Toward Research and Theory Building in the Study of Nonviolent Action

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

This monograph expresses some of our thoughts about developing theory and conducting research in the field of nonviolent action. We think of it as a step toward a research agenda, although no list of projects is suggested in it. Instead, it is a rationale for research and theory building. Research agendas are an informal genre, appearing irregularly and without agreed-upon standards of form and content. They provide an opportunity for researchers to reflect upon their activity, report their reflections in a somewhat systematic fashion, and attempt to convince others that there is merit in the approach they prescribe. In this essay, our attention is directed toward an emerging field of study, that of nonviolent action employed as a technique of struggle in the course of human conflicts.

We owe several debts of gratitude for assistance received in the preparation of this work. It owes its origin to Gene Sharp, founder of the technique-oriented school of thought on nonviolent action, who has vigorously promoted the belief that clear and critical thinking about nonviolent action is both possible and necessary. We can only hope that we have met his standards. This project has been supported throughout by the Program on Nonviolent Sanctions at Harvard University's Center for International Affairs and the Albert Einstein Institution. We express a special thanks to the staff of the Program on Nonviolent Sanctions, particularly Kendra McCleskey and Leah Pellegrino, and Program Director Doug Bond. These ideas have been aired at the Seminar on Nonviolent Sanctions sponsored by the Program on Nonviolent Sanctions. We wish to thank the members of the seminar and guests for their help in clarifying many issues. Special thanks go to Roger Powers and William Vogele of the Albert Einstein Institution, who helped us to pare down an unwieldy argument into one we hope will be accessible. Preliminary versions of these ideas were presented at conferences sponsored by the Albert Einstein Institution in 1987 and 1990. Much of the research and writing was supported by a grant from the United States Institute of Peace, to which we express our thanks.

We encourage your comments and criticisms. One of the aims of this essay is to encourage more communication among scholars working on nonviolent action. Please write to us at the Albert Einstein Institution, 1430 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138.

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TOWARD RESEARCH AND THEORY BUILDING IN THE STUDY OF NONVIOLENT ACTION

by Ronald M. McCarthy
and Christopher Kruegler

INTRODUCTION
THE TECHNIQUE APPROACH TO NONVIOLENT ACTION

Nonviolent action is arguably a universal phenomenon, in the sense that it occurs throughout history and across social and political systems. Today's news often carries stories about nonviolent struggle. Events such as labor strikes, protest marches, and the defiance of governmental authority by groups of people occur in all parts of the world. No form of government appears to be immune from nonviolent challenges, neither the most repressive nor the most democratic. Nor are examples of nonviolent action limited to the current period—historical research frequently discloses similar actions by people as varied as members of the medieval guilds, African-American slaves, and upper-class English women.

Nevertheless, nonviolent action remains poorly understood as a distinctive phenomenon. Because it overlaps with other areas of human behavior that receive much more study on their own—such as social conflicts, state violence and repression, war, and collective action and protest—nonviolent action has been subsumed into these

fields, to the extent that it is studied at all. As a result, behavior that clearly qualifies as nonviolent action has not been studied as such; rather, it has been treated as a marginal part of other areas of interest. Further, the field of research on nonviolent action itself generally lacks clear definition as the study of a genuinely empirical category of human actions in conflicts. Without a firm identity, the research enterprise has had great difficulty constructing a progressive research program.

A major challenge for theorists and researchers is to address such deficits and move toward the creation of a more productive field of study. This essay argues that a framework for such inquiry already exists, which we will call the "technique approach" to nonviolent action. We propose that a coherent research program can be sketched out in a way that incorporates existing research and knowledge into this framework and generates productive new research questions. We do not intend to offer a theory of nonviolent action here, in the sense that theory is used in positive social science. Our more modest ambition is to identify how the technique approach provides ways to examine current ideas about nonviolent action critically, exposing a number of "red herrings" and contributing to other research in the domain of human conflict.

The claim made in this essay is that nonviolent action, properly understood, constitutes a readily identifiable, recurring, and significant human activity in the prosecution of conflicts. It is one that can be defined, recognized, and understood. The technique approach to the study of nonviolent action contains the outlines of a researchable field of empirical knowledge. Briefly stated, the technique approach maintains that research will be most fruitful when focused on nonviolent action as purposive behavior in conflicts and on the problems and possibilities that nonviolent action raises for actors in conflicts.

