was a challenger and for which there was not; controlling other possible influences on collective benefits by examining cases that are otherwise similar; and employing standard "controls" in regression analysis.

Thinking about the impact of challengers on collective benefits through legislation can be simplified by dividing the political process into agenda-setting, content-specifying, and the passage of legislation (Kingdon 1984). From this point of view, a challenger would be considered to have an impact if it changed the plans and agendas of political leaders, changed the content of the proposals as devised by executives, legislators, or administrators, or influenced disinterested representatives key to the passage of legislation. If a challenger is successful in getting its issue onto the political agenda, we would argue that it has increased
the probability of some collective benefits being incorporated in proposed legislation. As far as content is concerned, a challenger can work to increase the value of any collective benefits for its constituency included in the legislation. Once a bill's content has been specified, moreover, challengers can influence individual legislators to vote for it and thus influence the probability of gaining specified collective benefits.

If one looks at it this way, collective action strategies may be deemed productive even if they fall short of realizing their goals. By forming a new political party or fighting for an initiative, a challenger may gain victories by stimulating institutional political actors to propose, augment, or support legislation benefitting the group the challenger is claiming to represent. Political leaders may put some related issue on the agenda and work for its passage. Administrators, typically unlikely to adopt the challenger’s program, may advance augmentations of benefits based on existing or similar programs to aid the group represented by the challenger. Legislators, whom challengers can place in fear of their political futures, may be induced to vote for such a program. Creating a new political party can be valuable even if the party does not become dominant. A new party with some victories may alter the balance of power in the polity. Similarly, a strong showing in an initiative, even if it fails, might induce an executive to place the challenger's issue onto the political agenda and work for its passage. Like Gamson (1990), we believe that "preemption," which he defines as a challenger winning new benefits without being recognized as legitimate, is a way for movements to be successful. Unlike him, we argue that it is possible for a challenger to win collective benefits even if its specific agenda is rejected. Also, we argue that when state actors make concessions without recognizing the challenger this does not necessarily result in the preemption or decline of the challenger.

EXPLAINING OLD-AGE POLICY DEVELOPMENTS: POLITICAL MEDIATION AND OLD-AGE POLICY IN THE NATION AND CALIFORNIA

To appraise our claims we consider the Townsend Movement's political circumstances and its strategies at different places and times, and its effectiveness. Figure 2 reproduces the theoretical expectations of figure 1, but also includes empirical situations that relate to the theoretical possibilities. The figure indicates the types of political regime, strength and alignment of the bureaucracy for the aged in the nation and in California, and the strategies of the Townsend Movement.

As figure 2 summarizes, the Townsend Movement found itself in various political contexts at the state and national level during the 1930s and 1940s. In three instances, the Movement matched its strategies of action to what, we argue, would prove effective under the circumstances. (These "matched" strategies are indicated in italics.) The first instance is at the national level in 1934-1935, when political circumstances were highly favorable to the aged (upper left-hand corner of figure 2). Here the Movement followed a collective action strategy that was based mainly on mobilization and limited protest. In California in 1939, the Movement found itself with at worst a neutral regime in power, but with an unfavorable administrative structure. At this time the Townsend Movement effectively targeted the administrators with assertive action (upper-right corner). In California in the early 1940s, the Townsend Movement found itself in a situation where the regime was unfavorable and the program administration was neutral (lower left). In this case the Movement used relatively assertive strategies to sanction law-makers and to attempt to overrides them through the initiative process. In a fourth instance, however, the Townsend Movement did not match action to situation, to our way of thinking. In the middle 1930s in California, both the regime and the program administration were unfavorable to the aged. At this time, the Movement
relied on a strategy of relatively limited protest, focused mainly on the national level, instead of the more assertive and focused measures (indicated in bold type) that we expect would have the greatest hope of producing favorable outcomes.

We expect that mobilization in the absence of bold collective action strategies would work only when political conditions are otherwise favorable for reform. Thus in its early years of relatively mild action we expect the Townsend Movement to have had better results at the national level than at the state level because political conditions were more favorable at the national level. However, we expect that the Movement had the potential for an impact in California in the late 1930s and 1940s. Despite the unfavorable political circumstances, the Townsendites began challenging directly and stringently California politics and old-age assistance administration and legislation. This happened first through its bid to contest liens—claims made by counties on the estates of OAS recipients. This pressure increased and was applied to legislative leaders when the Movement went on drives for initiatives, first regarding liens and then the entire old-age pension system through baby Townsend Plans. We expect such assertive collective action to make legislators more likely to vote for the OAA improvements and make the content of proposals more closely resemble the unrestricted, generous Townsend Plan. Similarly, we would expect other states with drives for baby Townsend Plans in the 1940s to witness improvements in their old-age assistance programs. We turn now to the episodes outlined in figure 2.

