

POLITICAL ACTIVISM AND DEFERRED AGENCY

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
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Abstract

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This dissertation explores the apparent discrepancy between concern and political action as an instance of what I refer to as *deferred agency*, by which I mean the separation of the perception of a problem from the recognition of it as an occasion for self-organized action. I examine the deferral of agency through the theoretical prism of the work of Jürgen Habermas, comparing and contrasting his approach with that of social movement theory, postmodernism, and ethnomethodology. I explore this apparent discrepancy through the analysis of the data provided by nine in-depth interviews, using the analysis of one interview as a template to compare and contrast the other eight respondents' accounts of the relationship between their concerns about global issues and their responses to them. My analysis suggests that significant factors influencing the deferral of agency in situations of potential action may include the individual's development of the capacity for independent moral judgment; the tendency to delay or defer decisions about whether to engage in political action under the complex, often uncertain conditions of modern life; the extent to which an individual's orientation towards such situations is characterized by existential or expressive, as opposed to goal-oriented (or *instrumentally-rational*) value commitments; the existence of a

personal connection with others who already are involved in efforts to address the problems the individual is concerned about; and the individual's biographical availability for involvement in such issues. Through a detailed analysis of the accounts which my respondents give of their decision-making processes with regard to situations of potential action, I explore the extent to which behavior that often appears to be non-rational behavior on the part of individual social actors can, under some interpretations of what actors say and do, be understood as *rational*. What makes that behavior rational is that, in terms of most of the data analyzed here, my respondents' exercise of political agency is not absent, but rather deferred; that is, my respondents appear to be no less "active" than those who already are participating in social movement organizations or activities, and thus already are committed to a particular mode of political involvement.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I. OVERVIEW

This dissertation is concerned with the apparent discrepancy between Americans' awareness, knowledge, and concern about what I characterize as global *threats* – threats to human survival and the continuing capacity of the Earth's environment to support human and other forms of sentient life – and their relative lack of participation in collective efforts to address these issues through concerted political action. While there has been much research in sociology, political science, and related disciplines exploring the factors affecting the mobilization into and participation of individuals in social movements and other forms of collective action, much of this research has assumed, implicitly or explicitly, that the *lack* of participation by other individuals can be explained, variously, by some combination of (1) the absence of certain social, structural, or ideological factors that otherwise would promote conditions favorable to the development of such action, (2) the failure or inadequacy of recruitment efforts by existing organizations or movements, or (3) the inability or unwillingness of some individuals to engage in political action due to certain psychological, personality, or other factors that inhibit their ability to act rationally on the basis of their concerns.

While acknowledging the valuable contributions of the existing literatures on social movements, collective action, and political behavior to an understanding of the factors influencing the recruitment and mobilization of individuals into organized forms of political action, this research seeks to further explore the reasons for this apparent

discrepancy between concern and political action by focusing concretely upon how individuals evaluate and assess their action options and make decisions about whether or not to participate in collective efforts to address such global problems. Some of the key questions explored by this research are: To what extent are individuals' decisions about whether or not to become involved in organizations or movements oriented to addressing these problems based upon *rational* considerations? And, if so, what kind of "rationality" can be attributed to individuals who are aware of and concerned about these problems, but nevertheless do not become involved in such collective efforts?¹

Conversely, if such decisions are not based on rational considerations, what are the nature and sources of the "irrationality" or other disturbing factors that inhibit such actors from acting upon their concerns? My argument below is that, on some interpretations of what my respondents say and do, it is possible to conclude that they are indeed acting rationally; and that this rationality conforms with standard definitions of the concept.²

The key to understanding the apparent discrepancy between concern and political action is the concept, developed in more detail in Chapter 2, of "deferred agency," by which I mean an individual's attitude or orientation towards a situation of potential action that is characterized by a state of concerned attention to and awareness of a problem and its potential consequences, but which awareness and concern does not result in a decision by that individual to *act* on that knowledge or insight in order to address it. This orientation is analogous to an active, expectant "waiting and seeing" in situations or circumstances that an individual perceives as complex or uncertain, or in which he/she is not able to identify an appropriate course of action.

In my review of the sociological and related literature pertinent to this issue, I find that the literature most relevant to a further exploration of this question is that of the Frankfurt School and critical theory, particularly as interpreted and developed through the work of Jürgen Habermas over the past forty years. The purpose of the present research is to demonstrate the efficacy of a modified Habermasian approach to the above questions; i.e., to an understanding of why social actors appear to act “non-politically” in situations where one would expect them to act politically. An application of the theoretical insights provided by Habermas and critical theory more generally to this research requires an *interpretive* method that seeks to *understand* how individuals (1) conceptualize global issues and problems they are concerned about, and (2) make decisions about whether or not to *act* on those concerns. I perform this research in a non-inductive, illustrative way, through the analysis and interpretation of data provided by extensive, in-depth interviews with nine individuals, chosen because of their concerns about and/or experience with attempts to address such global problems, as well as their ability to describe that experience. In utilizing the rich data provided by these interviews, my aim is to demonstrate the potential fruitfulness and cogency of the theoretical framework mentioned above, and described in detail in Chapter 2. In other words, the efficacy of that framework can be assessed in terms of whether it provides an interpretive approach to understanding as *rational* individual behavior which otherwise would appear to be irrational.

II. ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

Having briefly introduced the issues to be explored by this dissertation, summarized the theoretical approach I propose to bring to bear upon those issues, placed

that theoretical approach in the context of existing research, and suggested its potential contributions to that research, the chapters that follow develop this approach in more detail, and then present, analyze, and evaluate the data collected through the interviews in order to assess the usefulness of that approach to an understanding of what I have termed deferred agency. In Chapter 2, I describe in more detail the issues to be addressed by this research; explore those issues more thoroughly in the context of the existing sociological literature on social movements and collective behavior; place the problem of deferred agency in the context of the theoretical work of the Frankfurt School and, more specifically, that of Habermas and some of his critics; and, based upon this discussion, suggest the outlines of a theoretical framework that can be brought to bear in an analysis of the problem of deferred agency. In Chapter 3, I discuss the methodology and research protocol I employed in selecting my respondents and conducting the interviews³; present, analyze, and summarize the results of my interview with Rhona; and present some tentative conclusions that provide the basis for a comparative analysis of the data provided by my other eight respondents. In Chapter 4, I present in narrative form summaries of the other eight interviews. Finally, in Chapter 5, I selectively analyze and compare the data provided by those interviews in terms of the categories of analysis suggested by my analysis of Rhona's interview in Chapter 3; evaluate the usefulness of the theoretical perspective developed in Chapter 2 for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of deferred agency; present some tentative conclusions; and suggest some areas for future research.

¹ For the purposes of this research, I presuppose that human beings are tendentially rational; that is, that they will, in most situations, attempt to approximate an ideal of rationality in action despite, or in response to, conditions which are uncertain, ambiguous, or unclear in terms of the available options for action or their possible consequences.

² It should be noted at the outset that the sort of rationality being propounded here is not the “rationality” of rational choice theory, but rather resembles what Amartya Sen (2002) calls “reasonableness in choice behavior.” For Sen, a *rational* action is one that, given one’s assessment of the relative efficacy of various options, (1) corresponds to his/her reasoned beliefs about the nature of the world, and (2) is informed by ends that are equally reasonable by some standard.

³ A digital copy of my interview schedule was provided to the publisher along with the digital copy of this dissertation, and may be available from UMI Dissertation Publishing at http://www.proquest.com/products_umi/dissertations.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I. INTRODUCTION

Most Americans are aware, to some extent, of the continuing dangers posed to human survival by the existence of weapons of mass destruction, most prominent among these being nuclear weapons. Moreover, in the wake of the horrific events of September 11, 2001 the continuing tragedy unfolding in Iraq and the larger Middle East, and their larger geopolitical, domestic, and human consequences, there is growing awareness of the vulnerability of the United States to additional acts of mass violence, at home as well as abroad, from a variety of sources: further attacks such as those that took place in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania against (and by means of) civilian airliners; the possible use of chemical and biological weapons against civilian populations; and perhaps even, in the future, the detonation of a nuclear device on American soil by an individual or group seeking to inflict maximum death and destruction in order to further certain regional, geopolitical, or ideological objectives.

Most often lost amidst the cacophony of official voices, media pundits, and talk-show hosts warning, for example, of the growing dangers posed to this country by future acts of terrorism, escalating political and military tensions between India and Pakistan, or by American withdrawal from Iraq (in the context of a growing insurgency and the precipitous decline in support for an American military presence there), is the fact that the United States, the sole remaining military superpower after the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the Soviet Union from the geopolitical landscape, still maintains

the largest nuclear arsenal in the world.¹ Meanwhile, public concern about the possession or possible acquisition of nuclear weapons or weapons-grade materials by "third-world" states such as North Korea and Iran, or by domestic terrorist groups or individuals with their own political agendas, have only been heightened by recent events.

Similarly, over the past four decades, Americans have become increasingly aware of and concerned about threats to the global environment, and their implications for the continued habitability of the planet. The dangers to the planetary ecosystem posed by such interrelated phenomena as global warming, the deterioration of the earth's ozone layer, and the destruction of the rainforests have increasingly become the foci of media attention and public debate (though perhaps not to the extent warranted by the seriousness of these developments). At the same time, concern about more immediate threats to natural and human environments has grown, as evidenced by public reaction to events such as the Chernobyl disaster, the massive oil spill and ensuing ecological devastation of Prince William Sound by the Exxon Valdez, the Cassini space mission, and continuing public health concerns generated by the release of toxic substances into the air, ground, and water, problems of nuclear and other toxic waste disposal, and, more recently, the genetic engineering of some of the basic elements of our food supply.

However, largely neglected amidst recent discussions of these problems, and of possible ways to address them, has been the apparent lack of involvement by most Americans in public discourse and political action on these and other critical global issues. Indeed, studies of political activism and social movement participation in the peace and antinuclear movements since the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union give the impression of a downward trend in citizen involvement, with

the notable exceptions of the peace movements that sprang up in response to the build-up to the 1991 Persian Gulf War, and, more recently, in response to the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and its horrific aftermath. On the other hand, Americans' participation in the modern environmental movement, which waxed and waned through the end of the past century, recently has seen a marked increase (apparently due, at least in part, to the increasing media and public attention to and discussion of the dangers of global warming and prospective worldwide climate change). Nevertheless, overt participation in organizations oriented toward addressing these problems appears to have remained at levels far below that which one reasonably might expect, given the imminence and seriousness of these threats to the global ecosphere, and their likely consequences.²

There are a number of possible explanations for the apparent paucity of citizen political engagement with these issues that immediately come to mind. For example, given the immensity of these problems, many people may have doubts about whether any actions they conceivably could take would make any kind of significant difference in addressing them. Or they may doubt that there is anything that *can* be done to address such large-scale problems. Others may believe that such problems are best left in the hands of their elected leaders and representatives (and perhaps even justify their own lack of involvement by explaining that “others” are doing something about them). Also, there is the tendency, recognized in the literature on rational choice, that people generally tend not to act in situations which they regard as too complex, or where there are no clearly identifiable options for action.³ And there is the extensive literature on individuals' responses to situations of stress and threat, as well as the literature on people's

psychological and behavioral responses to nuclear and environmental dangers, which suggest, among other things, that individuals may employ psychological defense mechanisms such as repression, denial, displacement, and rationalization to avoid consciously confronting such formidable social problems, and the fears and anxieties they arouse.⁴ Finally, on a more mundane, everyday level, there are many practical, often overlapping factors that can inhibit individuals' involvement in larger social and political issues: lack of time; other, more immediate responsibilities in one's life, such as those entailed by work, family, or other personal and professional commitments; and the absence of a social context within which such involvement can be nurtured and developed.

In a related vein, some of the sociological literature over the past three decades has pointed to a general decline in Americans' participation in community, civic, and political affairs in the aftermath of the political and cultural ferment of the 1960's and early 1970's (as well as, more broadly, since the end of World War II), accounting for this decline in various ways. Flacks (1988), for example, discusses Americans' decreased participation in movements for social and political change since the 1960s in terms of generational differences, the lack of a coherent oppositional culture, and the absence of catalyzing issues (as, for example, opposition to American involvement in Vietnam) that would have the potential to motivate large numbers of concerned citizens across a wider political spectrum. Bellah et al (1985) suggest that conflicting feelings about personal and family life, as opposed to involvement in the wider community, as well as difficulties in finding a "language" with which to express often latent or unarticulated concerns about community, society and larger social and political questions, are factors which inhibit

civic participation. Putnam (2000) discusses how changes in work, family structure, age, suburban life, television, computers, women's roles and other factors have contributed to this decline. And Abercrombie et al (1980), in the context of a broad-ranging critique of what they call the "dominant ideology thesis" in Marxist theory, argue that it is the requirements and constraints that the functioning of a modern market economy imposes on subordinate classes, rather than the imposition of a set of powerful, coherent beliefs on them by a dominant class, that serves to inhibit the development of opposition movements. Unfortunately, there has been little consensus within this literature as to the reasons for this general decline in social and political participation.

However, all of these possible explanations of the lack of overt political involvement by most Americans in collective efforts to address the threats posed by nuclear proliferation and environmental degradation (and, indeed, efforts to address other global social and political issues as well), while plausible and in many cases necessary to an understanding of this phenomenon, are not adequate to a more comprehensive, systematic theorization of the apparent discrepancy between public concern and political participation. There is the need for a conceptual framework that can both capture and foreground this discrepancy, on the level of the individual social actor as well as that of larger collectivities.

This research focuses upon the apparent discrepancy between public awareness of and concern about global environmental and nuclear dangers, on the one hand, and the lack of political participation by most Americans on these critical issues, on the other, as an expression of what I will refer to as *deferred agency* by which I mean the separation of the perception of a problem from the recognition of it as an occasion for self-organized

action. In such a case, agency can be said to be deferred. The deferral of agency with regard to nuclear weapons and environmental issues will be examined as a particular instance of a more general lack of political involvement by Americans in processes of public dialogue, consensus formation and political action on contemporary social and political issues. This focus on the concept of “agency” highlights the contingent character of the integration of a subjective recognition, understanding of, and concern about a social or political issue with a practical orientation to action that is necessary in order for an individual to self-consciously engage in political activity.

Of course, the concept of “agency” has a long and varied history, and has been defined and utilized in various intellectual and disciplinary contexts such as philosophy, political theory, sociology, feminist theory, and postmodernism. While the concept of agency to be employed here to an important extent shares a common theoretical heritage with each of these, it needs to be distinguished from them as well. For the purposes of this research, I am defining “agency” as that potentiality within human beings that consists in a self-recognition of one’s capacity to *act* to address a perceived need, problem, or desire. From the perspective of the individual actor, this capacity also entails the related awareness that *other* actors share this capacity, and that therefore they are available to the actor as potential *co-participants* in any considered course of action. More specifically, I am defining *political* agency as the recognition of one’s ability to act in the public sphere⁵ to address a perceived societal issue or problem. That is to say, what I mean by political agency is action with regard to a particular type of issue in which the imaginable possibility of that action being effective depends upon the actor’s anticipation that others already are (or will be) acting with him to address that issue.⁶

Deferred political agency, in this sense, refers to a situation in which an individual's perception of a social or political problem is not integrated with such a self-recognition of her capacity and desire to act in conjunction with others.⁷

Given such a definition, and this way of posing the question at hand, we can refine the theoretical issue of the apparent discrepancy between individual concern and political action with regard to global threats in the following terms: Why is it that individuals often *don't* act politically in situations in which they perceive these global problems and the need to address them? Of course, implicit in this way of posing the question are at least four assumptions:

(1) That it is *rational* in such circumstances for individuals to act to address these problems; (2) that there are *actions* that conceivably could be taken with regard to these publicly presented and perceived dangers that would constitute rational behavioral responses to them; (3) that, furthermore, the decision-making process which extends from an individual's perception of a danger, to deliberation about his possible responses, to engagement in some form of political action oriented to addressing that danger can be conceived of as a *rational* process; and (4) a particular conception of what constitutes political action.⁸ For the purposes of this research, I am interested in those forms of political action that find expression outside of, and often in opposition to, existing political institutions, and at the same time are oriented towards influencing their decisions and actions. In other words, I am focusing upon forms of extra-institutional political *activism*, or those forms of action that involve the self-organization of individuals and groups into *movements* which challenge existing structures of political power and authority, and are oriented towards effecting significant social and political change.

Activism, in this sense, involves a step beyond traditional forms of political participation, e.g. voting, lobbying one's legislators, writing a letter, etc. It involves committing oneself, as an individual and as a member of a collectivity, to addressing fundamental structures of political, social, and/or economic power in order to affect broad public policy questions. In this vein, one might, for example, provisionally define as *activism* those individual and collective responses to perceived nuclear and/or environmental dangers that are oriented towards influencing or affecting public policy and decision-making with regard to them, and that find expression from outside existing structures of social and political authority.

I explore the nature, origins, and cultural-political significance of the phenomenon of deferred agency through the prism of the theoretical work of Jürgen Habermas. Habermas' work offers one of the most fertile, multidimensional, but relatively untapped sources of theoretical understanding and insight into the dynamics of this phenomenon. At the same time, the unprecedented, world-historical significance of the dangers these global developments pose to human survival affords social theorists, political activists, and ordinary citizens a unique opportunity to rethink the foundations of our ostensibly democratic political culture, and the role and responsibilities of informed citizenship in an increasingly global world society. I believe that Habermas' work provides the most fertile, comprehensive theoretical framework available for just such a rethinking. In addition, I argue that Habermas' *communicative* account of action and rationality, as the conceptual core of his work, provides a basis for connecting two formerly unrelated aspects of that work and, in so doing, lays the groundwork for the application of his overall theoretical framework to an understanding of deferred agency.⁹

I take for granted here that any attempt to understand the multiple sources of individual political behavior, particularly in concrete, empirical cases, is exceedingly complicated, because one is faced with analyzing and interpreting a dynamic, multifaceted configuration of contingent, interlocking factors - psychological, social structural, political, cultural, historical, etc. - which influence such behavior. For the purposes of this research, I simply wish to place the problem of deferred agency in the context of the work of Habermas and the original Frankfurt theorists, as well as sociology more generally, in order to shed some light, in a preliminary fashion, on certain key dimensions of this problem.

Before proceeding to review in more detail some of the sociological literature that bears, directly or indirectly, upon the phenomenon of deferred agency, it is important to clarify the term “rationality” as it is being used here. For the purposes of this research, I define as *rational* the ability to think and act in ways that are consistent with one’s needs, desires, or goals. Of course, there are many accounts of rationality, variously discussed in the philosophical, social-scientific and other literatures, which would fit under this general definition.¹⁰ For the purposes of this research, my discussion of rationality is limited to *political* rationality, by which (in line with my definition of political agency above) I mean an actor’s reasoning with regard to a situations of potential action on a public issue or problem in which the actor perceives or anticipates that other actors also are (or *will be*) acting collectively to address that issue or problem. In line with this definition, and Habermas’ four types of orientation to action, I want to highlight four distinct types of political rationality¹¹ that are particularly relevant to an analysis of deferred agency:

1. instrumental rationality: rationality oriented toward success, or the achievement of a particular goal or set of objectives (also referred to as strategic, teleological, or purposive rationality);
2. Contextual, or norm-guided rationality: rationality that “conforms to the beliefs and social norms in the context of which it occurs”¹²;
3. Dramaturgical rationality: rationality that is oriented to expressing an actor’s “wishes, feelings, hopes, needs, etc. to which the subject can reflectively relate and selectively represent to others”¹³; and
4. Communicative, or moral-existential rationality: rationality that is “oriented to reaching an understanding” among actors with regard to a “practical situation confronting them, in order to coordinate their actions consensually.”¹⁴ Seen from the perspective of the individual actor, this form of rationality reflects a commitment to act in ways that are consistent with one’s moral values.¹⁵

These types of rationality, while not necessarily exhaustive, will serve as useful analytical tools in the empirical analysis and interpretation presented in Chapter 4.

II. CONCLUSION

As we shall see shortly, there is a hidden "rationality problematic" that undergirds much of the literature on social movements and political activism of the past four decades. While much of this literature, in contrast with older collective behavior and mass society theories, purports to explain involvement in political and social movements on individually or socially rational grounds, there remains a "gap" or lacuna in that literature as regards attempts to link theoretically, much less empirically, the individual and social levels of analysis. This is particularly the case with regard to the central concern of this research. That is, most theoretical attempts to explain, within the sociological literature, how individuals become involved in social and political movements have failed adequately to link the level of individual perceptions of, and knowledge and concerns about, social and political issues with decisions to participate in collective action.¹⁶

Habermas, on the other hand, has made a preliminary attempt to address this

problem much more explicitly by providing a communicative, language-based framework through which issues of rationality and action at both the individual and social (interactive) levels can be understood. Nevertheless, Habermas himself has been criticized for failing to connect the logic of processes of rationality at the interactive level (i.e., the level of communicative *action*) with the logic of processes of structural determination at the level of social *systems*.¹⁷ Section VI will take up in more detail Habermas' communicative account of action and rationality, and show how his overall project, as modified by these and other critiques, nevertheless can still provide a theoretically sophisticated yet promising framework for understanding the phenomenon of political agency and its deferral.

III. "DEFERRED AGENCY" IN SOCIOLOGY: A THEORETICAL LACUNA?

There is a vast theoretical and empirical literature in sociology, as well as related disciplines, which has explored the origins, development, and significance of social and political movements, as well as related questions of the genesis of, and motivating factors involved in, the mobilization of individuals who engage in social and political activism, and collective action more generally. Section IV will review some of this literature in more detail, focusing upon how it theorizes (or *fails* to adequately theorize) the relationship between, on the one hand, individual perceptions of and responses to collective *dangers*¹⁸ (the organization of *motivation*) and, on the other hand, processes of collective mobilization (i.e., the organization of collective *acton*).

However, before proceeding with that literature review, it is crucial to understand that there is a basic analytical problem undergirding any attempt theoretically to address

this relationship within the terms of sociological theory as traditionally defined. That is, apart from the specificities of that literature, the nature of sociological discourse itself poses a basic theoretical limitation upon any attempt adequately to conceptualize the relationship between individual and social (i.e. collective) levels of analysis. The roots of this problem, of course, lie in the historical and theoretical-philosophical circumstances that provided the context from which sociology as a distinct social scientific discipline emerged. It is beyond the scope of the present research to present a detailed account of these developments.¹⁹ For now, suffice it to say that, from its inception, sociology (or, more accurately, *sociologie*, in the native language of its acknowledged founder, Auguste Comte) has defined itself as the science of "society." As such, its primary theoretical and substantive concerns have focused upon that level of analysis constituted by the *social* or *collective* (as opposed to the individual psychological and behavioral) dimensions of human experience. These limitations become more evident as we make a preliminary attempt in what follows to frame, in sociological terms, the relationship between, on the one hand, an individual actor's perceptions of, and beliefs and concerns about, a collective danger (such as that represented by global nuclear weapons proliferation); and his response to that danger with regard to participation in (or abstinence *from*) some form of (collective) action oriented to addressing it.

A. Collective Dangers, Collective Resources, and Political Agency: A Sociological Framework

From a sociological point of view, the relationship between individual perceptions of and responses to the dangers posed to humanity by environmental destruction and nuclear weapons proliferation can be understood in a three-fold manner.²⁰ First (1), one

must consider the relationship between the individual actor²¹ and the collective danger in question. It is clear from numerous studies in sociology, political science, and psychology, as well as from public opinion surveys conducted over the past 40-50 years, that significant numbers of Americans have consistently acknowledged the existence of these collective dangers, as well as their fears and concerns about them. At the same time, the relative seriousness and urgency with which individual citizens have regarded such dangers, as well as the dangers so identified, have varied historically, as well as among individuals.

Second, (2) it is necessary to consider the relationship between the actor and the collective *resources* to which he might turn in order to address the danger in question. These resources may consist in, for example, a petition campaign to abolish nuclear weapons, a public policy organization that lobbies against the destruction of old-growth redwoods, or the activities of full-fledged social movement organizations such as Greenpeace or Peace Action. In each case, these resources are potentially available to the individual as a vehicle for giving expression to or acting upon his concerns with regard to these dangers.

Third (3), one must consider the ability and willingness of individuals to *act* in response to these concerns in concert with others who share them. The capacity for *agency* involves, among other things, (a) a conscious self-recognition of this ability (i.e. one's sense of political efficacy), (b) the ability to relate to and interact with such groups or organizations in order to give practical expression to these concerns, and (c) the ability to assess the potential significance of one's participation in such a collective effort in light of one's considered beliefs, values, and objectives. I will now briefly take up, in turn,

each of the three dimensions of the relationship between individual perceptions of and responses to these dangers highlighted above, in order eventually to advance some tentative hypotheses about the deferral of agency on these issues.

Re (1): To begin with, one must recognize the dual existential status of these dangers. That is, they exist for us simultaneously as both objectively real *and* socially-textually constructed phenomena. To be more precise, it is only in and through the mediation of these dangers as cultural and textual representations and expression(s) (or, in the terms of contemporary structural and poststructural literary criticism, as *signs*) that the empirical realization of the potentialities represented by these dangers can have meaning for *us*. On the one hand, the dangers posed to humanity by the threatened or actual use of nuclear weapons has a demonstrable empirical basis, in the sense that these weapons are physical devices which are scientifically constructed such that their use (i.e., their correct technical deployment and operation) reasonably can be expected to result in massive death and destruction to human and other forms of life that inhabit the material and social environments within which this use occurs. On the other hand, it is obvious that, for most of us, this danger has meaning as an *expectation* of, or *potentiality* for, such death and destruction on a vast scale, rather than as an immediate personal experience or recollection of such. That is, because only a few remaining individuals are alive today who have actually experienced (and survived) an actual atomic blast, this danger can exist for the rest of us *only as* a socially, culturally, and linguistically-constructed and mediated phenomenon.²² Therefore, the meanings which we ascribe to this potentiality are mediated by the particular, idiosyncratic ways in which such dangers are socially and culturally constructed and presented to us through the mass media, as well as by our own

personal experiences, our encounters and discussions with others, the influences of family, friends, and peer groups, and the unpredictable events which form the unique and ever-changing tapestry of our individual life histories.

Notwithstanding the variety of meanings that individuals ascribe to the dangers posed by nuclear weapons and threats to the global environment, and the social, cultural, and psychological factors that influence their perceptions of those dangers, this research uncovers, through the conduct of individual interviews and the analysis of supporting contextual material, interesting evidence that supports the observation that individuals do indeed recognize the existence of these collective dangers, but that, at the same time, this recognition often involves a kind of reasoning which does not easily lend itself to types of action that one might reasonably expect to follow from such recognition and concern. That is, because such dangers are both collective *and* global in character, the threats they pose have meaning for individuals at a level of abstraction that does not appear to be amenable to individual action. These dangers may indeed appear to individuals as addressable at the international level in the form of, for example, arms reduction agreements between states, or even at the national level in the form of federally-mandated carbon dioxide emissions standards. However, I argue, following Habermas, that the increasing separation of processes of public will-formation from those of political decision-making and policy implementation in advanced capitalist societies, which has resulted in the effective exclusion of masses of citizens from participation, has had its social-psychological consequences in the form of feelings of disempowerment, apathy, cynicism and hopelessness among ordinary citizens with regard to their ability to participate effectively in political matters in general, and more specifically to

meaningfully impact processes of public policy decision-making on the global issues with which I am concerned here.

In light of this argument, I hypothesize that, for many individuals, their perceptions of and responses to environmental and nuclear weapons dangers are characterized by a tension or discrepancy between the concern they feel as a result of their recognition of the seriousness of these dangers, and feelings of apathy, fear, political disempowerment, cynicism, and helplessness they experience with regard to engaging in any form of action oriented towards addressing these dangers. This motivational ambivalence thus contributes to a perception of collective dangers which does not easily lend itself to action oriented to addressing them.²³

Re (2): I would hypothesize that most people are aware of, and in many cases are able to offer opinions about, some of the groups and organizations that are oriented to addressing these problems. However, at the same time, and for reasons similar to those just outlined under (1) above, it is often the case that their perceptions of these dangers put individuals at a psychological and practical remove from those resources. For the same reason that the collective and global nature of the dangers to humanity and the planet makes it difficult for some individuals to orient themselves toward possible courses of individual action that could conceivably address these dangers, it is also difficult for those same individuals to identify with, much less make a decision to participate in, the activities of groups or organizations attempting to address these dangers on a *collective* level. This is because a person attempting to rationally appraise a collective danger often has difficulty conceiving of the potential efficacy and significance of her involvement in other than individual, instrumental terms. That is, she will often

weigh her potential behavioral responses to such dangers in terms of whether her involvement in an organized group might contribute to that group's likelihood of being able to address successfully the particular danger at hand. In other words, in evaluating the efficacy of her potential participation in a social movement organization, she may assess the potential value of that involvement in terms of whether her participation in such a collective effort will “make a difference” incrementally in terms of contributing to the organization’s overall effectiveness in addressing the problem.²⁴ Another individual, however, may be able to evaluate his potential participation in moral-rational rather than (simply) instrumental terms, and may consequently decide to become involved with such an organization because it is “the right thing to do,” independent of any assessment of the impact of his involvement on possible outcomes.²⁵

Re (3): The same historical and political-cultural developments that have contributed to a general depoliticization and accompanying feelings of apathy and cynicism among many citizens, as described under (1) above, have likewise resulted in an inability and/or unwillingness on the part of those citizens to conceive of the values and possibilities of collective engagement on such issues in any kind of positive, meaningful, or effective way. That is, the same sociohistorical separation between, on the one hand, processes of public, democratic deliberation and, on the other hand, processes of technocratic decision-making that Habermas describes as leading to cynicism, passivity, and disengagement from political participation on a mass scale (and, in particular, to the deferral of participation in the face of the kinds of collective dangers that I am discussing here) also contributes, on a psychological level, to the impairment of an individual’s ability (a) to reflect upon his capacity to act in concert with others to address such

dangers, and therefore to identify and enter into interaction with those others in a collective effort to address this danger; and (b) to evaluate rationally the significance of his own participation in such a collective effort. Following the thrust of Habermas' argument, I will argue in the following pages that it is the impairment of this capacity for agency which is the *crucial* factor in explaining the lack of extra-institutional political engagement by most Americans in collective efforts to address the global dangers represented by nuclear weapons proliferation and ongoing destruction and degradation of the Earth's environment and its supporting ecosystems.

The analytic distinctions described above suggest a framework within which one might begin to address, from a sociological perspective, the theoretical problem implied in the issues I have just presented: how is it that the individual perception of a collective danger can lead to that individual's participation in collective action? Or, stated in slightly different terms: how can we reconcile rationality at the individual level with rationality at the collective level? The aforementioned limitations of the sociological perspective in this regard suggest the existence of a theoretical lacuna in the field that we presently will see evidence of in the sociological and other literature that bear upon this problem.

Before exploring that literature in more detail, however, I will briefly describe three general ways of pointing to this problem in the context of the theoretical concerns of this research. This will help set the stage for the literature review that follows.

B. Individual Rationality and Collective Action

From the perspective of individual rationality, i.e. that of an individual rationally appraising a collective danger, it is exceedingly difficult to explain how and why an

actor, on purely logical-rational grounds, would act to address such a danger, since, by definition, a *collective* danger clearly is not one that could be adequately addressed, if at all, at the level of individual action. Furthermore, in line with traditional rational choice theory, the rational individual, in the absence of coercion or selective incentives that compel or encourage participation, normally will not contribute his time or resources to *collective* responses to such dangers. (Olson, 1965; Cohen, 1985:676). Adherents of the rational actor model since Olson have attempted to build upon his insights, and in some cases to widen the scope and character of the "incentives" that enter into the rational deliberation of actors about collective engagement. More recent work has attempted to bring social factors back in to what had been, up to that point, predominantly instrumentally-rational accounts of individual deliberation and decision-making.²⁶ Nevertheless, from the theoretical standpoint of individuals rationally appraising collective dangers, it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to account for individual decisions to act in concert with others in terms other than those of instrumental, self-interested calculation.

C. *Individual Identification with a Collective Actor*

From a more explicitly sociological standpoint (i.e. one that recognizes from the outset that an individual actor is, prior to engagement in particular acts of perception, deliberation, or action, a fundamentally *social* actor whose very identity and existential being is bound up with the experience of being connected with others in that web of interactive relations that we call society), it is easier to approach the question of how and why individuals decide to participate (or not) in collective action. That is, prior to any overt engagement in social or political action, individual actors are already constituted as

members of particular social groups (e.g. their immediate social circles, neighborhoods, communities, professions, classes, ethnicities, etc.) with which they often identify. For example, in the case of an elementary school teacher who is facing problems of class size, lack of resources to buy books and materials, an unsupportive school board, etc., she may, prior to deliberating about a potential course of action to address these problems, already identify with other teachers, administrators, parents, or community groups that share her concerns. And, if a particular group of others with whom she identifies in this context is sufficiently organized (or, in her view, *capable* of such organization) as to constitute a collectivity that she perceives as capable of coordinated action in response to these concerns, it is not too difficult to understand how, in this context, she might decide to act collectively in conjunction with these others to address the problems at hand.

Likewise, on a larger social scale, it is not too difficult to envision a situation in which an individual is compelled, because of historical and geopolitical circumstances, to appraise rationally a collective danger of a different type and magnitude, e.g. one that may have immediate (and lethal) consequences for the members of a much larger collectivity of which that individual is also a member, and, consequently, with which he already identifies. A good example of just such a situation is that which U.S. citizens have faced in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. For many Americans, those attacks were (and are) perceived as attacks against the United States of America, the American people, our "way of life," our system of government, etc. (not to mention "Western civilization"). As such, it is not difficult to understand why Americans who already identify with and/or considered themselves members of the (actual or hypothesized) collective entity perceived to be under attack would thus see themselves as

already "participants" in that political body seemingly in the best position to address and therefore respond to these attacks, and the dangers of more such attacks in the future: the United States government. Of course, in this situation, the nature of this "participation" will, for most citizens, be virtual or peripheral to the concrete political, military, intelligence, diplomatic, and other concrete actions that are being taken by the United States government and military in order to respond to these attacks and prevent the occurrence of more such attacks in the future.

D. Non-Identification with a Collective Actor

However, the circumstances surrounding a decision to participate in collective action are somewhat different in a situation in which a person perceives and is concerned about a collective danger, but is not immediately able to identify with a particular collectivity that she sees as able to address this danger. In such circumstances, the individual actor not only has to assess rationally the problems posed by the danger, but also to deliberate about the very conditions under which it would be efficacious, or even possible, for her to *act* on the basis of such an assessment. This is a practical problem that any individual actor must confront in a situation of potential action, as well as a theoretical problem from the perspective of the sociologist or social theorist. The situation described by *this* scenario is the context for the present research, which is concerned with how and why individual actors, in the face of perceived global dangers, do or do not become involved in extra-institutional forms of collective action (i.e. social and political movements) oriented towards addressing those dangers.

Not surprisingly, this is also the area in the sociological literature, and the social movement literature more specifically, that most exemplifies the theoretical lacuna I

previously have described. Given the basic analytic distinction between the individual and social levels of analysis that is already "built in" to sociological theory and practice, it is therefore not surprising that we might find a "tension" in that literature that reflects and expresses this distinction, particularly in cases where an attempt is being made to link theoretically these logically incommensurable levels of analysis. In other words, in attempting to address theoretically the problem of how and why individuals join social or political movement organizations, we are faced with resolving a theoretical dilemma that is inherent in traditional sociological theory.

IV. RATIONALITY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: THREE HYPOTHESES

Before proceeding with the aforementioned literature review, I want to return to an issue that was alluded to briefly in the introductory section of this chapter. Implicit in any discussion about why individuals do or don't act politically in response to perceived threats or dangers is something in the nature of an assumption about the rationality (or irrationality) of such action.