Definition

One definition of nonviolent action from the social-scientific point of view reads as follows (Sharp 1985:51):

> Nonviolent action is a technique of conducting protest, resistance, and intervention without physical violence by: (a) acts

of omission (that is, the participants refuse to perform acts which they usually perform, or are required by law or regulation to perform); or (b) acts of commission (that is, the participants perform acts which they usually do not perform, are not expected by custom to perform, or are forbidden by law or regulation from performing); or (c) a combination of both.

This stresses several important empirical features. First, it defines its subject as an aspect of action, generally collective action, in social, political, or economic conflicts. As disputing behavior, the actions described are typically undertaken by participants to influence the course and outcome of conflict. Nonviolent action is therefore neither passivity, nor a part of institutionalized politics, nor violence. Indeed, Sharp implies that it is an alternative to each of these.

Second, as a means of protest, resistance, and intervention, nonviolent action is distinct from conflict resolution and conflict management techniques, including persuasion and third party intervention, efforts at reconciliation, negotiation, and mediation.

Third, nonviolent action operates beyond institutionalized means for conducting and settling disputes in a given social or political system. Voting, for example, is obviously a nonviolent political behavior, but, to the extent that it remains within institutionalized channels for settling questions and conflicts, it is not *nonviolent action* as meant by the definition above. Of course there are significant points of contact between the institutional order and nonviolent action, including legal and political procedures that might be introduced to regularize, manage, channel, and control nonviolent action. This in itself makes it clear that nonviolent action is independent of those procedures as such.

Fourth, the conduct and effects of nonviolent action in conflicts can be assessed independently of whether physical violence (including threats of physical force) and material destruction are present in the same conflict. Means such as these regularly happen alongside nonviolent action precisely because all are ways of acting to wage acute conflict. Violence and destruction may be used by the same or different groups as those using nonviolent action, and certainly by adversaries of nonviolent groups. In studying outcomes, however, researchers justifiably ask how the effects of different techniques vary,

combine with, or contradict one another.

Finally, nonviolent action appears in practice in the form of distinctive *methods* that constitute its discrete and recurrent patterns of behavior. Collectively, these methods can be analyzed as types of *protest and persuasion, noncooperation,* or *nonviolent intervention.* While Sharp (1973) identifies 198 methods of nonviolent action, it is certain that this list is not exhaustive and that the types of action listed in it may not always be mutually exclusive. Besides this, innovation of new methods is quite common.

The assumptions underlying the technique approach are implied in the definition just stated. The technique approach assumes that nonviolent action is independent of cultures and belief systems, political arrangements, and forms of government that pertain in particular times or places. The existence of nonviolent action requires neither the presence of particular ethical beliefs nor the willingness of the powerful to tolerate active opposition. Nonviolent action comprises a technique for the carrying out of conflict, one that has been conducted in many political, cultural, and historical contexts. Nonviolent action is a unilateral initiative by one party to an acute conflict and does not require that the opposing party respond in kind. Nonviolent action is an alternative both to passivity and to violence as an option in conflict—it is one of many means of action attempting to use power effectively in struggles to prevail over an adversary.

In addition, specific factors can be identified that increase or decrease the likelihood of success in reaching conflict goals through nonviolent action (Sharp 1973). Since nonviolent action has not yet been systematically studied, these must of course remain propositions for further research and testing. However, we can propose that among these factors are discipline in nonviolent conduct, the capacity to withstand opposition violence, and a knowledge of the particular dynamics of this form of struggle. To the extent that nonviolent action is purposive, it can be studied and practiced strategically. Identifying and exploring the factors and circumstances that contribute to effective nonviolent struggle can produce both social-scientific knowledge and the possibility of broader and more effective application.