Figure 2. Collective Action Strategies Expected to Produce Collective Benefits, Given Specified Political Conditions, and Townsend Movement Campaigns, National and State Levels, 1934-1945.

STATE BUREAUCRATS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong and aligned with challenger's interests</th>
<th>Weak or opposed to challenger's interests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regime aligned with challenger's constituency</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sanction or Urge Creation of State Bureaus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sheer Mobilization, Limited Protest</em></td>
<td><em>(Anti-lien campaign, 1939)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(National level, 1934-35)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regime opposed to challenger's constituency</strong></td>
<td><strong>Highly Assertive Strategies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sanction or Displace Elected Officials</em></td>
<td><em>(California before 1939)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Initiative drives, 1940s)</em></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Strategies in italics were undertaken by the Townsend Movement in the indicated polity and time period. Strategies in bold are indicated by the theoretical model, but were not undertaken by the Townsend Movement in the indicated polity and time period.
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On September 30, 1933, Dr. Townsend, a 66-year old laid-off assistant medical officer, published a letter to his hometown Long Beach Press Telegram, outlining what was soon known as the Townsend Plan. In January, 1934, the not-for-profit Old Age Revolving Pensions, Ltd. (OARP) was incorporated, led by Townsend and a real estate agent, Robert E. Clements. From that point the Movement grew, and financial records suggest that its paying membership probably peaked at about one million at the end of 1935 (U.S. Congress House of Representatives 1936: 65, 82; Amenta and Zylan 1991). In the spring 1936, the Movement went into a tailspin, and by the summer membership dropped to somewhat below one-half million, but it was rejuvenated with its reorganization in 1937. Membership grew steadily until reaching, in 1939, approximately 750,000 (Holtzman 1963:72-3). By 1942 membership had fallen below 300,000, leveling off at 270,000 in 1944, then dropping steadily until its demise in the 1950s.

The Movement's main initial strategy was a mild one of the mobilization of members across the country into clubs, to indicate support for the Townsend Plan. There was also a petition-signing campaign and some attempt to elect favorable members of Congress. This culminated in the introduction in Congress of a Townsend bill, which failed quickly and badly in 1935. It was not until 1938 that the Townsend Movement made credible and extensive efforts to endorse congressional candidates (Holtzman 1963; Amenta, Carruthers, and Zylan 1992). In the Movement's early years, all collective action efforts in the individual states were designed to influence political leaders to induce Congress to adopt the plan. There was no attempt to improve old-age pensions in the states; indeed Townsend himself intervened against Townsend-like plans at the state level, reasoning that they might draw support away from the plan (Holtzman 1963: 191-93).

At the national level in 1935, the political situation was highly favorable for the aged constituency represented by the Townsend Movement. After the elections of November 1934 Democrats from outside the under-democratized South dominated Congress for the first time ever (Congressional Quarterly 1984; ICPSR 1992). They accompanied a Democratic president from New York, Roosevelt, who was elected in 1932 by a landslide and was committed to old-age pensions (Davis 1979: chaps. 3, 8). At the bureaucratic level, the situation was similarly favorable. Although there was no bureaucracy devoted to old-age policy, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration had been in operation since 1933 and ran the most extensive social policy program in American history. Among its efforts was aiding the impoverished aged (Brown 1940: chaps. 8-12; Brock 1988: 162-73; U.S. Committee on Economic Security 1937). What is more, in June 1934 Roosevelt called for the creation of a Committee on Economic Security (CES). One of its charges was to study the issue of old-age pensions and make recommendations for them (Witte 1962). In the end, the CES (1935) recommended the adoption of old-age assistance and an old-age insurance program and in August 1935 the Social Security Act became law.

Although the Movement was not the main force behind putting old-age legislation on the political agenda, on specifying its content, or getting it passed, it had considerable impact on benefits for the aged. The Movement appeared after the 1933 Dill-Connery bill placed means-tested old-age pensions on the national political agenda. But the Movement may have prevented the old-age issue from leaving the agenda of the CES by protesting a statement by Roosevelt in November 1934 that hinted that old-age proposals were going to be delayed; after the protest the administration backtracked (Witte 1962: 43-47). What is more, OAA was probably made more generous by movement activity. The OAA provisions of the economic security legislation compared favorably to the previous Dill-Connery bill in the amount of
Table 1. The Townsend Movement: National Membership and Revenues and California Membership and Club Receipts, 1934-1949.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>National Paid Membership</th>
<th>National Gross Receipts</th>
<th>California Self-Reported Membership</th>
<th>California Club Revenues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>(107.4)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>(1156.8)</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>(718.4)</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>612.5</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>761.6</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>646.9</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>$82.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>468.7</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>153.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>297.6</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>185.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>271.8</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>241.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>269.6</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>510.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>234.8</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>247.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>173.6</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>157.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>134.3</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>126.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>92.7</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: National paid membership is in thousands and gross receipts are in thousands of dollars. Numbers in parenthesis are estimates based on ratio of membership to receipts in 1938 and 1939.