For example, a presumption implicit in most recent (i.e., post-1960s) social-scientific attempts to explain the sources and processes of individual mobilization to participation in collective action is that it is *rational* to participate.²⁷ Similarly, although much earlier, and in a much different historical and ideological context, social and political theorists and philosophers such as Lukacs, Korsch, Gramsci, Reich, and members of the Frankfurt School, writing in the tradition of Western Marxism,²⁸ sought to explain the ultimate failure of working class-inspired revolutions in a number of central and eastern European countries in the aftermath of World War I not only in terms of failed strategies and tactics on the part of the leaderships of those working-class movements and their political

parties, but also in terms of hypothesized psychic, social psychological, and political-cultural dynamics that thwarted the development of a revolutionary subjectivity or class consciousness on the part of workers. While these theorists disagreed in important respects about precisely how these dynamics operated, the presumption shared among all of them was that these psychological, political and sociocultural dynamics created impediments to the development of an effective class consciousness among workers; indeed, they constituted *irrational barriers* to the formation of such a consciousness. Therefore, the related presumption was that, in the absence of such barriers, workers would be rationally motivated to take collective action that would, in the end, bring about a more (socially) rational, just, and humane social order.

While these Western Marxists were writing in a very different sociohistorical and geopolitical context than that faced by today's critical theorists, they nevertheless encountered a similar theoretical problem: how to account for the lack of participation by large numbers of people in political movements that are perceived to be in their (collective) interest. This problem has, of course, been at the core of some of Habermas' most important work, beginning with *Legitimation Crisis* (1975). From his perspective, the longevity of late capitalism as an economic and political order is largely the result of the ability of that system to achieve crisis stabilization, either through the promulgation and maintenance of cultural patterns of belief and behavior (i.e., motivational syndromes) that alter the bases for system legitimation by providing material and status rewards in lieu of democratic participation in processes of consensual will-formation (Habermas, 1975), or by stabilizing the economic and administrative subsystems at the expense of lifeworld integrity (Habermas, 1987).

For Habermas, the search for a solution to this modern "rationality problematic" takes the form of an inquiry into the circumstances under which social actors are able to recognize their ability to act individually and collectively on the basis of decisions arrived at through processes of communicative sociation and consensual will-formation, as opposed to circumstances in which they are blocked from such recognition and action by processes of "systematically distorted communication."

In the course of my review and critique of the literature on social movements and collective behavior, I will consider differing theoretical positions within sociology with regard to this rationality problematic. To prepare the ground for that discussion, I present three conceptual "hypotheses"²⁹ regarding the relationship between individual rationality and political action, each of which highlights a particular way in which this relationship can be understood. I consider each hypothesis through the lens of three different theoretical perspectives, in order to explore how each perspective might differently support each hypothesis. This exploration, in turn, will provide me with a way of highlighting what is at stake conceptually in my review of the sociological literature below with regard to the problem of (deferred) political agency.³⁰

A. It is rational for an individual who perceives a collective danger to act to address that danger.

From the standpoint of an instrumentally rational perspective, it is rational for an individual to act to address a collective danger if and only if the actions contemplated reasonably can be expected to either:

- (a) provide him with some incremental benefit (whether material, psychological, social, or political) that could not be derived from abstaining from such participation, or

- (b) make some meaningful contribution to the amelioration and/or eventual elimination of that danger.

As already indicated above,³¹ this theoretical perspective privileges a means-ends (or *strategic*) conception of reason; that is, in any consideration of the rationality of an individual's actions, it focuses upon whether or not those actions are designed with reference to, and are oriented towards achieving, particular goals.³²

From a *contextually rational* perspective, it is rational for an individual to act to address a collective danger if and only if that action "conforms to the beliefs and social norms in the context of which it occurs." On this account, the rationality of a particular action contemplated or taken in response to the perception of such a danger is dependent upon the normative and ideological context within that action occurs. (White, 1988:10)

From a morally rational perspective, it is rational for an individual to act to address a collective danger if and only if the individual believes that the danger in question represents a threat to:

- (a) universalizable values and corresponding moral convictions (e.g. the sanctity of human life, the principle of non-violence conflict resolution, the responsibilities of citizenship, commitment to the preservation of basic human and civil rights, etc.), held by that individual as part of his moral identification with a particular collectivity (e.g. humanity, sentient life); and thus
- (b) the integrity, social cohesion, or survival of the collectivity in question.

Clearly implicit in all three of these types of rationality is the assumption that, in the absence of the respective conditions of rational action outlined above, there are circumstances in which it conceivably would be rational *not* to act. First, from an instrumentally rational perspective, it would be rational to abstain from participating in collective action oriented to addressing a collective danger if an individual believes that either (a) she will derive no meaningful benefit from participating in action oriented to

addressing a collective danger that she would not otherwise gain by abstaining from such participation, or if (b) her participation will not contribute meaningfully to the amelioration of the danger.³³ Second, from a contextually rational perspective, it would be rational for an individual to abstain from such participation if to do so would be at variance with the beliefs and social norms of the collectivity (e.g. the community, social group, or larger society) to which that individual belongs, or with which she identifies in contemplating such action. Finally, from a morally rational perspective, it would be rational not to act if the potential actor does not believe that the perceived collective danger represents a threat to values and convictions she holds, often in common with others with whom she shares a common moral identity, and which she believes to be universalizable to that larger moral community. As will become clear shortly, Habermas' *communicative* conception of action and rationality is such a morally rational perspective, one that incorporates certain basic premises about human subjectivity and agency that are grounded in a fundamentally normative model of intersubjectivity and language, while incorporating aspects of both the instrumental and contextual models.

Thus, the second hypothesis is the following:

*B. It is rational for an individual who perceives a collective danger to **abstain** from action intended to address that danger.*

The "classical" sociological account providing support for this hypothesis, i.e. that implicit in traditional theories of collective behavior is that, under normal conditions, it is *irrational* for individuals to participate in collective action, and that such behavior, absent certain precipitating social conditions, is rooted variously in individual and/or mass psychopathology. One version of this perspective (that proffered by Smelser, 1963), while initially assuming a relationship between individual rationality and political

behavior opposite to that stated in the first hypothesis enumerated above, also describes socially-specific conditions under which it nevertheless would be *rational* for individuals to participate. These conditions include structural conduciveness, the existence of structural strain, the growth and spread of a generalized belief, the existence of precipitating factors, and the mobilization of participants for action.³⁴

However, there is another sociological perspective on the relationship between individual rationality and social action that explains that relationship in much more contingent, historically relative terms: the perspective implied in *postmodern* accounts of action and rationality. Postmodern critiques of universalistic notions of reason deny privileged status to any of the three types of rationality discussed above; indeed, they deny any special ontological status to the notion of reason as such.³⁵ For postmodernists, what we call "reason" is a fallible, culturally and historically specific process whereby we attempt to justify certain courses of action (past, present, or future), often by appealing to grounds (e.g. moral, logical, contextual) that extend beyond the immediate circumstances under consideration.. On the contrary, for postmodernists, reason is *always* contingent and context bound; "each situation is different and calls for special understanding." (Rosenau, 1992:128.) Within the terms of this perspective, there are no *ultimate* grounds from which to determine the rationality or reasonableness of any particular individual action in response to a perceived threat; there are only those "local," culturally-specific conditions and circumstances that present themselves to individuals in particular situations of (potential) action. Therefore, there is no way of establishing in *general* whether or not an individual's action in response to a perceived danger is rational.

Furthermore, even in specific circumstances in which it might make *sense* for an

individual to act in response to such a perceived danger, postmodernists further undercut the potential intelligibility of such action by problematizing the ontological status of the perceived danger itself. Since, postmodernists would argue, in most instances what we experience as "real" is representational (i.e. is present(ed) to us indirectly in the form of symbolic constructs, rather than as an immediate experience of the phenomenon as such), individual perceptions of potential dangers to human survival are likewise influenced by the ways in which such phenomena as, for example, global warming, the destruction of the Earth's rainforests, or the existence and threatened use of weapons of mass destruction (e.g. nuclear, chemical, biological) are mediated and *represented* by and to such individuals as historically and culturally contingent, discursive (i.e. linguistic) artifacts. Accordingly, their character as representations further problematizes any attempt to establish reasonable grounds for any particular response (or, indeed, any response at all) to them. Thus, in the postmodern view, to the extent that the postmodern individual (that is, the individual hypothesized by postmodern theory) is *aware* of the contingent nature of these dangers, he or she is thus more likely to delay or *defer* any potential behavioral response to them. In this view, it is "rational" for an individual not to act in response to a perceived danger, since that very perception is understood by the individual to be a matter of representation, rather than a perception of reality as such.³⁶

Postmodern accounts of the processes of social, cultural, and economic modernization also tend to stress that the use of traditional modernist concepts such as agency and hegemony becomes increasingly problematic, as these processes produce mobility, contingency, and diffuseness of authority in all areas of social life. (Jameson, 1991; Lyotard, 1984; Jay, 1984.) In this view, the deferral of agency is merely the

expression of a healthy skepticism toward any particular representation of reality, including a representation of danger. It is a reasonable response to a cultural situation in which reality is (correctly, in this view) experienced as uncertain and subject to multiple interpretations, and in which agency is diffuse and indefinite. The deferral of agency is, in other words, a "rational" reluctance to act in circumstances in which the reality of such representations is uncertain. In this sense, a conception of something like deferred agency is implicit in the postmodern view of action and rationality.

- C. *Action (or the deferral of same) in response to a perceived danger is not ultimately intelligible as a matter of individual rationality, but as a matter of the effectiveness of the relevant socialization processes involved in the construction of individual identity and agency.*

The assumptions underlying this hypothesis are rooted in a social systems account of identity formation and socialization. In that view, the identity of the individual social actor is formed through the internalization of social and cultural norms via the process of socialization. (Parsons, 1951; 1970.) In western industrial societies, this process initially takes place primarily within the nuclear family (i.e. through the first few years of life), though the process is soon expanded to include the influences of peers, the educational system, and other more general agencies of socialization. One aspect of this process involves the learning and subsequent internalization of norms relating to the individual's role as citizen and participant in the political system, and correlative behavioral expectations in this regard. In modern societies with an increasingly differentiated division of labor, individual participation in politics occurs, under normal circumstances, primarily indirectly through the election of representatives to the official bodies of political and administrative decision-making, and through participation in and support of the work of lobbying and other interest groups. To the extent that the increasing

separation of the technical and administrative spheres of society from those of culture and polity is accompanied by the maintenance of a close connection between societal needs and values and goal attainment, there is no need for individual actors to participate directly or actively in the workings of the political system, save for those few persons who decide to enter politics as a *profession*. For the rest of the adult population, deciding whether or not to participate in the political system, or in political activity more generally, is not an issue of *rationality*, but of the assumption of one's proper occupational, social, and family role in the context of a modern, highly differentiated social order.³⁷

In the social systems view, therefore, an individual's response to the perception of a collective danger would usually be limited to expressing his concern through established political channels, e.g. by writing or calling one's representative, giving time or money to interest groups that support and express one's point of view, etc. Thus, the fact that most Americans, for example, do not participate in an environmental organization would not be a matter of the rationality or irrationality of such involvement. Rather, in this view, abstention from participation is seen as the logical outcome of a process of socialization whereby most citizens successfully have internalized the socially-appropriate norms for acting in accord with one's values and beliefs in the context of the existing social division of labor.

However, there is, within the terms of this perspective, the possibility of the limit case entailed by what has come to be known as the "breakdown" thesis. In a situation characterized by what Smelser (1963) calls "system strain," important norms, values, and beliefs begin to lose their coherence and/or legitimacy under conditions of social,

cultural, or political crisis or threat. If this strain cannot be managed, contained, or ameliorated within the existing social, political and cultural sub-systems, individuals may become disillusioned, angry, agitated, or fearful about existing societal conditions, and what they portend for the future. As a consequence, they may begin to mobilize on their own (that is, outside of existing social and political structures of authority and decision-making) to address the perceived sources of strain. In such situations, the resulting collective mobilization can nevertheless be viewed functionally as serving to transform the boundary-maintaining functions of the social system in a way that ultimately stabilizes that system on the basis of an altered set of social relations, one that recognizes and is inclusive of the boundaries and sociocultural identities of previously marginalized groups.

Having provisionally established the usefulness of these hypotheses for a critical analysis of the sociological literature on social movements and collective action, I now will proceed with a review of that literature as it bears upon an understanding of political agency and its deferral.

V. *READING AGAINST THE GRAIN: A SELECTIVE ANALYSIS AND REINTERPRETATION OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL LITERATURE ON SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR*

A. *Introduction*

In order to establish, in a preliminary fashion, the importance of the concept of deferred agency for an understanding of differential political involvement, as well as to situate this concept in relation to sociological and other research on the subject, it is necessary to review some of the major theoretical perspectives on social movements and political activism. This review will necessarily be selective, and is not intended by any

means to cover all of the theoretical and empirical developments in sociology and related disciplines that could be brought to bear upon this problem. Rather, the focus will be upon representative contributions to the theoretical and empirical research on social movements, collective behavior, and political mobilization bear upon an understanding and interpretation of political agency and its deferral.

As such, this review will explore some of the ways in which the extant literature has attempted to explain how and why individuals join social or political movements, or otherwise participate in collective action.³⁸ Its primary theoretical focus will be on how sociologists and social and political theorists have attempted to explain the relationship between (1) individual perceptions of and concerns about collective dangers, and (2) processes of political mobilization and recruitment to activism. In so doing, this review will both (1) indicate where the theoretical lacuna discussed above reveals itself in this literature, and (2) suggest how a concept of deferred agency might fruitfully be deployed in order more adequately to theorize this relationship, and thereby address this lacuna.

Since a concept of deferred agency is, at best, implicit in this literature, our review will require, at crucial points in the discussion, "reading against the grain" in order to reveal the theoretical and discursive space within which such a concept might be situated. That is, it will often require reversing the terms of conventional sociological discussions of the sources and genesis of individual motivation and mobilization to social and political action, and asking, instead, why it is that many *other* individuals who encounter the same or similar circumstances, and share similar beliefs or concerns about the issue at hand, nevertheless do *not* become actively involved in attempts to address it.

That said, a sociological perspective does have the advantage of allowing us to

address the problem of deferred agency at a level of analysis that can link issues of action and structure, individual behavior and political mobilization. This level of analysis thus is theoretically situated between, on the one hand, (1) Habermas' macro-sociological analysis of the dynamics and contradictions of modernity in advanced capitalist societies; and, on the other hand, (2) his social psychological and moral-developmental accounts of (a) the dynamics of the extant motivational structures in such societies, and (b) the corresponding normative and motivational structures of individual moral consciousness. Thus, to the extent that contributions from the literature to be reviewed below explicitly or implicitly address my research question, they also conceivably may contribute to the building of a conceptual "bridge" between these two levels of Habermas' analysis.³⁹

B. Collective Behavior Theory

Collective behavior theory has its roots in the social psychological tradition of the "Chicago School" of sociology (see Park, 1967), which was in turn heavily influenced by earlier studies of crowd behavior and psychology (Le Bon, 1960; Freud, 1940). The basic insight of this earlier work was that spontaneous gatherings of individuals provide the basis for a nascent collective identity which cannot be explained solely by reference to the psychology of the individual participants.

Two main variants of this approach emerged, both of which broadened their concerns beyond that of crowds to include the emergent structures and processes which define different forms of collective action. Building upon Park's work, Herbert Blumer (1969) outlined a new way of conceptualizing social movements as a form of *collective* behavior, emphasizing the potential for the emergence of new norms and forms of social learning and solidarity inherent in spontaneous group activity. Talcott Parsons (1969), on

the other hand, focused on the emergence of social movements as collective responses to system "strains" generated by processes of modernization and social differentiation in industrializing societies. His structural-functionalist theory of society incorporated the notion of such strains as resulting from a conflict between the norm-integrating functions of social systems (in his later theory, the requirements of adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and pattern maintenance) and a breakdown in the extant conditions of rational action, such that social actors, in the face of such perceived strain, redefine their behavior in the direction of non-institutional responses that incorporate magical beliefs and a propensity to panic, crazed, or other forms of non-rational action.

A number of thinkers subsequently adapted and refined Parsons' approach, the most influential of these being Neil Smelser (1963). For Smelser, a particular set of social structural and ideological conditions have to exist in order for collective behavior to occur, the chief among these being the existence of structural strain, the growth and spread of a generalized belief, the existence of precipitating conditions, and the mobilization of participants for action.

This mobilization can only occur, however, in the context of the development of a set of shared meanings which identify and interpret the strain, and prescribe certain collective responses which are designed to address its source. These shared meanings and prescribed behaviors are provided by a generalized belief. (Smelser, 1963:16.) But to the extent that such a generalized belief does not operate to provide a meaning-giving structure to a group of potential actors, and thus the ideological basis for bringing the group into action is not present, collective behavior in response to conditions of structural strain cannot occur. This would suggest that an account of deferred agency is at least

implicit in Smelser's theory. Unfortunately, Smelser fails to specify in any concrete detail the dynamics of mobilization at the individual level. Rather, he is more concerned with explaining mobilization in social structural terms by emphasizing the role of emergent norms and values in response to system strain (Cohen, 1985), and by specifying how particular configurations of social structural conditions determine the form and content of collective behavior.

With these limitations in mind, it is unclear what a Smelserian account of deferred agency would look like in concrete terms, except that the absence of collective behavior in particular situations would have to be defined by the absence of one or more of the necessary conditions that Smelser outlines. For example, in the case of the threats posed to the Earth's ecosystems by global warming, the absence of collective behavior in response to these threats could be ascribed to the lack of people's recognition of these dangers (as symptoms of "structural strain"), or to the absence of generalized beliefs which could serve to interpret these dangers and prescribe appropriate responses to them, e.g. an ideology of environmentalism. But, in the first instance, the question of how one would account for the absence of public recognition of these dangers, in the face of much publicly-presented evidence to the contrary, is immediately begged. And, in the second instance, such an ideology may lack the character of an authentic generalized belief (insofar as it does not specify a particular set of responses to guide individual action in addressing the source of strain), yet still motivate movement participation on the part of some individuals.

While some collective behavior theorists have attempted to make use of psychological theories in explaining the presence or absence of collective action, others

(like Smelser), while attempting to explain mobilization in more social-structural terms, have tended to ignore the issue of differential recruitment. The *mass society* approach, another version of collective behavior theory (though one predating Smelser), was an interesting attempt to relate broad social forces and currents to the occurrence of individual and collective action. Emerging in the wake of post-World War II debates about the rise of authoritarian regimes and movements, this approach tried to explain the emergence of mass movements as the result of structural and institutional changes brought about by modernization, which engendered social atomization and conformity, and consequent feelings of alienation and anxiety. (Kornhauser, 1959.) Although outwardly macrosociological in their focus, some variants of this approach emphasized the importance of understanding individual psychology and interpersonal interaction in accounting for mobilization. (Arendt, 1951, and Hoffer, 1951, as cited in McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1988.) While criticized for ultimately explaining the origins of movements on the basis of individual states of mind, mass society theories nevertheless had the virtue of placing individual recruitment to activism in a broader, macrosociological context.

While focusing primarily upon the influence of broader social and cultural forces on human behavior and personality, to the exclusion of other mediating factors such as social organization, culture, and agencies of socialization, mass society theories nevertheless represent a forgotten dimension of collective behavior theory, one that the present research may help to re-establish the importance of through a more complex and nuanced understanding of differential political involvement.

C. *Resource Mobilization Theory*

The resource mobilization approach had its origins, in part, as a reaction against a perceived overemphasis on the microsocial and psychological determinants of collective action, and the implicit attribution of irrational motivation to movement participants. Against such an interpretation, resource mobilization theorists offered a model which emphasized the organization and mobilization of the flow of resources by emergent movement organizations. In this view, social movement participants are rational individuals who are motivated by primarily if not exclusively by self-interest, and who are continually engaged in strategic interaction with others based on cost-benefit calculations. (Cohen, 1985: 675.)

Not surprisingly, most resource mobilization theorists have uncritically adopted a "rational choice" explanation for individual recruitment to activism. McCarthy and Zald (1977:1226), for example, assume "that the costs and rewards of involvement can account for participation." Thus they invoke the "free rider" problem. First delineated by Mancur Olson (1965), the argument behind this problem posits that, in the absence of constraint or selective incentives which compel or encourage participation, the rational individual will not contribute time or resources to collective action. (Cohen, 1985: 676.) Even Charles Tilly, whose version of resource mobilization theory is arguably the most sophisticated attempt to address this problem, still retains the logic of cost-benefit analysis, and is thus ultimately unable to explain adequately why instrumentally-rational individuals in pursuit of their own interests get involved in collective action (Cohen, 1985: 677). In emphasizing the primary role of individual self-interest in decisions about participation, resource mobilization approaches inherently beg the question of why, in the

absence of such constraints or incentives, many people nevertheless devote significant time and energy to social movements. By implicitly explaining abstention from such involvement on either instrumentally-rational or collectivist grounds (i.e., in terms of the absence of selective incentives sufficient to motivate individual participation or, alternatively, or by the lack of sufficient organization and resources on the part of the members of an already-constituted group), resource mobilization theorists thereby are relegating non-participation to the status of a residual, unexamined category. In so doing, they are also failing to address the issue of differential involvement.

Habermas, on the other hand, holds very different presuppositions about individual rationality. For him, individuals are, by their very nature, *social* beings, and thus share a common value - that of the inherently social nature of human interaction. Habermas makes this point in his early essay on the ideal speech situation,⁴⁰ where he argues for the implicitly social character of any instance of a speech act. For him, language (and therefore all forms of human communication and interaction) by its very nature invokes (and presupposes) this social dimension of human existence. I will discuss in more detail below Habermas' concepts of rationality and communicative action. For now, suffice it to say that, ironically, his understanding of rationality and action also obscures the lacuna between individual rationality and collective action, but in a different way. That is, because Habermas' theory presumes that each occasion of individual reasoning has an unequivocally social dimension, his theory implicitly assumes the tendency of individuals to engage in social (i.e. *collective*) action. It thus bypasses the issue of precisely how and why it is that particular individuals may decide to join and/or participate in the work of a particular collectivity or social movement, while

others may decline or "defer" such participation, in light of this very same social value.⁴¹

Just as resource mobilization theorists can be criticized for begging the question of how it is possible for rationally calculating, self-interested individuals to participate in collective action, so Habermas can be criticized for obscuring (and therefore not adequately accounting for) the extent to which some individuals in given circumstances nevertheless may choose *not* to participate in the actions of collectivities that they may nevertheless identify with and even support.

Ironically, while the "free rider" problem does not, on its own terms, provide an adequate theoretical explanation of individual participation in collective action, it *does* provide the basis for an alternative account of why many individuals do not participate. Such an explanation, when recast from the perspective of Habermas and critical theory, could argue that the increasing pervasion of the sphere of everyday life by a scientific, technological rationality could be seen as ultimately manifesting itself on the individual level in the form of an instrumentally-rational mode of thought that, in many circumstances, would effectively preclude a decision by individuals to participate in collective action.

E. New Social Movement Theory and Its Successors

The *new social movement* approach originated in the wake of the mass mobilizations of the 1960's and early 1970's, and sought to explain the rise of the social movements of those two decades as a reaction to significant structural changes in western industrial societies. According to one version of this approach, the appearance of these movements can be traced to the emergence of new values, needs, and social identities which emerged out of the contradictions of the modernization process, and their

consequent clash with more traditional values and ways of life. (Klandermans & Tarrow, 1988.) Inglehart (1977), for example, described the dramatic change from materialist to postmaterialist values among youth in postwar Europe, which eventually led many of them to come into conflict with the extant political, economic, and normative institutional structures of their societies.

Another group of theorists, including Habermas, linked the rise of these movements to the frustration of new material and status aspirations which have developed with the growth of the modern welfare state. (Klandermans & Tarrow, 1988:8.) Because of contradictions inherent in advanced industrial economies, they argued, the state has been increasingly compelled, for reasons of self-legitimation, to intervene in the private sphere in order to address social needs which are not adequately fulfilled by the market economy. (Habermas, 1976.) As a result, new status groups have been created which are dependent upon the state for the satisfaction of their material and status needs. (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1988:702.)

However, increasing structural and political limitations on the state's ability to continue to provide such material benefits have led to a breakdown in the postwar social compact between labor and capital. (Offe, 1984; O'Connor, 1978.) In this view, the new social movements arose to defend the achieved living standards and quality of life of the affected groups. Arguing along similar lines, other theorists considered increasing state penetration into previously private spheres of life to be the salient factor in the emergence of these new movements. Habermas, in particular, saw the emergence of the new social movements as reflecting collective resistance to the intrusion of systemic imperatives rooted in the growth as well as transformation of processes of capitalist development and

accumulation upon the traditional institutions and communicative practices of the lifeworld. (Habermas, 1976, 1987; White, 1995; Melucci, 1985.)

Other work on new social movements placed more emphasis and importance on what was distinctively "new" or different about these movements. Jean Cohen (1985) argued, for example, that what distinguishes contemporary movements from those of the past is a new identity or self-understanding which is politically self-limiting, culturally pluralistic, and radically democratic. Along these lines, many European theorists of the new social movements tended to adopt an "identity-oriented" paradigm, which focused on "the processes by which collective actors create the identities and solidarities they defend" (Cohen, 1985:690.) For these thinkers, the formation of new, collective identities was the motive force behind the creation of these movements. In fact, for Pizzorno (1978), the formation of these new identities through expressive (inter)action among people desiring to develop new norms, values, and modes of solidarity and self-recognition was the defining characteristic of the new social movements, prior to any concern about strategic goals or objectives. Despite these differences in focus or orientation, however, most of the earlier new social movement theorists tended to give a general, "structuralist" explanation for why these new movements have emerged and developed when and where they have.⁴² As a result of their primarily macro-level explanations of the emergence of these movements, these earlier theorists, like those of traditional resource mobilization theory, failed adequately to address the concrete factors that determine the mobilization potential of contemporary movements, as well as the recruitment of particular individuals. In other words, they failed to provide an adequate explanation for why many individuals do *not* become active in response to some of the

same perceived social-structural "strains" described by Smelser.

The work of LaClau and Mouffe (1985) represented an interesting and important attempt to redefine the terms of the debate about the so-called "crisis in Marxism" among the global left during the early 1980's. As a powerful theoretical critique and re-examination of contemporary socialist theory and practice based upon some of the fundamental concepts of discourse theory as developed byists such as Foucault, Derrida, and Wittgenstein, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* also drew upon and made important contributions to understanding the significance and potential of the new social movements, particularly the feminist, ecological, and antinuclear movements of the 1970's and early 1980's.⁴³ Rooting their work in both a radical democratic vision of social transformation and a fundamental rethinking of some of the most basic categories of Marxist thought, LaClau and Mouffe criticized, for example, the centrality and independent materiality of the economic in socialist theory, and argued instead for the primacy of discursive formations, in which the "objects" of analysis are understood as constituted by and through dynamic configurations of language and action. (Aronowitz, 1985:8-9). In line with this analysis, LaClau and Mouffe saw the new social movements both as practical exemplifications of both the exhaustion and irrelevance of the traditional categories of Marxist analysis for an understanding of contemporary social movements, as well as a potential locus for the kinds of radical democratic discourses and political practices that could challenge the discursive hegemony of existing power relations.

Finally, more recent literature on globalization, democracy, and social movements, much of which has appeared in the wake of the catastrophic events of 9/11/01, has significantly altered the terms of the discussion about the significance of

new social movements, and the prospects for movements for democracy, social justice, and progressive social change in general. In light of a redefined global division of labor, the increasing power and influence of institutions of international finance and transnational capital, and the stark new realities of global terrorism (whether initiated by marginalized, oppressed individuals or groups - often as desperate if indefensible responses to the consequences of the projection of Western political, economic, military, or cultural power and influence over so-called “third-world” societies or cultures - or by nation-states in the name of what they consider their economic, political, or “national-security” interests), theorists of contemporary social movements, including the new social movements, have been forced to rethink the contours of popular resistance in this new global context, where the sovereign authority of nation-states has to a certain extent been comprised, if not entirely superseded by, the increasing power and influence global economic and financial institutions. Hart and Negri, for example, argue that the new global economic and political order is more adequately characterized by the concept of “Empire,” an arrangement that “[consists] of the national governments of the Great Powers and the leading institutions of transnational capital.” (Hart and Negri, 2000; Aronowitz and Gautney, 2003:xvii-xviii, xxii.) This changed global configuration, and the consequent destabilization of national boundaries and political authority, creates the conditions in which potentially new forms of democratic practice and resistance – which they see as rooted in an emerging, diffuse network of social subjects they call the *multitude* - can emerge that do not define themselves solely in terms of geographical boundaries or parochial interests. (Hart and Negri, 2004:xiii-xiv.) Aronowitz and Gautney, while on the whole sympathetic to the overall thrust of Hart & Negri’s

theoretical and political analysis, nevertheless has argued that, despite their contention that the power of the nation-state effectively has been trumped by that of Empire, “nations remain critical actors in the constitution of the global order.” (Aronowitz and Gautney, 2003:xxii-xxiii.) In sum, the recognition of the increasing role that international corporate and financial globalization has played in restructuring as well as destabilizing the world political and economic order, as well as the global impact of the events of 9/11/01 and those that have followed in their wake (for example, the U.S.-led invasions and bombing of Iraq and Afghanistan, the ensuing killing of massive numbers of innocent civilians as the result of those actions and increasing acts of “terrorism,” and the tragic human consequences of the ongoing “War on Terror” both at home and internationally) has resulted in ongoing attempts by social movement theorists as well as political activists to critically reframe the context within which the genesis, importance, and future trajectory of contemporary social movements (particularly the so-called “new” social movements that continue to address the global crises represented by nuclear weapons proliferation, global warming, and other threats to the health, safety, and survival of life on earth) can be understood.

G. Conclusion

Having established, in a preliminary fashion, the existence of the lacuna between individual rationality and participation in collective action in the sociological literature on social movements, I now will develop in more detail a theoretical account of deferred agency, drawing upon the work of Habermas and some of his interlocutors. This will, at times, entail analyzing this issue in ways that are distinctly different from most contemporary sociological research on social movements and collective action.

However, there are distinct advantages to having first engaged the social movement literature on this issue. First, having analyzed that literature from the standpoint of the aforementioned lacuna, we have been able to identify and describe its parameters to such an extent that we are now in a position to explore to what extent an account of *deferred agency* can contribute to the "filling-in" of this lacuna. Second, having identified that lacuna in the course of the literature review, we can be mindful of drawing out the implications of that review for an account of deferred agency that is distinctively *sociological*. We then will be in a position to develop hypotheses regarding the deferral of agency that can address that lacuna at a theoretically more precise level of analysis that is located between

(1) global accounts of the influence of larger social forces (e.g. advanced capitalism, with its accompanying dynamics of modernization and technological development) on the forms of consciousness, agency, individual and social identities, solidarities, and propensities towards political action that are characteristic of the members of a particular society or social-cultural group at a given point in time⁴⁴; and (2) psychological, rational choice, and other micro-level accounts of individual perception, belief, and motivation with regard to political behavior and collective action.⁴⁵ In so doing, the account developed below may contribute to a rethinking of the nexus between individual political behavior and collective action.

VI. *HABERMAS, CRITICAL THEORY, AND THE PROBLEM OF DEFERRED AGENCY*

A. Introduction: Habermas on Agency, Action and Rationality

Any account of Habermas' views on the social, cultural, and psychological factors involved in the realization or deferral of individual participation in social and political

action must start with an understanding of his conceptions of agency, action, and rationality. This is unavoidable, not only because his theory of communicative action and rationality depends upon these conceptions, but also because any coherent social science research program (such as the one in which Habermas has been engaged) must include some notion of the subject; i.e. an account of human agency. From a philosophical perspective, such an account is, of necessity, inextricably linked with an understanding of what constitutes "rationality" in the arenas of human thought and action.⁴⁶ From Habermas' standpoint, the choice of a conception of action necessarily establishes the framework for a particular conception of rationality. This is because "in the choice of a conception of action, a social theorist implicitly makes certain 'ontological' assumptions about the possible 'relations between actor and world.' These 'world relations ... establish, in turn, a particular framework for the 'possible rationality ... of actions.'"⁴⁷

Although Habermas does not appear explicitly to employ the term "agency" in his writings, a conception of it is clearly implicit in his notion of *autonomy*, understood as the cognitive capacities of individuals "to engage in critical examination of self and others, engage in reasoning processes, and arrive at judgments they can defend in argument." As such, autonomy involves "the ability to initiate projects, to bring new ideas, things, and relations into being."⁴⁸ For the Habermas of *Knowledge and Human Interests*, the interest in autonomy was rooted in the emancipatory cognitive interest, or the interest in "freedom from dependence upon hypostatized powers."⁴⁹ However, in his later work, this autonomy is inherent in the human capacity for language as such, because the foundational structure of linguistic communication is such that it necessarily

presupposes the ability of individuals to engage in free, unfettered discourse with others, and to settle the epistemological status of knowledge claims through the consensual force of the better argument. In this sense, "a conception of human agency, in which we see ourselves as beings who are at least sometimes 'doers,' who control and direct some of our actions according to our purposes and beliefs," is inherent in our ability to engage in linguistic (and thus communicative) interaction.⁵⁰

Accordingly, Habermas is primarily interested in the characteristics of human agency (and therefore *action*) that are implicated in cooperative interaction among the members of a group, or what he calls *communicative sociation*. This type of interaction is, in turn, based upon a general conception of action as oriented to reaching understanding, or what he calls *communicative action*. For Habermas, communicative action is the type of action most relevant to understanding how free, autonomous actors are able to interact collectively, both to reproduce the existing social and institutional structures and lifeworlds that they inhabit, *and* to join together in collective efforts to bring about changes to existing structures, institutions, and lifeworld relations. In the latter sense, it is also the type of action most relevant to his understanding of how social and political movements grow and develop, and how individual actors come to participate in them. And the notion of communicative *rationality*, which is rooted in his conception of communicative action, provides, for Habermas, the theoretical touchstone against which the "rationality" (in a more restricted sense) of individual as well as collective decisions to participate (or to *abstain* from participation) in such movements can be made intelligible.

Understood in this way, Habermas' conception of action and rationality can be

fruitfully employed to analyze the problem of deferred agency. This is because both the processes of lifeworld colonization and cultural impoverishment discussed above can be analyzed from the standpoint of the ways in which they systematically distort the processes of communicative action (i.e., communicative sociation and lifeworld reproduction) that are necessary to the socialization of individuals as autonomous, responsible social actors *and* to the maintenance and reinforcement of social integration and solidarity among a society's members, via systemically-induced reification and the fragmentation of consciousness. For Habermas, these processes hinder the development of critical consciousness and action, on the level of the individual actor as well as the social collectivity. At same time, however, they also provide a subjective basis for the development of new forms of social and political action (i.e., the "new social movements") oriented to resisting these processes and their resulting distortions.

Habermas' analysis of the dynamics and potential of the new social movements also sheds further light on the ways in which these distortions manifest themselves individually and collectively on the level of communicative action. In this way, his analyses of these processes of distortion provide the basis for (1) a more complex, nuanced understanding of the problem of deferred agency; (2) insight into how these processes at the same time generate new forms of resistance; and (3) a practical diagnosis of what is necessary on this level in order for individual and collective actors to overcome these barriers to critical thought and action, and thus to participate in movements for progressive social and political change.