Intellectual History of the Approach

This section discusses the trends of thought that gradually led over the past hundred and fifty years to identifying nonviolent action as a phenomenon that scholars could study. While the *practice* of nonviolent action has a lengthy history, the *study* of nonviolent action began only recently, originating largely in the thought of the Indian nationalist leader Mohandas K. Gandhi (Deutsch, Platt, and Senghaas 1971). As he developed his ideas, Gandhi came to believe that nonviolent action as a whole could be distinguished from particular methods or limited conceptions of its nature. For example, he came to the position that the popular terms *passive resistance* and *civil disobedience* do not encompass all of nonviolent action (Dhawan 1962; Kripalani 1969).

The English-speaking world began to use the term *passive resistance* to mean something like nonviolent action early in the nineteenth century. Passive resistance implies, more or less, a stubborn refusal to cooperate with or obey persons in power and was used in England early in the organized labor movement and during the Chartist period (cf. Goodstein 1984). As Huxley (1990) shows, ideas about passive resistance in the nineteenth century were associated with the European "constitutionalist" thinking of the time. (Passive resistance was also contrasted with active resistance, meaning violence, which served to strengthen the sense that nonviolent approaches are a kind of passivity.)

Later, the term *civil disobedience* came into use and was associated largely with American thinker Henry David Thoreau. Like passive resistance, civil disobedience suggests refusal and resistance, but in this case a more affirmative refusal to obey immoral laws. Thoreau did not actually use the term himself, but its meaning is implied by his renowned essay "Resistance to Civil Government" (later reprinted under the title "Civil Disobedience" [Hunt 1969]). In this essay, Thoreau proposed two ideas that were important to later generations. First, he argued, there is an issue of political morality between the citizen and the state; namely, if the citizen accepts immoral acts of the state in silence, it is the same as actively supporting and contributing to these acts. Second, positive acts of resistance and refusal, even by a minority, would hinder the state in carrying out its objectionable policies (Thoreau 1973 [1848]). Part of the legacy of Thoreau, then, was a lack of clarity about the relationship between these two ideas, and

especially the distinction between the moral challenge he raised and the effects on the state of the kind of resistance he advocated.

Gandhi's thinking began the task of developing a more encompassing and focused view of nonviolent action and its relationship to political positions or objectives, distinguishing it from the more limited conceptions of the past. He personally retained the sense of moral commitment in his own concept of *principled* nonviolent action, which he called *satyagraha*. Consequently, Gandhi's influence led to a large, often uncritical, literature on the relationships among nonviolence, nonharm or *ahimsa*, love of one's adversaries, and effective struggle. However, by suggesting that a term such as passive resistance represented only a few aspects of the broader whole, he also encouraged more critical studies.

An early example of this more critical literature is the study by American sociologist Clarence Marsh Case, *Non-Violent Coercion* (1972 [1923]).[1] Case viewed "non-violent coercion" as being composed of the "methods of social pressure" found in passive resistance and similar sources. In addition, he recognized the similarities between Gandhi's methods and demonstrations, strikes, and boycotts in general. The research direction this implied was for a broader understanding of the nonviolent technique. Case's direction was not followed at once, however, largely because others stressed the study and advocacy of Gandhian methods as an especially privileged set of ideas. An early work by Gandhian Richard Gregg, for example, argued that Gandhi's concept of nonviolent resistance was "universally valid" (Gregg 1972 [1929]). Gregg went on to write several other works analyzing the technique, arguing that nonviolent action could effectively substitute for war (Gregg 1966 [1935]; Gregg 1936). In a sense, Gregg was arguing a highly generalized view based on only one version of the practice of nonviolent action. Consequently, analysis and advocacy were not always clearly distinguished, nor was it evident that there could be competing views.

Krishnalal Shridharani (1939) added a more properly academic approach to the Gandhian strategy of *satyagraha*, in that he tried to identify and assess the specific methods that Gandhi advocated. Joan Bondurant (1958) later systematized Gandhi's views on the process of conflict and the operations of *satyagraha*. Bondurant based her study on Gandhi's own ideas and his contentions about their political application. In particular, she compared the actual events of several

Gandhian campaigns with his theory, determining to what extent the reality differed from the ideal model and what the consequences of this might be.