Sources: Holtzman 1963:48-49, 172; U.S. House Special Committee 1936; Mink 1959.

money and in the matching formula. The OAA program was also better funded—with a higher matching rate and greater maximum benefit—than the similarly constructed and simultaneously enacted Aid to Dependent Children program. The latter did not have the support of any challenger (Cauthen and Amenta 1996). By contrast the Townsend Movement sent at its peak some 1,500 letters per day to the Committee on Economic Security or the President, who forwarded them to the committee (Witte 1962: 35).

Because of the Townsend mobilization, moreover, members of Congress were probably more willing to support the Social Security Act generally. Townsend’s testimony before Congress was front-page news. As Witte (1962: 95) noted, “The thousands of letters which members received in support of this plan worried them greatly”—though not enough to vote in favor of the Townsend Plan. There is little doubt that the existence of the Movement speeded the process by which the Social Security Board approved state plans for
Political Mediation and the Townsend Movement

OAA in early 1936 (McKinley and Frase 1970: 148-49; Orloff 1993: chap. 9; Coll 1994: chap. 3). All in all, in its salad days the Movement had a significant impact on old-age policy at the national level—despite the failure of the Townsend bill.

Unfavorable Political Situation, Limited Protest, Minimal Impact: California Before 1939

The results were different in California, where the Townsend Movement was highly mobilized and engaged in similar sorts of mobilization and mild protest strategies. The Movement took off somewhat earlier in California than elsewhere; no surprise as it was founded in Long Beach. Congressional testimony by Edward Gordon, state organizer for southern California suggests that in the early years California clubs had more members per club; also of the $905,000 generated by the Townsend Movement, approximately $97,000 of it was generated by southern California in the second half of the year (U.S. Congress House of Representatives 1936:495-96). Membership figures reported by club leaders indicate that California membership suffered no drop from 1940 to 1942 and did not decline very much until after 1946 (Mink 1959). (See table 1.) In short, California Townsend membership was relatively high and steady for almost a decade.

However, in California the Townsend Movement’s political action was highly limited. In 1934 Townsend snubbed Upton Sinclair, the Democratic nominee for governor, whose End Poverty in California (EPIC) plan and organization called for generous old-age pensions in California. Townsend instead endorsed the conservative Republican candidate for governor, Frank Merriam, who had endorsed the Townsend Plan, which, if enacted, would cost California nothing. Merriam also agreed to press the state legislature to “memorialize” Congress to enact the Townsend Plan. However, the Movement requested nothing specific from Merriam regarding the aged in California (Sinclair 1934; Delmatier, McIntosh, and Waters 1970: chap 8; Putnam 1970: chaps. 3, 4).

The political situation in California was much less favorable than it was at the national level in 1934 and 1935. Before the 1936 elections, California’s political regime included a conservative Republican governor and legislature. (See table 2.) After 1936, conditions improved somewhat, as Democrats controlled the Assembly, but there was still a conservative Republican governor and Republican control of the Senate. As for domestic bureaucracies, conditions also began unfavorably. At the beginning of the 1930s, California counties administered the state’s Old Age Security Program, with the state acting purely as a watchdog.1 In 1935 and 1936, changes in OAS legislation to conform with federal standards marked a significant increase in the role of the California Department of Social Welfare (1940[a]: 4). But the department gained only partial responsibility for OAS’s administration and had to share it with county boards of supervisors until 1948 (Pinner, Jacobs, and Selznick 1959: 16-17).

California was already a kind of leader in old-age politics before the Townsend Movement, and after the emergence of the Movement California’s old-age program did not improve as much as it might have. At the end of 1934, half the states had compulsory pension laws, with California having adopted its OAS program in 1929. In 1934, California’s OAS granted granted about $20 on average to recipients, ranking it third, and covered nine percent of those aged 65 and older, placing it ninth (U.S. CES 1937). The 1935 Social Security Act with its grant-in-aid OAS program gave states strong incentives to create or improve their own

---

1 California’s Old Age Security Program (OAS) retained its original title even after it became subject to federal regulations. i.e., and OAA program.
Table 2. Democratic Party Strength in the California Senate and Assembly, 1929-1947.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Republican Senate</th>
<th>Democrat Senate</th>
<th>Margin</th>
<th>Republican Assembly</th>
<th>Democrat Assembly and others</th>
<th>Dems and others Margin</th>
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<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td>-60</td>
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<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-34</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-24</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-10</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>44</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-14</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Years in bold represent a Democratic Governor.


old-age programs. California responded, and by the end of 1937 California’s program had, at $33.34 per pensioner per month, the second highest average old-age benefit in the country. But California lagged further behind other states in promoting eligibility. Only 18 percent of those 65 and older received pensions, dropping California to 24th on this basis. In 1938, OAS recipients in California received a setback. The chairman of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors refused to release liens taken out on pensioners and was upheld by the State Supreme Court (California Department of Social Welfare 1940[c], pp. 2-5; Putnam 1970: 84-85, 88). This meant that pensioners could not bequeath their possessions and prevented many of the aged from applying for pensions, as they did not want to be treated as paupers.