Having introduced in general terms Habermas' potential contributions to an analysis of the problem of deferred agency, I now will begin my more detailed discussion

of these by placing them in the context of the work of some of the earlier Frankfurt School theorists.⁵¹

B. Habermas, Classical Critical Theory and the Problem of Deferred Agency

For Habermas as well as for his theoretical forbears, the problem of deferred agency must be situated in the context of the development of advanced capitalist societies. Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse argue that modern industrial societies are characterized by the increasing influence of what they variously call subjective reason, technological rationality, or instrumental reason.⁵² *Instrumental reason* is reason that is based upon rational calculation in the service of an end or goal that is predetermined, or extrinsic to the process of reason itself. The philosophical implications of this change, and its cultural and social psychological consequences, are discussed in detail by Horkheimer (1974), Horkheimer and Adorno (1972), and Marcuse (1964). For them, the promise of Enlightenment reason culminates, ironically, in an overly rationalized society that is largely devoid of meaningful connection to any larger, transcendent human purpose, or standard of objective truth.

While the original Frankfurt School thinkers tend to characterize the influence of instrumental reason on modern societies in broadly philosophical, social theoretical, or psychological terms, Habermas grounds these insights sociologically through his discussion of the increasing separation or "decoupling" of processes of public will-formation from those of administrative decision-making and technical enactment. These social structural developments provide the objective bases for the increasing predominance of what he calls "subsystems of purposive-rational action" over those characterized by "communicative action."⁵³ (1970:91 ff.) In the context of the political-

administrative system, this decoupling results in a situation in which decisions about social ends are effectively removed from open, democratic discussion and debate by ordinary citizens, and instead are made *de facto* by political, economic, and military elites, who are more concerned in their decision-making with the most efficient, cost-effective means to these (technocratically-predetermined) ends. The public sphere, on the other hand, which was originally the ostensible location for open, democratic discussion of societal goals and values, and for the rational determination of public policy based upon considered judgments regarding these goals, becomes increasingly devoid of meaningful public participation. (Habermas, 1970; 1975; 1989.)

C. *Habermas on Deferred Agency*

For Habermas, the deferral of agency can be understood, at least in part, as the consequence of such a decoupling process, with the result that people no longer experience the political public sphere as an arena in which they are able to participate in authentic processes of democratic deliberation and decision-making about important social and political issues. Instead, they experience a sense of alienation, and consequent feelings of powerlessness, apathy, and cynicism with regard to their ability to meaningfully participate in or influence such processes. Elsewhere, in line with the work of the earlier critical theorists, Habermas also argues that the economic, social, and cultural demands of such an increasingly rationalized system force individuals, in order to survive, to adapt and conform to these demands. Social psychologically, this leads to an increase in adaptive, conditioned behavior, characterized by passivity, compliance with authority, and rigidified, mechanical gestures and expressions. (Habermas, 1970:107; Horkheimer, 1974:95-100; and Marcuse, 1970:14.) However, as already indicated,

Habermas goes further than his predecessors in this respect in explicitly linking the appearance of these psychological changes to the aforementioned subsumption of spheres of communicative interaction (i.e., the “lifeworld”) by subsystems of purposive-rational action. (1970:107.)

Many books and countless essays have been written which recount, evaluate and critique various aspects of Habermas' seminal contributions to contemporary critical theory, and to social theory more generally. Given the space constraints here, it is impossible to touch upon, even briefly, all the areas of his work that conceivably could be brought to bear upon a consideration of the problem of deferred agency.⁵⁴ For the purposes of this research, I want to emphasize the importance of, and the relationships among, three central dimensions of his work: (1) his sociological analysis of advanced capitalism; (2) his work on moral development and ego identity; and (3) his theory of communicative action and rationality.⁵⁵

His communication-theoretic framework (3) is an essential part of most of Habermas' post-1970 work, particularly his studies of moral consciousness, as well as of his more recent writings on rationality, modernity, and advanced capitalism.⁵⁶ As such, it provides a common frame of reference linking the other two dimensions of his work noted above. What is not yet clear, however, is precisely *how* his structural and social psychological accounts of the influence of instrumental reason in advanced capitalist societies, as detailed in earlier writings like *Towards a Rational Society* (1970) and *Legitimation Crisis* (1975), relate to his subsequent work on moral consciousness. For example, it is unclear how the notions of motivational syndromes and crisis tendencies he advances in *Legitimation Crisis*, and his later, related conception of “lifeworld

pathologies,"⁵⁷ link up with his discussions of moral development and ego identity, and of the relationship between moral judgment and moral action.⁵⁸ It is precisely the elaboration of such links, and thus the integration of these previously unrelated aspects of his work, which can provide a theoretical vantage point from which to apply Habermas' critical insights to an understanding of the deferral of agency on nuclear and environmental issues, and on social and political issues more generally.

D. Motivational Patterns and Crisis Tendencies in Advanced Capitalism

In *Legitimation Crisis* (1975), Habermas describes the economic, political, and sociocultural conditions under which various types of "system crises" can contribute to processes that tend towards the delegitimation of the existing political system, and thereby foster a social climate conducive to political protest and activism. Under conditions of liberal capitalism, the state "merely secure[d] the general conditions of production." However, under advanced capitalism, the political/administrative system is forced, in some instances, to act as a surrogate for market forces, due to functional weaknesses in the operation of market mechanisms. This re-coupling of the economic system to the political results in a "repoliticization" of the economic system, as the state becomes actively engaged in production. And with this increased role of the state in workings of the economy comes an increased need for the legitimation of that state. (Habermas, 1975:36.)

At the same time, however, the state can no longer rely upon traditional beliefs and values for that legitimation, as those beliefs and values "have been undermined and worn out during the development of capitalism." According to Habermas, "this problem is resolved through a system of formal democracy," in which administrative decisions are

made largely independent of citizen participation. (*Ibid.*) This is the concrete sense in which, as described earlier, the separation of processes of public will-formation from those of administrative decision-making and technical enactment occurs. And, with regard to the central theoretical focus of this research, this separation is one important way in which something approximating the problem of deferred agency is implicit in Habermas' structural analysis of advanced capitalism.

The successful legitimation of the political system under such conditions requires "a legitimation process that elicits generalized motives - that is , diffuse mass loyalty - but avoids participation." (*Ibid.*) These motives take the form of "motivational syndromes," dominant cultural patterns of thought and behavior that reinforce political passivity and quietism among the general populace. These syndromes are ideal-typical constructs that abstract from the complexity and specificity of individual psychic life. The two motivational patterns or syndromes which he describes, *civil privatism* and *familial-vocational privatism*, are products of aspects of both bourgeois and pre-bourgeois cultures. ***Civil privatism*** denotes an instrumental, output-orientation towards the workings of the political (i.e. legitimation) system, combined with an attitude of general political passivity, (or what Flacks (1988) calls "motivated disengagement") as regards participation in processes of political will-formation and decision-making. ***Familial-vocational privatism*** denotes complementary orientations towards, on the one hand, leisure and consumption and, on the other, career concerns and status competition. Together, these syndromes imply a primary focus on the family and personal life, an orientation to the demands and rewards of the occupational and educational systems, and a passive, deferential attitude towards political institutions and elites.⁵⁹ (Habermas,

1975:75-77)

The traditions out of which these motivational patterns emerged have been systematically eroded by the processes of modernization and capitalist development. This observation leads Habermas to speculate on the possibility of motivation and legitimation *crises*, cultural crisis tendencies which can emerge when the normative structures of a society change in such a way that the requirements of the political and economic systems are no longer consonant with the needs and expectations of the society's members. (Habermas, 1975:48-50, 75ff.) However, to the extent that (1) traditional normative structures can be stabilized, and their corresponding motivational patterns can be reinforced, and (2) newly-developing syndromes can be neutralized, or made irrelevant to the continued functioning of the political system, such crises can be averted, displaced, or delayed. Thus, for the Habermas of *Legitimation Crisis*, these more traditional cultural patterns, and their accompanying motivational syndromes, play a central role in explaining the relative lack of political involvement by citizens in advanced capitalist societies, as compared with the putative ideal of the "classical" bourgeois public sphere.⁶⁰

Habermas' later work makes the import of his earlier prognoses about the possibilities for the development of such cultural crises, and the role of motivational syndromes he describes in conjunction with them, less clear. On the one hand, he suggests that these crisis tendencies become less relevant, the more that the processes of lifeworld colonization and cultural impoverishment undermine the necessary conditions for citizen participation in the political process, and thus relieve the state of the necessity of legitimating its actions. *Lifeworld colonization* refers to the process whereby market

and (political) system imperatives (in the form of what Habermas calls the media of money and power) increasingly penetrate the structures of the lifeworld,⁶¹ such that interaction among individuals based upon on processes of communicative sociation are increasingly replaced by these systemically-derived imperatives. *Cultural impoverishment* refers to the process whereby forms of knowledge which are essential to the modern individual's ability to function as a competent, self-reflective and critical member of society are undermined by the increasing insulation of so-called "expert cultures" from their rootedness in everyday practice. (See White, 1988:116-123.)

On the other hand, the success of these processes in undermining the necessity of such legitimation also depends upon the extent to which the motivational syndromes discussed earlier continue to be effective in diffusing meaningful political participation on the part of most citizens. Also, to the extent to which the processes of lifeworld colonization and cultural impoverishment bring about new "lifeworld pathologies," complexes of attitudes and behavior similar to the motivational syndromes discussed earlier, the long-term implications for the maintenance of political stability and thus, ultimately, for the legitimacy of the state remain far from clear. (White, *op.cit.*:119 -123.)

I cannot do justice here to the various ways in which Habermas describes the processes of lifeworld colonization and cultural impoverishment as generating each of these pathologies, some of which hinder the development of critical consciousness and action on the part of individuals, and others that contain incipient possibilities for individual and collective resistance to these same processes. Suffice it to say that Habermas leaves open the possibility of the development of new forms of such resistance, based in large part upon attempts to re-establish and strengthen the essential structures of the lifeworld that

depend upon and support the forms of communicative sociation and interaction described earlier.

Be that as it may, if these motivational syndromes (and later, lifeworld pathologies) Habermas describes are (as he seems to imply) ideal-typical attitudes or behavioral propensities that are characteristic patterns of orientation in advanced capitalist societies, their influence should be empirically observable in the psychological and behavioral characteristics of individuals. Or, to put it another way, if civil and familial-vocational privatism, or, say, political indifference and cynicism are in fact "complex *motivational* patterns" (emphasis added), these patterns should manifest themselves, as part of a complex causal picture, on the level of personality structure. And if there is, as Habermas claims, a basic symmetry or "correspondence" between traditional cultural (i.e., normative) and motivational patterns, this correlation should, as he claims, have its counterpart at the micro (psychological) level in the form of "[a] correspondence between normative and motivational structures ... [at] the ontogenetic levels of moral consciousness." (Habermas, 1975:75-76.)⁶²

This statement, and its accompanying reference to Kohlberg's work, point to a hypothesized link between the motivational patterns elucidated by Habermas in his earlier work, and the structures of moral consciousness that Lawrence Kohlberg has described in his theory of moral development, and that Habermas takes up in a later essay. (Habermas, 1979, Chapter 2.) If Habermas is correct about this link, then these two motivational syndromes should find expression in the stages of individual moral consciousness described by Kohlberg. If this can be demonstrated, then the forms that this expression takes, however mediated in the course of an individual's moral and

psychological development, or altered or transformed by the vicissitudes of individual psychic life, reasonably can be argued to constitute one modality through which the individual deferral of agency with regard to global dangers is constituted.

E. Habermas on Moral Development and the Stages of Moral Consciousness

In "Moral Development and Ego Identity" (1979), Habermas, drawing upon the insights of analytic ego psychology, cognitive developmental psychology, and symbolic interactionism, reinterprets Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, with a view towards simultaneously reconstructing and justifying its developmental logic. That is, he attempts to provide provisional "proof" for the contention that the stages of moral consciousness that Kohlberg (1971) has outlined form a developmental-logical sequence, with each stage characterized by the incorporation of the insights of the previous stage and, simultaneously, by a more complex, differentiated, reflexive moral sense than the one preceding it. He does this by demonstrating how the stages of moral consciousness can be derived from the general qualifications for role behavior (i.e., the requisites of interactive competence⁶³) that the growing child must master at each successive stage of cognitive and motivational development.

Putting aside for the moment the task Habermas has set for himself, and focusing upon the characteristics models of cognitive thinking that Habermas, following Kohlberg and others,⁶⁴ ascribes to each of the six stages of moral consciousness, it is clear that, for certain of these stages, there is a significant amount of psychological resonance or "elective affinity" between their typical characteristics, and the two motivational syndromes described by Habermas in *Legitimation Crisis*. (1975, *op.cit*) For example, stages 3 and 4, which comprise the "conventional" level of moral consciousness, are

characterized by attitudes of deference to authority and conformity with the existing social order.⁶⁵ This style of moral orientation fits very nicely with an orientation towards politics that is characterized largely by abstinence from participation in processes of political will formation, and an accompanying attitude of relative passivity and deference to decision-making elites.⁶⁶

However, there is another way in which Habermas' appropriation of Kohlberg's theory of moral development leads to a discussion that is relevant to a more strictly psychological account of deferred agency. As noted above, for Habermas there is a direct correlation between an individual's attainment of a particular level of moral consciousness, and his achievement of the general qualifications for role behavior that constitute interactive competence. Under ordinary circumstances, an individual will, in the course of his development, reach a stage of moral consciousness that is consonant with his achieved level of interactive competence. In situations of moral conflict, however, he may be unable to maintain the level of competence necessary to resolve such conflicts in the face of the feelings that a conscious confrontation of the situation might evoke. As a result, according to Habermas, he "will fall back in his moral actions, or even in both his moral actions and moral judgments, below the threshold of his interactive competence." (1979:91-92) What this means in concrete terms is that an individual, in situations which may provoke unusually high levels of fear, desire, anxiety, guilt, etc., is often unable and/or unwilling to engage in conscious conflict resolution. As a consequence, his ego devises psychological mechanisms for avoiding such conflict. Habermas describes these "ingenious strategies for avoiding conflict" as "contribut[ing] to a reaction to danger that is similar to flight; dangers are screened out of consciousness

as the ego hides itself, as it were, from them.” In other words, the ego employs defense mechanisms that enable the individual to avoid consciously confronting (and resolving) the moral conflict in question. He is thereby able to avoid experiencing the anxiety, fear, etc. that would accompany such a confrontation.⁶⁷ (*Ibid.*, 92.)

Habermas mentions external reality, instinctual impulses and the sanctions of the superego as representing alternative sources of such perceived danger. (*Ibid.*:92.) From the vantage point of the concerns of this research, we can view global nuclear weapons proliferation and environmental degradation as possible external sources of such danger.⁶⁸ In the context of Habermas’ appropriation of Kohlberg’s stage-development theory, it can be hypothesized that *some* individuals are able to consciously acknowledge and confront the reality and moral implications of the existence of such dangers *and* respond to them in a manner commensurate with their achieved level of moral consciousness. Others, however, are unable to do so, because of the intensity of personal feelings and other reactions triggered in them by such dangers. In such cases, “the party in question will then fall back in his moral actions, or even in both his moral actions and moral judgments, below the threshold of his interactive competence.” (Habermas, *op.cit.*) In other words, the person concerned is unable to maintain his capacity for moral action in the face of such dangers. Accordingly, the recognition of the danger itself, and thereby of the *need* for action, must be denied, repressed, rationalized, or otherwise removed from conscious awareness.

Given Habermas’ interpretation of Kohlberg’s schema, it is likely that discrepancies between moral judgment and moral action with regard to global dangers are most likely among individuals who have attained the *postconventional* level of moral

consciousness. This is because such individuals, according to Habermas, are able to recognize and define moral values and principles that have validity and application apart from the authority of the groups or persons holding them, “and apart from the individual’s own identification with these groups.” (*Ibid.*: 80.) Individuals at the *conventional* and *preconventional* levels are unlikely to be able to do so, because they are largely oriented towards the satisfaction of personal and familial needs in conformity with social and cultural expectations, fixed rules, and established, socially sanctioned forms of authority. (See *Ibid.*: 79-80; and Kohlberg, 1981: 409ff., as cited in Habermas, 1979.) Thus, they are unlikely even to be able to *form* independent moral judgments concerning global nuclear weapons proliferation or the degradation of the Earth’s environment, much less *act* on them. They therefore would be unlikely to experience the kinds of moral conflicts faced by postconventional individuals, and thus would have no need to defend against a conscious awareness of them.⁶⁹

I cannot go into further detail here concerning the ways in which Habermas’ reinterpretation of Kohlberg’ work enables him to provide a link between his theory of communicative competence, Kohlberg’s theory of moral development, and the operation of psychological defense mechanisms in order to explain why certain individuals do not act on otherwise strongly-held moral convictions.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, this is another important way in which Habermas’ theoretical insights can be fruitfully applied to an exploration of the phenomenon of deferred agency.

F. Habermas' Critique of Postmodern Theory

While Habermas discusses the influence of moral-cognitive and motivational

factors on the development of ego identity, and their consequences for what he calls “discrepancies” between moral judgment and moral and action, he does not draw out the implications of these dynamics for an understanding of why individuals sometimes do not *act* on the basis of deeply-held moral and political convictions; in other words, their implications for what I am describing as the phenomenon of *deferred agency*. Instead, Habermas’ focus in this regard has been on the social structural and social psychological dimensions of life under advanced capitalism that make problematic individual as well as collective efforts to address important social and political issues. As discussed earlier, underlying this analysis is his positive (in the sense of affirmative), communicative model of what qualities characterize the progressive dimensions of human agency, action, and rationality in modern societies. This account is implicit (and largely undeveloped) in *Legitimation Crisis*; however he makes it much more explicit in *The Theory of Communicative Action*. (1984,1987.) In the latter work, this model not only directly informs his analysis and critique of the processes of lifeworld colonization and cultural impoverishment; it also enables a theoretical account of precisely how and why individual and collective resistance to these processes develops as a result of these very same dynamics.⁷¹

As was discussed above, Habermas in his later work becomes less sanguine with regard to the possibilities of resistance to these processes. Nevertheless, Habermas still maintains the critical vantage point of the earlier critical theorists with regard to keeping open possibilities for the development of critical thought and action in response to these developments. As such, he has been extremely critical of the critique of reason and modernity that emerged from the work of French theorists such as Foucault, Lyotard, and

Derrida in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Habermas is particularly critical of the "aesthetic drift" characteristic of much of this writing, "in relation to which all ideals of *collective political action* and the potential for a more just society become deeply problematic." (White, 1988:3-4, emphasis added.)⁷² Contrary to Habermas, who has tended to see modernization largely as the realization of the developments of late capitalism, and the resulting distortions in social life introduced thereby, these theorists, usually characterized as *postmodern* or *poststructuralist*, see modernization as a self-transcending process of social fragmentation, disintegration, and constant instability. Furthermore, they argue that the state and economy in so-called postmodern societies have become at once more diffuse and more penetrative in terms of their impact upon the lifeworld, and that the boundaries between nation-states have become increasingly permeable (based in large part on the globalization of capital and consequent preeminence of circulation as the universal mode of exchange). As a result, the ability of individuals to recognize situations of potential agency, and therefore possibilities for social and political action, has become more and more problematic in the context of complex and shifting political, cultural, and discursive boundaries.⁷³ Consequently, there is a "waiting to see," or hesitance, in the postmodern individual's thinking about social and political issues, and about whether and how to act in accord with one's concerns, as she looks or waits for a reason to pursue a particular course of action, or for a social actor (e.g., a neighborhood group, local community organization, social movement organization, or governmental body) to make its collective presence felt.

From Habermas' perspective, this "aesthetic drift" of much of postmodern thought is the result of its totalizing critique of modernity, and consequent rejection of

any universalistic notion of reason. Foucault, for example, regards what the Western philosophical tradition has referred to as "reason" as riddled with hidden traces of the power relations that have been "inscribed" in it in particular ways in particular historical circumstances. It is part of the task of what Foucault calls "genealogy" to uncover these traces, and in so doing reveal the utterly historical, contingent, and domination-ridden character of what modernist philosophers have characterized as a transcendental concept. While agreeing in part with this critique, Habermas believes that Foucault ultimately has no standpoint from which to criticize modern society and its institutions, because he fails to establish any theoretically-defensible criteria for such a critique. For Habermas, the failure of postmodern thinkers to provide an adequate theoretical basis for their critique of reason and modernity has dangerous theoretical and political consequences. One of these consequences is the uncomfortable affinity that he sees between the postmodernists' embrace of an anti-Enlightenment rejection of reason, as well as other, quasi-religious, mystical and other "irrationalist" notions, and the theoretical and practical foundations of fascism. (Best and Kellner, 1991: 237-238, 243-244.)

As indicated above, what most troubles Habermas are the general implications of much of postmodern thought for the possibilities of collective political action and a more just society. (White, *op.cit.*) To the extent that the possibilities for political agency are vitiated by the postmodern critique, there is little hope for the growth of forms of resistance to the processes of lifeworld colonization and cultural impoverishment that Habermas describes as characterizing late modern (capitalist) societies. Without the possibility that such forms of resistance (such as the growth of new social movements) may be able effectively to challenge the structural, cultural, and psychological distortions

of the lifeworld by the media of money and power, as well as the cooptation of public participation in political decision-making and policy implementation by the state, there is little hope for the kind of participatory democracy that Habermas sees as essential to human survival and a more just social and political order.

However, there may be other, less obvious reasons for Habermas' severe criticisms of postmodern thinking. First, to the extent that his account of the separation of the will-forming and administrative functions of the state fails adequately to account for the “gap” between (1) individual perceptions and concerns about social and political issues, and (2) actions oriented to addressing them, Habermas' theory is still lacking in important respects with regard to a more comprehensive, nuanced account of the sources of deferred agency. It is this account that a postmodern analysis and critique of modern society can contribute to, one that is based, in part, on postmodern and related accounts of the problematic character of the relation between the individual and political agency under conditions of (post)modern life. Such an account would incorporate a dimension of deferred agency that Habermas, while alluding to at one point, does not go on to develop in any detail.

Second, while Habermas' analysis of the pathologies of advanced capitalist societies is similar to many postmodern accounts of the same, he (unlike them) is hesitant to draw the same (or similarly) negative conclusions with regard to the possibilities for effective resistance to those conditions in the form of the development of critical thought and action. Some critics have argued that this hesitancy flows from the fact that drawing conclusions similar to those of the postmodernists would expose a significant contradiction in his own work: the unresolved tension between his (largely negative)

appraisal of the potential for progressive political change under the conditions of advanced capitalism, and his normative model of the “ideal speech situation” as a theoretical basis for the (re)construction of a more democratic political system and public sphere. Such conclusions would therefore compromise significantly the viability of Habermas’ theory of communicative action as a normative basis for the development of individual and collective political agency under late capitalism.

G. Bogen and the Conversation-Analytic Critique of Habermas

In a recent work, David Bogen offers a sympathetic critique of Habermas from the standpoints of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. (Bogen, 1999.) While in essential agreement with the overall thrust of Habermas’ theory of communicative action, Bogen nevertheless takes Habermas to task for attempting to ground his conception of rationality and action in universal structures of language and communication. Such a “transcendental” move is wrong-headed and unnecessary, Bogen believes, because the traditions of practice-based inquiry inspired by Wittgenstein and rooted in the work of Garfinkel and others have established empirically that social actors construct their own orders of intelligibility and rationality in and through the process of engaging in language and communication in localized, situationally-specific contexts. Instead, he argues that the very orders of intelligibility and rationality that Habermas wishes to establish by way of his theory of universal pragmatics can be found, instead, in and through the study of the very processes of linguistic communication and social interaction that are the focus of ethnomethodological and conversation-analytic studies. For this reason, Bogen believes that a discourse or even *rapprochement* between critical theory and such practice-based inquiries is not only possible but *essential* if critical

theory is to move beyond the crisis caused by the decline of the great rationalist social projects of the past two centuries and the simultaneous rise of an array of post-enlightenment and anti-rationalist movements waiting to take their place." (Bogen, 1999:[192]).

In the sentence just quoted, Bogen clearly is referring to some of Habermas' postmodern interlocutors. Interestingly enough, Bogen's suggested link between the theory of communicative action and these practice-based forms of inquiry could provide Habermas with a way to counter some postmodern criticisms of his work. That is, to the extent that the rational, ordered properties of language and communication can be rooted in the lived orders of everyday life rather than in the transcendental properties of an "ideal speech situation," Habermas could avoid the charge that he has failed to find a way beyond the aporia of individual subjectivity and structural determination that Bogen believes is a legacy of the Cartesian tradition within modern linguistic thought. (*Ibid.*:14.) Such a move could also enable Habermas to overcome the unresolved tension between the consequences of his analysis of advanced capitalism for the development of critical thought and action in modern societies, and his normative model of communicative action. However, as Bogen points out, such a move on Habermas' part could come at a high price: the jettisoning from his theory of communicative action of an attempt to ground his theory of democratic will-formation and his pragmatic theory of meaning in the transcendental properties of language itself.

H. Communicative Action and Deferred Agency: A Theoretical Prospectus

Given Habermas' critique of the postmodernists, as well as the insights that they and the other theorists discussed above can contribute to a more comprehensive

conception of the sources and dynamics of deferred agency in modern societies, there is a need for a more explicit, fully-developed understanding of that phenomenon, one that is adequate to Habermas' analysis of late capitalism, and at the same time incorporates the insights and criticism provided by sympathetic critics, postmodern theorists and others. Such an analysis would also include a response to those of his critics who suggest that there is an irreconcilable incompatibility between his social-structural analysis and critique of advanced capitalist societies and certain aspects of his theory of communicative action (in particular, his concepts of communicative action and rationality, which allegedly find their *a priori* grounding in his notion of the "ideal speech situation"), which Habermas believes can serve as a theoretical and practical basis for the reconstruction (and realization) of democratic institutions and practices. Furthermore, such an analysis also would include critical evaluations of, and responses to, the arguments of critics in the tradition of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis such as Bogen, who has claimed that Habermas' inability to bridge the theoretical "gap" between his analyses of modern institutions and normative practices, and the analysis of empirical instances interaction and ordinary-language communication, results from his (in their view) unnecessary attempt to "impose" his model of communicative action and discourse on levels of interaction and communication that ultimately "construct" their own order in the course of ordinary, everyday conversation and interaction .

These formidable tasks are beyond the scope and parameters of the current study. What I intend to demonstrate in what follows is that Habermas' theory of communicative action and rationality (and, in particular, the concept of deferred agency as presented and explored above) can provide a theoretically-powerful and potentially useful empirical

framework for the critical examination of the factors influencing or inhibiting the exercise of political agency (and therefore collective action) by many Americans on issues of global concern to them.

VII. CONCLUSION

The tentative theoretical hypotheses that flow from the preceding discussion of Habermas and his theoretical interlocutors are that, in (post)modern societies, the deferral of agency in modern societies can best be understood in terms of:

(1) An increasing separation of political decision-making about scientific and technological issues (and their subsequent technical enactment) from processes of authentic public will-formation or consensus in modern societies. Here I will argue that the increasing penetration and consequent reification of the public sphere (and the lifeworld as a whole) and its democratic and communicative functions by the media of money and power leads, paradoxically, to a separation of (now manipulated/controlled) will-formation and consensus-building functions from those of political/administrative decision-making and technical enactment. These developments also have *subjective* consequences for individual thought and action, and thus contribute significantly to the deferral of agency, as apparently "technical" issues of public policy are perceived by individuals as divorced from and alien to the sphere of everyday life and concerns, and thus beyond the realm of matters over which they feel that they can exercise any control;

(2) The ideological and practical effects on individual consciousness and behavior of modern, scientific-technological rationality and its concomitant discourse, which reifies technology, distorts communication, and thereby obscures the social, human, and moral dimensions of decisions about its uses.⁷⁴

(3) Evidence that suggests that some individuals tend to delay or defer decisions about whether, when and/or how to engage in political action in response to the uncertain social, psychological, and/or discursive conditions that characterize (post)modern life as described above. This dimension of the deferral of agency is characterized by (a) a kind of "waiting" that takes the form of a "waiting to see" whether others, particularly others like oneself, or a collective actor or agent of some type, are taking or will take action on the issue at hand. A special case of this type involves Kohlberg's postconventionally moral individual, who, for example, recognizes and acknowledges the need to act politically in the face of the increasing risk of the use of nuclear weapons, but lacks a sense of collective identity sufficiently strong to motivate such action. This "waiting" may also reflect (b) a hesitancy or ambiguity about acting in the face of a situation or circumstances perceived as complex or uncertain, in face of complex and shifting representations of the "real," or (c) unclarity about what, in circumstances so perceived, constitutes an "issue" or "problem," in the sense of a clearly-definable set of concerns in response to which individuals conceivably could take some kind of meaningful "action."

Since the dynamics of the deferral of agency manifest themselves on more than one level of analysis, the empirical expectations that derive from these varying theoretical constructs can be explored in at least three distinct dimensions:

1. At the level of *individual psychodynamics*, I hypothesize that the deferral of agency is manifested as a conflict between the individual's desire to act in response to a perceived danger, and a reluctance or ambivalence about doing so. Residual feelings of dissatisfaction and anxiety with regard to the inability to act, as well as fear and anxiety about the continued existence of the

(unaddressed) danger are then repressed, rationalized, or displaced through defensive or coping behaviors which function to contain these feelings, and deny or displace the perception of danger.⁷⁵

2. At the level of *narrative*,⁷⁶ I hypothesize that the deferral of agency manifests itself through characteristic patterns, themes, or other forms of verbal expression (such as, for example, the "vocabularies of motive" identified and described by Mills (1940)) that comprise actors' accounts of their thinking, attitudes, beliefs, values, and general orientations towards situations of potential action on global issues or problems they are concerned about.
3. At the level of *social interaction*, I hypothesize that the deferral of agency manifests itself through distortions in communication that are caused by, or find expression in, unacknowledged differences in individual definitions of the situation, unarticulated or unexpressed needs or desires, unstated or conflicting background assumptions, and overt, unrecognized or latent conflicts between participants in dialogue.

Once the empirical data provided by the interviews described below have been analyzed in Chapters 3 and 4, these theoretical expectations can then be explored in terms of the extent to which they usefully can be applied to that data in order to attain a better understanding of the apparent discrepancy between public awareness of and concern about contemporary global threats to human and planetary survival, and the relative lack of participation by Americans in organized efforts to address these critical issues.

¹ Among the other Cold War-era nuclear powers, China, Russia (which still has a sizeable number of these weapons ostensibly under its control, though there have been questions raised about the whereabouts of some of its weapons-grade materials), Britain, and France still maintain nuclear arsenals. Israel is believed

to possess nuclear warheads that numbers in the hundreds. Pakistan and India also have nuclear weapons capabilities. While North Korea apparently has shelved its nuclear ambitions in response to a recently negotiated agreement with the United States, there currently is significant disagreement among states, policy experts and in the international community about whether or not Iran is seeking to develop or acquire them. But the United States possesses by far the most extensive nuclear weapons arsenal on the planet, with a current arsenal of around 9,960 intact warheads, of which 5,735 are considered active or operational (although only a certain number of these are deployed at any given time). "Nuclear Weapons and the United States," *Wikipedia*, September 16, 2007 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_weapons_and_the_United_States#Current_status).

² A review of past literature on social movements and collective behavior suggests that, with the important exception of situations involving massive social unrest (such as pre-revolutionary situations), it usually is only a minority of the population potentially available for protest activities that actually participates in them at any given point in time. Thus, while relatively low levels of citizen political participation on important social and political issues are not unique to the threats posed by nuclear weapons proliferation and environmental degradation, the paucity of overt citizen engagement with respect to these issues is particularly striking, if only because these two threats involve global developments that, if allowed to continue unchecked, may have serious long-term consequences for human survival and the habitability of the planet. Given growing public awareness and concern about these problems, one might expect more people to be actively involved in attempts to address them.

³ See, for example, Green and Shapiro (1994).

⁴ See, for example, Lifton and Falk (1982); Lifton (1967).

⁵ By *public sphere*, I am, following Habermas, referring to those discursive spaces situated between the institutions of the bourgeois state and economy in which private citizens freely can participate in a practical discourse involving the formulation, stipulation, and adoption of general social and political norms of action. See Benhabib (1992):104-105; Forrester (1987):182. For his definitive work on the historical development and transformation of the bourgeois public sphere, see Habermas (1991).

⁶ This definition of political agency is, in certain respects, a narrow one, in that it excludes from the realm of the "political" behavior which, in a different discussion, would require one to take account of behavior in which one acts in a way that is indifferent to others, but which nevertheless could be considered to be political.

⁷ Also included in this category is the case of an individual who both perceives an issue or problem and recognizes her ability and willingness to address it, but nevertheless chooses not to act. For example, an individual's *deferral* of political agency, rather than being rooted in a sense that she is *incapable* of taking effective action with regard to a perceived problem, may in fact be the result of a perception that others do not seem to be available to act with in addressing that problem.

⁸ While acknowledging these assumptions, I nevertheless want to leave open the question of what is to be understood as "reasonable" or "rational" when it comes to characterizing or accounting for people's behavior in specific empirical circumstances. That is, at the same time that, for the purposes of this research, I am characterizing political activism as comprising a set of putatively rational behavioral responses to global dangers, I want to leave open the possibility that there may be circumstances in which such responses, while not involving conventionally recognized forms of "action," nevertheless could be understood to be equally "rational." See the example described at the end of the previous note.

⁹ On the theoretical usefulness of Habermas' communicative model of action and rationality, with specific reference to an understanding of new social movements, see White (1988):123-127.

¹⁰ The literature on rational choice, despite its limitations, has made important contributions to political

sociology. See, for example, Green and Shapiro (1994). On the other hand, recent feminist as well as postmodern, postcolonial scholarship bearing upon questions of subjectivity and agency have sought to bring a more differentiated, less Western, and “male-centered” conception of reason to bear in social and cultural critique. See, for example, Braidotti (1994); Butler (2006:45-49); Spivak (1995:199); and Mohanty (1991:61-88), the latter two references as cited in Butler (2006).

¹¹ This typology is based, in part, on White's account of Habermas' analysis of “three different conceptions of action and the corresponding frameworks they establish for rationality,” as well White's account of what Habermas considers to be his more adequate, *communicative* conceptions of reason and action. White, 1988:10-21, 25-36, 37.

¹² White, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

¹³ Habermas, *TCA*, p. 92-2, as cited by White, *ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁴ White, *op.cit.*, p. 39. Habermas (1984:69; 1979:1) refers to “action oriented to reaching understanding.” As discussed below, the choice of a conception of action necessarily establishes the framework for a particular conception of rationality. See *infra*, Section VI. (A).

¹⁵ In his essay, “On the Pragmatic, the Ethical, and the Moral Employments of Practical Reason,” Habermas makes a distinction between *ethical* questions, which involve considerations of how one wants to live one's life in accord with one's values, priorities, and goals, and *moral* questions, which involve considerations of the universalizability of “behavioral expectations in response to interpersonal conflicts resulting from the disruption of our orderly coexistence by conflicts of interests.” (1993:1-17). However, it is unclear to what extent what Habermas refers to as “ethical-existential discourses” can, in a practical, lifeworld context, be so easily separated from “moral-practical” ones.

¹⁶ This issue will be discussed in more detail in my review of the theoretical social movement literature, below.

¹⁷ See, for example, my discussion of Bogen (1999), below.