The outlines of a technique approach emerged from clues contained in the kinds of studies just mentioned: (1) that nonviolent action is broader and more encompassing than earlier characterizations (passive resistance) implied; (2) that actions by leaders or participants can be studied separately from their ethical commitments and political beliefs; (3) that ideas and propositions about nonviolent action are combined with ethical statements in many texts; (4) that civil disobedience and *satyagraha* are methods in themselves or a combination of methods when they are used in acute conflicts; (5) that attention to actions taken in conflicts permits researchers to identify many more forms or methods of nonviolent action than the classic texts suggest; and (6) that the nature, conduct, and effects of these methods and therefore of nonviolent action are susceptible to study.

It was on the basis of observations like these that Gene Sharp synthesized the technique approach in his 1973 work *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Sharp's contribution lies in recognizing that knowledge of nonviolent action can be generalized far beyond its heritage, once a strategy for recognizing it exists. Sharp's intellectual strategy uses the concept of *methods* to identify nonviolent action. Case uses this concept informally and Shridharani employs it to identify a handful of methods, but Sharp broadens the concept by employing the idea in the sense used by Clausewitz, the scholar of strategy in war. Sharp argues that actors in acute conflicts employ recognizably similar behaviors in very different circumstances. In his view, these methods draw upon three distinctive sources: symbolic expression (methods of nonviolent protest and persuasion), refusal to perform otherwise expectable acts (methods of noncooperation), or direct and psychological disruption of normal activity (methods of nonviolent intervention).

The concept of methods of nonviolent action does not imply that actors have learned the means from one another, have certain motives for not using violence in a conflict, or are aware that their actions are nonviolent action. Consequently, the concept treats as an *empirical* question aspects of the phenomenon that others have considered *definitional*. It recasts the history of thought about nonviolent action to draw in researchers who knew nothing of nonviolence but who made

a contribution in the analysis of a specific method (e.g., strikes; see Hiller 1928; Hall 1898) or of the potential dynamics of noncooperation (see Sharp 1973:34-36 on Etienne de la Boétie and others). In short, by arguing that researchers must recognize nonviolent action by certain of its features, Sharp opts for a minimum definition of nonviolent action that throws open an entire field of research.

In *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Sharp presents an extended hypothesis regarding the relationship of nonviolent action to social and political power, the requirements for effective struggle, and processes conducive to achieving goals. The conceptual basis for social-scientific study of nonviolent action, its nature, and its effects lies within this approach because of three aspects of Sharp's concept:

- a definition based upon manifest features, which clearly distinguishes nonviolent action from associated or similar phenomena;
- an indicator (methods of nonviolent action) that makes it possible to recognize the presence of the phenomenon and facilitates the creation of operational definitions and the systematic collection of data; and
- an interrelated set of testable hypotheses regarding the dynamics, mechanisms, and effects of the phenomenon.

In the following sections, we will argue that the technique approach holds the potential for greater research productivity than do alternative approaches, for several reasons. First, it is in accord with important criteria of social science, including focusing on observable phenomena and assuming that the most likely causes and consequences of an event or practice are found in other observable phenomena. The technique approach thus regards nonviolent action as a *researchable* phenomenon. Second, it contains the seeds of an *explanatory* system, concerned with causal as well as instrumental aspects of nonviolent action. Third, by aspiring to develop a logically coherent and fully specified theoretical and conceptual basis, the technique approach can ground an assessment and criticism of present knowledge and help identify priorities for further work. Fourth, the technique approach is a source of testable and falsifiable hypotheses. It can suggest hypotheses that predict relationships between variables and in what directions they can be expected to be related. Likewise, it offers ways to collect the evidence that may fail to support proposed relationships. In our view, therefore, the technique approach is supe-

rior as the basis of a research strategy to any *a priori* understandings of nonviolence or nonviolent action.

BUILDING UPON THE KNOWLEDGE BASE

As the outline for a progressive research program, the technique approach should be capable of integrating existing research on nonviolent action with related work from other fields. A renewed research program should also be able to answer the questions posed by previous research at least as convincingly, identify inconsistencies in other approaches, and suggest more satisfactory explanations. How can the technique approach build on prior study of nonviolent action? As we have noted, the literature on nonviolent action is broad and diverse but often does not offer a coherent direction for research. Indeed, we believe that the literature uncritically repeats assumptions that are not supported by research—"red herrings" that ought to be abandoned and connections not warranted by a clear understanding of nonviolent action.