Despite high mobilization, the movement had little impact on OAS during the middle 1930s. Although California improved OAS, there is little reason to believe that the Townsendites directly influenced the enactment or content of California’s OAS legislation. Their presence may have moved the old-age issue up California’s political agenda. But most of the advances made in California were due to the support of long-standing old-age advocates such as the Fraternal Order of Eagles, new supporters such as EPIC, California’s previous pioneering old-age policy, and inducements from the national government (Putnam 1970). As far as California’s aged were concerned, the only thing that Townsend Movement clearly accomplished was the passage of pro-Townsend memorials to the U.S. Congress—which neither induced Congress to adopt the Townsend Plan nor helped the aged in California.
Mobilization

9-1947.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dems and others Margin</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>68</td>
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<td>1940</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-4</td>
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<td>-14</td>
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<td>-8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Unfavorable Administrative Context, Targeted Assertive Action: Stopping Liens, 1939}

Political circumstances became somewhat more favorable for the Townsend Movement. The 1938 elections gave the governor's office to the Democrat and former EPIC leader Culbert Olson and provided the Democrats a majority in the Assembly, but they remained shy by six votes of controlling the Senate. This resulted in the failure of Olson's "New Deal for California," which in any case did not call for the augmentation of OAS (Burke 1953). What is more, county boards were actively fighting the liberal administration of OAS, and they were backed by the state's Supreme Court. Thus despite gains, the political situation was not entirely favorable for the aged, especially in administrative matters.

At this time, however, the Townsend Movement began to contest specific aspects of California's Old-Age Security Law and in an increasingly assertive manner. In 1939 Townsendites marched on county boards in both Los Angeles and San Francisco, protesting their enforcement of liens for OAS pensions (Putnam 1970:69-70; O'Byrne 1953: 40, 42-43). These protests were in line with their idea that OAS should provide pensions as a right to citizens rather than as a pauper's dole and drew attention to the boards' policy on liens. Also, the Movement for the first time sent to the capital lobbyists strictly devoted to California old-age issues. In 1940 the Movement sought to place an initiative on the ballot to amend the California constitution to outlaw liens as well as to make sweeping changes in OAS.

Although the initiative did not make the ballot, the bid for change likely had an impact. At the start of the 1940 legislative session Olson asked for the repeal of the lien provision. Two repeal propositions passed by a more than half a million votes. The Movement was most likely responsible for placing the lien issue on the political agenda in 1940. It happened despite the fact that Olson was hoping to avoid pension issues that session. But the movement continued to pressure the county boards, which in turn pressured the governor and the legislature, joined by the Townsendites. The Movement also helped this change to pass as it mobilized its members through its newsletter in favor of the repeal campaign (Putnam 1970:119, 123-24).

\textbf{Unfavorable Legislative Context, Targeted Assertive Action: The Impact of the Baby Townsend Campaigns of the 1940s}

Although the amendment reduced the power of county boards and made the administration of pensions more favorable to the aged, the political situation took a turn for the worse after the elections of 1940 and 1942, when a Republican was elected governor, and Democratic representation in the legislature dropped. By 1943, the Townsend Movement stepped up its pressure at the state level and demanded the passage of "baby" Townsend Plans. These called for $60 per month for all citizens 60 years old and older. By 1944 the Movement had put the "Sixty-after-Sixty" initiatives before the voters in Arizona, Washington, and Oregon, as well as in California. The initiatives lost in each state; in California there were about two million opposed and one million in favor (Holtzman 1963: 193-98). Initiative drives were also mounted later in California and in Oregon, but neither was victorious.

All the same, augmentations in old-age pensions occurred in the wake of these bids. In 1943, as the drive began, California adopted legislation that improved OAS in several ways. It raised the maximum grant from $40 to $50, further reduced the responsibility of relatives to support the aged, increased the amount of personal property a recipient could own, and provided that the state pay five-sixths of non-federal costs, up from one-half (California Department of Social Welfare 1943:5-7). California's average grant jumped more than $10 per month, putting it at the top of all states. By 1945, California's rank in terms of
old-age coverage improved to seventeenth (U.S. Social Security Board 1946). In 1947, the maximum benefit was raised to $60. In the wake of the baby Townsend mobilizations, California OAS was altered in the direction of the plan, despite their failures.