¹⁸ The specific focus of this research is on individual perceptions of and responses to the global threats represented by nuclear weapons proliferation and environmental degradation. However, for the purposes of the analysis below, I use the term “collective danger” to refer more generically to any type of social or political issue, problem, or threat that is perceived by social actors as having potentially deleterious consequences for a social or political collectivity with which they identify. In so doing, I wish to emphasize the socially-shared character of such dangers as posing a threat to the life of a social group rather than to the lives of separate individuals. In other words, the dangers to human survival posed by environmental degradation and by the existence of nuclear weapons are *collective* dangers, not only in the general sense that they represent potentialities which, if realized, could have extremely dire consequences for human and other life forms, if not for the planet as a whole; they also are dangers that we, as human beings, implicitly share as co-inhabitants of this planet. As stated earlier, my working assumption here is that research concerning the sources and dynamics of individual perception, belief, and action with regard to these specific global dangers can also have relevance to an understanding of the roots of political participation (and its deferral) more generally.

¹⁹ A theoretically-sufficient account would, for example, trace these historical and theoretical roots from Comte through the work of Durkheim, Marx, Weber, and Parsons, up through the work of more contemporary social theorists such as Foucault, Habermas, Giddens, and Alexander.

²⁰ It must be noted from the outset that the discussion that follows is presented at a level of analysis that necessarily abstracts from the concrete specificities of individual cases. That is, the framework to be presented here provides a general conceptual structure within which the relationships among the individual, his perceptions of global dangers, and the organized collectivities that are attempting to address them can

be understood. The analysis and interpretation of my interview materials in Chapters 3 and 5, while assuming this general conceptual framework, nevertheless will discuss those materials in terms of the contextual factors and empirical contingencies that come into play in each individual case.

²¹ The term “actor” is used here in its generic, sociological sense; that is, with reference to individual persons within larger collectivities. Thus, it implies nothing about the nature of such a person’s behavior in any particular situation.

²² There is an extensive sociological literature dealing with the “social construction” of social problems. There was also an interesting debate among literary and discourse theorists and philosophers during the 1980s around ist and realist approaches to the extratextual “reality” of the nuclear threat. See, for example, Solomon (1988), and the special issue of *Diacritics* (1984).

²³ The ways in which individuals respond to their perceptions of global dangers will also vary depending upon the extent to which certain motivational patterns come into play. On Habermas’ notion of “motivational syndromes,” see below. These syndromes may act as additional inhibiting or diverting factors that compromise an individual’s willingness to respond to these global concerns through some form of political action.

²⁴ Of course, a *rational choice* approach to analyzing an individual’s decision-making process with regard to participation in collective action would also consider the potential “costs” as well as “benefits” to the individual of such participation, as well as the extent to which such “benefits” would accrue to the individual without her participation. On the “free-rider” problem, see Olson (1971). While only partly addressed by this research, an assessment of the relevance of rational choice approaches to the analysis of individual decision-making about political participation, and the outlines of a critique of such approaches from a Habermasian standpoint, would be a valuable contribution to a more comprehensive approach to the problem of deferred agency.

²⁵ I have already alluded to the role of moral consciousness in influencing an individual’s orientation to addressing nuclear and environmental dangers - see my discussion of Habermas’ rendering of Kohlberg’s theory of moral development above. Such considerations will also come into play in the analysis of my interview materials.

²⁶ See, for example, Hechter (1983, 1987); and Friedman (1983).

²⁷ With the alleged invalidation of earlier “breakdown” theories of collective action in the 1970s, rational-actor models of motivation and decision-making with regard to participation in social and political movements, best epitomized by resource mobilization (RM) theory, came to the fore. For a critique of earlier characterizations of breakdown theories of collective action, see Useem (1998).

²⁸ For an excellent (though somewhat tendentious) explication of this tradition, see Anderson (1979).

²⁹ These are not hypotheses in the traditional, social-scientific sense of the term; rather, they are more in the way of conceptual assumptions I make for the heuristic purpose of exploring what kinds of arguments would need to be made in order to justify them, and what existing theoretical perspectives would be in the best position to advance them.

³⁰ For reasons of brevity, I henceforth will be using the term “deferred agency” as synonymous with “deferred *political* agency.” The following discussion is based, in part, on White’s (1988:10-21, 25-36) distinction, following Habermas, between the strategic, contextual, and communicative conceptions of reason and action.

³¹ See Section I.

³² Of course, this relationship between contemplated actions and achievable goals also must be rational, i.e.

it cannot merely be a matter of subjective belief.

³³ Of course, this perspective begs precisely the question of whether or not there are other, equally rational grounds for participation that do not depend upon an instrumental, means-ends conception. Obviously, the same can be said about the other two perspectives described here.

³⁴ Smelser (1963). Smelser is also considered an adherent of the social systems perspective in sociology, following Talcott Parsons. See Section V.B. below.

³⁵ I have placed the words "type" and "rationality" in quotation marks here because most postmodern thinkers would deny the universalistic pretensions that they see as implicit in the very use of such terms.

³⁶ Of course, the "rationality" of this reluctance to participate must of necessity be defined in minimalist terms, i.e. as "rational" only in the sense that the individual is unable to establish reasonable (i.e. discursively defensible) grounds for any particular course of action. The individual's *awareness* of the representational character of that perception, on the other hand, may be more or less conscious, and thus more or less accessible to conscious articulation.

³⁷ While I am presenting here a Parsonian account of action and rationality rooted in his (descriptive) theory of the development and functioning of modern societies, and of the place of individual socialization with that development, it is impossible nevertheless to avoid the impression that there is a strongly normative undercurrent to his theory of society. To the extent that a slightly different presentation of Parsons emphasized these normative dimensions, it would be easy to draw a conclusion more in line with hypothesis #2 above: that it is *rational* not to act in response to a perceived danger.

³⁸ Again, my theoretical focus is on *extra-institutional* forms of political action.

³⁹ There is also an extensive empirical literature that has studied, largely ethnographically and interpretively, specific antinuclear and environmental organizations and activists. While it is beyond the purview of the present research, it also would be valuable to review and analyze representative contributions to *this* literature, in order to evaluate some of their findings against the claims of the theoretical literature reviewed below, and our initial interpretation of the problem of deferred agency. Such analyses also could be helpful in further developing and refining that interpretation, as well as in generating new theoretical resources that then could be applied to the interpretation of empirical data derived from in-depth interviews.

⁴⁰ "Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence," Part I ("On Systematically Distorted Communication"), in Dreitzl, Hans Peter, ed., *Recent Sociology no. 2*, London, The MacMillan Co., 1970, p.115-148.

⁴¹ There are, of course, other tendencies within Habermas' work which point very clearly towards the phenomenon that we are referring to as *deferred agency*. These will be taken up in more detail below.

⁴² In line with this criticism, some have argued that new social movement theory sidesteps the issue of the processes of mobilization that are involved. (Klandermans and Tarrow, 1988:9.)

⁴³ For an excellent review and critique of this work, see Aronowitz (1987).

⁴⁴ Such as, for example, the account provided by the "classical" critical theorists, detailed below.

⁴⁵ I am referring here to the work of some of the earlier theorists of "collective behavior" mentioned above; but also to more psychologically-oriented work by Lifton (1967, 1987, 1990), Lifton and Falk (1982), and others; and to the excellent empirical research on antinuclear activism by both sociologists and psychologists in the late 1970's and early 1980's.

⁴⁶ White, 1988:36-37.

⁴⁷ White, 1988:36-37.

⁴⁸ Warren (1995: 172-173).

⁴⁹ Habermas, 1970:[#].

⁵⁰ Moon (1995:159.)

⁵¹ I am referring to Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse. The work of Erich Fromm and Wilhelm Reich, while in other respects central to the concerns of this dissertation, will not be taken up here.

⁵² Horkheimer, in *Eclipse of Reason*, counterposes what he calls "subjective reason," or "the ability to calculate probabilities and thereby to co-ordinate the right means with a given end" to "objective reason," or reason which is informed by universalizable principles which are inherent in the structure of reality itself and, by extension, human existence. (Horkheimer, 1974: 5-11). I will use "instrumental reason" as the generic term here.

⁵³ This distinction is the earlier structural analogue to his later, more encompassing distinction between "system" and "lifeworld." These developments are what Habermas later refers to as the "colonization" of the latter.

⁵⁴ Habermas himself does not use the term "deferred agency." However, the phenomenon to which this term refers is implicit in his use of the concepts of civil- and familial-vocational privatism ((Habermas, 1973:36-37, 75-77), as well as in his discussions of the decline of the public sphere (1989), and of the discrepancy between moral judgment and action (1979: 91-93).

⁵⁵ This is basically the same tripartite distinction in Habermas' work as that made by White (1988:5), except that my discussion of his communicative ethics will focus more specifically upon his theory of moral development.

⁵⁶ With reference to the latter, see White (1988).

⁵⁷ On pathologies of the lifeworld, see Habermas, 1989, passim; and 1982:280-281.

⁵⁸ I have in mind here primarily the essay on "Moral Development and Ego Identity" in Habermas (1979), as well as several of the essays in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (1990) and *Postmetaphysical Thinking* (1992). To my knowledge, Habermas has never explored the links between these two aspects of his work, although early on he made some suggestive remarks in this direction. See Habermas, 1975:76, 155-56f.

⁵⁹ At one point, Habermas refers collectively to these syndromes as "civic privatism." (Habermas, 1975:37.)

⁶⁰ See Habermas (1989). Of course, Habermas makes it clear that the actual extent of political involvement on the part of ordinary citizens in liberal capitalist societies was significantly circumscribed, often due to class, status, and other socioeconomic considerations.

⁶¹ "Lifeworld (German: Lebenswelt) is a concept used in philosophy and in some social sciences, meaning the world 'as lived' prior to reflective re-presentation or analysis...." For Habermas, the lifeworld is the "background" environment of cultural, linguistic, and cognitive understandings, competences and attitudes that perform as well as inform individuals' lived experience. "Lifeworld," *Wikipedia*, April 2007.

⁶² Habermas here cites Kohlberg (1969:397ff).

⁶³ For Habermas, *interactive competence* consists in the abilities that an acting subject must acquire in order to take part in increasingly complex structures of social (or "communicative") interaction. These "structures" include the actors who are in communicative interaction; behavioral expectations; norms; principles for deriving norms; situational or normative consequences of action; and the actors' motivational orientations. See Habermas (1979:82, 86), and McCarthy (1978:344).

⁶⁴ See, for example, Turiel (1974:14-29), as cited in Habermas (1973:77).

⁶⁵ For a rendering of Kohlberg's stages of moral consciousness, see Elliot Turiel, "Conflict and Transition in Adolescent Moral Development," *Child Development* 45 (1974:14-29), as referenced in Habermas (1979: 77).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*:37, 77.

⁶⁷ Habermas (1979) cites the concept of defense mechanisms originated by Sigmund Freud and developed theoretically by Anna Freud (1966) and others with regard to how these psychological dynamics operate.

⁶⁸ These external dangers, of course, also may resonate with or "trigger" existing fears or anxieties within the individual.

⁶⁹ Such individuals might, however, still need to employ other types of defensive mechanisms to avoid having to consciously confront fears and anxieties that nevertheless might be provoked by a partial or inchoate awareness of the dangers represented by these developments.

⁷⁰ However, it is important to note that Habermas' insights in this regard provide the theoretical basis for future research on the relationship between these three levels of analysis. See Chapter 4 below.

⁷¹ White (1988: 110, 124.)

⁷² In this regard, White contrasts the moral-practical sense of "responsibility to act" underlying Habermas' position on this issue, as opposed to the moral-aesthetic sense of "responsibility to otherness" underlying that of the postmodernists. See White (1991: x, 20-21).

⁷³ In fact, according to Rosenau (1992), the "skeptical" postmodernists assert that the realization of political agency as a positive political project is no longer possible, much less desirable, under conditions of postmodern life.

⁷⁴ This research would, however, following Aronowitz (1988), contest Habermas' claim that the ideological influence of this rationality stems solely from the ways in which it is utilized as a distorting factor in communicative interaction (Habermas, 1984). I argue, rather, in line with Angus and Cook (1987), that science and technology constitute a discursive formation which has an inherent ideological function; and that this discourse does not merely distort communication, but forms and limits communicative possibilities.

⁷⁵ This first level of analysis, while beyond the scope of the present research, nevertheless is crucial to an understanding of how the phenomenon of deferred agency manifests itself on the level of individual personality structure.

⁷⁶ By *narrative*, I am referring to the accounts of their thinking, attitudes, motivations, and actions provided by respondents through the interview process. This is to be contrasted with the more explicitly dialogical character of *social interaction*, although the distinction here is by no means an absolute one, since of course the participation of the researcher in the former means that the interview situation is also fundamentally *dialogical*.

CHAPTER 3

THE INTERVIEWS: PART ONE

I. METHODOLOGY

This research seeks to evaluate the theoretical cogency and empirical usefulness of the concept of deferred agency in understanding why many Americans today are not involved in ongoing, collective efforts to address critical global issues. In order adequately to perform such an evaluation, it is necessary to select a method of analysis that is suitable to its “object” – in this case, the thoughts, feelings and behavior of individuals with regard to such issues, including the ways in which they understand those issues in terms of their social, political and/or moral significance as well as practical implications, and evaluate possible courses of action in response to them. However, with the important exception of certain forms of systematic, critical self-reflection, social researchers can only have access to data regarding subjective experience indirectly, through the accounts of such experience provided to us by others through the medium of language. Even in the limited case of participant observation, where the researcher *is* able directly to observe and evaluate the behavior of the “subjects” with whom she is interacting, she nevertheless only can have adequate access to the *meaning* of that behavior through a form of interpretation that depends at least partly upon those subjects’ own accounts of their experience.

In order to have access to this kind of data, this researcher conducted in-depth, personal interviews with nine different individuals, selected because they either apparently shared or differed on one or more of the following characteristics: (1) their

concerns about contemporary global issues; (2) past or present histories of political involvement on one or more of these issues; or (3) their apparent withdrawal from, or reluctance to engage in, concerted political activity on those issues at certain points in their life histories, despite their continuing concerns about them. At the time the initial interviews were conducted, seven of the nine respondents made their homes in the San Francisco Bay Area; the other two lived in New York City and Seattle, Washington, respectively.¹ Respondents were identified and selected either through personal contacts or access to local political groups or activist organizations. Other than using the criteria just enumerated above, I made no attempt to select respondents based upon any notion of a “representative sample.” Rather, my interest was, as already indicated, in identifying individuals who, because they shared (or differed on) one or more of the characteristics described above, hopefully would provide data that could help to illuminate the empirical usefulness of a theoretical framework informed by the concept of deferred agency.

This sort of in-depth, qualitative field research, of course, has many precedents in the sociological and related literatures.² In line with the theoretical and methodological rationale behind these types of studies, my interest was in developing rich, in-depth data on the thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and behavior of a small number of individuals, rather than in doing a quantitative study of a larger sample of respondents, selected “scientifically” on the basis of, for example, certain demographic, social-structural, or ideological characteristics, in order to arrive at some ostensibly generalizable findings about surface attitudes, beliefs, and values. In *qualitative* research of the sort conducted here, what is lost in terms of the potential generalization of findings attained through other methods utilizing a larger number of subjects (such as survey research and other

forms of quantitative analysis) is, in this researcher's view, more than compensated for by the richness and complexity of the data obtained through in-depth, qualitative interviews that provide access to the subjective experience of a small number of individuals.³ A small number of respondents also allows for easy follow-up with regard to statements or issues that are unclear from the initial interview, as well as the opportunity for more focused, in-depth discussions of issues that were raised by the initial interview, but which the researcher subsequently determines require more thorough discussion.

That said, my selection of the nine respondents whose interviews provided the empirical data that are presented and evaluated in Chapters 3-5 was guided by my theoretical interest in exploring the phenomenon of *deferred agency* as it manifests itself in the political consciousness and behavior of discrete individuals. At the same time, the selection process was informed by the belief that individual thinking and behavior with regard to situations of potential action (in this case, an individual's assessment of available opportunities to become involved or participate in collective efforts to address critical global issues, as well as decisions about whether or not to *actually participate* in one or more of those efforts) always is informed by, as well as intimately bound up with, the particular social contexts within which they occur. Accordingly, my selection process also was informed by an initial desire to attain, to the extent ascertainable prior to the conduct of the interviews themselves, a certain kind of "diversity" in the family backgrounds as well as life experiences of my respondents.

A total of twelve interviews were conducted, all of them in person. Of the nine interviews conducted initially, four were conducted at the respondents' homes, three were

conducted at my home, and two were conducted at the respondents' respective places of employment.⁴ Seven of the nine initial interviews were conducted in the San Francisco Bay Area or environs between 1985 and 2001, and two were conducted in New York City, one in 1985 and the other in 1993. Of the 12 interviews I conducted, only one took place *after* the events of September 11, 2001 and their immediate aftermath.⁵ Each of the interviews took between two and four hours to complete. In each case, the interview was (audio) tape-recorded and transcribed. These oral and written records then provided the basis for the discussion, analysis and interpretation of the interview data as presented below.

Before commencing each interview, I read a short introductory statement, briefly identifying myself and my institutional affiliation, describing the purpose of the study, asking the respondent's permission to conduct the interview as well as to tape-record it, describing the measures I was and would be taking to protect both the respondent's identity and the confidentiality of the information the respondent would be providing,⁶ and informing the respondent that he/she could refuse to answer any question, or end the interview at any time without any penalty. I also offered each respondent an opportunity to receive a copy of the results of the study. Once I had answered any questions the respondent had about these procedures or the study itself, I then asked for the respondent's verbal permission to begin the interview.

For the purpose of conducting these interviews, I developed and produced a rather detailed questionnaire, based upon a thorough review of questionnaires used in other, similar types of studies, consultation with expert sources, and my previous experience with interviewing techniques, questionnaire development, and the conduct of quantitative

(survey) as well as qualitative research. While I developed and utilized this instrument in part so as to be as consistent in my data collection as possible across interviews for purposes of comparative analysis, at the same time my interview technique itself was more concerned with eliciting, probing, clarifying or understanding in greater depth certain types of information, statements, issues, or questions raised in the course of the interview process, either directly as a result of something a respondent said, indirectly as a result of my assessment of the relevance of what was being said to the theoretical concerns that informed this research, or some combination of the two. In the latter sense, the questionnaire was infinitely more useful and important to this study as a “tool” for first identifying and then exploring in greater depth and complexity data that could be suggestive or revealing in terms of the theoretical concerns of this research. A copy of my questionnaire is attached below as Appendix A.

In performing the analysis and interpretation of the data itself, I utilized a form of textual analysis that draws its theoretical coherence from a modified form of the situational approach within sociology. This form of analysis is characterized by (1) a sensitivity to the importance of the dynamic interaction between actor and social context in understanding how actors constitute their thought, experience and behavior in specific empirical contexts through the medium of language (i.e. discourse and narrative), as well as by (2) systematic attention to the methodological problem inherent in any attempt to understand the thinking and behavior of social actors through the interpretation of verbal accounts provided by the actors themselves.⁷ That being said, my approach to analyzing the “data” comprising my interview texts was to focus upon certain statements, concepts, expressions, phrases, and the like that appeared to be indicative or characteristic of (1)

some aspect or dimension of how the respondent described or accounted for her thinking or behavior with regard to a global issue of concern to her, (2) how she evaluated or assessed the available (or potential) options for participation in collective efforts to address that issue, or (3) her general orientation to political agency or action.

The ultimate purpose of the presentation and analysis of the interview with Rhona that follows, and my subsequent presentation and comparative analysis of the interview data derived from my other 8 respondents in Chapters 4 and 5, is to explore the extent to which the theoretical framework presented and developed in Chapter 2 with regard to the problem of deferred agency, as informed by the work of Habermas and his theoretical interlocutors, may be useful in understanding the apparent discrepancy between, on the one hand, many Americans' awareness of and concerns about critical global issues that in some cases represent threats to human survival and the continued habitability of the planet, and their relative lack of participation in collective efforts to address those problems, on the other.⁸ However, because the interview with Rhona initially provided a wealth of data with regard to her thinking, attitudes, beliefs, values, and decision-making with regard to participating in the various issues she expressed concern about, and because I wanted to avoid "biasing" (and therefore invalidating) my interpretation of these data (and therefore my findings) from the outset, the interpretations and conclusions presented in Section II below were arrived at *inductively*; that is, they resulted from a detailed analysis of those data, through which I was able to identify certain recurring themes and patterns in the ways Rhona characterized her orientation towards political agency in general, as well as in the ways she accounted for her specific political involvements (or her decisions to defer such involvements).⁹

Section II (A) below presents, discusses, and analyzes these data in some detail, with a particular focus on material that appears to be characteristic of (1) her general orientation towards political agency and activism, and (2) her processes of thinking as well as decision-making with regard to situations of potential action (i.e. opportunities for political participation on the issues or problems she expresses concern about). Based upon this discussion, in Section II (B) I identify and highlight certain patterns or themes that seem to characterize Rhona's general orientation to political agency as well as her cognitive, decision-making, and behavioral "styles" with regard to specific empirical contexts of (potential) action. This will set the stage for the comparative analysis presented in Chapter 5, where I use these themes as the basis for a comparative analysis of the data provided by my other eight respondents (as summarized in Chapter 4). In this manner, the following presentation and analysis of the data provided by my interview with Rhona will serve as a methodological "template" for my subsequent analysis and interpretation of the data derived from the other eight interviews.

II. RHONA

A. Presentation and Analysis of The Data

Rhona was 45 years old at the time I first interviewed her. She was born in Brooklyn, New York, and grew up on Long Island, in a residential suburb of New York City. Because hers was a Jewish family living in a largely non-Jewish neighborhood, Rhona, at a young age, personally experienced the effects of social isolation, alienation, and prejudice. As a result, she developed a strong sense of independence and individual identity, choosing to be alone rather than try to "fit in" with her immediate social environment and with other children her own age. She contrasted herself with her only

sibling, Margaret, whom Rhona described during childhood as desperately trying to fit in with others her own age, to the extent that Margaret preferred to avoid any discussion of social and political issues, as though such discussion would somehow undermine her own self-perceptions, and thus her already-precarious status with her peers.

In addition, the fact that her family's (in particular, her father's) values and political orientation were well left of center also contributed to Rhona's sense of isolation. Her father was active in civil rights protests in the 1950's and early 1960's, and he took Rhona, who was only seven or eight years old at the time, to several of them. Her parents also talked about the Holocaust on several occasions, and Rhona recalled being particularly moved by their account of how Jews were rounded up and taken away by the Nazis to concentration camps, and in many cases to their deaths, while most ordinary people stood by and did nothing to intervene. Her father impressed upon Rhona the importance of speaking out against injustice and standing up for others who were being mistreated or persecuted. Rhona recalled this aspect of her upbringing in the context of explaining her deeply held convictions about confronting injustice, racism, and discrimination against others who are less fortunate than herself, or who are members of other oppressed minorities, such as blacks or poor people. In fact, at one point in the interview, in reflecting upon the role her parents may have played in her orientation to global issues, Rhona had the realization that one of the reasons for her strong convictions about letting victims of acts of persecution or injustice know that *she* noticed, that she was witnessing (and cared about) the perpetration of such acts on them, was precisely her father's account of how many people *did* stand by and do nothing as Jews were led away to their deaths in the Holocaust.

Rhona lived in a quiet, two-bedroom house with her partner, Grace, and their two informally adopted children¹⁰ in a tree-lined residential neighborhood in Oakland, California, populated mostly by people of African-American, Hispanic, and Asian descent. Rhona and Grace had lived together for twenty years, all of them in that house. Rhona had lived in the Bay Area since 1978, when she moved there from Vermont.

As a central focus of the interview protocol, I asked respondents to identify three issues or problems in the world today that they were concerned about. In Rhona's case, she named poverty, police brutality, and AIDS. However, when I asked her which issue was of most concern to her right now, she had difficulty ranking them in order of importance. She explained that these issues were connected for her, and that therefore it was difficult for her to rank them relative to one another, or to separate them for purposes of discussion. At my suggestion, she agreed to discuss them separately, with the caveat that she was free to make any connections among them she wished during the course of our conversation.

Rhona rated her level of concern about poverty as fairly high (8 out of a possible 10¹¹), and said that what concerned her the most about poverty was the lack of life choices available to the poor; hunger; and, following from that, what people do as a result of being hungry, such as selling their bodies, committing crimes, and other secondary effects, such as on education, the upbringing of children, etc. When I initially asked her what she thought could be done to address poverty, Rhona responded, "that's hard," laughed, said, "I don't know," and was silent for several seconds. However, when I asked her who should take responsibility for dealing with the problem of poverty, she replied, "Well, if it was up to me, everyone; from governments to non-profits to

individuals." As to what such organizations and individuals should be doing in this regard, she said:

"Well, I would say things like ACORN,¹² which gives a voice to the concerns, is a good start I work at adult literacy, I think that's a good place to start, because you give people some room to get out of a limited place. Umhh ... you know, job training, obviously, things like that. But I think it's bigger than that, because there's mental barriers on the part of people with power, you know- where they don't want someone different than them where they speak different or they look different.

As to Rhona's own sense of responsibility regarding this problem, and what she thinks she herself should be doing to address poverty, she says:

Well, we try to support ACORN, and Global Exchange, and groups like that. Umhh ... you know, the things like housing in the Presidio for the homeless; umh ... you know, when there's demonstrations -- to protest, like, the homeless people dying, we try to support that, either go, or share the information, or share flyers. Umh, you know, just on a small level, I try to treat homeless people with respect, and not have them be invisible; ask them how their day is, and/or give them money; but at least, give them personhood, you know, and maybe give them money - sometimes I do [give them money] and sometimes I don't. The money one's hard, because there are institutions that do that ... organizations that help the hungry. And it's always a conflict for me, which is a more effective use of my money; but yeah, I definitely feel like it's partly my responsibility.

The fact that Rhona answered a question about what she thinks she should be doing to address poverty with a fairly specific account of what she (and her partner) were *already* doing about it indicates that not only is she a person who has been thinking about this issue and her relationship to it for some time; she is also someone who has engaged this issue practically, i.e. in terms of her own considered responses to it.¹³ Furthermore, Rhona's description of how she (and, in this instance, her partner) gave practical expression to her feelings of responsibility to do something about poverty (and, in particular, her expression of conflicting feelings about whether to give money directly to homeless people or, instead, to contribute to organizations that help them) serves to

highlight an important aspect of her orientation towards social and political issues: that orientation is, at bottom, informed by a search for forms of action through which she can join with *others* to address these problems. In other words, the conflict Rhona verbalizes about the most effective way to contribute money in order to address the problems of poverty and homelessness expresses more than a simple desire to "do" something as an *individual* that might improve the lot of poor or homeless people; she is, in a larger sense, searching for a vehicle of *collective* action that could absorb her resources, talents, energies, etc. In this sense, what underlies Rhona's conflict about how best to help the homeless is not so much a concern with the most effective use of her money, but rather a search for a way in which she can *participate* effectively with *others* in addressing this problem.

Moreover, Rhona's expression of this caveat with regard to the form of her participation in efforts to help the homeless is indicative of a cognitive approach or style of decision-making with reference to the assessment of situations or opportunities for potential action that was, to varying extents, shared by most of the other subjects interviewed for this study. This approach was generally characterized by a concern with and attention to the morally-relevant aspects of the forms of action to be engaged in, as well as the often conflicting moral implications as well as consequences of engaging in (or, on the other hand, the *deferring* of agency with respect to) particular forms of participation in particular empirical contexts.¹⁴

When asked what experiences or events in her life most helped shape her thinking and concerns about poverty, Rhona described those concerns as stemming largely from her father, whom she said had been a role model for her in terms of "how to treat less

fortunate people you come across.” She recalled that he used to tell her “hundreds of times” about how he had, over time, walked the streets of Manhattan in every direction, familiarizing himself with the different neighborhoods and the different kinds of people who lived in them. She said that, partly through these experiences, he had developed respect for people of all classes and races.¹⁵ She also described how, at one time, her father had started a business, and had hired ex-convicts, gays, battered women, and immigrants, and had given them a nice place to work. In this context, she also recalled how she had first become aware of the plight of farm workers on Long Island, who were at that time being organized into a union called the Eastern Farmworkers. She said that her father had made her aware of a “progressive house” in their area that served as an organizing center for various causes. Rhona originally went there to participate in fighting the construction of the Shoreham nuclear power plant on the Island. She said she believed that that probably was where she first met some people from the farm workers’ union, and that she had been directly exposed to their work in that way. Though Rhona was only 13 years old at the time, she was strongly moved by their plight, including the abuse and workplace injuries they suffered because of the farm bosses. When I asked what specifically had happened as a result of her visit to the progressive house that led her to get involved, she said it was the fact that human beings were being treated so badly, though she could not recall the specific circumstances. She said that she was involved with the farm workers’ cause for about three years, doing some fundraising and helping with the grape boycott, but, most importantly, working on a class-action lawsuit that the union was filing against the local police: “That was a big one for me.”¹⁶

As to what factors Rhona believed, in retrospect, had motivated her to become active in the Eastern Farmworkers' cause, she said that it was “one specific way to tackle racism, and oppression - like slavery right next door... And [we were] eating the food that comes from those people.” According to Rhona, once she had an awareness of their plight, and the injustices involved, it was simply a matter of identifying a way in which she could help.¹⁷ However, when Rhona left home at seventeen and moved to New Hampshire in 1973, her involvement with the farm workers' cause ended, because there were no similarly situated farm workers up there. But she did become involved working at “a radical left conference center.” She subsequently moved to Vermont, where, for about four years, she “did a lot of political organizing” on labor and domestic violence issues as part of the left activist community there. She remarked, however, that she “was too young” at the time, and after a while had decided to move to the San Francisco Bay Area, where she believed she would have more opportunities to “work on things,” and to learn from other activists. Indeed, she described how, after she had moved to San Francisco, she had been exposed to a much wider variety of issues and causes, of which the plight of California's farm workers and their union, the United Farm Workers of America (“UFW”), was only one of many. Thus, while she continued to support the struggles of farm workers on the West coast by occasionally helping with the grape boycott, she did not become actively involved in their struggle, as she had been with the farm workers on Long Island. When I asked her whether she was involved with the UFW today, Rhona replied, “No, not really,”¹⁸ though she said that she occasionally would attend a “big event,” such as a recent forum at a local bookstore commemorating the birthday of Cesar Chavez.¹⁹

In terms of her involvement today more generally with organizations addressing poverty, Rhona said that she was "connected" to ACORN, meaning that she and Grace supported the organization, though Grace was *more* connected with that organization than she was. She also said that, although she had worked with Global Exchange for many years, she was not "*directly* connected" with that organization today.²⁰ At the time of the interview, she was doing paid work tutoring immigrants and other people who couldn't read through an adult literacy program funded by Second Start.²¹ However, of these three organizations, the only one she was actively involved with was Second Start, where she had been a tutor for about twelve years.

When I asked her why she was still doing adult literacy work with Second Start after so many years, Rhona responded, "Partly because I get so much back from it." She said that she herself had had a terrible time in school, and that this skill was something she could give to others: "What I can give is so minimal, yet I can get so much back." In this regard, Rhona remarked that her twelve years as a tutor, and in particular the ways in which her tutees responded to the help she was able to give them, had given her back more than all of the other political work she had done from the time she was thirteen years old. Rhona particularly stressed the uniqueness and intimacy she was able to develop with the tutees in a one-on-one relationship, explaining that

... For those twelve years, umh, that person taught me so much of who they were, what their life experience was like; how they responded to the little pieces of help I could give, I learned from them by how they responded; where before, I'd worked on all these causes, I didn't get so much feedback - I didn't learn so much; umh [short pause]; it was pretty exciting; because I'd always done so much work, and then this was so personal, where you formed a real bond with someone It's a different thing to have a one-on-one relationship

Paradoxically, however, while Rhona saw a "huge need" for the kind of assistance provided by organizations like Second Start, and expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the work, she also expressed a fair degree of ambivalence about the efficiency of that organization in achieving its stated objectives. This ambivalence first became evident when I asked her what was the most frustrating thing for her about working for Second Start. Rhona answered rhetorically, "You're not going to quote this?", laughed, and said:

My boss's incompetence. You know, that's really, you know, there's such an [pause] urgency to help people, on a daily basis, who can't read; and we could do better. And my boss doesn't care. When things don't work, she just kind of turns the other way; and, I kind of feel like, umh, I'm not working in a vacuum. I'm not just me, Rhona, tutoring one person. I'm part of an organization. And when the organization is inefficient, I feel like it kind of reflects on *me*, as if I don't care, and I *really* care. And the more I try to get my boss to care, the more I think she's going to fire me But it's frustrating, because the need is so great, and the things [that need to be changed] are so simple. We just have some problems, like with paperwork, where we kind of lose things. Ya know, some pretty basic things. Umh, but if the people who make decisions don't care, that that system isn't working, I either have to go elsewhere or I have to shut up But that's the hardest, is, you know, I don't really love my boss; *and*, I love the work....²²

The frustration expressed by Rhona in the above passage is evocative of that expressed by some of the subjects interviewed by David Wagner (1990) in his study of the social service careers of radical social workers. In that study, Wagner found that individuals who experienced and expressed a conflict between their values and radical political ideals and goals, on the one hand, and the institutional limitations and conservatizing influences of social service work, on the other, were much more likely to be those who exhibited an intensity of moral and practical commitment to social work that Wagner describes as "missionary zeal." Not surprisingly, these same individuals

were also much more likely to report work experiences associated with what Wagner characterized as "job tension" or "burnout." While at the time I first interviewed her, Rhona obviously was still working at Second Start despite her conflicting feelings about her supervisor, her dual expression of feelings of frustration about as well as satisfaction with the tutoring work she did with Second Start very well may have stemmed from a similar intensity of commitment.

At the same time, however, it is interesting to note that, on the whole, Rhona was not characterized by the kinds of personality traits often associated with the prototypical "activist," in the sense of a self-assured (or even self-aggrandizing) individual who exudes a single-minded determination in the pursuit of a mission, and presumes to be a model for others. On the contrary, Rhona's words, bodily and facial expressions and gestures, and her general demeanor and way of speaking were, generally speaking, those of a person who allowed herself to acknowledge doubts, ambivalences, and uncertainties about her choices and commitments (or lack of same), and who was willing, almost to a fault, to recognize and question the limitations of her own knowledge, abilities, or insights.

When I asked Rhona whether or not her feelings about being politically active had changed as a result of her involvement in adult literacy work, she replied that "there is a level of sustainability that I'm learning." She added that she needed to do political work that she could maintain energy for, and that the tutoring that she was doing with Second Start was sustaining her, apparently despite the ambivalent feelings she expressed about working there.

With regard to police brutality, Rhona characterized herself as "extremely concerned" about the issue, which she viewed as closely linked with poverty, in the sense that it was primarily the poor and oppressed who suffered injustice and degradation at the hands of the police. While she had not been involved with a group primarily oriented to addressing this problem (such as, for example, the ACLU, which she mentioned as a group whose work she supported), Rhona described a period during her involvement with the Eastern Farmworkers when she became very aware of police brutality "as part of the system that was oppressing the farm workers." She went on to explain how the union initiated a class-action lawsuit against the local police, who were attempting to interfere with the union's organizing efforts by harassing and intimidating farm workers and their families. When asked to describe her involvement with the lawsuit, Rhona continued:

.... And it was very intense, because we got sworn affidavits from people who had been abused; and the police knew what we were doing, (and they started harassing us;) so it was pretty intense.... The police worked as silencing, they worked on the side of the crew leaders or the bosses.... So it was like, if we didn't look at that part, everything else was squished down, because people were so in fear. But it was very scary, to be a 14-year old, hearing that the county cops were so vicious. Breaking all the rules, not just legal rules, but just like ethical, moral rules, like you can't just hurt people because you don't like what they're saying.

When questioned more directly about what she thought motivated her to get involved with the lawsuit, Rhona paused for a few seconds, and then replied:

Well; we supposedly have a constitution, there are supposedly laws that protect people. And I don't think people have a right to hurt someone because they disagree with them.... So that to me is really an intense issue. I guess to me it feels like a moral issue, you know, that taking, abusing power is so, you know, kind of unethical to me, I just feel like we all have to speak out against it.