Some assumptions are either unstated or not expressed as researchable problems. Among them is the idea that specific political, ethical, or social commitments are necessary for nonviolent action to be effective (or even to exist at all). The belief that specific attitudes of committed nonviolence are at the heart of nonviolent action is fairly modern, probably not predating nineteenth-century American non-resisters. Massachusetts pastor and convinced promoter of non-resistance, Adin Ballou, is an instance of this. Ballou, whose writings were known and praised by Tolstoy, provides his work *Christian Non-Resistance* (1846) with many examples taken from journalism or history intended to justify a commitment to nonresistance by showing that it can be practically effective. In our century, the relationship has often been reversed, in a sense, because authors have argued that distinct cases of nonviolent struggle reveal an attitude or ethic of nonviolence, even where some or all of the activists may not have accepted such a label. In other words, they incorporate the "principled" into the "pragmatic" in problematic ways.

This point might be made clearer by looking at two studies that explore the convictions of activists and leaders in nonviolent struggle, producing surprisingly contradictory findings. Inge Powell Bell's

study of the Congress of Racial Equality in the early 1960s finds that an ideological commitment to nonviolence was characteristic of CORE leaders, but not nearly so much of followers. Amrut Nakhre, in a study of three Indian *satyagraha* campaigns, discovered the opposite there, namely that the rank-and-file adopted nonviolence as a way of life while leaders adopted it as a technique (Bell 1968; Nakhre 1982).

Since people's attitudes and other motivations are clearly relevant for understanding nonviolent action, methods must be found to address them and their significance. Motivation must be treated as a variable in explaining both the sources of nonviolent action and the choice to continue using it during a conflict. Thus, the principled-pragmatic issue could productively be treated as a research question, asking what normative motivations are held by people who engage in nonviolent forms of struggle. The same question could be stated as a testable proposition, as follows: "An attitude of nonviolence (such as bearing no ill will towards one's adversary) is necessary for nonviolent action to occur."

Shifting from making an assumption to stating a researchable problem encourages refinement of the concepts necessary for a theory of nonviolent action. It also generates a series of additional research questions. For example: How, if at all, does the presence of an attitude of nonviolence contribute to achieving the actors' objectives in various conflicts? How do different culturally specific meanings of *nonviolence* affect the choices of methods of nonviolent action? How are these meanings used to motivate action in different contexts? Dajani, for example, has found that for the Palestinians of the West Bank, the term nonviolence implies submissiveness (*Transforming Struggle* 1992:123). As a result, many kinds of resistance by Palestinians to the conditions of Israeli occupation in the West Bank before the Intifadah were innovated under the slogan *sumud*, or "stand fast." According to Dajani, *sumud* implies unyielding resistance and steadiness in the struggle, expressed in methods quite like those termed nonviolent action here.

The technique approach broadens the range of motivations and attitudes that can be considered, such as political or ideological beliefs, perceptions of the relative costs and benefits of participation, and dispositions toward particular leaders or away from the existing social and political system. Consequently, it could give us a better understanding of one of the key components of nonviolent action—

the individual's choice to participate in collective action. Friedman, for example, has looked at individual propensity to participate in a strike from the rational-choice perspective (Friedman 1983), while other studies of collective violence and social movements have investigated the same question at a more highly aggregated level (see Zimmerman 1983). We note, however, that these studies have proceeded without making the character of the behavior—nonviolent action as such—the analytical focus. A theory informed by the technique approach would direct research toward longitudinal, cross-sectional, or cross-cultural comparative studies that recognized this key feature of movements of protest and defiance.

Another assumption that needs to be critically assessed is the belief that highly centralized and charismatic leadership is indispensable in nonviolent action. Charismatic figures such as Gandhi, King, and Mandela dominate the image of nonviolent action and seem to give credence to this view. In addition, the thought of Gandhi and King and their ideas on the nature, motives, and effects of nonviolent action (on *satyagraha* and disinterested love of the adversary, for example) hold an almost indisputable truth value. Yet when their ideas are doubted or disputed, the larger body of practices they are taken to represent is also thrown into doubt.