**STRATEGIES AND CONTEXTS: TWO MOST SIMILAR SYSTEM COMPARISONS**

To appraise our arguments further we make some comparisons across states of the Union. Each provides a "most similar systems" design (Przeworski and Teune 1970) in which many potential causal factors are held relatively constant. In this way we can take advantage of variance in what we claim to be explanatory conditions, to ascertain whether they influence the object of explanation—old-age pensions (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). We examine all states that were similar in the following ways. Each state had a relatively strong Townsend Movement (Amenta and Zylan 1991). Also, each was part of a political system that was not under-democratized or patronage-oriented, structural political conditions that have been found to dampen collective action of the less well-off (Amenta et al. 1992). Within this group, we are provided two sorts of comparisons. The first is during the Movement’s early years, in which it followed relatively unassertive strategies in varying political contexts. The other comparison is during the 1940s—in states with unfavorable political contexts, but in which the Movement employed different strategies.

**Minimal Action, Favorable and Unfavorable Legislative Contexts, 1934-1939**

At first the Townsend Movement did not carry out specific plans of action to improve state old-age assistance programs. Because we expect minimally assertive collective action to have an effect only in favorable political circumstances, we would expect positive effects from Townsend mobilization only in those states. In these comparisons we include only those states in structurally favorable situations with strong Townsend Movements and with data on functioning old-age pension programs in 1934—the first year of the Townsend Movement and the year before the Social Security Act. In some cases, Democrats controlled the government (Colorado, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, and Wyoming), and in other cases (California and New Hampshire) they did not (Burnham 1984). We expect better results from those states with Democrats in power (upper part of figure 2), as we expect the minimal action strategy to work in favorable political contexts and not in unfavorable ones (lower part of figure 2).

For the two sets of states we compared the average benefit as a percentage of the state’s per capita income in 1934 and in 1939 (U.S. Social Security Board 1935, 1940; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1935, 1940), the year in which the Townsend Movement began to pay more attention to the state level. For the two states without favorable regimes in power during the 1935-1938 period, the average old-age benefit prior to the Townsend Movement was 47.1 percent of the state’s per capita income. By 1939, this figure had increased only to 52.6 percent—or a 5.5 percent increase. By contrast, the five states with Democratic or third-party regimes in power saw their benefit levels jump from 27.4 percent of per capita income to 53.3 percent—a much more substantial increase. The states with strong Townsend Movements and Democratic regimes also saw greater increases than those with merely Democratic regimes alone.

**Unfavorable Legislative Contexts, Assertive and Less Assertive Strategies, 1940-1946**

In the 1940s strategies varied more greatly. In only some states were there drives for baby Townsend initiatives. As was the case for the previous comparison, we started with
Mobilization

.946). In 1947, the send mobilizations, ures.

SYSTEM

across states of the June 1970) in which can take advantage whether they influence 1994. We examine by strong Townsend polity that was not hat have been found ihtin this group, we arly years, in which he other comparison which the Movement

4-1939

of action to improve a collective action to positive effects from lude only those states s and with data on send Movement and called the government cases (California and its from those states nimaal action strategy per part of figure 2). a percentage of the rd 1935, 1940; U.S. movement began to pay le regimes in power Townsend Movement had increased only to Democratic or third-of per capita income th strong Townsend those with merely

izes, 1940-1946

were there drives for ison, we started with

Political Mediation and the Townsend Movement states that had strong Townsend Movements and political systems that were not under-democratized or patronage-oriented. This time, though, we include only those states without favorable regimes in power in the years immediately before and after the initiatives (Burnham 1984). In short, each state was in lower portion of figure 2, but strategies varied between more and less assertive. The three states (California, Oregon, and Washington) with initiatives are juxtaposed to the seven similar states without initiative drives (Colorado, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Wyoming). We would expect better results in those states with the assertive action.

To address the impact of initiatives amid such unfavorable circumstances we compare across the two groups of states their average OAA pension (as a percentage of per capita income) in 1940 and 1941, just before the initiatives, and the same figures in 1946, in the aftermath of the drives (U.S. Social Security Board 1941, 1942, 1947; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1941, 1942, 1947). The evidence indicates that the baby Townsend initiatives may have boosted the average pension. Beforehand, the three states that were to have initiative campaigns had slightly more generous pensions than the seven states that did not. The average OAA pension was 35.6 percent of per capita income in the seven states and decreased slightly to 35.5 percent of per capita income by 1946. In the three otherwise similar states with initiative drives, however, the average pension increased from 31.7 percent of per capita income to 42.4 percent—more than a 10 percentage-point increase.