As the interview progressed, the strong *moral* component of the value commitments that undergirded Rhona's orientation towards the issue of police brutality, and towards other types of social situations that involved the mistreatment of others, became increasingly evident. For instance, when I asked her if there were any other factors she thought motivated her to become involved with the farm workers on this issue, she responded:

Well ... you know, brutality is brutality. When it's the police, you know, that's one group doing it. But I was aware of abuse within families on my block, you know, rape in my neighborhood, domestic violence in my neighborhood. And to me, they're similar. I mean they don't have the same institutional connection; but my family helped me have a value judgment, that an adult hurting a child is wrong; and a cop hurting a person without any weapons is wrong. So I think it is wrong within that context, wrong for the person with power to hurt the person without....

And later, when I asked her if there was anything that stood out as having given her the most personal satisfaction about working with the farm workers movement, Rhona replied, "No, just that I thought it was the right thing to do. And I think that was significant. But I don't know that we got anything back.... A lot of things weren't really moving fast; it was more just that it was wrong, and I had to work against it...." When I changed the question slightly, and asked her what was the most satisfying thing to her personally about working on the *issues* that the farm workers' movement was addressing, Rhona she responded:

Well, it was just for my own ethics. I really believed it was right. It was very simple, you know, no one could say that this situation of farm workers was acceptable. And I really believed it was the right thing to do. So, it was an internal thing. From my internal set of values, I knew it was the right thing to do.

A personal, strongly-held sense of moral conviction with a sensitivity to context was a leitmotif that seemed to undergird Rhona's accounts, not only of her involvement

with the farm workers, but of her concerns about and involvement with several of the political and social issues we discussed.²³ Interestingly enough, however, by Rhona's own account, one of the main sources of this conviction became evident to her only in retrospect when, later in the interview, I asked her to reflect upon how growing up in her family may have influenced how she has come to relate to social and political issues in the way that she did, and consequently how she saw herself as a political actor. To back up for a moment, earlier in the interview, Rhona had described how she made a point of being a witness to situations in which she observed police interacting with or confronting people on the street, particularly situations of potential police harassment or abuse involving people of color or others she identified as members of oppressed minority groups. Rhona explained that she did this in order to make sure that the police, as well as the actual (or potential) victim(s) of abuse, noticed her and realized that she was watching and was aware of what was going on, and that she cared about how the police were treating those individuals. Later in the interview, in the context of reflecting back upon those earlier comments, Rhona had the realization that

.... [w]hen I said ... when I was saying the thing about police brutality, and I said [spoken slowly and deliberately] it was important that the people being targeted knew that others not targeted cared [pause; end of slow, deliberate phrasing], it reminded me of Jewish history and the Holocaust, and how strongly we were raised about the people who turned the other way and didn't care; and the effect of that on Jews as a people. So when I *said* it, I said, wow, that's just like that issue of the Holocaust, and those who got involved and risked their lives, and those who turned the other cheek. So then I'm saying, OK, it's the year 2001 and I say, even if I'm not the target, I want the target people to know, I'm awake, I see it, and I think it's wrong. So it reminded me, and I do think that, you know, I was fed *daily* about the lessons of the Holocaust. Some of that was very negative; but that story was a *humongous* impact on my growing up and my consciousness, and that particular part of it, the part that people turned away and didn't care, *supposedly* didn't care, *looked* like they didn't care. I

feel like I will spend my life, trying to not look like them. Right? God forbid I should be mistaken for that person.

Thus Rhona's moral convictions, particularly those relating to her perceptions of the ways in which people less fortunate than her socially as well as economically are treated by individuals or institutions with more power and authority, were in her own mind linked to her upbringing as a Jew who had been inculcated by her parents with knowledge of the atrocities that had been visited upon other Jews by the Nazis, often with the tacit acceptance, if not consent, of others. From a social psychological perspective, it would be tempting to speculate about the extent to which Rhona's political engagement on issues of concern to her might be linked to that upbringing, in the sense of her perceptions of the mistreatment or persecution of others as motivating influences upon her to act on behalf those in society whom she identified as less fortunate than herself and in need of moral witness, if not active assistance.²⁴ In any event, it would seem to be important for an understanding of Rhona's orientation to political agency (or of her apparent deferral of such agency) under particular circumstances to consider the extent to which such internalized moral convictions may come into play in her assessment of the social or political issue(s) that have prompted her attention and concern, and her consequent decisions about whether or not to act on those concerns.²⁵

The deeply moral character of Rhona's beliefs and convictions about issues such as poverty and police brutality also helps to highlight another important dimension of her accounts of the factors that influenced her to become involved politically (or to defer involvement) with organizations that she perceived as addressing global issues or problems about which she was concerned: the extent to which her orientation towards particular forms of political action on these issues is informed by morally-intrinsic (or

"existential"), as opposed to instrumental (or goal-directed) value commitments. A particularly lucid example of the uneasy co-existence, if not tension, between these two orientations in Rhona's account of her own experience came when I asked her what she thought was the most frustrating thing for her personally about working on the issues raised by the farm workers' movement:

...It was that, externally, outside of my own heart and core values, I can't say I saw a lot of change. And that's where it gets hard.... You could put 2,000 hours in , and you could feel like you're in the same place; and, I'm human, so maybe it's just a human foible, that I get discouraged, if you put 2,000 hours in and you feel like you're in the same place. But it's hard to keep going for me without seeing some change.

In this short paragraph, Rhona alludes both to the moral-existential core of her personal commitment to work to improve the lot of farm workers because it is the right thing to do ("my own heart and core values") *and* to her frustration and discouragement about the difficulties in achieving real, palpable victories on their behalf ("You could put 2,000 hours in ... and feel like you're in the same place"; and "it's hard to keep going for me without seeing some change").

Interestingly enough, when I questioned Rhona later about her more sporadic involvement in environmental issues and causes, and asked her if she thought that her more limited involvement on those issues might have some relationship to the extent to which she felt hopeful about the possibilities of effecting change on them, her response was somewhat counterintuitive:

You know, that's a pretty strong thing for me, the hopefulness. But I think around this [i.e. environmental issues/concerns], it doesn't really rate. To me, you have a responsibility every second to think about polluting or not polluting, or genetically-altered food; so mostly hopefulness doesn't come in, because we contribute or we don't. [...] *[R]egardless of whether we're gonna convince anyone or change anything*, you know, you either drive

your car or you don't or you don't use recycled paper or you do. Umh .. So I guess I don't look for *results* in that way.... (emphases added.)

It may partly be the fact that Rhona's commitment to and involvement with environmental issues has been much more sporadic and circumscribed than was her involvement with and commitment to the Eastern farm workers' cause (where she had made more of a long-term "investment" of her time and energy, and therefore had more of an expectation that her political efforts would bear fruit in the form of a tangible outcome) that has enabled her to maintain that more limited level of involvement in environmental issues without the expectation of achieving a result beyond the carrying-out of those actions themselves. That is, Rhona's more existential orientation to her involvement with environmental issues may have a lot to do with the fact that that involvement *is* more limited, and thus that she doesn't *have* need of, or expectations of contributing to or achieving, a "result" that would justify her efforts. Of course this, in turn, also may have to do with the fact that most of her self-described activism on environmental issues is *individualist* in character - that is, many of the activities she describes herself as participating in (e.g. recycling, writing letters, driving her car less) are self-contained, time-limited actions that are not linked to a form of ongoing participation in the work of political group or organization (as was the case with her involvement with farmworker issues, for example). As such, these activities are generally of a sort that don't require the achievement of an external goal that retrospectively would justify or validate the political actor's efforts; in an important sense, these kinds of activities provide their own intrinsic justification (or *raison de faire*).

In a very different context, Rhona made a related point toward the conclusion of the interview, when she was describing changes in her attitude towards working with

members of other groups or organizations (e.g. Catholics), some of whose values might differ from hers but who nevertheless might share some of the same political goals:

And I just wonder, as we change, as progressive people change in how we view others, umh .. you know .. I personally think now tons of people are doing tons of work on tons of different issues. Whether we see the results? I don't know. The results might be attitudinal, they might be that people believe they can do the work.... Because *I* struggle with the hopefulness question, you know, getting discouraged. Umh, and I use this thing as a role model, which I mentioned to you long ago, but I'll say it for your report thing. Growing up, the resistance people to World War II were the role models, were who we idolized. And no one ever believed that anyone in the Resistance was going to succeed in winning the war - that was not the goal. Right - no one was under the illusion that the Partisans were gonna beat the Nazi army. But, because - the reason they were role models is because they did what was right.²⁶

Rhona goes on to explain how she subsequently has used this example of the Partisans to bolster her own sense of purpose and determination in her political work at trying moments:

And I've tried to remind myself of that when I get discouraged, when I say "but we keep fighting for this and we keep losing," where I, I fall into this trap where I wanna get the goal. "Better schools for our kids, " you know, whatever the goal is, right; and then when you can't get that, I say, "oh God, maybe I should just read a book." You know, you want, you could lean towards giving up, because you don't reach that goal. So I try to remind myself that maybe the goal is to speak out. Not *achieving* a desired result, but just speaking up in itself is the goal, therefore you've *achieved* it. See that, we have control over. If you speak out, you've spoken out; you can do that.

With regard to AIDS, Rhona rated her level of concern about the issue as moderate; at the same time, Rhona expressed a lot of concern about the disease, especially in terms of how its spread disproportionately had affected the black community. As to whether her concern about AIDS has increased over time, decreased, or stayed about the same, Rhona said it had increased, as she learned of the impact of the

disease on poor people and people of color.²⁷ According to her, another factor in her increased concern about the spread of AIDS was that she had become aware, through news programs and talking to other people about the issue, of an attitude among some people with AIDS that it was “normal” or “cool” to be HIV positive. This attitude frightened Rhona, because she always has “wanted to do the right thing ... like, you know, if you know that smoking is bad for you, you say, then why would you smoke? So for people to say, what’s the difference, I might as well be [HIV] positive, as all my friends are, really scares me.... So that frightens me, because we have the information.”

When asked about her awareness of groups or organizations working on AIDS issues, Rhona first mentioned John the Baptist Temple as being one of the leading voices on AIDS awareness in the black church community in Oakland. She also mentioned their best friend Tami, whom Rhona described as a health care worker who was very involved in health care issues (although Rhona wasn't clear what group Tami was involved with). When I ask her whether she was aware of any other groups or organizations that were working on AIDS issues, she began by saying “no,” and then promptly mentioned the birth mother of her children, who is a hospice nurse doing AIDS work full-time. Rhona then went on to remark that

“There's a lot of organizations ... there's a ton of paid people; there's so many org-- you know, [the] AIDS Foundation, I mean there's thousands of organizations. I guess if you said, 'What are the groups?', there's thousands.... Umhh, which makes me feel like, it's OK, it's covered. At least more or less covered.... and that gives me permission [pause - clears throat] to work on other things.

When asked whether she currently is active or involved in any efforts to address the problem of AIDS, either on her own or as part of a group, Rhona says that her involvement has been limited to putting up flyers for anti-drug company

demonstrations²⁸, which she had obtained from Tami, whom she described as more directly involved with the issue. When I asked Rhona why, given the concerns she had articulated about AIDS, she had not become more actively involved on the issue, Rhona replied:

“Ummh ... [pause] ... I guess partly ‘cause I think that the part that- that I care about the most locally is, ah, for the people of color community; and I feel like I’m not the best leader for, within that community, as I’m not *in* that community The other [reason] is that - it doesn’t directly affect me, you know, ummh, I feel like of all the issues in the world, which there’s so many, and there’s so many that pull me, ummh, I think a lot of people are working on this, and I kind o’ have a *trust*, that if I don’t personally do it, it still will get done. [...] So that gives me permission, in my own mind, to say, let other people handle it, a lot of people are doing it.”

Rhona then went on to elaborate, saying that when AIDS started in the gay men's community, she didn't have a lot of connections to that community”

... Now that it affects people of color more, I feel stronger about it; [pause] ummh; but I haven't taken leadership on it. ... Sometimes I wish I was on the outside [laughs] still." (By "on the outside," I here take Rhona to mean being politically active apart from her paid work.) When asked to explain this wish, she explains, "Sometimes [my paid work is] - less efficient than I wish; and it's hard to be there where I can't get my boss ta [pause] care.

It is clear from her account of her perceptions of and concerns about AIDS that Rhona had been aware of and thinking about this issue for quite some time, and that it was a problem of considerable concern to her. At the same time, given her time constraints, her other political concerns and commitments, her lack of connection to the community she perceives as most affected by it, and the fact that the problem "doesn't directly affect" her, it might be plausible to treat these all of these factors collectively as "reasons" (in Mills' sense²⁹) sufficient to account for why she had not translated her concerns about AIDS into some form of more concerted, ongoing involvement on the

issue. But the situation is more complicated than that, as Rhona apparently had been actively involved in the past on other social and political causes that didn't directly affect her, but that she nevertheless chose to give time and energy to, despite time constraints and other commitments.

The particular ways in which Rhona characterizes her thinking and concerns about global issues such as poverty and AIDS exemplify an important aspect of her orientation towards political involvement that will become clearer as we move further through the analysis of her interview. That is, to the extent that Rhona looks to groups or organizations as (potential or actual) sources of response to the social issues and problems she is concerned about, she seems to calibrate her ability and/or willingness to get involved in part upon the extent to which she feels able to connect with such groups or organizations in ways in which she thinks she can participate effectively. That is, Rhona gives indications of seeing herself as the kind of person who needs a *personal connection* with an organization working on an issue (or with someone else who already is connected with such an organization) in order to be sufficiently motivated to become *active* on that issue. This self-perception is evidenced, for example, by what she says about the conditions under which she could see herself becoming more active on the AIDS problem:

If less people worked on it, I'd probably feel more of a pull, to get involved. Umhh...and ... [pause] *if I knew people who were working on it that needed help*. You know, like the churches, the black churches that are working on it, they haven't come - you know, I don't know them personally enough for them to say, "Rhona, we need more people for this." *Because if they said that, I'd probably do it in a second.*³⁰

Thus, by her own account, one of the keys to understanding Rhona's limited involvement on this particular issue lies in her lack of a personal connection with

members of the black church community in Tremont. In addition, as indicated by the first quote on the previous page, Rhona considers her relationship with the black community there as problematic with regard to her possible involvement with it. That is, while her concerns about AIDS center mostly on the effect that AIDS is having on the black community (and she notes that she "loves" the work being done on the issue in that community by John the Baptist Temple), at the same time she makes a point of acknowledging her lack of connection with that community. ("I'm not the best leader within that community, as I'm not *in* that community.") At another point, she says that she can't see herself actively participating in the work of the black churches against AIDS, because she is " ... Jewish, and ... not black." Thus, one of the crucial factors in how Rhona accounts for her deferral of agency with regard to the AIDS issue appears to be that, while the aspect of this problem that concerns her most is its impact upon the black community, she neither feels part of, nor has a personal connection with, that community. Thus, ironically, the organization she would otherwise feel most inclined to turn to in terms of actively expressing those concerns (John the Baptist Temple) is part of the same community with which she feels this lack of personal connection.

Conversely, in situations in which such a personal connection exists or develops with others who already are working on issues of concern to her, Rhona describes herself as having a strong inclination towards political involvement. This is evidenced by the fact that, with regard to another aspect of the AIDS issue, she volunteers without hesitation to put up flyers for anti-drug company demonstrations because of her personal connection with Tami. Another concrete example of this inclination is her annual volunteer work with High Desert Trek (HDT), a liberal Catholic faith-based group that

organizes annual acts of witness, sometimes including acts of civil disobedience, in the Nevada desert in commemoration of the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki towards the end of World War II.) When I asked Rhona about how her involvement with HDT came about, she describes it this way:

... I don't know how I got started with them.... It's a church right near my house.... Somehow they asked me to help, and I said sure, I'll help. Because see, if someone asks me and I agree, I'll do it, you know, if it's that concrete.

Indeed, Rhona's inclination or willingness to become involved with HDT as a result of this personal connection was strong despite her self-acknowledged limitations with regard to her knowledge of nuclear weapons issues. This became evident when I asked her what it was about the work HDT was doing on nuclear weapons issues that drew her to work with that organization:

Well, I knew that nuclear power was wrong, and, therefore to me, nuclear weapons are even more wrong, 'cause they could hurt so many more people. Umm. But I don't know very much about it, I still don't understand it very well.... But I trusted them ... You know, when Nevada Desert Experience came to me and said would I help, the little bit I knew was enough for me to say I trust them, I think that they're doing really good work, so I said I'd help.

B. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As should now be evident, my interview with Rhona provides a rich source of data with regard to the factors that may influence her general orientation to political agency, including her assessments and evaluations of empirical situations of potential action, and her consequent decision-making style with regard to whether, and if so, how to participate in collective efforts to address the global problems she was concerned

about. These factors can be described in terms of eight tentative findings or conclusions. That is, my analysis of the data provided by Rhona's interview with regard to (1) - (3) above indicates that her orientation to political agency appears to be characterized by:

1. A search for forms of agency or action through which she can participate effectively with others in addressing those issues. The data provided by my interview with Rhona suggests that, once she has recognized a particular global issue or problem as being of significant concern to her, her consideration of potential options for action primarily is defined by the identification and evaluation of opportunities for her to participate in existing collective efforts to address that issue or problem.
2. An evaluation of the empirical context of potential action. Rhona's account of her search for ways in which she potentially could engage in political action with others to address issues she was concerned about seemed to reflect an assessment of the available options for such action (i.e. the political "opportunity structure"), as well as an assessment of the overall empirical context within which that potential action would occur.
3. A set of underlying moral convictions (or principles) that guide decisions about appropriate actions under certain conditions. These data also seemed to indicate that Rhona's assessments of (and subsequent decisions with regard to) situations of potential action were informed by a strong sense of moral conviction (and accompanying principles) about what it was appropriate for her to do (or *not* to do) in a given context.

4. Two distinct types of rational orientation toward situations of potential action.

The first orientation is informed by an evaluation of the extent to which her participation will contribute to achieving the goal(s) of the group or organization with respect to the global issue or problem she is concerned about; the second, by a judgment about whether her participation would be morally appropriate, regardless of the likely achievement of such goals.

5. A consideration of the extent to which she experiences a personal connection

with others who already are participating in attempts to address the issue. A personal connection with others who were already involved in efforts to address the problems Rhona was concerned about appeared to be very important in her consideration about whether or not to act on those concerns.

6. An assessment of the extent to which decisions about the issue(s) or problem(s) being considered are (actually or potentially) accessible to processes of public deliberation and democratic decision-making. For example, it appeared that one of the factors that contributed to Rhona's relative lack of active involvement on issues of nuclear weapons proliferation and disarmament was the distance she felt from the government and military leaders she perceived as responsible for all decisions about policies regarding nuclear weapons, as well as their use.

As already alluded to above, in Chapter 5 I will utilize these tentative findings with regard to Rhona's political orientation as the basis for a comparative analysis of the data provided by the other eight interviews, as summarized in Chapter 4.

¹ In the case of George, I conducted two subsequent interviews in addition to the initial one I conducted with him in 1985: one in 1987, and the other in 2007. In the case of Mona, an initial interview was conducted in 1985, and a second one in 2001.

² See, for example, the now-classic studies such as Lane (1962), Riesman (1952), Lynd & Lynd (1956), Keniston (1965), Lifton (1967), Sennett and Cobb (1972), and Rubin (1976). For more recent examples of this type of research, see, for example, Loeb (1987) and Reinerman (1987).

³ Of course, for Max Weber (1904:17), *verstehen* (or interpretive understanding) is “the method *par excellence* of sociology.” (Marshall, 1998:326.) For an excellent, more detailed account of the use of the qualitative interview in field research, see Whyte (1982:111-122.) For some interesting comments on the methodological advantages of collecting field data from a small number of subjects without regard to the statistical “generalizability” of the resulting “findings,” see Cottle (1982:128).

⁴ Of the two that were conducted at the respondents’ workplaces, one took place in a private meeting room where there were minimal interruptions, and the other took place in a pleasant outdoor seating area away from the respondent’s office. In both of these cases, the respondents had work settings that afforded them a significant degree of autonomy in the performance of their work, and involved minimal or no direct supervision by others.

⁵ As already indicated above, I did a follow-up interview with George in April 2007.

⁶ In the presentations and analyses of the interviews below, I have altered the names and, in some cases, other information about the respondents where necessary to protect their identities and privacy.

⁷ By the “situational approach,” I am referring to an approach to sociological research that involves, in part, the identification and analysis of vocabularies of motive as pioneered by Mills (1940). This methodological problem consists in the fact that the retrospective accounts that respondents provide about their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior in specific empirical contexts are not necessarily reflective of what those beliefs, attitudes and behaviors actually were. Nevertheless, it is these accounts that comprise the data that are the “object” of sociological investigation in studies like the present one. Accordingly, any analysis of the factors influencing individual decision-making with regard situations of potential engagement in political action must take this distinction into account for the purposes of analysis.

⁸ It is important to note at the outset that, with one exception, all of the interviews took place *prior* to the events of September 11, 2001 and their immediate aftermath. It is very likely that those events had and continue to have significant impacts upon the dimensions and dynamics of political agency as discussed and interpreted in the present study. Therefore, further empirical research in this area is essential in order to identify and evaluate what these impacts have been, as well as to develop a more current, systematic, and empirically-grounded understanding of the factors promoting or inhibiting political participation with regard to critical global problems facing the world today.

⁹ By saying this, however, I am by no means claiming any kind of “objectivity” in the presentation and analysis of the data; I am simply stating that my intention was to avoid utilizing the very theoretical concepts I wanted to “test” by means of these data to analyze these data in the first place. Of course, it is not possible to divorce one’s analysis of data from the theoretical and conceptual biases or predispositions that one unavoidably brings to that analysis in the first place; one can only hope to be self-conscious and reflective about those biases, and choose to be candid and forthright about how they influence the way one approaches a research question, and how they may lead to one set of conclusions rather than another.

¹⁰ Rhona and Grace co-raised the two girls with their birth mother.

¹¹ See Appendix, p. 3, question 2A. In general, I interpreted a respondent’s rating of “level of concern” with regard to the issue or problem in question as “high” if it was in the 8-10 range, “moderate” if it was between

5-7, and "low" if it was 4 or less. However, the particular import or "meaning" of a respondent's numerical rating also had to be interpreted in the larger context of that respondent's interview.

¹² ACORN, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, is the nation's largest community organization of low- and moderate-income families, working together for social justice and stronger communities.

¹³ At the same time, this kind of response, by answering a question different from that which was actually asked (i.e., "What are you doing today to address problems of poverty?") also could be interpreted, in some instances, as a way for a respondent to avoid consciously experiencing any tension or "cognitive dissonance" between what that person believes (s)he *should* be doing, and what that person *actually* is doing, to address a given issue.

¹⁴ See Chapter 5. For a study that explored the personality correlates of this moral decision-making style, and contrasted its behavioral consequences with those of non-moral deciders, see Schwartz, Shalom H., Feldman, Kenneth A., Brown, Michael E., and Heingartner, Alex, "Some personality correlates of conduct in two situations of moral conflict." *Journal of Personality*, 1969, v.37, no.1, 41-57.

¹⁵ Rhona remarked that, on an emotional level, what her father had conveyed to her about these experiences on countless occasions was his "joy of discovery."

¹⁶ Rhona took sworn affidavits from farm workers who had been abused or mistreated by the police who, according to her, were in cahoots with the farm workers' bosses.

¹⁷ It is important to note, if for the moment only in passing, the two distinct ways in which I asked respondents to account for their political involvements, and the two correspondingly different types of accounts usually prompted by these respective modes of questioning. First, I typically asked a respondent to describe how she first became involved in working on a particular issue, or with a particular movement or organization. This question usually prompted a situational account, that is, a more or less detailed chronological rendering of the circumstances through which the respondent became aware of or exposed to the work of that movement or organization, and consequently how he/she actually became involved with the organization and their work. Second, I asked her to describe what she believed motivated her to become involved in working with that organization. This latter question typically resulted in a retrospective account of the genesis of that involvement based upon *reasons*.

¹⁸ When I subsequently asked her what she thought she had meant by this, she said that she was supportive of the UFW, sent them money, and would go to demonstrations from time to time, but that working with the UFW was not the primary focus of her political attention and efforts.

¹⁹ One of the founders and the first president of the UFW. Chavez died in 1994.

²⁰ Similarly, when I asked her what, in retrospect, she thought that she had meant by being "not directly connected" with Global Exchange, Rhona explained that she had worked for Global Exchange for about five hours a week for about two or three years, and that the organization "felt like family" to her. Thus, even though she was no longer "directly connected" with Global Exchange as an organization, she felt "personally very connected to them," while she had never felt that level of involvement or commitment with ACORN.

²¹ A non-profit, community based organization in Oakland that, among other things, provides English-speaking tutors to immigrants who are preparing to take English-proficiency tests.

²² It is important to note at the outset that Rhona's work with Second Start, as a self-acknowledged, practical expression of her concerns about issues of poverty, occurs within an institutional framework (i.e., the world of work) that by its nature imposes very real limitations upon the extent to which Rhona is able to

express those concerns in ways that are consistent with her values, political commitments and beliefs. On the most obvious level, the fact that she is being paid for the work she is doing with Second Start means that, to the extent that she wishes to continue doing that work (and get paid for it), she has to put up with the inadequacies of her supervisor, though that means, at times, compromising some of those very commitments and beliefs. The existence of these limitations, as well as Rhona's acceptance of them as conditions of employment (and therefore of her involvement in the work of Second Start), alters, to a certain extent, the interpretation we must give to this work as a practical, political expression of those concerns, and thus alters the sense in which this involvement can be interpreted as a "pure" expression of political agency. While it is important, for analytical reasons, to distinguish between *volunteer* work with a group or organization, and work that involves the kinds of contractual, moral, and authority-driven obligations, responsibilities, and consequent limitations necessarily entailed by most forms of paid employment, what is important for the concerns of this research is the *meaning* that Rhona ascribes to her work with Second Start, and the particular ways in which she views that work as a practical expression and articulation of her moral values.

²³ While Rhona made reference here to her own "ethics," and the terms "ethical" and "moral" are often used interchangeably, I will, in keeping with Habermas' distinction between *ethical* and *moral* questions, henceforth use the term "moral" to refer exclusively to rational considerations of justice (as opposed to "the rational consideration of a value decision that affects the whole course of one's life."). See Habermas, 1993:8.)

²⁴ However, such speculation would go beyond the type of empirical "evidence" adduced by the present study, which is concerned with how respondents make sense of (and account for) their political choices and commitments, as opposed to a concern with explaining the underlying "motives" (in a causal sense) for their behavior. See Mills, 1940.

²⁵ Again, while outside the scope and methodology of this research, this dimension of the factors influencing an individual's deferral of agency might fruitfully be explored through a clinical investigation of individual psychodynamics that is linked to a broader understanding of the social, cultural, psychic, and social psychological forces that structure, shape, and influence individual thought and action. The most famous study of this sort is probably *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al, 1950.) See also Chapter 2, Section VII, *supra*.

²⁶ It is important to point out that these comments occurred in the context of her discussion of how more people might be drawn into *collective* action, (i.e. participating in the ongoing work of a social movement organization), as contrasted with the kinds of activities she describes herself as having engaged in around environmental issues. Nevertheless, insight into the reasons motivating more individualist forms of political engagement might prove helpful in identifying and/or developing new forms of *organized* political expression and engagement that, while rooted (and finding their *raison d'etre*) in individual experiences of empowerment and achievement, nevertheless might offer a stronger, more durable motivational basis for individual participation in collective action.

²⁷ Rhona appears to be using this term as synonymous with "black," though this is not always clear. In any event, I will treat them as equivalent terms for the purposes of this analysis.

²⁸ That is, regarding the companies' unwillingness to waive their patent rights and/or reduce the prices of such drugs, so that they could be made more affordable, and thus more widely available, to people in Africa and elsewhere.

²⁹ Mills, 1940.

³⁰ Emphasis added. A little later in the interview, when asked whether she could see herself joining or becoming a member of an organization *like* John the Baptist Temple, Rhona replies, "Umhh, no, not really, just because I think there's so many [other] issues that I think I'd prioritize are the ones." While probably true for her in the abstract, it nevertheless may be that, in *particular* situations in which Rhona makes a

personal connection with others who are working on an issue, the strength of that particular connection often "overrides" her inclination to otherwise defer involvement in that issue in favor of others that she thinks are more important. This also appears to be the case with regard to Rhona's willingness to hand out flyers about demonstrations against drug companies' policies towards the distribution and availability of AIDS drugs as a result of her connection with Tami, and her involvement with High Desert Trek on the nuclear weapons issue. See discussion below.

CHAPTER 4

THE INTERVIEWS: PART TWO

I. INTRODUCTION

Having just presented, in the previous chapter, a rather detailed analysis of my interview with Rhona, I now will briefly summarize the data presented in the other eight interviews, with particular attention to material that may be revealing of similarities or differences with regard to some of the conclusions regarding political agency or its deferral initially suggested by that earlier analysis. The purpose of these summaries is to provide, in turn, the empirical basis for a comparative analysis of the other eight interviews in the final, concluding chapter, using the categories suggested by my analysis of the interview with Rhona as theoretical touchstones. In that concluding chapter I first will explore to what extent the other interviews can be interpreted using the same working hypotheses derived from my analysis of Rhona, and to what extent that set of initial hypotheses may need to be revised or expanded in light of the empirical material presented in those latter interviews. Second, I will assess the extent to which the theoretical framework presented and developed in Chapter 2 is useful in illuminating the insights provided by my interpretation of the data with regard to a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing political agency and its deferral. Finally, I will make some suggestions for future research based upon these insights, including ways in which these kinds of research could contribute to better understanding the factors affecting citizen participation in (or deferral of) efforts to address important contemporary global problems.

II. SUMMARIES OF THE INTERVIEWS

David

Similar to Rhona, David grew up in a Jewish family from Long Island that emphasized values of social justice and standing up for individuals and social groups who were oppressed, marginalized, or discriminated against. David's father had an activist background, having done union organizing in the 1930's as a member of the Communist Party. As a self-described "red diaper baby," David remarked that he "grew up with a feeling that [i.e. being politically active] is part of life, something you do – take responsibility for the world in which you live," and that this was "particularly something a male is supposed to do.... So I always assumed that I would do this too."

David identified wealth and poverty, AIDS, and the use of violence to resolve conflicts as the three global issues or problems he was concerned about. While he initially said AIDS was the problem he was most concerned about, in the course of our discussion of this issue, he changed his mind about this. In responding to a follow-up question about how he thought changing what he characterized as patriarchal attitudes towards women and sexual practices could help solve the AIDS problem, David remarked, "I should have said my main concern is overpopulation.... If you would ask me [now] what could do the most to change things in the world, I would say overpopulation." As to what people should be doing to deal with this problem, he said, "Everybody should be politically, socially active, engaged in the issues, find a way to do something: voting, organizing, finding other ways to influence government decision-making." And as to what he thought *he* should be doing in this regard, David mentioned his job (as a child care worker) as "having a political and activist dimension," in that he

was “an example to other men to redefine their relations to women and children in terms of their relationships,” and that the job was “a way of combining my commitment to activism with making money.”

David described himself as first becoming involved in issues related to overpopulation in the course of his earlier involvement in the anti-Vietnam war and civil rights movements of the 1960's and early 1970's, where he met a lot of people (and in particular, women) who began to question the treatment of women as “second-class citizens” within those movements, and believed that it was necessary for women “to start organizing for their own interests.” David said he “was very drawn to this ... [and] wanted men to respond to it in a positive way” - the possibility of working with other men around these issues “spoke to me right away.” After the Vietnam War ended, and the civil rights movement splintered and eventually was “destroyed”,¹ David became involved in the women's movement, where he noted that he participated in men's “consciousness-raising” groups. However, as that movement waned, and he simultaneously attempted to redefine his relationship with his wife in ways that “made sense in terms of feminism,” his involvement with feminist issues eventually “came down to what I did in my personal life,” because there weren't any “organized opportunities [for involvement], at least I couldn't find any....” Also, by this time, David said he was “burned out on being a foot soldier,” and “wanted to be more practical, have a family.” He volunteered for his children's child care cooperative, and was chair of the board of a New York City preschool for three years. Subsequently, with his family's move to San Francisco, he became chairman of an alternative school there, involved in a local organization to defend alternative schools, and eventually a child care worker. The

most recent political expression of his interest in and concern about issues related to his child care work (which he saw as a way to both support and empower women, and thereby as an extension of his earlier concerns about overpopulation and working to change attitudes toward women and traditional male/female gender roles) was his involvement in the Worthy Wage Campaign (WWC) a grassroots movement to organize pre-school teachers to get better wages. He said he got involved with WWC by hearing about it, and “just started to go to meetings to see what they were doing.” As to what motivated him to get involved, he initially said that he wanted to get fair pay for the work he did.² Also, some of the leaders of WWC were influential in this regard, mainly by “provid[ing] an organization that I could plug in to.”

As to whether, over time, he had become more active or less active with WWC (and on child care issues generally), David said, “It’s kind of gone up and down. Now I’m back to an upswing.” He explained this oscillation in his level of involvement by saying that he always wants to be more active than he is, but has to balance that involvement with his family responsibilities and his commitment to his job. In acknowledging that there had been periods in his life more generally when he was relatively inactive politically, he said that these were “[t]imes when I needed to rest, to devote more time to personal life,” and times when it was “unclear what to do next.” Other factors he mentioned were the importance of having an organization to plug into and the demands of political activity, as well as “things that I just don’t have a taste for anymore,” such as lobbying and “grunt work” (e.g. making phone calls). He preferred “direct action” and “connection with people,” such as “working directly with other

teachers” on the WWC.³ For David, the most satisfying thing about working with WWC was his sense of his own empowerment, “the feeling that *I* can do something about this.”

As already indicated above, David saw his child care work as an expression of his commitment to changing existing social and cultural attitudes with regard to women and gender roles, and thereby to changing attitudes and practices that contribute to overpopulation. At the same time, he makes an interesting distinction between his *paid* work and his political activity, saying that “I’m hired to take care of and teach children, not be a feminist ... role model.” Thus, he clearly separated what he did for his job (which he saw as having a political dimension) from his participation, for example, in the anti-Vietnam war and civil rights movements, and his current involvement with the WWC. Later in the interview, while discussing his participation in the work of groups like Greenpeace and the Sierra Club, he described that participation as “just minimum involvement: signing petitions, giving money,” and going on service trips with the Sierra Club.⁴ With regard to these types of activities, he remarked, “it’s a kind [laughs] of activism.” When pressed further on these types of involvement, David said, “No, I don’t consider those activities [e.g. giving money, restoring hiking trails] as “activism.” At the same time, he said it was precisely those kinds of activities that were the most satisfying things for him about his involvement with the Sierra Club.

However, the most striking thing about the interview with David was his account of how his family background and relationships influenced his subsequent political orientation and values in important ways. In this regard, he explained that his admiration for his father” was something that spurred me to become an activist.” At the same time, his father’s patriarchal, “Stalinist” attitudes, as well as the “cult-like aspects to growing

up as a red diaper baby” made it important for him to “redefine activism, the way that people did politics,” as well as to “develop healthy reasons for being an activist....

Activism did become an arena for me working out a lot of [personal] issues.” What was most notable about these comments was the David’s assertion that he had been able to *consciously* acknowledge and articulate the “working out” of these internal motivations and conflicts in a way that enabled him to integrate the resulting insights into an ongoing, personal process of redefining the “meaning” of political activism as well as his relationship to it. This ability demonstrated a sophisticated combination of self-reflection and emotional openness that may be rather unusual among political activists.