Clearly, the practices of a great leader are but one part of a broader body of technique. It would be poor empirical work to verify or falsify the entire phenomenon on an assessment of one or two cases. This conception defines nonviolent action as practically coextensive with movements led by the best-known leaders. The more diverse and extensive human experience with these methods is ignored. Likewise, in a reversal of this same trend of thought, the movements for Indian independence and civil rights in the United States finally become seen as either historically and culturally unique or the opposite—as standards against which all cases are to be compared. (An example of this last point is the comparison between the South African anti-apartheid struggle and the civil rights movement, a comparison understandably annoying to South Africans.)

A more productive research approach would identify and investigate the tasks of leadership in nonviolent movements, varying types of organization, differing means of recruitment, or varied communications systems. In this context, the particular roles of Gandhi or King could be analyzed as representing types of leadership models, and the

organizational milieu in which they operated could be better understood. The comparative questions for research, then, would address the presence or absence of particular qualities of effective leadership that these men demonstrated. The object of comparative research would then expand to include movements without apparent leadership, or without charismatic leadership, and would assess the conditions under which various forms might be effective.

A third common assumption in research on nonviolent action relates to how some thinkers and activists have traced the process by which nonviolent action achieves change. One argument proceeds something like this: first, the nonviolent challenge engages activists in the voluntary acceptance of suffering (because they experience repression); second, their suffering creates moral contradictions and tensions among the adversaries; and third, the contradictions are resolved by a change of minds and hearts in the adversaries, leading to closer understanding and reconciliation of groups. In the literature, the process is sometimes called moral suasion and its results termed the mechanism of conversion. However, changes of mind and heart or reconciliation constitute only one of several potential mechanisms of change. Lakey (1968) and Sharp (1973, 1990) suggest other mechanisms of change, which broaden the focus of research. Arguably "conversion" of opponents (including change in beliefs and attitudes toward nonviolent actionists initiated by the effects of self-suffering) is one way in which change might be achieved. If conflict is viewed as a clash of power relations and interests, however, changes might equally be achieved through agreement based upon self-interest or even forceful coercion of the opponent. In Sharp's terms, settlements would be one kind of "accommodation" and compulsion—when an opponent really has no choices left—an example of nonviolent "coercion" or even of "disintegration." As in other research issues mentioned, the technique approach accepts the potential validity of the conversion hypothesis, but enables researchers to construct researchable and testable questions about it. Empirical evidence of conversion, in other words, must be weighed against evidence of other mechanisms of change, which may operate independently or in conjunction with conversion. Similarly, such a set of research questions profitably draws upon work in conflict resolution, negotiation, and the social psychology of collective learning, attitude change, and bargaining (see Bond 1992 for a brief survey of these literatures).

In concluding this section, we turn our attention from the problem of "red herrings" to consider sources of insight neglected in studies of nonviolent action. (See Ackerman and Kruegler 1994 for an extended discussion of these problems in the literature.) As implied by the comments above, we believe that students of nonviolent action have viewed their topic in isolation from other empirical and theoretical traditions, especially in the social sciences, and have not drawn adequately on them.

The assumptions of the technique approach can and should be posed as testable propositions if they are to be the basis of a coherent research program. For example, the belief that nonviolent action, as a behavioral phenomenon in conflicts, is global, trans-historical and cross-cultural can be treated as a proposition for investigation. Put as a question, what *is* the global distribution of nonviolent action? If the proposition is largely confirmed by systematic empirical research, the problem then is to explain why this should be so. Sharp's arguments about the nature of power (1973, 1990) offer one set of explanations. There may be others. If the record shows significant variation across cultures or regions, the challenge becomes explaining *those* patterns. Variation might be explained by cultural differences, the structure of opportunities, levels of repression, or the nature of the particular conflicts. In any of these cases, treating nonviolent action as a distinctive class of behavior reveals aspects of conflicts that might normally be concealed, opens avenues for new inquiries, and permits constructing hypotheses and testable questions.

Social-science studies of political protest, collective violence, and social movements also generate potential avenues for research with direct relevance to the field of nonviolent action. McAdam (Bond, Markley, and Vogele 1992) points out that collective action began to be treated some years ago as intentional, purposive activity, rather than collective irrationality or mob behavior. (See also Tilly 1978; Gamson 1990; and McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988 for surveys of relevant concepts.)