EXPLAINING OLD-AGE PENSION COVERAGE IN CALIFORNIA COUNTIES

We also appraise the impact of the Townsend Movement by employing inferential statistical methods on ecological units in which it contended. This allows us to examine the impact of the Movement while controlling for other potential influences on the collective benefits sought by it (Snyder and Kelly 1976; Cohn 1993). Our unit of analysis is the California county. The county boards of supervisors appointed and oversaw administrators who assessed applicants’ income and need. Counties were also responsible for a significant part of the funding of OAS. Below we examine the degree to which OAS covered the aged population—an issue related to eligibility criteria and demands of the Townsend Movement.

Our reasoning in these analyses is as follows. We want to compare the impact of the Townsend Movement on coverage before 1940 with its impact afterwards. We do not expect very strong Movement effects on OAS coverage in the first period, because it did not contest OAS systematically or assertively until the end of the 1930s—though the political situation called for such action. We expect a much stronger impact of the movement’s bolder and more focused campaigns of the early and middle 1940s, also an unfavorable political situation.

For each dependent measure, we first estimated (using SPSS for Windows 8.0) a model addressing the potential impact of the Townsend Movement and then a model including the Townsend measure and measures suggested by literature on welfare states (Amenta 1993). In each model we include a lagged dependent measure, to ascertain whether the determinants had an impact on the change in coverage. In each model we also include socioeconomic control measures. For each dependent measure we then estimate a final model by including each of the measures with significant and interpretable coefficients in the preliminary regressions and then eliminating measures that did not add to the explained variance when adjusted for lost degrees of freedom. We then run regression diagnostics on the pared-down models. We examine Townsend Movement measures simultaneously with other measures that might influence social policy outcomes in order to ascertain whether the movement had a significant impact on coverage net of these other potential influences.

For our dependent measure we employ the coverage of the OAS pensions as recipients divided by the population over 65 (California Department of Social Welfare
1940[a]). We examine coverage in 1940 and in 1946—after the 1940 anti-liaison provisions and the 1943 legislation, and the 1944 Townsend initiative. Our initial measure of Townsend mobilization is based on the “credits” or dues sent to the California office for each Townsend club in California in 1940 as a share of the county population (Mink 1959, box 133). This is the only available and relevant information for this period. For the regression concerning coverage in 1940, we employ as a lagged dependent measure coverage in 1934, the first year of the Townsend Movement’s existence. For the later period, we employ 1940 coverage as a lagged dependent measure. As for socioeconomic control measures, we employ the average monthly rent in 1940 (ICPSR [a]), as a measure of need, old-age assistance was a means-tested program. We also measure the percentage of the aged as the fraction of the population over 65 (ICPSR [b]), which may have either a positive or negative effect. Also we measure a number of potentially independent variables, including standard political influences suggested by the welfare-state literature. These measures include ones tapping political institutions, partisanship, and previous policies related to OAS, as well as other social movements.2

Old-Age Security Coverage in 1940 and 1946: Regression Results and Discussion

The initial regressions on the coverage of OAS in 1940 show little impact of the Townsend Movement (see table 3). As model 1 indicates, the standardized coefficient for the Townsend mobilization measure of club credits is nearly zero when entered at the same time as the socioeconomic control measures and the lagged dependent measure. Model 2 also includes a number of potential determinants of social spending policy, as gleaned from the social policy literature. Of these, only voting rights is significant at the .05 level or better. Although the coefficient for the Townsend measure becomes positive and somewhat larger, it is not significant. Model 3, produced by eliminating insignificant measures from model 2 in a stepwise fashion, includes only the voting measure, the socioeconomic control measures, and the lagged dependent measure. Thus the results indicate that Townsend Movement did not have an independent impact on OAS coverage in 1940. Yet these results support rather than contradict our political mediation thesis. We expect that mobilization will have an impact only if challengers engage in appropriate collective action—which was not the case for the Movement in the 1930s.

We also appraised the impact of the Movement in the 1940s, by measuring OAS coverage in 1946. In this period we expect a positive impact of Townsend mobilization and collective action on changes in OAS coverage; the political conditions of the times called for assertive Townsend activity focused on OAS and the Movement engaged in such action. Because of that, our measure of the Townsend Movement includes more than just membership. In these models we employed a measure of Townsend Movement activity that

2The first is voting rights, an institutional measure which addresses the ability of everyday people to have their voices heard. We calculate the natural log of voters in the 1934 gubernatorial election as a percentage of the population over 21 (ICPSR [c]). We expect that the higher scores indicate a greater ability to vote (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1975: 1087–99), and the literature suggests it will have a positive effect on OAS coverage. Democratic party strength, a political partisanship measure, is calculated as registered Democratic voters as a share of all registered voters (California State Department 1932–1946) and is expected by the literature to have a positive effect. We also examine the impact of state policies on OAS coverage by measuring per capita spending on old-age homes in 1932, which is expected to have a positive effect. The literature suggests that other movements might boost social spending policy. For the labor movement, we calculate the total union dues per capita in 1940 (California State Federation of Labor: Officers’ Reports and Proceedings of the 35th to 44th Annual Conventions). We also measure the support for the 1938 Ham and Eggs initiative (Retirement Life Payments), which called for weekly payments of $30 in scrip to each qualified unemployed California over 50 (Pinner et al. 1959: 4–5; Putnam 1970: 94–100), by calculating the votes in favor as a share of votes cast (California State Department 1932–1946).
Mobilization