Jane

Jane was forty-eight at the time of the interview, and had been living in a small, bustling, mixed business and residential community sandwiched between two other, larger cities across the bay from San Francisco for the past nine or ten years. She was born and grew up in a small town outside New York City, the daughter of a Sephardic Jew from Egypt and an American woman from Jersey City. As a consequence of her father’s job change, the family moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1967, when she was fifteen years old. Jane described her father as “an extremely smart, knowledgeable person, a scientist who invented vaccines,” her mother as having had “sort of a radical background in college, when she supported Harold Stassen.”⁵ In Jane’s family, there was a very high emphasis on education, though not necessarily politics.⁶ She said she watched the news on T.V. from an early age, and that “I really identified with the civil rights movement, the demonstrators I was seeing.”⁷ According to her parents, Jane’s family was “subject to some anti-Semitism” in the town where they lived; as a result,

Jane said she had developed “a little identification with oppressed minorities.”⁸ She also mentioned that, during her first two years of high school, she felt very much like a loner, and that, paradoxically, it was partly her self-perception as “unconventional” that she believed contributed to her later ability to develop a self-identity that did not depend upon “mainstream” notions of career, success, and consumer values.

Jane identified militarization, racism, and “the growing discrepancy between the haves and have-nots” as three issues or problems in the world today that she was concerned about. When pressed as to which of these issues she was most concerned about, she said militarization, but added that she also saw this issue as “an umbrella under which the other stuff falls.” While identifying racism as the issue of next- most concern to her, she noted that she saw the wealth/poverty discrepancy and racism as “kind of the same issue in a way.” What concerned Jane the most about militarization, and specifically the dangers of nuclear weapons, was that “all life on the planet... could be eliminated within a few minutes.... It’s the big stick that’s behind the current geopolitical power arrangement.” When asked what could be done to address these dangers, Jane said, “That’s a hard a question, because I’ve been trying to do that for the past twenty years.” She went on to explain that her view of what could be done was affected by the fact that she had just returned from a trip to Japan, where she had participated in ceremonies commemorating the 56th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, and had met with a number of Japanese *hibakusha* (people who had survived the United States’ dropping of atomic bombs on Japan at the end of World War II). She believed that the use of nuclear weapons by the United States was “immoral and illegal,” and that those events, which represented “a qualitatively different experience of terror

and violence than [had] ever happened before,” had “profoundly changed history since that time,” and had resulted in widespread suffering by people all over the world, which continues to the present day.⁹ As to what can be done to address these dangers, Jane said, “It all comes down to mobilizing public opinion, and this has to be done with reference to the danger of these weapons, and those original bombs.”

As to how she first became involved in nuclear weapons issues, Jane explained that, after her parents moved from New York to Moraga, California¹⁰ in 1969, she took a course in high school on environmental issues, which included information about the environmental effects of the thermal release of nuclear *power*, which damaged marine life.¹¹ She subsequently threw herself into environmental issues, and helped form a student group that gave speeches on those and related topics. Later, she became involved, to a limited extent, in the anti-Vietnam War movement, though she remarked that at times the movement appeared “kind of disorganized” to her, and that the angry, sometimes violent attitudes and behavior of some protestors had “scared” her.¹² However, this was the point in time “when I became active and stayed active.” Although Jane had memories of participating in “duck and cover” drills while in kindergarten, and had some memories of the Cuban missile crisis, she could not specifically recall when she first learned what nuclear weapons *were*.¹³ In 1975, she worked on a nuclear safeguards ballot initiative. Then, in 1979, the 3-Mile Island event occurred, and she “immediately jumped into action,” helping to form a local group that organized against nuclear power. That group became part of a larger movement, the Livermore Action group (LAG), that became active in protesting the siting and operation of the nuclear power plant at Diablo Canyon, near San Luis Obispo, as well as the nuclear weapons

research and development work being conducted at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, which was owned by the U.S Department of Energy, but operated by the University of California. Somewhere during that time, Jane “began to connect nuclear power and nuclear weapons,” and noted that others in her milieu were going through similar political trajectories during that period. She became involved in mass protests at both Diablo Canyon and Livermore, and was arrested several times. As to how she became involved with CLDF, Jane explained that, after one of those arrests at Livermore (in June 1983), she chose to go to trial with other protestors rather than plead no contest, as many had done previously. She learned that an organization named California Legal Defense Fund had offered to represent them. Sometime after the trial, she was asked to work for CLDF, though she said she had never “planned” to do that kind of work, but rather had “evolved” into the job. In fact, at the time the position was offered to her, she was unsure that she should take it.¹⁴ But she eventually accepted the position, because “I was finding it so difficult to be effective on a part-time basis.” When I asked her what, in retrospect, she believed had motivated her to become involved in nuclear weapons issues with CLDF, Jane replied that “the Livermore Lab representative trial was an incredible bonding experience, with a large group of defendants and lawyers being coordinated through the auspices of [CLDF].” She also added, “This is not just a job for me. I got into it because it is my life’s work.” She said that, since she first started working there, she had become more active in the work. She described the process as “a constant ladder of escalation”: by continually learning new skills (e.g. writing press releases, doing public speaking, learning to work with a wide range of individuals and groups) and becoming good at them, she became “in more demand... and there’s no road map for this

[kind of work] that I know of.” As to whether she had had periods in her life when she was relatively inactive politically, Jane explained that when she was much younger, she was “trying to figure out what I was doing, trying to pursue some kind of career as an artist; the scene, the whole, uh, situation with respect to public awareness of these issues, politics generally ... were very different.” Though there were “major events, things going on that called for a response,” at that time she didn’t feel “obligated” to work on nuclear weapons issues full-time, both because there were competing demands on her time (e.g. other jobs), but also because she was “less ... completely connected, not knowing everyone who was involved” on these issues.¹⁵ “And I kind of feel the same way [now], still not [having] enough time.... I could be more effective if I had more time....” However, from 1979 on, she said she was very involved in political work.

As far as what motivated her in general to become involved in political activity, she mentioned that, in her earlier work with the Abalone Alliance (around nuclear power issues), she highly valued the decentralized structure of that organization, in which its individual units (or “affinity groups”) were both community based *and* consisted of people “who cared for each other,” and acted collectively, often in dangerous situations, based upon principles of non-violence and consensus decision-making. For Jane, the most satisfying thing about this experience was “the decision-making process, the sense of community.” In fact, when I asked her whether, in retrospect, her attitude toward groups like Abalone had changed, she replied:

I *long* for the Abalone Alliance.... I think [it] was very highly evolved; and I think the Movement has lost something.... Because it was a statewide organization with many affiliates in many cities around the state; and those [community-based] units ... provided a base, anybody could be a part of those groups. You didn’t have to be

actionists, someone who would resist arrest.... [Now]
we've gotten into a very fragmented mode.

With regard to her work with CLDF, she said the most satisfying thing to her was the “opportunity to do something meaningful that I really care about; and to work with a really great group of people who have the same values.” She said she had found CLDF to be very unusual, because it was both committed to very high standards of research and analysis, while at the same time being “committed to this ethical commitment to speaking truth to power.”

Mona

Mona grew up in a small, rural community in the Midwest. She never knew her real father, who abandoned her, her mother, and two other children when she was very young. Her mother had a series of husbands, most of whom treated Mona badly, often abusing her physically. With regard to how these step-fathers influenced the kind of person she is today, Mona said, rather poignantly:

If I'd just had a loving relationship with one of them, I think I could have been much more in life.... I was held back for so long, had to work through so much.... It was hard to feel good about myself. It was very disempowering. The kind of relationship I had with them was not nurturing; it was more about power and playing games.

Mona recalled a period when they often had very little to eat, and her mother would sit outside on the porch with them and sing church hymns, which Mona said comforted her. She said that, at an early age, she was “left alone a lot,” and would go out into the forest and hug a tree for consolation: “... the earth was like my mother, I felt very comfortable... I sought refuge in nature.” These experiences, she said, combined

with a childhood friend's mother, who often took both of them church, "contributed to my spiritual development."

Mona identified juvenile violence, threats to the environment, and the rapid pace of technological advancement as the three issues in the world that she was most concerned about. With regard to juvenile violence, the issue of most concern to her, she explained that her son, Jack, had become involved with the juvenile justice system, though she did not specify the nature of that involvement. However, she explained that she had been experiencing and learning about the problems of other children through hearings and other court proceedings, as well as through conversations with some of these children and their parents. As a result, she had become very interested in issues of juvenile violence, had done extensive research and reading on the subject, and at that time was working with a colleague on a film on the subject.

With regard to her concerns about the environment, Mona mentioned the seepage of fuel additives into ground water, global warming, and the disappearance of the ozone layer, as well as auto emissions, overpopulation, and human encroachment on the natural habitats of other species as aspects of environmental degradation that she was aware of and concerned about. When asked what she thought should be done to address these problems, she replied, "I guess what it takes is kind of an *ethical* mentality. It's an ethical, a *moral* dilemma. For all three of these issues [i.e. juvenile violence, environmental degradation, and the pace of technological advancement], it comes back to moral and ethical issues and questions that have to be asked from single individuals all the way up to ... entire countries...."

When I asked Mona what she currently was doing in her life to express her concerns about environmental problems, she said that “we do give money to a lot of different grassroots organizations who address those causes,” and mentioned Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, and Pesticide Watch as some of those organizations. At the same time, she acknowledged that, though she also frequently talked about these issues with friends, she was “too caught up in the drama of my life right now” to devote more energy or attention to them than she already was, saying that, other than contributing money, most of what she was doing in relation to these problems was “on a personal level,” such as recycling, composting, buying bottled water, driving her car as little as possible, and “elect[ing] government officials who will vote the way I think they should on these issues.” As to whether her involvement in environmental issues had increased over time, Mona said it had, but only on this personal level, “rather than in a political way.” She said that she had never been involved on environmental issues in more of an overt, activist manner, because she was too involved in everyday life and therefore had “no time ... to go out and do anything else.” As to whether she felt that, through her individual actions, she had been able to make a difference on these issues, Mona replied, “Yes, I am giving a lot of money to charities that support environmental legislation; also recycling. But not in a big, Nobel Prize-winning kind of way. I could do more....”

As to what it would take for her to get more actively involved on environmental issues, she mentioned “a threat to my family, my life; perhaps with our immediate environment.... I haven’t figured out what the impetus is for me,” but that “perhaps, if and when my son matures, I could put more attention to these three issues, and what I could do more directly.” Similarly, in response to a question about why, given her

concerns about nuclear weapons, she had never become active on that issue, Mona said, “I’ve been too involved with my life.... I expect my governmental representatives to represent me when these issues come up.” As to what it would take for her to *become* more involved, she said it probably would take a “serious threat,” a catastrophic event that happened somewhere in the world, on the level of, for example, what occurred at Chernobyl,¹⁶ though she was quick to mention how much more dangerous and destructive the detonation of a nuclear weapon would be.

She also mentioned that she preferred interacting with others in face-to-face, personal situations, rather than in large groups, and that she was more likely to take action in the former. Finally, as to how she perceived herself as a political person, Mona said:

I vote conscientiously.... I don’t see myself as being particularly political, but I can get mad at things. And I am proud of my country, for certain things that happen.... [I see myself as] a champion for the downtrodden.... Because I was hungry, abused as a child, I feel that there’s a soft place in my heart for helping the plight of those who fit [that category]. So that is one of the underpinnings of my ... concerns about violence.... I don’t know who I am as a political person, but I champion the downtrodden.

Katy

Katy was the daughter of a Republican congressman from Wyoming. She grew up in the Ozark Mountains of southern Missouri. Her father was, until his retirement, an engineer in the mining business. Both her parents loved the outdoors, and spent much time canoeing and camping, often taking Katy along. Early on, Katy developed a sense of the magnificence, beauty, and sacredness of the natural world.¹⁷ At the time of our interview, she had been working part-time for the past three years for the Environmental

Collective, a local grassroots environmental organization in Berkeley, California, as a writer and educator for its “Environmental Education for Schools” (EES) program. The majority of her work involved the development of curriculum-based educational programs for public schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. She was thirty-three years old, and lived with her boyfriend in a quiet residential neighborhood in Berkeley.

The global issues Katy identified as of concern to her were the dangers of genetically-modified foods; deforestation, global warming, and human overdependence on non-renewable resources (e.g. fossil fuels); health and diet (including what she called “health ignorance”¹⁸); and the increasing power of multinational corporations. For the purposes of the interview, she agreed to my suggestion to group our discussion of the second group of issues under the topic of environmental concerns, with the caveat that she would be free to talk about any or all of these issues under this topic, as well as to make any connections she desired between them. She initially identified the increasing power of multinational corporations as the issue she was most concerned about, giving it a score of 9 out of a possible 10.¹⁹ As to what concerned her most about this issue, she replied that the exercise of corporate power usually resulted in benefits “to so few people in the short term, rather than to more people in the short or long term.” As to whom she thought should take responsibility for dealing with this problem, Katy said, “People; citizenry in general; *and* their elected officials. And [citizens] not continuing to vote for [politicians] who ... do the bidding of the corporations, and don’t pass meaningful election contribution reform.” As to whether *she* had any responsibility to do something about corporate dominance, she replied, “Yes, absolutely,” and went on to describe two ways in which she currently was involved in efforts to do so: first, to educate students

about the problem through developing and writing curricula addressing the problem that were distributed to high school teachers in across northern California; and second, to discuss this issue during social gatherings with friends and family. With regard to the latter, she saw such family discussions as an occasion for “cross-pollination,” meaning that interacting with her father (who previously had been involved in mining operations, and was now, at least in part, representing the interests of local mining companies in Congress) “can teach me a lot about how the other side thinks.”

Katy first became involved in the issue of corporate dominance three years ago. While teaching at an arts “magnet” school in Boulder, Colorado, she developed and presented an instructional unit on how to do media analysis. While preparing and presenting this unit to her students, she identified and discussed issues relating to how the mainstream media often selected and framed issues in ways that excluded certain viewpoints from discussion, and biased the presentation of news in ways that privileged or favored corporate interests. Since taking her current job with the EES program, she had done more research and become more informed on the subject of corporate power. This led her to develop curricula for high school teachers about how corporate power influences the public’s understanding of important social and political issues.²⁰

As to what, in retrospect, had led her to become involved in this issue more generally, she mentioned two factors: one was picking up and reading the magazine “Ad-Busters”²¹ for the first time; the second was having an aunt who had been politically active in the labor movement.²²

Ralph

Ralph grew up in a largely white community in Racine, Wisconsin. While he didn't offer many details about his family background, he did relate to me what he described as a "very telling childhood experience" that "was an important event and influence on me." He described how, although his parents were "not very broad-minded about race issues," they nevertheless had been very giving to a black woman in their neighborhood whose baby had had her arm torn off by a washing machine. From that point on in his life, Ralph said he had tried to be giving to others whenever he could.²³ He said he had been a political activist throughout his adult life. He was a conscientious objector during World War II, and had been involved in nuclear weapons issues ever since 1945. He worked for twenty-eight years with the American Friends Service Committee, where he helped found the Friends Committee on Legislation of California. During the Vietnam War, he helped found the Committee for Draft Resistance in San Francisco. Ralph also reported that, through the course of his activist career, he had been arrested around fifty times, with fourteen of those arrests resulting in jail time.²⁴ At the time of our interview, Ralph was 84 years old, retired, and living in an intentional rural community with his wife, Sylvia, in Sonoma County, California.²⁵

Ralph identified nuclear weapons proliferation, dangers to the Earth's environment, and race relations as the global issues of most concern to him. He rated his level of concern about the first two issues as very high.²⁶ With regard to nuclear weapons, he said that what concerned him most was "the demise of living things, not just human," and that that concern had grown over time.²⁷ As to how he has expressed that concern, Ralph described his long history of involvement on nuclear weapons issues.

The catalyzing event for him was the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, by the United States in August 1945.²⁸ While he could not recall the exact circumstances under which he first became active in opposing the production or use of nuclear weapons, he relayed to me a memory that, while possibly apocryphal, nevertheless seemed to represent an important moment of realization for him. He recalled a time when, while crossing a major intersection in Berkeley, California shortly after the bombing of Hiroshima, he suddenly was “shaken” by the reality of what had occurred, and the enormity of the death and destruction that it entailed. He subsequently told me that, in retrospect, he saw the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan as “a crossroads in terms of our country,” and that he saw his crossing the street at this “major signal [light]” as a powerful metaphor for this crossroads.²⁹ After the end of the war, Ralph did some counseling with conscientious objectors. He believes that the first antinuclear organization he ever worked for was the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), where he first volunteered, and subsequently was hired on as paid staff member, doing fundraising and serving as regional director of their San Francisco office in the late 1940’s.³⁰

For several years in the early 1990’s, Ralph said he helped to organize, and participated in, numerous peaceful protests at the Concord Naval Weapons Station,³¹ which according to Ralph at that time housed over 300 nuclear weapons.³² In addition to protesting, during that time he also worked with his local peace center, and with the Friends Committee on National Legislation.³³ He also attended and helped recruit participants for a meeting of antinuclear weapons activists in Oakland, California in February 1997, which resulted in the formation of the Sonoma County Committee for

Nuclear Abolition (Nuclear Abolition), as well as a number of other local antinuclear groups affiliated with Abolition 2000.³⁴ While he was semi-retired at the time I interviewed him, he said that he had become more active with Nuclear Abolition over time, but was now trying to lessen his political involvements, as he and Sylvia were contemplating their move to Nevada City.³⁵

While Ralph said that “it would be hard to say” that he had made a difference on nuclear weapons issues through his activism, he believed that he had made a difference “with people.” indeed, the most satisfying thing about his work with NA was “the association with the people.” However, he immediately qualified this latter statement by saying, “I’d like to say the accomplishment [was the most satisfying thing]; but I can’t say there’s been much....”³⁶ As to whether his attitudes toward groups like NA had changed as a result of his involvement, he said that he had “felt all along that this is the kind of organizing we have to do,” but that there was a split in the antinuclear movement between the “activists” (those who believed in nonviolent protest as a primary means toward achieving nuclear disarmament) and those he characterized as “elitists” (which included among their number some retired generals and admirals), who focused more upon making “realistic” intellectual arguments against current nuclear weapons policies, and didn’t want any association with “protestors.” As to whether he was as involved in the antinuclear movement as he would like to be, Ralph said, “No, but then it would be very aggravating to my family.” He also mentioned getting older: “You have to recognize your own diminishment.”

Ralph was equally concerned about the dangers to the Earth’s environment posed by global warming, the destruction of the ozone layer, and other forms of environmental

degradation. He said the “greatest danger” was what he termed “the ‘ostrich’ effect in humans. They either deny, or they’re too busy consuming ... and the development of a culture that emphasizes violence, rather than non-violence....” Interestingly, while Ralph indicated several times during the course of the interview that he was pessimistic about humanity’s chances for survival in the long-term, at the same time, he also said he thought it was a good (albeit “doomed”) approach for activists to work with people one-by-one: “If I can really influence one person to be really concerned and active, that’s a great satisfaction and, uh, increasingly a great achievement.” As to whether attempts to address environmental problems incrementally through changes in lifestyle, consumption (e.g. the development and use of alternative energy, living “off the grid,” etc.), and the development of local, small-scale efforts to build sustainable communities ultimately could be successful in reducing or eliminate the kinds of environmental threats humanity currently faces, he replied, “No, not unless we can control population at the same time.”

When I asked him how he related in his own mind the satisfaction he had described earlier (i.e. from being able to influence another person to see an issue in a different way, or to become involved in the issue themselves) with his pessimism regarding the future of humanity and the planet, he replied that, “Well, obviously there aren’t enough people influencing other people enough, or in ways which are positive,” and mentioned as examples the negative influence of T.V. on the thinking of children, and the fact that many of them have to grow up in environments “where violence is acceptable.”

However, in spite of his pessimism, Ralph said that he had found that his “battery got recharged” in a number of ways, one of which was through poetry. As an example, he described a time when he had listened to a poetry reading by two men over lunch, and “it

was just so incredible... I just felt so turned on because of what they were doing – it energized me.”

Flora

Flora was the oldest of four children, and the only girl. Her family originally was from Ecuador, and moved to the U.S. when she was very young. She told me it was a challenge growing up in her family:

Dad was a rageaholic; my mom was in denial most of the time ... in the sense of being unwilling to face difficult realities.... [But there was] a lot of support for intellectual pursuits, and a lot of encouragement to think about big issues.

While she described her father as “difficult” and very judgmental, when I asked her whether he had influenced the kind of person she was today, she said that he was “an amazing example of someone who really modeled taking responsibility and making your own sense of the world, and thinking critically, questioning in an ongoing way.” Flora described her mother as “very supportive, loving in one sense,” and as having “incredible concern for other people.... She’s been a wonderful example of responding with genuine feeling to the suffering of others....” At the same time, Flora also described her as having had “a lot of difficulty relating with people, especially family members, in an intimate way.”

Flora initially identified nuclear weapons, chemical contamination, Y2K,³⁷ and what she termed “fascism”³⁸ as the three issues in the world today she was concerned about. However, when I asked her which of those issues she was *most* concerned about right now, she said she didn’t “relate” to that question – while those were the issues that

she thought were “most important in the long run,” they were not necessarily the ones she chose to get involved in at any given point in time:

I may be most worried about, for example, China having nuclear weapons, but not feeling like I can do much about it. I don't always feel able to act on things that concern me most. I don't always decide that that's the best use of my time and energy.

When I asked her again which of the issues she had just identified she was most *concerned* about, she said:

I guess right now, where I sometimes worry most is about Y2K stuff. And the reason that I worry most about it isn't necessarily because it's the most dangerous, but in part because there is a time within stuff is inexorably going to start to happen....

However, when I asked her to *rate* her level of concern about Y2K, she said:

Well, before I answer that, I really want to say [that], part of the reason I'm working on it is because I really see it as an opportunity to organize. So, I don't feel like my activism is mostly motivated out of concern, it's like half motivated out of concern, and half motivated out of opportunity, or a feeling of possibility.³⁹

Flora also said that she found her “energy for working on things to be best when I'm coming from a place of being ... more balanced, and hopeful, and at peace.... I actively try to do things that alleviate my worries and fears.... For me, it's much more helpful when I'm not highly concerned in that way.” She went on to distinguish between “concern” in the sense of the care, attention, and importance she attached to an issue, on the one hand, and “concern” in the sense of the extent to which she “worried” about what might happen if that issue was not adequately addressed. She then clarified that, in terms of the former sense, she was “highly concerned” about the Y2K problem, while in terms of the latter sense, she was also “very concerned” about it; at the same time, she said that

she actively worked to alleviate her sense of worry about political issues she was working on, and to keep it in balance with her sense of care about and attention towards them.⁴⁰

While Flora also was very concerned about the dangers of nuclear weapons, at the time of the interview she was not politically active with a group directly addressing that issue. On the other hand, she made the point early on in the interview that she believed that the Y2K problem might have deleterious consequences for all three of the other issues she identified, including nuclear weapons. She saw the Y2K and nuclear weapons issues as linked.⁴¹

When I asked her whether she ever had been involved on working on nuclear weapons or disarmament issues, Flora said that she had contributed money and signed some petitions, but hadn't been "more active" than that, although she *had* written a research report about women's peace camps in the early 1980's while taking a class on ecofeminism at Oberlin College.⁴² She said that, although there was a lot of antinuclear activism at that time, and she was interested in becoming a part of it, she was not very "stable" at the time, and never did really "plug in" with an antinuclear organization, dropping out of school instead and moving to the West coast. While she said she had been really intrigued by the idea of women's peace camps and direct action (which she saw as models for "what we need to replace the ... existing order"), and still felt inspired by them today, her interest had shifted toward finding a way of working on this issue "that would appeal to a broader range of participants, people who would never go to something like a peace camp. She mentioned that, more recently, she had become aware of annual antinuclear protests that were taking place at the Nevada test site as well as at Livermore, but said she had decided not to become involved in them because at one time

she thought she might want to have a child, and had been really concerned about exposing herself to radiation.⁴³ She said that these were the kinds of actions that normally would have had the most likelihood of drawing her into involvement in antinuclear weapons work, and that there hadn't been other ways of participating on this issue that she was aware of, although she had been very active on Cassini for two or three months.⁴⁴ As to *why*, in general, she hadn't been more active on nuclear weapons issues, she said she attributed that to "timing," i.e. not being "available" for involvement during the period when the disarmament movement was at its height because she was "still in the process of figuring out my life and thoughts and not feeling very stable."

Sally

Sally was the daughter of a career navy officer whom she described as one of the first trained nuclear engineers. At the time I interviewed her, she was a graduate student in a criminal justice program at a public university in New York City, and was affiliated with a research center at that university that focused on exploring the causes and consequences of war, terrorism, and other forms of organized violence, as well as on peaceful approaches to conflict resolution. She was very intelligent, thoughtful, and articulate, and exceedingly knowledgeable and informed about the issues we were to discuss. Sally was a regular participant in colloquia, discussion groups, and other organized events at the center, and at the time of the interview, had been participating in a series of informal discussions around the conflict in Bosnia, where thousands of people were being displaced, killed, wounded and, in some cases, were the victims of other mass crimes such as rape, detention, and forced relocation.⁴⁵ As such, she identified "tribal consciousness" of the sort that was then playing itself out in the former Yugoslavia as the

global issue that currently was of most concern to her.⁴⁶ The other two issues she identified were economic scarcity in the distribution of resources, and the environment and destruction of natural habitats. She said she would put the nuclear issue under the environment, but also described how that issue related to the other two, as it was “the result of national conflict and war,” but also was “bound up with people’s use of resources,” as well as with the disposal of radioactive waste. Sally also clarified that she wasn’t making a separation between the issue of nuclear weapons and that of nuclear power, though she acknowledged that they were “different.” In fact, with regard to all three issues, she said that she really did see them as related – in her mind, there really was no one burning issue, with everything else subordinate to it:

.... All of these things are connected; the largest framework this all is in is theodicy – the suffering of innocents. Environmental concerns seem less so; but with the diminishment of the environment, the natural world, animals, as well as other forms of sentient life suffer; and people suffer, are diminished when we damage the natural world. The issue of suffering is very immediate right now in Bosnia –people [are] dying in most horrendous way.

As to what it was about the situation in Bosnia that concerned her the most, she said that it went precisely to the issue of suffering, especially because the “ethnic cleansing” that was underway, as well as the way in which mass rape was being used as military tactic in conjunction with it, raised the specter of the Holocaust and the other crimes of the Nazis during WWII; and that, as a result of this objectification, civilians were being treated as targets, as “collateral damage,” rather than as human beings.⁴⁷ As to what she thought could be done to address the situation in Bosnia, Sally mentioned that, as a result of the series of informal discussions on this issue among activists, intellectuals and others that had been held at the Center (and that she had participated in), one of the individuals

involved (Stuart) had put forward the idea of creating “safe havens” for members of minority ethnic groups that were being threatened, displaced, or otherwise caught up in the fighting. Sally said she supported this idea (which, she noted, the United Nations recently had put on its agenda) because she saw no other organization that could take the role of a neutral intervener in the conflict, and because it would allow innocent victims to “opt out” of the fighting. She also saw it as a moral issue, in that “saving someone’s life” was the most important thing.⁴⁸

As to whether she thought she could make a difference in addressing this problem, Sally replied, “That’s the issue – how to define ‘making a difference.’” When I specified the question in terms of implementing the idea of safe havens, she responded:

I can’t make a difference as an individual ... [b]ecause I don’t have role in an organization, or publicly, that would allow me access – I don’t have political access to the people shaping the policy that shapes the actions that are taking place from outside the country..... I do think makes a difference to be who you are, to talk – I didn’t do anything, I just attended those meetings, but felt very comfortable with what they were doing I don’t walk around with a feeling of powerlessness and doom.

As to how she saw her participation in the Center’s discussions about what to do about the Bosnian crisis in this regard, Sally said that she supported what they were doing, had signed her name in support of their efforts, and had expressed her views to others. In addition, she said that she thought “it really matters who you are in the world,” and that it was very important to her, in terms of her own growth, as well as what’s going on in the world, for her to voice her beliefs. Also, “there are people who are examples, [who] provide inspiration to me. If they weren’t there, I would be despairing; but I’m not....” In contrast, she mentioned others who believe that “the world is a just confluence of evil forces spiraling downward into manmade chaos,” and gave as an example another participant in the activities of the Center who she said was all “gloom

and doom.” She said she understood why people felt that way, but that “it’s almost an ethical issue – when you feel that way, it’s almost like [you] participate in [the problem]....” She added that the role models for her were “people who offer hope at the last minute, holding someone’s hand. It’s important to look at people who are doing good stuff in the world, and to affirm that.”

When I asked Sally what it was about the threats to the environment, including the disposal of nuclear and other radioactive waste, that was of most concern to her, she said that the destruction of the environment was “very much entailed in the objectification and destruction of other people in violence,” which she saw as, in turn, entailing “the non-recognition of another person’s humanity.” She said she saw our humanity as not existing independently, but rather as intimately bound up with the natural world as part of an ecological system. To that extent, we “can’t separate ourselves from the natural world – the more we do that, more we participate in the destruction of ourselves as a species.”

George⁴⁹

George was a divorced, 66-year old retired schoolteacher living alone in a small, nondescript house on a small island in Puget Sound in the Pacific Northwest, off the coast of Washington State. While he had a son living in southern California who apparently visited him only infrequently, George took regular trips into nearby Seattle to visit friends, or to the East coast or Florida to visit relatives. He was an avid reader, and particularly sought out books that addressed issues of personal and human growth and development from various perspectives. He generally was a gregarious, outgoing person,

though he also could be reclusive, and spent a lot of time by himself. At the same time, the most striking thing about George was his propensity to bring up social and political issues of concern to him in public settings,⁵⁰ as well as in informal conversations with others. On the surface, his objectives in raising these issues in social settings seemed to be to find others who shared these concerns, and to dialogue with them around what could be done to address them. On the other hand, he seemed to be looking for some evidence or assurance that humanity was not in a “hopeless” situation, and that “things could be turned around.”

As a worker in a plant manufacturing wooden drums in Jersey City, New Jersey in the late 1930's, George participated in an organizing drive for the local warehouseman's union. In the early 1940's, he met someone who was a member of the Socialist Worker's Party, and became a socialist himself in the 1950's. He became a schoolteacher around 1961, and in the early 1970's ran for the Los Angeles School Board as a socialist. At the time we first met, George was sharing a house with a couple in Seattle, and dividing his time between there and his island residence.

When I first interviewed him in 1985,⁵¹ George's main areas of global concern were (1) his assessment that humanity was facing a hopeless situation with regard to the increasing danger of a military confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union that could eventually lead to a nuclear war, and (2) that there would eventually be a worldwide economic breakdown that would result in massive social disruption and dislocation, poverty, and the attendant dangers of authoritarianism. At the time of our second interview in 1987, these were still his main concerns, though he also mentioned his concern about the increasing threats to human survival and the Earth's environment

posed by global warming, the continuing deterioration of the ozone layer, and the destruction of rainforests. He also reported that he had “withdrawn” from his earlier attempts to connect with others around these issues, because he “didn’t feel like they were really responding.”⁵² When I asked him what concerned him most about the danger of nuclear weapons, he said it was what he called a “power problem,” in that

the people who have the power - the corporations, tied in with the government – have held onto it; and there hasn’t been enough awakening on the part of the masses – they’re still victimized by the corporations and the media. And it’s hard to see how we’re going to get out of this now, with this limited awareness on the part of most people.

He also said that what he called the “power structure” was still in control of the weapons, and that he feared they might use that power if they thought their interests were being threatened. As to what should be done to address this problem, he said it was necessary to build a “force” of committed people who, when the inevitable economic breakdown occurred, would be willing to challenge that power structure, and offer an alternative political direction that could appeal to massive numbers of people. At the same time, however, he said he saw this political power structure as increasingly resilient and entrenched, and the general population as, on the whole, passive, apolitical, and beholden to the status quo. He said there weren’t enough people with “the wherewithal to deal with the problem,” or with the awareness, vision, or knowledge necessary to influence other people to oppose that structure in an effective way. Thus he saw no evidence of the needed “force”, and therefore saw no possibility that the current global problems could be “turned around.”⁵³

As to how he first became involved in nuclear weapons issues, George explained that “there was a continuity” with his earlier involvement with socialist politics, “a

recognition that capitalism was an exploitative system, and the government was working with the corporations, the capitalists, rather than the people.” He said he became involved with the Socialist Party around 1947 or 1948, and that at that time they took a strong position against nuclear weapons proliferation. He said that involvement was the main avenue for his activism on nuclear weapons issues until the early 1980’s.⁵⁴ According to him, the development and subsequent use of nuclear weapons against the Japanese at the end of World War II was a logical consequence of this alliance between the government and the corporations in order to maintain their hold on state power. Remarking that the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was “a terrible thing that we did,” George said that, from that time on, he was always in opposition to the development or use of nuclear weapons.

George’s more recent involvements on nuclear weapons issues (i.e. during the early 1980’s) had included attending meetings of various political, religious, and community groups who were concerned about the issue. In addition, he recounted to me his attempt to contact various antinuclear organizations in the Seattle area and convince them to form a coalition to develop a common political strategy and agenda to address the problem. He expressed frustration and disappointment about not being able to convince them to do this. It was this experience, coupled with his already-existing frustrations about his inability to connect with other like-minded people on this issue, that apparently led him to withdraw from further political involvement in it.⁵⁵

While echoing these same views in our most recent (2007) interview, he nevertheless expressed a continuing desire to find a few other people who were simultaneously able to “take in,” on an emotional as well as intellectual level, the

hopelessness of the world situation, while at the same time be able to maintain a sense of moral dignity and commitment in the face of these concerns, while continuing to address them. As to whether he sees any possibility that young people today could become sufficiently aroused and aware in sufficient numbers to make a difference on any of the issues he had identified, he said that they were “not politically motivated,” and were being programmed to “look out for them, to “go along with the consumer society.” He also said he saw no evidence that they are prepared to address these problems, much less the corporate structure that is at the root of them.

III. CONCLUSION

Having just presented, in summary form, data from the eight interviews above, I will now selectively analyze and compare these data in terms of the tentative conclusions derived from my earlier analysis of Rhona in Chapter 3, and explore what these additional data reveal about the validity or comprehensiveness of those initial hypotheses. This analysis will provide me with the empirical basis for (1) an assessment of the usefulness of the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 for a better understanding of the relationship between concern and political action, as well as for (2) deriving some preliminary conclusions regarding the implications of such an analysis for a better understanding of the role of deferred agency in mitigating individual and collective responses to the serious and daunting global problems the world faces today.

¹ David presumably was referring here to the period of the late ‘60’s and early ‘70’s, after the death of Martin Luther King, the concomitant rise of the “black power” movement, and the covert activities of U.S. government agencies to infiltrate, smear, and otherwise discredit or destroy those movements. See, for example, the FBI’s “Cointelpro” program.

² However, when I asked him essentially the same question later in the interview, he responded by saying, “I like to be involved. It’s an arena of *personal expression*, a way to use my talents, to get up in front of a

group and convinced them of something.... I like the *contact*. The best friends I had was in the '60s. That's a very strong motivation – to be *connected*." (Emphasis added.)

³ "If there's an organization that's already existing, and can challenge my talents, that's more interesting to me."

⁴ He mentioned, for example, trail-building in Alaska, and going on some archeological digs in the Southwest.

⁵ The 25th Governor of Minnesota (from 1939 to 1943), and later a perennial candidate for other offices, most notably and frequently for the Republican Party nomination for President of the United States, seeking it nine times between 1948 and 1992. Interestingly, Jane also mentioned, in passing, that her mother's college roommate "had an affair with Trotsky in Mexico."

