

(How Do You Like Your Politics, Sir?)

Doug McAdam's "Political Process Theory"

The political process theory, which was developed as an alternative to the dominant *Resource Mobilization Perspective*, rests on the idea that social movement participants are individuals who possess limited power in society and thus seize the opportunity, through a **cycle of contention** (or punctuated periods of protest and revolt among disaffected masses) to use social movements to champion their grievances during periods of abrupt social changes when the state's authority might be weakened. McAdam's political process theory is heavily influenced by Karl Marx's view on power, as stated in his own words: **"...The political process model is more compatible with a Marxist interpretation of power. Marxists acknowledge that the power disparity between elite and excluded groups is substantial but hardly regard this state of affairs as inevitable. Indeed, or orthodox Marxists, that which is inevitable is not the retention of power by the elite but the accession to power by the masses."** -Doug McAdam, 1982.

Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Integrated Political Theory of 1970s

- ▶ A branch of PPT has also tried to enhance "mass society" theory by examining macro-level institutional political processes. Particularly, the relation of politically powerful elites and the led "masses" is important:
 - **Accessible elites:** lack of intermediate buffers between masses and elites (democracy helps to break down these "buffers")
 - **Available masses:** lack of integration into local associations and collectivities (alienated/marginalized)
- ▶ Available masses (alienated from the establishment political system) are swept into mass movements that can threaten the political power of accessible elites
 - e.g. 2016 election, Wikileaks