Table 3: Regression of OAS Recipients as a Proportion of Population 65 Years and Older in 1940 (Coverage) on Selected Independent Measures Across California Counties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Measure</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Townsend Movement:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townsend Mobilization (Credits Per Capita, 1940)</td>
<td>-.006 (t=-0.07)</td>
<td>.089 (t=0.97)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Welfare State Literature:</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting Rights, 1940</td>
<td>.376** (t=3.14)</td>
<td>.404** (t=3.62)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending on Old-Age Homes per Capita, 1932</td>
<td>.092 (t=1.10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party Strength, 1940</td>
<td>-.079 (t=-0.56)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Support for Ham and Eggs Initiative, 1938</td>
<td>-.090 (t=-1.01)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Dues per Capita, 1940</td>
<td>.017 (t=0.20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS Coverage, 1934</td>
<td>.338** (t=3.34)</td>
<td>.227* (t=1.84)</td>
<td>.203* (t=2.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rent, 1940</td>
<td>-.547** (t=-5.37)</td>
<td>-.453** (t=-4.27)</td>
<td>-.445** (t=-4.64)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent Aged, 1940</td>
<td>-.350** (t=-2.90)</td>
<td>-.314** (t=-3.41)</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

F-statistic 27.316 13.066 30.255
Adjusted R-squared .585 .660 .676

Notes: *p < .05  **p < .01. All coefficients are standardized (t-tests in parentheses). All tests are one-tailed, except for Percent Aged, which is two-tailed (see text). N=57.

included its resource mobilization, as in the first period. For this later period, however, we also include information on self-reported membership (Mink 1959) and on collective action through the Townsend Party and initiative.3

3 The self-reported membership data are available only for the period after 1940. Our measures of collective action include registered Townsend party voters as a share of registered voters in 1940 and the percentage voting in favor of the 1944 baby Townsend (Retirement Payments, Gross Income Tax) initiative, which called for $60 monthly payments to citizens who were over 60 or disabled and a 3 percent gross income tax (California State Department
Table 4. Regression of OAS Recipients as a Proportion of Population 65 Years and Older in 1946 (Coverage) on Selected Independent Measures Across California Counties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Measure</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Townsend Movement</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townsend Movement Activity, 1941-44</td>
<td>.134**</td>
<td>.151**</td>
<td>.168**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(t=2.67)</td>
<td>(t=2.69)</td>
<td>(t=3.28)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welfare State Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voting Rights, 1942</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.037</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(t=0.70)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democratic Party Strength, 1944</td>
<td></td>
<td>.107*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(t=2.14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Union Dues per Capita, 1942</td>
<td>-.100</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(t=-1.68)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS Coverage, 1940</td>
<td>.835**</td>
<td>.836**</td>
<td>.826**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(t=11.72)</td>
<td>(t=12.12)</td>
<td>(t=11.94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Rent, 1940</td>
<td>-.108*</td>
<td>-.069</td>
<td>-.123*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(t=-1.49)</td>
<td>(t=-0.85)</td>
<td>(t=-1.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Aged, 1944</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(t=0.68)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F-statistic                           | 123.688    | 58.771     | 100.163    |
Adjusted R-squared                    | .868       | .878       | .876       |

Notes: *p < .05  **p < .01. All coefficients are standardized (t-tests in parentheses). All tests are one tailed, except for Percent Aged, which is two-tailed (see text). N=57.

Model 1 of table 4 is similar to its counterpart in table 3 in including a Townsend measure, socioeconomic control measures, and the lagged dependent measure. This time, however, the Townsend measure has a positive and significant impact. What is more, model 2 indicates that the Townsend measure continues to have a positive and significant impact despite the presence of other potentially explanatory measures suggested by the welfare-state literature. Among the welfare-state measures the only significant one is the Democratic party