⁶ However, Jane did mention that her father had been "questioned by the McCarthy forces...."

⁷ "The civil rights movement made a huge impact on me, though I was only a child." Later in the interview, Jane also mentioned that, partly as a result of her exposure to that movement at a young age, she had "very much absorbed Martin Luther King [Jr.]'s [nonviolent] philosophy."

⁸ In response to a question about other ways in which her family had influenced her, Jane said she had been taught that "... when you see an injustice, you have to stand up and be counted... you should pay attention to what's happening in the world...."

⁹ Jane specifically mentioned "the people of the Marshall Islands, Chili Arbensk in Russia, and Kazakhstan, who are suffering from extreme rates of illnesses," as well as "indigenous people, people of color, whose land is being tested on...."

¹⁰ Moraga is a small suburban community in the San Francisco bay area, several miles east-northeast of Oakland, California.

¹¹ Jane also mentioned that, curiously enough, the course did *not* discuss the environmental effects of nuclear radiation or toxic waste disposal.

¹² She elaborated that this violent attitude and behavior was antithetical to her own values, which were rooted in non-violence (see Note 7 above), and that she simply couldn't understand how people who purported to be anti-war could use or condone the use of violence.

¹³ She did recall, however, that, at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, she understood (and was very frightened by) the possibility that those developments might result in widespread destruction and the annihilation of life on earth.

¹⁴ "I had to wrestle with whether there was something immoral about getting paid for [doing this work], something impure about it. But I finally decided that if I got paid, I would be able to do a lot more of it...."

¹⁵ When I asked Jane, in August 2007, to clarify what she had meant in describing herself as "less completely connected," she said that she had meant this in the sense of not being a member of an organization that had continuing relationships with other organizations working on these or related issues (as compared with her later involvement with CLDF, where she *was* so connected). By "connected," she said she meant being involved in an organization where she had an investment in her role in that organization, and therefore a certain degree of accountability for her actions on its behalf. She also clarified that this period of relative inactivity politically was probably from about 1970 to 1979, after she had graduated from high school and before the nuclear accident occurred at Three-Mile-Island in March, 1979. From that point on, she said had been "very active" politically right up until she began working full-time for CLDF.

¹⁶ The explosion of a nuclear reactor that occurred at the Soviet nuclear power plant at Chernobyl in 1986, which resulted in the immediate deaths of thirty plant workers, and the spread of toxic radioactive elements that affected the health and safety of people across a wide swath of the then Soviet Union, parts of Eastern Europe, and as far north as Norway. While estimating the number of deaths that resulted from the Chernobyl accident is exceedingly difficult, the results of a CNN worldwide survey of expert groups on the potential number of deaths from thyroid cancer linked to the explosion estimated this death toll to be between 9,000 and 98,000 individuals. "Chernobyl 20 Years On," Igor Kudrick and Rashid Alimov, The Bellona Foundation, April 25, 2006 (<http://www.bellona.org/articles/Chernobyl%2020%20years%20on>).

¹⁷ At one point, she described camping or otherwise spending time in the wilderness as her "religion."

¹⁸ In using this phrase, Katy was referring to the general public's overall lack of knowledge about the factors affecting human health.

¹⁹ For the purposes of this and similar questions, I initially asked respondents to rank their level of "concern" about specific issues or problems using a traditional version of the Likert scale, where 5 meant "extremely concerned," 4 meant "very concerned," 3 meant "somewhat concerned," 2 meant "not very concerned," and 1 meant "not concerned at all." Later in the interview process, this scale was revised to a scale from 1 to 10, but without assigning descriptive statements to each of the possible responses.

²⁰ For example, one of the instructional units she developed was designed to educate students about the history, current legal status and rights of corporations, and about what citizens and municipalities could do to challenge and limit those rights.

²¹ Adbusters, or Adbusters Media Foundation, is a not-for-profit, anti-consumerist organization founded in 1989 by Kalle Lasn and Bill Schmalz in Vancouver, British Columbia. They describe themselves as "a global network of artists, activists, writers, pranksters, students, educators and entrepreneurs who want to advance the new social activist movement of the information age." The foundation publishes *Adbusters*, a 120,000-circulation, reader-supported activist magazine, devoted to numerous political and social causes, many of which are anti-consumerist in nature.

²² "... In growing up, little pieces of information would filter [to me] through her ... so I always had my ears perked up about whatever she was working on."

²³ Later in the interview, in our discussion of race relations, Ralph identified this as a formative experience in his political development, the other being his participation in the Freedom Rides in the South in the early 1960s. In 1961, Ralph participated in a sit-in at the Jackson, Mississippi airport, where he was arrested and subsequently served some jail time.

²⁴ Ralph claimed that, as a consequence of these 14 arrests, he had served a total of about four months in jail. He described that time served as an important experience: "I was sacrificing something, but met some wonderful people." Telephone conversation, August 12, 2007.

²⁵ At the time I interviewed him in 2001, Ralph and Sylvia were contemplating a move to Nevada City, a small community located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, to be closer to some of his children and grandchildren.

²⁶ 10 on a scale of 1-10.

²⁷ As to how his *thinking* about the threat represented by nuclear weapons had changed over time, Ralph said that those weapons were "more hideous than anything I ever realized."

²⁸ The second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki three days later, on August 9, 1945. The Japanese subsequently surrendered several days later, marking the end of World War II.

²⁹ Telephone conversation, August 12, 2007.

³⁰ Ralph also mentioned that, while he was not involved in “physically protesting” against nuclear weapons during this time (by which I presume he meant risking arrest), he said he *did* do some picketing against nuclear testing. *Ibid.*

³¹ The U.S. Naval Weapons Station in Concord, California was established in 1942, and functioned as a World War II armament storage depot supplying ships at Port Chicago. It also was the site of numerous antinuclear and antiwar protests from the mid-1980’s to the early 1990’s, partly in response to the offloading of spent nuclear fuel rods from ships there.

³² According to Ralph, he and Sylvia protested there every month for seven years, noting that “[t]hat was the longest, sustained thing we’ve ever done.”

³³ An independent, non-profit political advocacy organization sponsored by the Society of Friends (Quakers).

³⁴ Abolition 2000 was an umbrella organization of antinuclear groups and individuals whose original goal was to work towards the abolition of all nuclear weapons worldwide by the year 2000. Ralph was a founding member of Nuclear Abolition, which was one of those groups.

³⁵ “... Consciously I’m trying to withdraw from things, but I’m sure I’ll be involved up there [i.e. in the Sierra foothills] somehow.” Subsequent to our interview, Ralph and Sylvia did move to Nevada City, where they now live. Ralph later reported that, after moving there six years earlier, he had served on local peace committees, including the Peace and Social Concerns Committee of the local Quaker meeting. When we last spoke in August, 2007, he said that he now had some dementia, and was “not active on anything anymore, but I try to be active.” He mentioned that he still kept up with the various activist newsletters he received, as well as reading and occasionally responding to invitations and solicitations he received from various organizations.

³⁶ Similarly, as to the most frustrating or disappointing thing about his work with NA, he said that there was “very little ... you can point to as progress. It looks like a violent ending.”

³⁷ “Y2K” was an acronym that came into common usage in the latter part of the 1990’s to refer to a range of potential problems (and resulting disruptions) to governmental, military, and public institutions and services) that many computer experts as well as laypeople at the time believed might occur when the internal “clocks” associated with various types of electronic equipment (including computers) reached the year 2000. While no significant computer failures actually occurred on or immediately after January 1, 2000, debate ensued as to whether the absence of such failures was the result of the preparation undertaken, or simply of the fact that the significance of the problem had been overstated.

³⁸ By “fascism,” Flora said she meant “hatred and intolerance, Aryan nation kind of stuff.”

³⁹ She also said that she saw Y2K as “a strategic issue, a catalyst, a way to address” the other three issues she had identified “right now, as well as other things.”

⁴⁰ With regard to the “worry” aspect, she added that “... actually, I really work hard at feeling this sense of, um, peace; and, and, just making peace with the world, with myself, with my own death, with other people’s death.... Death is the ultimate concern on some level, the ultimate worry on some level....”

⁴¹ “As a result of Y2K, we have a lot more citizen participation and democracy in this country. I think we [now] have a stronger base for [organizing against nuclear weapons].”

⁴² There were a number of women's peace encampments protesting nuclear weapons that occurred around 1982-83, the most famous of which took place at Greenham Common in England.

⁴³ The United States Department of Energy conducted numerous tests of nuclear weapons at its Nevada Test Site, located about 65 miles northwest of Las Vegas, from 1951 until 1992, when President George H. W. Bush signed a moratorium banning underground nuclear weapons tests. That moratorium has continued to the present day, although tests of nuclear weapons have continued by other means through the so-called "Stockpile Stewardship" program, which involves the use of simulations (using non-nuclear explosives tests and supercomputers, among other methods) and applications of scientific knowledge about physics and chemistry to the specific problems of weapons aging. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) is a Federal government research facility which, under a recently-awarded contract, is operated by a joint consortium consisting of the University of California and the Bechtel Corporation. At the time of the interview, LLNL was devoted, in part, to the development of new weapons designs, as well as to the maintenance of the United States' existing stockpile of nuclear weapons.

⁴⁴ Flora was referring here to protests against the 1997 launching of Cassini-Huygens, a joint NASA/ESA/ASI robotic spacecraft and probe designed to explore Saturn and its moons. The Cassini orbiter was powered, in part, by plutonium. This fact attracted significant protest from environmental groups, physicists, and some former NASA staff. Flora noted, however, that Cassini was an environmental (i.e. nuclear power) rather than a nuclear *weapons* issue.

⁴⁵ The International Court of Justice in the Hague subsequently found these crimes to be "acts of genocide" according to the Genocide Convention, but that these acts did not, in themselves, constitute genocide *per se*. *Sense Tribunal*, The Hague, February 26, 2007 (<http://www.sense-agency.com>). This interview took place in April 1993, around the time that the largely Muslim enclave of Srebrenica fell to Serbian forces, and Sally noted, in this regard, that the media had told people to expect images of mass slaughter over the weekend.

⁴⁶ More specifically, she described tribal consciousness as resulting in "the objectification and degradation of non-members," and noted that she would include sexism under this rubric, as that issue also involved the objectification and consequent degradation of a social group.

⁴⁷ "And I feel like I have been a victim of that, I know what that's like. My earlier years in New York were filled with being attacked, fearing for my life.... I was attacked; and to the people doing the harassing, my humanity was completely beyond their ken – they completely projected who I was, [like] something out of a porno magazine. When you look in someone's eyes, and you know that's what they're doing, it's frightening. And this is (now) going on on a mass scale."

⁴⁸ In this vein, Sally was particularly critical of then-President Clinton, as well as talk-show hosts such as Charlie Rose, whom she saw as rightly condemning the killing, but at the same time continuing to "address it in a military way rather than responding to the suffering," as viewing the situation "as generals, strategists who are above all this. So I really admire [Stuart] for this idea [of safe havens]."

⁴⁹ I first met George at a Quaker meeting in Seattle, Washington, in 1981, and we subsequently became friends, partly due to the fact that we shared a common concern about the dangers represented by the huge military buildup then taking place under the Reagan administration, and about the increasing danger of a nuclear confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Along with two other people, we subsequently formed a personal/political support group that met regularly over the course of the next year or so to discuss these concerns, and possible ways to address them. This experience was an exceedingly important one for me, not only in terms of the development of my approach to the issues addressed by the present research, but also with regard to the development of my own orientation towards political agency and activism.

⁵⁰ I still have a vivid recollection of how I first met George. One Sunday morning, I decided to attend a local Quaker meeting, which began with about an hour of quiet contemplation, during which time attendees

took turns standing and speaking about what was in their hearts or on their minds. George stood up at one point, and spoke passionately and articulately about his fears and concerns about the current state of the world, the dangers of a nuclear war, and what needed to be done to prevent one.

⁵¹ As already indicated in Chapter 3, Section I, I conducted two subsequent interviews with George (in 1987 and 2007), as well as a follow-up telephone conversation in August of this year.

⁵² George also remarked that his “dream” was to help bring about a grassroots, “Ghandi-like” movement to effect change, but that “people weren’t ready” for such a movement.

⁵³ He also was afraid that, due to his outspokenness and his radical past, he would likely be targeted for surveillance, and possible repression, by the FBI or other law enforcement agencies.

⁵⁴ George noted that he “probably pulled out of being in contact with the Socialist Party around 1975.”

⁵⁵ In a subsequent conversation, he added that “I recognized that people generally were not ready to deal with the problems, [that is,] nuclear weapons, or corporations having so much power.” With regard to whether his subsequent withdrawal from involvement on nuclear weapons issues resulted from his frustration and disappointment about not being able to convince others of the need for the kind of “force” or movement he believed was necessary to “turn things around”, he responded, “Yeah, sure, I became ... despair set in, where I felt it wasn’t gonna happen.” Telephone conversation, August 12, 2007.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Having just presented, in summary form, data from the other eight interviews, I will now selectively analyze and compare these data in terms of the tentative conclusions derived from my earlier analysis of Rhona, and explore what these additional data reveal about the validity or comprehensiveness of those initial findings. This analysis in turn, will provide me with the empirical basis for an assessment of the theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between concern and political action presented in Chapter 2, and for deriving some preliminary conclusions regarding the implications of such an analysis for a better understanding of the role of deferred agency in mitigating individual and collective responses to the serious and daunting global problems the world faces today.

I. ANALYSIS

Search for forms of agency

As noted at the end of Chapter 3, one of the tentative findings I suggested based upon my analysis of Rhona was that her orientation towards situations of potential action on issues she was concerned about was characterized by a search for forms of agency or action through which she could participate effectively *with others* in addressing those issues. This characteristic generally was shared by all of the other respondents except for Mona and Sally. Among the former, there were some interesting variations in the forms the search took, as well as in the ways respondents articulated them. For both Rhona and David, this “search” apparently was ingrained in the way they looked at the world, due to

the similarities in their family backgrounds, and consequently in the kinds of values that were inculcated in them from a very early age.¹ Unlike Rhona, however, for David this socialization process took the explicitly political form of being raised by a father who had been a radical political activist. Consequently, his “search” was informed by the belief that (organized) political activism “is part of life, something you do – take responsibility for the world in which you live.” For Jane, Flora, and George, evidence for their “search” was more implicit in the ways they talked about their relationships to such issues. Jane, for example, said that, after taking a high school course on environmental problems, she “threw herself” into work on environmental issues, helping to form a student group to give speeches about them; and that after learning of the near “melt-down” at the Three-Mile Island nuclear power plant in 1979, she “immediately jumped into action” and helped to form a local group against nuclear power. And George’s “search” was readily evident from his accounts of the efforts he made to connect with others around these issues, most notably by speaking up on these issues in public settings, and by his attempt to organize local antinuclear organizations into a coalition. Mona’s orientation to issues of concern to her, on the other hand, does not seem to be characterized by such a search – on the contrary, her way of looking at these issues is circumscribed by the extent to which she feels or experiences a problem *personally*, or is able to identify with those issues in a personal way. This is evidenced by her involvement in issues of juvenile violence because of Jack’s difficulties, as well as by her response to my questions about what it would take for her to become more actively involved on environmental issues: “a threat to my family, my life, perhaps with our immediate environment.” Sally’s case is a little more complicated and nuanced: while

she clearly *was* participating in an activity - the group discussions at the Center – that directly was addressing the “ethnic cleansing” then taking place in Bosnia, she seemed to measure the “effectiveness” of that participation in *expressive* terms (i.e., by providing support to the group’s efforts and expressing her views to others), rather than in the *instrumental* sense of helping to achieve a specific political goal or public policy objective (in this case, the establishment of “safe havens” in the former Yugoslavia). Since, with the possible exception of Sally, all of the other respondents whose political orientations were characterized by a search for appropriate opportunities for participation with others were (or at least *had* been) actively involved in movements for social and political change, it might be worth exploring, for example, whether the presence (or absence) of this “search” orientation might be one independent variable that influences an individual’s propensity for engaging in political action; and, if so, whether individuals with “activist” (David), political (Katy), and/or social-justice oriented (Rhona, David) family backgrounds are more likely to acquire this orientation than those who do not have these kinds of backgrounds.

Evaluation of the empirical context of potential action

As I noted in Chapter 3, Rhona’s account of her search for ways in which she potentially could engage in political action with others to address issues she was concerned about seemed to reflect an assessment of the available options for such action, (i.e. the political “opportunity structure”), as well as an evaluation of the overall empirical context within which that potential action would occur. While all of the respondents’ accounts of their judgments with regard to situations of potential action reflected, to one degree or another, assessments of empirical context, Flora’s and David’s

accounts provided the most explicit evidence in this regard. In explaining why the issues she was most “worried” about were not necessarily the ones she chose to become active on at any given moment, Flora gave the example of being worried about China having nuclear weapons, but not feeling that she could do much about it, or that that would be the best use of her time and energy. With regard to her work on Y2K, she recounted that one of the considerations that motivated her to become active was her view of that issue as an opportunity to organize, as well as the time factor involved. On the other hand, her reluctance to participate in the direct actions against nuclear weapons at both Livermore and the Nevada test site had nothing to do with motivational or strategic considerations, but rather with the perceived danger of exposure to radiation. For his part, David, in responding to a question about periods in his life during which he was less politically active, mentioned as factors the lack of organized opportunities for involvement, and uncertainty about “what to do next.” However, both of their accounts raise the question of whether their responses truly represent evidence of “real-time” assessments they made of those situations, or whether these responses were, in fact, *retrospective* accounts of why they did what they did at the time, provided in response questions which, in effect, asked them to explain (that is, to provide *reasons* for) why they acted the way they did.

A set of underlying moral convictions

As discussed in Chapter 3, Rhona’s assessments of (and subsequent decisions with regard to) situations of potential action were informed by a strong sense of moral conviction (and accompanying principles) about what it was appropriate for her to do (or *not* to do) in a given context. My other respondents fell roughly into three groups with regard to this finding: “strong” (Mona and Sally), “weak” (Jane, Ralph, and George), and

“nonmoral.” Like Rhona, Mona’s and Sally’s judgments with regard to situations of potential action also appeared to be informed by a strong sense of moral conviction, though they differed in terms of the ways they expressed this sense in their accounts, as well as in how they articulated the roles these convictions played in their assessments and subsequent decisions about whether and how to act. In response to a question about what should be done to address environmental problems, Mona stressed the importance of an “ethical mentality” in attempts to address any of the issues that she was concerned about: “[I]t comes back to moral and ethical issues and questions that have to be asked”

This moral sense also was clearly evident from her statement that she was a “champion for the downtrodden,” and from a related anecdote she told me. [little boy in donut shop]

Sally, on the other hand, while expressing her moral sense directly in terms of the Bosnian genocide (a “moral” issue, i.e. “saving someone’s life”), also articulated it in a more sophisticated, consciously philosophical manner, as exemplified in her references to theodicy (as the core moral principle underlying her concerns about all three issues she identified), and to the “objectification and destruction of other people in violence” as being integrally bound up with both the destruction of the environment and “the destruction of ourselves as a species.” Jane’s, Ralph’s and George’s interviews, on the other hand, while providing some evidence of a moral sense that informed their processes of assessment and decision-making with regard to situations of potential action, did not show the same kind of conscious articulation of and reflection on moral convictions and principles as part of these processes.² And while the “nonmoralists” (David, Katy, and Flora) did not explicitly reference moral concerns as part of their assessments of such

situations, this may be more of a reflection of their strong “activist” orientations than anything else.

Rationality of orientation to agency

Rhona’s interview data provides evidence of two distinct types of rational orientation toward situations of potential action or agency: one informed by existential value commitments, the other by goal-oriented (or instrumentally-rational) considerations. While Flora’s interview data provide clear evidence of an instrumental rationality that informs her assessments of situations of potential action, Jane’s account, like Rhona’s, appears to reflect a more complex, variegated orientation. While an instrumental, goal-oriented approach was clearly evident in her assessment of action options,³ the fact that she characterized her work with CLDF as not just a job, but her life’s work, that she considered the most satisfying thing about that work to be the opportunity it provided to do something meaningful that she cared about, to work with others who shared the same values, and to do this work with an organization that has an “ethical commitment to speaking truth to power” all indicate that an existential, value-oriented rationality was also a strong component of her orientation to agency. For Sally, the primarily moral-existential character of her orientation to action is much more unequivocal: for example, in response to my question about whether she thought she could “make a difference” in addressing the ethnic genocide in the former Yugoslavia, she clearly stated that she couldn’t make a difference “as an individual”; at the same time, she went on to say that she thought that it “makes a difference to be who you are, to talk,” and that “it really matters who you are in the world.” These kinds of statements, along with her acknowledgement of the inspiration she has received from “role models,” whom

she described as “people who offer hope at the last minute, holding someone’s hand,” all point towards considerations about whether or not to engage in efforts to address her concerns (or to support others who already are doing some) that go beyond a simple assessment of the efficacy of her potential involvement with such efforts.

Importance of a personal connection

In Rhona’s case, a personal connection with others who were already involved in efforts to address the problems she was concerned about appeared to be very important in her consideration about whether or not to act on those concerns. For most of my other respondents, this kind of personal connection also seemed to be an important factor motivating their decisions to become involved in organized political action, or in sustaining their current involvement in such action. David was most explicit in this regard, noting in response to a question about what motivated him to get involved with the Worthy Wage Campaign (“WWC”) that while personal contact with local leaders of that organization were influential in his involvement, he also liked the social contact provided by that involvement, and that being “connected” with others was a very strong motivation for him to participate. Jane alluded to this factor as well, noting that one of the reasons for her relative inactivity on nuclear weapons issues prior to working for the CLDF was that at that time she was less connected with others who were involved in those issues. Mona, while not sharing the activist inclinations of Rhona, David or Jane, nevertheless became involved with the juvenile justice system and issues of juvenile violence because of her son Jack’s difficulties. She also stated that she preferred personal, face-to-face interaction to participation in large groups, and emphasized that she was more likely to take action in the former type of situation. Ralph’s interview, on

the other hand, did not provide any evidence that personal connections of this sort were important to his decisions about whether to become active on issues; however, this lack of evidence must be seen in the context of his lifelong activism, through which he already was very connected with others who were working on issues that were of concern to him. Moreover, it was clear from his account that personal connections of this sort certainly had been important in *sustaining* his long-term involvement, such as his statements that he believed he had made a difference “with people,” and that the most satisfying thing for him about his involvement with Nuclear Abolition was “the association with the people.” And the “great satisfaction” he derived from working with people one-by one certainly echoes Rhona’s similar statements about the satisfaction she derived from tutoring immigrants with Second Start, and Mona’s preference for face-to-face interaction.

Accessibility of issue to processes of public deliberation and democratic decision-making

In my discussion with Rhona about nuclear weapons, part of the way she accounted for her current lack of involvement on that issue was the distance she felt from those whom she perceived as responsible for decisions about the policies regarding nuclear weapons, as well as their actual use. This belief was epitomized by her statement that those kinds of decisions were “beyond democracy.” The data provided by my interviews with Sally and George indicates their holding of similar beliefs (though, in George’s case, this conclusion is based upon an interpretation of his underlying belief structure rather than any explicit statement). And while Sally provided direct evidence of a similar belief, stating that she couldn’t “make a difference” in addressing the Bosnian situation because she didn’t have a public or organizational role that would allow her “political access to the people shaping the policy that shapes the actions that are taking

place ...”, this lack of access to those in a position to shape or influence the situation in Bosnia did not appear to inhibit her decision to become involved on this issue, only perhaps the *form* of that involvement.⁴ On the other hand, the interviews with David, Jane, and Ralph provided no evidence of their holding such a belief, much less that it was a factor in their decisions about whether or not to become active on issues they were concerned about. However, given their activist backgrounds and current trajectories, the absence of such evidence is besides the point, since their activism on these issues already belies the conclusion that beliefs about the accessibility of these issues to public input or democratic decision-making played any role in their decisions about whether to *act* on their concerns or, alternately, to defer agency on them.⁵

Availability for political involvement

An individual actor’s availability for political involvement on issues that he/she is concerned about, while not raised in my analysis of Rhona, nevertheless was mentioned by several of my other respondents as a factor in accounting for their lack of participation in organizations or movements that were addressing those issues. Mona, for example, mentioned being “too caught up in the drama of my life right now” and “too involved in everyday life” in general as reasons why she had never become more actively involved in environmental issues. In accounting for her period of relative inactivity politically prior to her work with CLDF, Jane mentioned competing demands on her time, and the fact that she was younger and still trying to figure out what she was doing career-wise. Similarly, Flora mentioned still being “in the process of figuring out my life and thoughts” and not feeling very “stable” as reasons why she had not been more active on nuclear weapons issues when the nuclear disarmament movement was at its height. And

David accounted for his lack of political involvement during certain periods of his life as times when he needed to rest and devote more time to his family and personal life.

II. INTERPRETATION

Given the above analysis, it is clear that, with the exceptions, limitations and clarifications noted above, the tentative conclusions (or “findings”) I suggested at the end of Chapter 3 with regard to some of the characteristic features of Rhona’s account of the factors affecting her “decision” to become politically active on issues she was concerned about are helpful in illuminating the data provided by my other eight interviews with regard to the problem of deferred agency. That being the case, the next task is to discuss the extent to which the interpretations provided by that analysis are useful in further clarifying this problem, both in terms of their empirical implications for an understanding of the phenomenon of deferred agency in modern societies, as well as for the analytical usefulness of the theoretical framework proffered in Chapter 3. As already indicated above, the data about the extent to which my respondents’ orientations to issues of concern in situations of potential action are characterized by a search for forms of agency through which they can participate effectively with others in addressing those issues, suggest that this “search” orientation may be an important characteristic of individuals who are predisposed to engage in organized political action, given certain conditions. Conversely, the fact that such individuals sometimes do *not* become active on issues they are concerned about may reflect a decision to *defer* such participation based upon a rational assessment of the empirical context of potential action. This interpretation of the data supports the tentative hypothesis, suggested at the conclusion of Chapter 2, that the deferral of agency in modern societies can, in part, be understood as the tendency of

certain individuals to delay or defer decisions about whether to engage in political action under the complex, often uncertain conditions that characterize modern life. This notion of a “search” as characteristic of such individuals also fits well with the associated notion of the deferral of agency as characterized by a kind of “waiting” that takes the form of a “waiting to see” whether others, particularly others like oneself, or a collective actor or agent of some type, are taking or will take action on the issue at hand. Similarly, the analysis above also supports the finding that this “search” orientation is often accompanied by the individual’s assessment of the empirical context within which that action would occur. This finding also provides at least preliminary empirical support for Schrag’s (1997) characterization of the modern self as being particularly sensitive to the contingencies of the concrete situation within which it must think and act.

With regard to the role of a moral decision-making “style” or structure characterized by strong moral convictions in individuals’ assessment of whether or not to become active on issues of concern to them, the data above suggest that— at least among my respondents – such a structure and accompanying set of moral principles appear to play an important role in their processes of assessment and decision-making with regard to situations of potential action. Of course, this preliminary finding begs the question of what intervening factors may, under certain circumstances, nevertheless inhibit such individuals from taking political action (or deferring agency) despite these strongly held moral convictions and their implications for action. It is precisely this conundrum that Habermas’ analysis of the apparent discrepancy between moral judgment and action seeks to address. Furthermore, the data from my respondents also lends itself to the possible interpretation, suggested by Habermas, that *one* of the inhibiting factors

contributing to individuals' deferral of agency in such situations may be the difficulty such individuals have in sustaining the connection between moral insight and action in the absence of a strong collective identity.

III. CONCLUSION

This research proposed to explore, in a preliminary fashion, the usefulness of the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 2 for an understanding of the apparent discrepancy between public concern and political action by Americans on issues of global concern. First, my analysis of the interview data described above supports the conclusion that, while the factors affecting individuals' decisions about engaging in political activity on such issues are diverse, complex, and interrelated, the theoretical insights provided by Habermas and his postmodern critics with regard to the deferral of agency can make a powerful contribution to an understanding of why many Americans do not participate in collective efforts to address issues that are crucial to the survival of humanity and the preservation and protection of the Earth's precious ecosystems upon which all life depends. Second, this analysis suggests that a cognitive structure (or decision-making "style") characterized by a strong set of moral principles and an accompanying sensitivity to context that are brought to bear in evaluating the empirical circumstances and contingencies within which individual action may occur is a salient component of *some* individuals' orientation to agency, one which may play an important role in those individuals' decisions to act or to *defer* agency in particular situations. This conclusion suggests a couple of important areas for future research that would be focussed upon answering the following questions: (1) To what extent is this "finding" generalizable to a broader population of individuals? and (2) What are the social structural, moral-

developmental, personality, and other correlates of such individuals? Third, my interpretation of the data supports the preliminary conclusion that a sense of personal connection or community with others who are already involved in collective efforts to address problems individuals are concerned about, or with whom they are engaged in face-to-face interaction, is an important contributing factor to individuals' decisions to become politically active. And conversely, this interpretation suggests that one of the main factors *inhibiting* certain individuals' propensity (or "readiness") to engage in political action on issues they are concerned about may be precisely this lack of a sense of personal connection or community with others who already are politically active on those issues, whether through a shared sense of identity, community, or of collective purpose, or through meaningful, face-to-face interaction with others. This conclusion also suggests an important area for further research in the area of political mobilization: the need for a more systematic, theoretically precise and empirically-grounded investigation of how these more "personal" forms of engagement have contributed to the success of past and present mobilization efforts by social and political organizations already working on these issues, and to the sustaining of such collective efforts over time. As previously suggested in Chapter 3, such research also could make a valuable contribution to the success of present and future mobilization efforts by building upon the insights provided by the above data concerning the factors that motivate the more *individualist* forms of political engagement among certain individuals, and thereby assisting in identifying and developing *new* modalities of political participation that, while building upon and integrating with the more traditional forms, provide a sounder and more durable motivational basis for encouraging and sustaining such involvement

over time. Finally, the analysis above identifies two distinctly different ways in which my respondents accounted for their decisions to engage, or to defer engagement in, collective action in particular circumstances – the situational and the motivational – that shed further light on the potential usefulness of applying Mills’ notion of “vocabularies of motive” to analyses of talk and interaction in dialogical settings such as the research interview.

¹ As is evident from the data, both Rhona and David came from Jewish families that emphasized issues of social justice.

² While Jane appeared to share Rhona’s and Mona’s commitment to standing up against injustice, that commitment was not as apparent in her account. This difference, however, might be due more to the explicitly *activist* character of her political experience and commitments than to any difference in the strength and importance of her moral convictions and principles to her judgments about situations of potential action.

³ As cited earlier, one of the reasons she gave for taking the full-time position with CLDF was that she was finding it difficult to be “effective” in the work on a part-time basis.

⁴ Given Sally’s avowed lack of “political access” to policy-makers, it would be tempting to speculate about what form her political involvement might take if she *did* have an organizational or public role that gave her “political access” to policy-makers.

⁵ Although, in David’s case, his response to my question about what he thought “everybody” should be doing to deal with the problem of overpopulation seemed to indicate a belief to the contrary, this statement probably was more a reflection of the nature of that particular issue than a belief that decisions about global issues are, *in general*, accessible to processes of public input and democratic decision-making.

MASTER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Michael J. Sukhov

Revised 08-09-01

I. INTRODUCTION

There are many issues in the world today that Americans are concerned about: for example, AIDS, world hunger, population growth, global warming, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and the negative effects of globalization on the health, safety, and quality of life of many people around the world.

This interview is part of a study exploring people's perceptions of and reactions to global dangers. I'm going to ask you some questions about how you think and feel about certain issues you are or may have been concerned about or actively involved in, either now or in the past. There are no right or wrong answers; I am simply interested in finding out how you think and feel about these issues, and your involvement with them.

II. DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Now, before we begin, I'd like to ask you a few informational questions about yourself. Again, your answers to these questions will be kept strictly confidential.

D1. First, are you at present employed, either full time or part time?

[YES] ____ [NO] ____

[IF NO]:

D2. Are you temporarily laid off, unemployed, retired, permanently disabled, a homemaker, a student, or what?

[SKIP TO # D4.]

D3. What is your occupation? _____

D4. Are you currently -- married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married? _____

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D5. Do you have any children? [YES] ___ [NO] ___

[IF YES]: D6. How many? ___

D7. What are their ages? ___

D8. How many of them are living at home with you now? ___

D9. What is the highest level of education that you have completed? _____

D10. Do you have any college degrees? [YES] ___ [NO] ___

[IF YES]: D11. What degrees? _____

D12. Which of the following categories best describes the combined annual income, before taxes, of all members of your family or household, including wages or salary, pensions, interest or dividends, and all other sources?

Less than \$25,000 ___

\$25,000 to \$49,000 ___

\$50,000 to \$74,000 ___

\$75,000 to \$99,000 ___

\$100,000 or more ___

D13. [Record respondent's race; or ask:] (What race or ethnicity do you consider yourself?) _____

D14. Are you a citizen of the United States? [YES] ___ [NO] ___

D15. Were you born in this country? [YES] ___ [NO] ___

D16. Were both your parents born in this country? [YES] ___ [NO] ___

[IF NO]: D17. Where are/were they from? _____

D18. And what is your age? _____

III. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1A. Is there an issue or problem in the world today that you are concerned about?

[ISSUE A]: _____

1B. What is another issue or problem in the world that concerns you?

[ISSUE B]: _____

1C. And another issue or problem in the world that you are concerned about?

[ISSUE C]: _____

1D. Which of these issues would you say is of most concern to you? _____

1E. Of least concern? _____

**[GO TO ISSUES IN RANK ORDER, OR IN ORDER IN WHICH R
MENTIONS THEM.]**

II. ISSUE [IF NOT NUCLEAR WEAPONS OR ENVIRONMENT]

2A. On a scale from 1 to 10, with '10' being extremely concerned, '5' being somewhat concerned, and '1' being not concerned at all, how concerned would you say you are about [ISSUE]?

2B. What concerns you most about [ISSUE]? Why?

3. What do you think can be done to address [ISSUE]? (PROBE: How do you think that could be brought about?)

4A. Whom do you think should take responsibility for dealing with [ISSUE]?

[IF SELF, SKIP TO #6A.]

4B. What do you think that [PERSON/GROUP/INSTITUTION] should be doing to deal with [ISSUE #1]?

5A. Do you think you have any responsibility to do something about [ISSUE #1]?

[IF YES, GO TO #6A.]

[IF NO]: 5B. Why not?

5C. Is there anything you think you ought to be doing about [ISSUE]?

5D. Is there anything you think you could be doing to address this issue?

6A. Are you currently involved in any efforts to deal with this issue, either on your own, as part of a group or organization, or in some other way?

[IF YES]: 6B. How? (Please describe.)

[CONTINUE WITH QUESTION # 8A.]

[IF NO]: 6C. Is there anything you think you ought to be doing about this issue?
(IF YES, PROBE: What? What gets in the way of your doing that?)

6D. Is there anything you think you could be doing about this issue? (IF YES, PROBE: What? What gets in the way of your doing that?)

7A. Have you ever been involved in working on this issue? If so, in what ways?

[IF YES, SKIP TO #28A.]

[IF NO:] 7B. Are you now or have you ever been a member of, donated money to, or otherwise supported the work of a group or organization working on this issue?

[IF YES, ASK R TO DESCRIBE THE NATURE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THAT SUPPORT.]

7C. Are there any (other) ways in which you have expressed your concerns about this issue? If so, what are they? (Please describe.)

[IF NO TO #7B & C, SKIP TO #51.]

A. CURRENTLY INVOLVED

- 8A. How and when did you first become involved in [ISSUE]? Please describe the circumstances. (Was there a group or organization you joined or began working with?)

[IF NO, OR IF GROUP ALREADY IDENTIFIED, SKIP TO #9A.]