These studies focus on movements themselves (or discrete aspects of the movements) as the objects of study. Many such movements have used methods of nonviolent action in their repertoire of political activism. Indeed, several of the research interests of social movement studies and nonviolent action are parallel, including organization, leadership, mobilization, and motivation, for example (Pagnucco,

Smith, and Crist 1992). Research on the technique of nonviolent action might examine the proposition suggested by resource mobilization approaches that the effectiveness of nonviolent action depends on the level and nature of "resources" (social, political, and material) that can be commanded by actionists, relative to the power resources of the opponent. A question of this kind is entirely consistent with Sharp's emphasis on nonviolent action as a struggle over the control of power (1973, ch. 1, 2) and his concept of the "loci of power" (1990).

To summarize the discussion in the preceding pages, we have argued that the technique approach to the study of nonviolent action provides the framework for a research program that differs in significant ways from what has gone before. It permits the integration of propositions from the current literature on nonviolent action into a coherent whole and offers a standpoint from which to criticize and possibly reject the received wisdom. Likewise, as we can only briefly explore here, it can incorporate related theory and research in a way consistent with the norms of social-science research. Articulating and testing the central hypotheses of a nascent theory of nonviolent action would itself be a significant achievement. Several issues remain to be addressed, however, including the selection of appropriate methods and the definition of variables. We turn to these matters next.

Toward a Program of Research

Like most scholars, researchers planning to work on nonviolent action usually find a project that interests them in itself and that addresses some question they consider worth answering. Often, the research questions are suggested by the topic. For example, a scholar might notice that nonviolent action occurs in a region or an era that he or she is interested in, and this might spark research to explore its extent and significance.[2] This can be a fruitful approach, as Patricia Parkman (1988) showed when she reconstructed several episodes of nonviolent struggle in twentieth-century Latin America and discovered that they shared many common features that demonstrated a pattern of civic resistance. In effect, Parkman used the concept of methods, along with "resistance" and "movements," to discover episodes of nonviolent action.

Approaching the research task this way, of course, does not address research questions explicitly suggested by the concepts and theories of nonviolent action. It does not test theory, but makes its contribution by adding new insights or by asking new questions. There are some difficulties associated with building concepts from the accumulation of case studies. First, it is not easy to specify the dimensions on which the settings of cases are similar or different. It is more common to focus on the differences between cases ("China is just not like Poland") without attempting to determine how these differences. are significant for the outcomes of nonviolent struggle (see also Smith 1990 for a comment on representativeness of cases). Second, the accumulation of theory from features of case studies has been unsystematic. There is a lack of clarity in the terminology, its intended meaning, and the objectives of criticizing the theory.[3] The result is a piecemeal approach that adds to the theoretical literature from insights based on specific cases.

The case study-theory dichotomy implies alternative methods of theory construction. In one of these, the case study method would be undertaken in a more explicitly theoretical way. Historical and observational studies of a single case or a small number of cases could deliberately be set up in order to draw out generalizations and propositions. The variables of interest would be determined mostly by features of the cases, the nature of the evidence and possible findings, and personal theoretical interests of the researcher. In a sense, an interest in the case or episode would still come first for the investigator and the enterprise of building a theory or field would be secondary.

A theory-driven research enterprise differs because questions are defined as part of a project of testing, criticizing, and expanding a body of knowledge that stands on its own. Although the theory of nonviolent action has limits in its ability to state important generalizations, it contains perspectives and propositions capable of being refined and tested systematically. Increasing the rigor of research questions formulated to test propositions derived from the theory itself is insufficient, however, if it does not rest on careful consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of the knowledge already produced. A research program impelled by the insights in the theory, aware of its gaps and absences, and aimed at developing and testing theory, is the unexplored alternative in the study of nonviolent action.