1932-1946. We created an index measure which was the factor score for average self-reported membership in 1941 and 1942, average club credits per capita for 1941 through 1944, Townsend party registration for 1940, and votes in favor of the 1944 Townsend Amendment. The variables were weighted .330, .344, .311, and .258, respectively. The factor had an eigenvalue of 2.56 and explained 64 percent of the variance.
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measure. In model 3, which results from eliminating one by one the insignificant measures in the previous model, the Townsend activity measure remains significant.\footnote{We ran a number of diagnostics on this final model, ascertaining whether it violated certain assumptions standard to OLS about the error term. These diagnostics included testing the models for the presence of significant spatial autocorrelation and, if necessary, correcting or adjusting for it using the SPACESTAT (VI.03, R17) program (Anselin 1993). Significant spatial autocorrelation might have a substantive interpretation, for counties may not have acted independently, as the OLS model assumes, but may have been influenced by their neighbors. Diagnostics suggested that spatial autocorrelation was present, and we ran a spatial error model (see also Doreian 1980) to correct for it. Although the lambda coefficient is positive and significant at the .05 level and the model is better fitting, according to the Akaike Information Criteria (Anselin 1993, chap. 29), the results do not otherwise change very greatly. The coefficient for the Townsend measure remains significant at the .01 level (results not shown, but available on request).} In short, the regression results support our arguments. The Townsend Movement had little effect on old-age eligibility in the 1930s, when it was not engaged in collective action appropriate to a relatively unfavorable political situation. In the early and mid-1940s, assertive Townsend action in unfavorable circumstances had the expected positive impact.

CONCLUSION

Our arguments and results bear on several issues concerning the impact of state-oriented challengers. We argue that their impact is politically mediated. Under some political institutional conditions, notably restrictions on democratic practices and the entrenchment of patronage-oriented political parties, the impact of state-oriented challengers is likely to be greatly dampened. Even when polities are open, however, specific collective action strategies are likely to work better under some political conditions rather than others. Collective action is more likely to work when a reform-oriented regime is in power and when state bureaucrats in charge of social spending are powerful. In such situations, we expect that mobilization and mildly assertive strategies of action to produce collective benefits for the group represented by the challenger. Challengers, however, are more likely to face more difficult circumstances. Under these conditions, we expect mobilization in itself to be necessary, but not sufficient for effecting collective benefits. A focused and assertive collective action program also is necessary to win collective benefits.

Our examination of the Townsend Movement supports these claims. At the national level in 1935, the Townsend Movement faced a favorable political situation and its relatively high mobilization and limited protest was enough to increase collective benefits for the aged in social legislation. In California, a state with a relatively open polity, the Movement had many members at the end of 1935 and a substantial and fairly constant number of them were in California through the mid-1940s. But during its first several years this mobilization did not translate into the enactment of the Townsend Plan or into great gains in California's old age security program. Yet the Townsend Movement began to have a greater effect in the late 1930s and through most of the 1940s, when it was engaged in more assertive and targeted collective action concerning Californian OAS and politics. The Movement had a great influence in removing liens from the property of pensioners, thus making it more likely that the elderly would apply for old-age assistance. What is more, the failed baby Townsend Plan campaigns resulted in gains in average old-age pensions in California and in three other states.

The quantitative results examining the coverage of OAS pensions across California counties also provide support for our claims. In the period before 1940, the Townsend Movement in California did not spend much effort contesting California OAS, and the regression results indicate accordingly that Movement resource mobilization resulted in no significant impact on OAS coverage. In the period between 1940 and 1946, the Townsend

\[ .168^{**} \]
\[ (t=3.28) \]

\[ .107^* \]
\[ (t=2.14) \]

\[ .826^{**} \]
\[ (t=11.94) \]

\[ -.123^* \]
\[ (t=-1.73) \]

\[ 100.163 \]

\[ .876 \]

\[ \text{All tests are one tailed, except} \]

in including a Townsend lent measure. This time, ct. What is more, model re and significant impact ested by the welfare-state e is the Democratic party
Movement remained in politically unfavorable circumstances, but engaged in bolder strategies that addressed OAS specifically. The regression analyses accordingly found that changes in OAS coverage were significantly related to assertive collective action by the movement.

Our arguments and results are of course limited. First, they are limited to impacts of a specific type of challenging activity: state-oriented challenges in largely democratic political systems demanding collective benefits through public policy. Yet state-oriented challengers are important, public spending benefits can be substantial, and many challengers not mainly state-oriented have some state-oriented goals. Second, the Townsend Movement is only one case, and not all of our theoretical claims can be examined by it. Although we have gone some distance in theorizing the impact of different forms of collective action in some standard political circumstances, further theorizing is needed. Our work here suggests that scholars need to think more seriously and systematically about the potential impact of different forms of collective action in varied political and other contexts. Collective action is likely to vary in its effectiveness according to contexts.

To examine arguments about the impact of movements, future research efforts will have to address methodological issues similar to the ones addressed here and devise strategies to ascertain the impact of the activity of challengers in different circumstances (Snyder and Kelly 1979; Giugni 1998). We employed historical comparisons, similar case comparisons, and examined outcomes across a number of ecological units. Probably the greatest gains will come from combining different sorts of analyses.

REFERENCES


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