[IF YES]: 8B. What was it?

8C. Are you still involved with this group/organization today?

- 9A. Have you been involved in [ISSUE] with other groups/organizations?

[IF NO TO "OTHER ORGANIZATIONS," SKIP TO #10A.]

[IF NO INVOLVEMENT WITH ANY GROUP/ORGANIZATION, SKIP TO #18.]

[IF YES]: 9B. What are they?

9C. Are you involved with any of these groups/organizations now?

[NOTE: IF RESPONDENT HAS BEEN INVOLVED ON THIS ISSUE WITH MORE THAN ONE ORGANIZATION, ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT FIRST ORGANIZATION, THEN REPEAT FOR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.]

- 10A. How long have you been/were you involved with (a member of) [GROUP]?

- 10B. What were the circumstances that led to your involvement with (joining) [GROUP]? (PROBE: How did you come to be involved with (become a member of) [GROUP]? What motivated you to become involved (join)? Were there people who were influential in your becoming involved with (joining) that organization?)

11. What were your impressions of or attitudes towards (groups like) [ORGANIZATION] before you (joined) became involved with them?

- 12A. Since you first (joined) became active with [ORGANIZATION], would you say over time you became/have become more active, less active, or stayed at about the same level of activity?

[IF STAYED THE SAME, SKIP TO #13.]

[IF BECAME MORE ACTIVE OR LESS ACTIVE]:

12B. How has/did has your involvement with [GROUP] change(d) during this time?
How would you explain that increased (decreased) involvement? (PROBE:
Have there been periods when you were relatively inactive? Please explain.)

13. Have/did your attitudes towards (groups like) [ORGANIZATION] change(d) over time? If so, how, and why do you think that is? How do you perceive [ORGANIZATION] today?
14. What has been (was) the most satisfying thing to you personally about working with (being a member of) [ORGANIZATION]?
15. What has been (was) the most frustrating thing for you personally about working with (being a member of)[ORGANIZATION]?
16. Has (did) your thinking about this issue changed as a result of your involvement with (membership in) [ORGANIZATION]?

[IF YES:] 17. In what way(s)?

[REPEAT FOR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IF NECESSARY.]

18. How long have you been involved with [ISSUE]?
19. What, in general, would you say were the factors that motivated you to become involved with [ISSUE]?
20. What would you say are the reasons that you are still involved with [ISSUE] (a member of [ORGANIZATION]) today?
- 21A. Are you as involved with this issue today as you would like to be?

21B. Are there circumstances in which you could see yourself becoming more involved?

[IF YES]: 21C. How might that come about? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

[IF NO]: 21D. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

22A. From the time you first became concerned about this issue, has that concern increased, become less, or stayed at about the same level?

[IF INCREASED OR DECREASED]:

22B. How would you explain that increased (decreased) concern?

23A. Have your feelings about being politically active changed as a result of your involvement on this issue?

[IF YES]: 23B. How?

24A. Has your thinking about this issue changed as a result of your involvement?

[IF YES]: 24B. In what way(s)?

25A. Do you think that you have been able to make a difference on this issue as a result of your involvement?

[IF YES]: 25B. How? **[SKIP TO #26.]**

[IF NO]: 25C. Why not? (PROBE: What has gotten in the way?)

25D. Do you know of others who have made a difference on nuclear weapons issues?

[IF NO, SKIP TO #26A.]

[IF YES]: 25E. How?

25F. Could you see yourself doing that?

[IF YES]: 25G. How?

[IF NO]: 25H. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

25I. Are there other things you could do to make a difference on this issue?

[IF YES]: 25J. What are they? (PROBE: What gets in the way of your doing that?)

[SKIP TO #27.]

26A. Are there ways you think you could make a difference on this issue?

[IF YES]: 26B. What are they?

27. In general, what would you say have been the experiences, events, or other influences in your life that have most helped shape your thinking and concerns about this issue?

[COMPLETE OTHER ISSUE(S). IF COMPLETE, SKIP TO #171.]

B. FORMERLY INVOLVED

28A. How and when did you first become involved in [ISSUE]? Please describe the circumstances. (Was there a group or organization you joined or began working with?)

[IF NO, OR IF GROUP ALREADY IDENTIFIED, SKIP TO #29A.]

28B. What was it?

28C. Are you still involved with this group/organization today?

29A. Have you been involved in [ISSUE] with any (other) group/organization?

[IF YES]: 29B. What were they?

[IF NO TO "OTHER GROUP/ORGANIZATION," SKIP TO # 30A.]

[IF NO INVOLVEMENT WITH ANY GROUP/ORGANIZATION, SKIP TO #36A.]

29C. Are you involved with any of these groups/organizations now?

[IF YES, GO BACK TO PAGE 5, #17.]

[NOTE: IF RESPONDENT WAS PREVIOUSLY INVOLVED ON THIS ISSUE WITH MORE THAN ONE ORGANIZATION, ASK THE FOLLOWING

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QUESTIONS ABOUT FIRST ORGANIZATION, THEN REPEAT FOR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.]

- 30A. How long have you been/were you involved with (a member of) [GROUP]?
- 30B. What were the circumstances that led to your involvement with (joining) [GROUP]? (PROBE: How did you come to be involved with (become a member of) [GROUP]? What motivated you to become involved (join)? Were there people who were influential in your becoming involved with (joining) that organization?)
31. What were your impressions of or attitudes towards (groups like) [ORGANIZATION] before you (joined) became involved with them?
- 32A. Since you first (joined) became active with [ORGANIZATION], would you say over time you became/have become more active, less active, or stayed at about the same level of activity?

[IF STAYED THE SAME, SKIP TO #33.]

[IF BECAME MORE ACTIVE OR LESS ACTIVE]:

- 32B. How has/did has your involvement with [GROUP] change(d) during this time?
How would you explain that increased (decreased) involvement? (PROBE: Have there been periods when you were relatively inactive? Please explain.)
33. Have/did your attitudes towards (groups like) [ORGANIZATION] change(d) over time? If so, how, and why do you think that is? How do you perceive [ORGANIZATION] today?
34. What has been (was) the most satisfying thing to you personally about working with (being a member of) [ORGANIZATION]?
35. What has been (was) the most frustrating thing for you personally about working with (being a member of)[ORGANIZATION]?
- 36A. Has (did) your thinking about this issue changed as a result of your involvement with (membership in) [ORGANIZATION]?

[IF YES:] 36B. In what way(s)?

[REPEAT FOR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IF NECESSARY.]

37A. Do you think that you were able to make a difference on this issue as a result of your involvement?

[IF YES]: 37B. How? **[SKIP TO #39.]**

[IF NO]: 37C. Why not? (PROBE: What got in the way?)

37D. Do you know of others who have made a difference on this issue?

[IF NO, SKIP TO #38A.]

[IF YES]: 37E. How?

37F. Could you see yourself doing that?

[IF YES]: 37G. How?

[IF NO]: 37H. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

37I. Are there other things you could do to make a difference on this issue?

[IF YES]: 37J. What are they? (PROBE: What gets in the way of your doing that?)

[SKIP TO #39.]

38A. Are there ways you think you could make a difference on this issue?

[IF YES]: 38B. What are they?

39. How long have you been involved with [ISSUE]?

40. What, in general, would you say were the factors that motivated you to become involved with [ISSUE]?

41. What would you say are the reasons that you are still involved with [ISSUE] (a member of [ORGANIZATION]) today?

42A. Are you as involved with this issue today as you would like to be?

42B. Are there circumstances in which you could see yourself becoming more involved?

[IF YES]: 42C. How might that come about? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

[IF NO]: 42D. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

43A. From the time you first became concerned about this issue, has that concern increased, become less, or stayed at about the same level?

[IF INCREASED OR DECREASED]:

43B. How would you explain that increased (decreased) concern?

44A. Have your feelings about being politically active changed as a result of your involvement on this issue?

[IF YES]: 44B. How?

45A. Has your thinking about this issue changed as a result of your involvement?

[IF YES]: 45B. In what way(s)?

46. In general, what would you say have been the important experiences, events, or other influences in your life that have helped shape your thinking and concerns about this issue?

The next few questions have to do with understanding why you stopped being involved in working on this issue.

47. When did you start becoming less active on this issue? (PROBE: What happened?)
Was this a sudden or a gradual transition?

48. When did you stop being involved on this issue? (PROBE: Why was that? What happened?)

49A. Overall, during the time when you were involved, were you as involved in working on [ISSUE] as you would have liked to have been?

[IF NO:] 49B. What were the reasons why you were not more involved?

50A. Are there circumstances in which could you see yourself becoming involved again on [ISSUE]?

[IF YES]: 50B. How might that come about? (PROBE: What would it take for you to become involved again on this issue? What gets in the way?)

[IF NO]: 50C. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

[COMPLETE OTHER ISSUE(S). IF COMPLETE, SKIP TO #171.]

C. NEVER INVOLVED

51A. From the time you first became concerned about this issue, has that concern increased, become less, or stayed at about the same level?

[IF INCREASED OR DECREASED]:

51B. How would you explain that increased (decreased) concern?

52A. Given your concerns about [ISSUE], why do you think you've never become actively involved on this issue? (PROBE: What has gotten in the way?)

52B. Why do you think it is that you are not active on this issue today? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

53A. Are there circumstances in which you could see yourself becoming involved on this issue?

[IF YES]: 53B. How might that come about? (PROBE: What would it take for you to become involved on this issue? What gets in the way?)

[IF NO]: 53C. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

54A. Do you think your involvement on this issue could make a difference?

[IF YES]: 54B. How? **[SKIP TO #54D.]**

[IF NO]: 54C. Why not? (PROBE: What would get in the way?)

54D. Do you know of others who have made a difference on this issue?

[IF NO, SKIP TO #55A.]

[IF YES]: 54E. How?

54F. Could you see yourself doing that? **[IF YES]:** How?

[IF NO]: 54G. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

54H. Are there other things you could do to make a difference on this issue?

[IF YES]: 54I. What are they? (PROBE: What gets in the way of your doing that?)

[SKIP TO #55C.]

55A. Are there ways you think you could make a difference on this issue?

[IF YES]: 55B. What are they?

55C. Are you aware of any organizations or groups that are working on [ISSUE]?

[IF YES]: 55D. Please name them.

[ASK FOR EACH ONE:]

56. What do you know about [ORGANIZATION]? What kind of work do they do?

57. What do you think about the work [ORGANIZATION] does? (PROMPT: What do you like or dislike about what they are doing?)

58A. Could you see yourself joining or becoming a member of [ORGANIZATION]?

[NOTE: IF CURRENTLY A MEMBER OF ORGANIZATION, GO BACK TO PAGE 5, #8A AND ASK QUESTIONS THROUGH PAGE 8, #27; THEN CONTINUE WITH OTHER ISSUE(S). IF PREVIOUSLY A MEMBER OF ORGANIZATION, GO BACK TO PAGE 8, #28A AND ASK QUESTIONS THROUGH PAGE 12, #50C.]

[IF YES:] 58B. How might that come about? (PROMPT: What would it take for you to join [ORGANIZATION]?) **[SKIP TO #59A.]**

[IF NO:] 58C. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

59A. What would it take for you to become *actively involved with* or participate in the *work* of [ORGANIZATION]? (PROBE: How might this come about?)

59B. What form might this involvement take?

60. In general, what would you say have been the important experiences, events, or other influences in your life that have helped shape your thinking and concerns about this issue?

[COMPLETE OTHER (2) ISSUE(S). IF COMPLETE, SKIP TO #171.]

III. NUCLEAR WEAPONS

(Now I'd like to talk with you about a(nother) contemporary global problem which some people believe poses a serious challenge to human survival and the planet as a whole: the existence and threatened use of nuclear weapons.)

61A. On a scale from 1 to 10, with '10' being extremely concerned, '5' being somewhat concerned, and '1' being not concerned at all, how concerned would you say you are about the dangers posed to the world by the existence and possible use of nuclear weapons?

[IF RATING IS 2-7]:

61B. What would it take for you to become more concerned about the dangers of nuclear weapons?

[IF RATING = 1 OR 0]:

61C. What would it take for you to become concerned about the dangers of nuclear weapons? [IF NECESSARY, PROBE: What would it take for you to consider the dangers of nuclear weapons to be a serious issue?]

62. What concerns you most about the dangers of nuclear weapons? Why?

63. What do you think can be done to address these dangers? (PROBE: How do you think that could be brought about?)

64A. Whom do you think should take responsibility for dealing with these dangers?

[IF SELF, SKIP TO #66A.]

64B. What do you think that [PERSON/GROUP/INSTITUTION] should be doing to deal with them?

65A. Do you think you have any responsibility to do something about the dangers of nuclear weapons?

[IF YES, GO TO #66A.]

[IF NO]: 65B. Why not?

65C. Is there anything you think you ought to be doing about the dangers of nuclear weapons?

65D. Is there anything you think you could be doing to address this issue?

66A. Are you currently involved in any efforts to deal with this issue, either on your own, as part of a group or organization, or in some other way?

[IF YES]: 66B. How? (Please describe.)

[CONTINUE WITH QUESTION #68A.]

[IF NO]: 66C. Is there anything you think you ought to be doing about the dangers of nuclear weapons? **(IF YES, PROBE:** What? What gets in the way of your doing that?)

66D. Is there anything you think you could be doing about this issue? **(IF YES, PROBE:** What? What gets in the way of your doing that?)

67A. Have you ever been involved in working on this issue? If so, in what ways?

[IF YES, SKIP TO QUESTION #87A.]

[IF NO:] 67B. Are you now or have you ever been a member of, donated money to, or otherwise supported the work of a group or organization working on nuclear weapons issues?

[IF YES, ASK R TO DESCRIBE THE NATURE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THAT SUPPORT.]

67C. Are there any (other) ways in which you have expressed your concerns about this issue? If so, what are they? (Please describe.)

[IF NO TO #67B & C, SKIP TO QUESTION #110.]

A. CURRENTLY INVOLVED

68A. How and when did you first become involved in nuclear weapons issues? Please describe the circumstances. Was there a group or organization you joined or began working with?

[IF NO, SKIP TO #69A.]

[IF YES]: 68B. What was it?

68C. Are you still involved with this group/organization today?

69A. Have you been involved on nuclear weapons issues with other groups/organizations?

[IF NO TO "OTHER ORGANIZATIONS," SKIP TO #70A.]

[IF NO INVOLVEMENT WITH ANY GROUP/ORGANIZATION, SKIP TO #77.]

[IF YES]: 69B. What are they?

69C. Are you involved with any of these groups/organizations now?

[NOTE: IF RESPONDENT HAS BEEN INVOLVED ON THIS ISSUE WITH MORE THAN ONE ORGANIZATION, ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT FIRST ORGANIZATION, THEN REPEAT FOR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.]

70A. How long have you been/were you involved with (a member of) [GROUP]?

70B. What were the circumstances that led to your involvement with (joining) [GROUP]? (PROBE: How did you come to be involved with (become a member of) [GROUP]? What motivated you to become involved (join)? Were there people who were influential in your becoming involved with (joining) that organization?)

71. What were your impressions of or attitudes towards (groups like) [ORGANIZATION] before you (joined) became involved with them?

72A. Since you first (joined) became active with [ORGANIZATION], would you say over time you became/have become more active, less active, or stayed at about the same level of activity?

[IF STAYED THE SAME, SKIP TO #73.]

[IF BECAME MORE ACTIVE OR LESS ACTIVE]:

72B. How has/did has your involvement with [GROUP] change(d) during this time?
How would you explain that increased (decreased) involvement? (PROBE:
Have there been periods when you were relatively inactive? Please explain.)

73. Have/did your attitudes towards (groups like) [ORGANIZATION] change(d) over time? If so, how, and why do you think that is? How do you perceive [ORGANIZATION] today?
74. What has been (was) the most satisfying thing to you personally about working with (being a member of) [ORGANIZATION]?
75. What has been (was) the most frustrating thing for you personally about working with (being a member of)[ORGANIZATION]?
- 76A. Has (did) your thinking about this issue changed as a result of your involvement with (membership in) [ORGANIZATION]?

[IF YES:] 76B. In what way(s)?

[REPEAT FOR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IF NECESSARY.]

77. How long have you been involved with nuclear weapons issues?
78. What would you say were the factors that motivated you to become involved with these issues?
79. What would you say are the reasons that you are still involved with nuclear weapons issues (a member of [ORGANIZATION]) today?
- 80A. Are you as involved with this issue today as you would like to be?
- 80B. Are there circumstances in which you could see yourself becoming more involved?

[IF YES]: 80C. How might that come about? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

[IF NO]: 80D. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

81A. From the time you first became concerned about the dangers of nuclear weapons, has that concern increased, become less, or stayed at about the same level?

[IF INCREASED OR DECREASED]:

81B. How would you explain that increased (decreased) concern?

82A. Have your feelings about being politically active changed as a result of your involvement on this issue?

[IF YES]: 82B. How?

83A. Has your thinking about nuclear weapons changed as a result of your involvement?

[IF YES]: 83B. In what way(s)?

84A. Do you think that you have been able to make a difference on this issue as a result of your involvement?

[IF YES]: 84B. How? **[SKIP TO #86.]**

[IF NO]: 84C. Why not? (PROBE: What has gotten in the way?)

84D. Do you know of others who have made a difference on nuclear weapons issues?

[IF NO, SKIP TO #85A.]

[IF YES]: 84E. How?

84F. Could you see yourself doing that?

[IF YES]: 84G. How?

[IF NO]: 84H. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

84I. Are there other things you could do to make a difference on this issue?

[IF YES]: 84J. What are they? **[SKIP TO #86.]**

85A. Are there ways you think you could make a difference on this issue?

[IF YES]: 85B. What are they?

86. In general, what would you say have been the experiences, events, or other influences in your life that have most helped shape your thinking and concerns about nuclear weapons?

[COMPLETE OTHER (2) ISSUE(S). IF COMPLETE, SKIP TO #171.]

B. FORMERLY INVOLVED

87A. How and when did you first become involved in nuclear weapons issues? Please describe the circumstances. Was there a group or organization you joined or began working with?

[IF NO, SKIP TO #88A.]

87B. What was it?

87C. Are you still involved with this group/organization today?

88A. Have you been involved in nuclear weapons issues with any (other) group/organization?

[IF YES]: 88B. What were they?

[IF NO TO "OTHER GROUP/ORGANIZATION," SKIP TO # 89A.]

[IF NO INVOLVEMENT WITH ANY GROUP/ORGANIZATION, SKIP TO #95A.]

88C. Are you involved with any of these groups/organizations now?

[NOTE: IF RESPONDENT WAS PREVIOUSLY INVOLVED ON THIS ISSUE WITH MORE THAN ONE ORGANIZATION, ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT FIRST ORGANIZATION, THEN REPEAT FOR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.]

89A. How long have you been/were you involved with (a member of) [GROUP]?

- 89B. What were the circumstances that led to your involvement with (joining) [GROUP]? (PROBE: How did you come to be involved with (become a member of) [GROUP]? What motivated you to become involved (join)? Were there people who were influential in your becoming involved with (joining) that organization?)
90. What were your impressions of or attitudes towards (groups like) [ORGANIZATION] before you (joined) became involved with them?
- 91A. Since you first (joined) became active with [ORGANIZATION], would you say over time you became/have become more active, less active, or stayed at about the same level of activity?

[IF STAYED THE SAME, SKIP TO #92.]

[IF BECAME MORE ACTIVE OR LESS ACTIVE]:

- 91B. How has/did has your involvement with [GROUP] change(d) during this time?
How would you explain that increased (decreased) involvement? (PROBE: Have there been periods when you were relatively inactive? Please explain.)
92. Have/did your attitudes towards (groups like) [ORGANIZATION] change(d) over time? If so, how, and why do you think that is? How do you perceive [ORGANIZATION] today?
93. What has been (was) the most satisfying thing to you personally about working with (being a member of) [ORGANIZATION]?
94. What has been (was) the most frustrating thing for you personally about working with (being a member of)[ORGANIZATION]?
- 95A. Has (did) your thinking about nuclear weapons changed as a result of your involvement with (membership in) [ORGANIZATION]?

[IF YES:] 95B. In what way(s)?

[REPEAT FOR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IF NECESSARY.]

96A. Do you think that you were able to make a difference on nuclear weapons issues as a result of your involvement?

[IF YES]: 96B. How? **[SKIP TO #98.]**

[IF NO]: 96C. Why not? (PROBE: What got in the way?)

96D. Do you know of others who have made a difference on these issues?

[IF NO, SKIP TO #97A.]

[IF YES]: 96E. How?

96F. Could you see yourself doing that?

[IF YES]: 96G. How?

[IF NO]: 96H. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

96I. Are there other things you could do to make a difference on this issue?

[IF YES]: 96J. What are they? **[SKIP TO #98.]**

97A. Are there ways you think you could make a difference on this issue?

[IF YES]: 97B. What are they?

98. How long have you been involved with [ISSUE]?

99. What, in general, would you say were the factors that motivated you to become involved with [ISSUE]?

100. What would you say are the reasons that you are still involved with [ISSUE] (a member of [ORGANIZATION]) today?

101A. Are you as involved with this issue today as you would like to be?

101B. Are there circumstances in which you could see yourself becoming more involved?

[IF YES]: 101C. How might that come about? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

[IF NO]: 101D. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

102A. From the time you first became concerned about this issue, has that concern increased, become less, or stayed at about the same level?

[IF INCREASED OR DECREASED]:

102B. How would you explain that increased (decreased) concern?

103A. Have your feelings about being politically active changed as a result of your involvement on this issue?

[IF YES]: 103B. How?

104A. Has your thinking about this issue changed as a result of your involvement?

[IF YES]: 104B. In what way(s)?

105. In general, what would you say have been the important experiences, events, or other influences in your life that have helped shape your thinking and concerns about this issue?

The next few questions have to do with understanding why you stopped being involved in working on this issue.

106. When did you start becoming less active on this issue? (PROBE: What happened?)
Was this a sudden or a gradual transition?

107. When did you stop being involved on this issue? (PROBE: Why was that? What happened?)

108A. Overall, during the time when you were involved, were you as involved in working on [ISSUE #1] as you would have liked to have been?

[IF NO:] 108B. What were the reasons why you were not more involved?

109A. Are there circumstances in which could you see yourself becoming involved again on [ISSUE]?

[IF YES]: 109B. How might that come about? (PROBE: What would it take for you to become involved again on this issue? What gets in the way?)

[IF NO]: 109C. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

[COMPLETE OTHER ISSUE(S). IF COMPLETE, SKIP TO #171.]

C. NEVER INVOLVED

110. In general, what would you say have been the important experiences, events, or other influences in your life that have helped shape your thinking and concerns about this issue?

111A. From the time you first became concerned about this issue, has that concern increased, become less, or stayed at about the same level?

[IF INCREASED OR DECREASED]:

111B. How would you explain that increased (decreased) concern?

112A. Given your concerns about [ISSUE], why do you think you've never become actively involved on this issue? (PROBE: What has gotten in the way?)

112B. Why do you think it is that you are not active on this issue today? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

113A. Are there circumstances in which you could see yourself becoming involved on this issue?

[IF YES]: 113B. How might that come about? (PROBE: What would it take for you to become involved on this issue? What gets in the way?)

[IF NO]: 113C. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

114A. Do you think your involvement on this issue could make a difference?

[IF YES]: 114B. How? **[SKIP TO #115A.]**

[IF NO]: 114C. Why not? (PROBE: What do you think would get in the way?)

114D. Do you know of others who have made a difference on this issue? **[IF YES]:** How? **[IF NO, SKIP TO #114H.]**

114E. Could you see yourself doing that? **[IF YES]:** How?

[IF NO]: 114F. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

114G. Are there other things you could do to make a difference on this issue? **[IF YES]:** What are they? (PROBE: What gets in the way of your doing that?)

[SKIP TO #115A.]

114H. Are there ways you think you could make a difference on this issue?

[IF YES]: 114I. What are they?

115A. Are you aware of any organizations or groups that are working on [ISSUE]?

[IF YES:] 115B. Please name them. _____

[ASK FOR EACH ONE:]

116. What do you know about [ORGANIZATION]? What kind of work do they do?

117. What do you think about the work [ORGANIZATION] does? (PROMPT: What do you like or dislike about what they are doing?)

118A. Could you see yourself joining or becoming a member of [ORGANIZATION]?

[NOTE: IF CURRENTLY A MEMBER OF ORGANIZATION, GO BACK TO PAGE 5, #10A AND ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT *MEMBERSHIP* THROUGH QUESTION #25G; IF PREVIOUSLY A MEMBER OF ORGANIZATION, GO BACK TO PAGE 8, #29A AND ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT *MEMBERSHIP* THROUGH #36B.]**

[IF YES:] 118B. How might that come about? (PROMPT: What would it take for you to join [ORGANIZATION]?) **[SKIP TO #119A.]**

[IF NO:] 118C. Why not? (PROBE: What gets in the way?)

119A. What would it take for you to become *actively involved with* or participate in the *work* of [ORGANIZATION]? (PROBE: How might this come about?)

119B. What form might this involvement take?

[COMPLETE OTHER (2) ISSUE(S). IF COMPLETE, SKIP TO #171.]

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

(Now I'd like to talk with you about a(nother) contemporary global problem which some people believe poses a serious challenge to human survival and to the planet as a whole: the dangers posed to the Earth's environment by things like global warming, the destruction of the ozone layer, and the gradual disappearance of the rainforests; and by environmental problems caused by pollution, overdevelopment, and the unsafe disposal of nuclear and other toxic waste.)

120. On a scale from 1 to 10, with '10' being extremely concerned, '5' being somewhat concerned, and '1' being not concerned at all, how concerned would you say you are overall about

... the dangers posed to the Earth's environment by things like global warming, the destruction of the ozone layer, and the gradual disappearance of the rainforests; and by environmental problems caused by pollution, overdevelopment, and the unsafe disposal of nuclear and other toxic waste?

[OR] (... these dangers to the environment?)

121. What concerns you most about the dangers to the environment? Why?

122. What do you think can be done to address these dangers? (PROBE: How do you think that could be brought about?)

123A. Whom do you think should take responsibility for dealing with these dangers?

[IF OTHER THAN SELF]:

123B. What do you think that [X] should be doing to deal with the dangers to the environment?

124A. Do you think you have any responsibility to do something about them?

[IF YES:] 124B. What do you think you should be doing to address these dangers?

[IF NO:] 124C. Why not?

124D. Is there anything you think you ought to be doing about the dangers of nuclear weapons?

124E. Is there anything you think you could be doing to address this issue?

125A. Are you currently involved in any efforts to deal with environmental problems, either on your own, as part of a group or organization, or in some other way?

[IF YES:] 125B. How? (Please describe.)

[CONTINUE WITH QUESTION #126.]

[IF NO:] 125C. Have you ever been involved in working on this issue? If so, how?

[IF YES, SKIP TO QUESTION #143.]

[IF NO:]

125D. Are there any ways in which you have expressed your concerns about the environment? If so, what are they? (Please describe.)

[IF NO "ACTIVIST" EXPRESSION OF CONCERNS, SKIP TO QUESTION #162.]

A. CURRENTLY INVOLVED

126. How and when did you first become active on environmental issues? Please describe the circumstances. Was there a group or organization you joined or began working with?

→ [IF NO, SKIP TO #(69A)*.]

127. What would you say were the factors that motivated you to become involved with environmental issues?

128A. Are you still involved with [ORGANIZATION "A"] today?

[IF NO:] 128B. What group or organization, if any, are you involved with now ["B"]?

[NOTE: IF RESPONDENT IS NO LONGER ACTIVE WITH ORGANIZATION "A," ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT ORGANIZATION "A," THEN REPEAT FOR ORGANIZATION "B":]

129. How long have you been involved in working on environmental issues?

130. How long have (were) you (been) involved with [ORGANIZATION]?

131. What were your impressions of or attitudes towards (groups like) [ORGANIZATION] before you became involved with them?

132A. Since you first became active with [ORGANIZATION], would you say you became (have become) over time more active, less active, or stayed at about the same level of activity?

[IF "MORE ACTIVE" OR "LESS ACTIVE":]

132B. How has (did) has your involvement with [ORGANIZATION] change(d) during this time? How would you explain that increased (decreased) involvement? (PROBE: Have there been periods when you were relatively inactive? Please explain.)

133. Have (did) your attitudes towards (groups like) [ORGANIZATION] change(d) over time? If so, how, and why do you think that is? How do you perceive [ORGANIZATION] today?

134. What has been (was) the most satisfying thing to you personally about working with [ORGANIZATION]?

135. What has been (was) the most frustrating thing for you personally about working with [ORGANIZATION]?

[REPEAT FOR ORGANIZATION "B" IF NECESSARY.]

136. Why are you still active on environmental issues today?

137A. Are you as actively involved in working on these issues today as you would like to be?

[IF NO:] 137B. What would you say are the reasons that you are not more actively involved?

138A. From the time you first became concerned about this (these) issue(s), has that concern increased, become less, or stayed at about the same level?

[IF INCREASED OR DECREASED]:

138B. How would you explain that increased (decreased) concern?

139A. Have your feelings about being politically active changed as a result of your involvement in environmental issues?

[IF YES:] 139B. How?

140A. Has your thinking about this issue changed as a result of your involvement?

[IF YES:] 140B. In what way(s)?

141A. Do you think that you have been able to make a difference on this (these) issue(s) as a result of your involvement?

[IF YES:] 141B. How?

[IF NO:] 141C. Why not?

142. In general, what would you say have been the experiences, events, or other influences in your life that have most helped shape your thinking and concerns about environmental issues?

[COMPLETE OTHER (2) ISSUE(S). IF COMPLETE, SKIP TO #171.]

B. FORMERLY ACTIVE

143. How and when did you first become actively involved in environmental issues?
Please describe the circumstances. What group or organization ["A"] did you join or begin working with?

144. What would you say were the factors that motivated you to become active on this (these) issue(s)?

145A. Have you been active on environmental issues with any other organization ["B"]?

[IF YES:] 145B. What organization was it?

[NOTE: IF RESPONDENT WAS PREVIOUSLY ACTIVE WITH MORE THAN ONE ORGANIZATION, ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT ORGANIZATION "A," THEN REPEAT FOR ORGANIZATION "B":]

146. How long were you involved in working on environmental issues?

147. How long were you involved with [ORGANIZATION]?

148. What were your impressions of or attitudes towards (groups like)
[ORGANIZATION] before you became involved with them?

149A. From the time you first became active with [ORGANIZATION], would you say you became more active, less active, or stayed at about the same level of activity?

[IF "MORE ACTIVE" OR "LESS ACTIVE":]

149B. Did your involvement with [ORGANIZATION] change during this time?
How would you explain that increased (decreased) involvement? (PROBE:
Were there been periods during your involvement with [ORGANIZATION]
when you were relatively inactive? Please explain.)

150. Have your attitudes towards (groups like) [ORGANIZATION] changed over time?
If so, how, and why do you think that is? How do you perceive
[ORGANIZATION] today?

151. What was the most satisfying thing to you personally about working with
[ORGANIZATION]?

152. What was the most frustrating thing for you personally about working with
[ORGANIZATION]?

153A. Did your thinking about this issue change as a result of your involvement with [ORGANIZATION]?

[IF YES:] 153B. In what way(s)?

154A. Do you think you were able to make a difference on environmental issues as a result of your involvement with [ORGANIZATION]?

[IF YES:] 154B. How?

[IF NO:] 154C. Why not?

[REPEAT FOR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IF NECESSARY.]

155A. From the time you first became concerned about this (these) issue(s), has that concern increased, become less, or stayed at about the same level?

[IF INCREASED OR DECREASED]:

155B. How would you explain that increased (decreased) concern?

156A. Did your feelings about being politically active change as a result of your involvement in these issues?

[IF YES:] 156B. How?

157. In general, what would you say have been the important experiences, events, or other influences in your life that have helped shape your thinking and concerns about environmental issues?

The next few questions have to do with understanding why you stopped being active on this (these) issue(s).

158. When did you start becoming less active on environmental issues? (PROBE: What happened?) Was this a sudden or a gradual transition?

159. When did you stop being politically active on this (these) issue(s)? (PROBE: Why was that? What happened?)

160A. Overall, during the time when you were active, were you as actively involved in working on these issues as you would have liked to have been?

[IF NO:] 160B. What were the reasons why you were not more actively involved?

161. Under what circumstances could you see yourself becoming active again on environmental issues? How might that come about? (PROBE: What would it take for you to become involved on this issue again?)

[COMPLETE OTHER ISSUE(S). IF COMPLETE, SKIP TO #171.]

C. NEVER ACTIVE

- 162A. From the time you first became concerned about dangers to the environment, has that concern increased, become less, or stayed at about the same level?

[IF INCREASED OR DECREASED]:

162B. How would you explain that increased (decreased) concern?

163. Given your concerns about the environment, why do you think you've never become actively involved in these issues?

164. Why is it that you are not active on these issues today?

165. Under what circumstances could you see yourself becoming active on environmental issues? How might that come about? (PROBE: What would it take for you to become involved on this issue?)

- 166A. Are you aware of any organizations or groups that are working on environmental issues?

[COMPLETE OTHER (2) ISSUE(S). IF COMPLETE, SKIP TO #171.]

[IF YES:] 166B. Please name them. _____

[ASK FOR EACH ONE:]

167. What do you know about [ORGANIZATION]? What kind of work do they do?

168. What do you think about the work [ORGANIZATION] does? (PROMPT: What do you like or dislike about what they are doing?)

169. Why is it that you have not become active with or participated in the work of [ORGANIZATION]?

170A. Could you see yourself joining or becoming a member of [ORGANIZATION]?

[IF YES:] 170B. How might that come about? (PROMPT: What would it take for you to become involved with [ORGANIZATION]?)

170C. What form might this involvement take?

[IF NO:] 170D. Why not?

[COMPLETE OTHER (2) ISSUE(S). IF COMPLETE, SKIP TO #171.]

171. How would you compare the dangers of nuclear weapons to the dangers to the environment, in terms of the seriousness of the threat each poses to human survival and the planetary ecosystem?

V. FAMILY BACKGROUND AND RELATIONSHIPS

Now just a few more questions about your background and life experiences. This may help shed some light upon how you have come to relate to these kinds of issues in the way that you do, and how you have become the person you are today.

172. What was it like growing up in your family? What were your parents like?

173. Are both of your parents still alive?

174. How old is (are) your (mother/father)?

175. What has (was) your relationship with your mother (been) like? Has it changed over time?

176. In what ways do you think he/she (has) influenced the kind of person you are today?

177. What was your relationship with your father like? Did it change over time?

178. In what way(s) do you think he has influenced the kind of person you are today?

179. What was the relationship between your parents like? Did it change over time? If so, how?
180. In general, how do you think your parents influenced the kind of person you are today?
181. What were/are your relationships with your siblings like (if any)?
182. What age is [BROTHER/SISTER]? Where is he/she in the birth order?
183. Have you had any major conflicts with him/her?
184. Do you think he/she has influenced the kind of person you are today? If so, how?
185. What is your relation with him/her like today?
186. How do you think growing up in your family as influenced the kind of person you are today?
187. Other than your family, what would you say have been the most important influences upon the kind of person you are today, e.g. how you see yourself, what you believe, your attitudes, values, etc.? [E.g. other personal experiences, role models, teachers/educational experiences, work experiences, etc.]
188. Can you think of any influences in your life (e.g. things in your past, your family background, particular people you have known, etc.) that may have influenced how you see yourself as a political being, in terms of acting (or not acting) in response to things you believe are wrong, or as becoming involved (or not involved) in issues that you are concerned about?
189. Given what we've been talking about, is there anything that you may have wanted to say but didn't say? Are there any questions you wish I had asked, but didn't?

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