Taking this course would quickly raise three questions. What do researchers in the field need to know? Where are they likely to find it? And how do they organize research around concepts? Answering the first question requires a thorough critique of the theoretical and empirical basis of current knowledge. Review and reconsideration of the theory of nonviolent action to answer this question has a fourfold aim: (a) to identify the strongly supported areas in the theory, (b) to identify the poorly supported areas, (c) to identify the missing areas, and (d) to criticize and develop the conceptual framework. As should be evident from the discussion so far, the theory of nonviolent action has not yet been subject to discussion, criticism, and development of this kind by a group of committed scholars. As such a critique begins, its objective must be the development of a fully specified explanatory theory of nonviolent action.

Empirical knowledge in the field represents a similar problem and a similar set of tasks. Reinvigorated empirical work must employ a research strategy of identifying nonviolent action by its manifest features, by the methods, to reveal more about the nature and dynamics of nonviolent action. The unsystematic nature of data collection about episodes of nonviolent struggle obviously has left the field without any defensible idea of the actual extent of nonviolent action in history. Because of this, an empirical basis on which to build a theory and a field of study is deficient in two particular areas. One of these is precise evidence of the incidence, prevalence, distribution, and scope of nonviolent action. As suggested previously, we do not know if the incidence of nonviolent action is high or low as a general feature of conflict, although we suspect it to be high. Likewise, we do not know precisely whether certain cultural settings or certain social, political, and economic relationships alone give rise to nonviolent action, and we cannot determine this without knowledge of its prevalence and distribution in various contexts.

Closely related to these areas of ignorance is the absence of theoretically informed inquiry into the emergence and change of the phenomenon. That is, researchers have yet to explore carefully how nonviolent action originates, either in world history or in specific conflicts. It is evident, for example, that certain methods of nonviolent action were used in antiquity, such as international economic sanctions in the Athenian Empire (Hufbauer and Schott 1985) and collective withdrawal in early Rome (Sharp 1973). It is not clear whether

such scattered observations demonstrate a history. It is evident that one particular Western example, the early phases of the American independence movement, involved some fairly conscious development of violence-free methods of protest, noncooperation, and intervention (McCarthy 1986). This implies that there *is* a history, but it has not been written.

Nonviolent action may arise within certain cultures because of traditions or ideologies of some sort. Huxley (1990), for example, traces the impetus and much of the form of nonviolent opposition against the absorption of Finland into the Russian Empire to Finnish intellectuals' participation in a European school of constitutional "passive resistance." However, nonviolent action may also be invented independently of traditions, perhaps because certain relationships give rise to the opportunity for nonviolent pressure and sanctioning.

It is certainly possible that nonviolent action is an innovation that arose in a particular place and then was diffused to other settings by means of "carriers" and change agents. (We refer here to certain Western religious and civic traditions as expressed by Tolstoy and Thoreau "diffused" to Gandhi and rediffused, partly through religious pacifists and social reformers, to Africa and back to the West.) It is equally possible that nonviolent action may be reinvented regularly, with or without knowledge of the traditions just named. Consider, for example, the apparent self-invention of tax boycotts in British colonial Nigeria by market women. These women built upon local methods of humiliating officials in shaping their challenge to new taxes, but they also appear to have invented the tax boycott spontaneously (Mba 1982).

Reliable answers to the questions just discussed cannot be found without extensive research into the incidence, prevalence, distribution, and scope of nonviolent action. Precise evidence of the incidence of nonviolent action and processes of its origination cannot be collected without theoretically-informed research protocols. These protocols must include agreed-upon standards for defining and identifying nonviolent action, formulating significant research questions, and developing methods for determining the course and conduct of nonviolent action in a given case or across a sweep of cases.

Lastly, nonviolent action can be viewed as a dependent variable or as an independent variable, depending on whether the researcher

is oriented toward its causes or purposes. Causal questions might be cast in this way: if Sharp's (1973) dependence theory of power is correct, does it imply that nonviolent action occurs only where there is substantial day-to-day interdependence between partisans and adversaries and therefore that nonviolent action is *caused* by specific sorts of strains in those relationships? Or does nonviolent action occur where the cost-benefit relationship between ruler and ruled (in which the ruled accept domination) is altered by the degradation of regime authority or an increase in regime exactions (cf. Levi 1983)? Purposive questions, on the other hand, would be more concerned with consciousness, intent, and agency. They would explore, for example, variation in the role and nature of explicitness in groups' formulations of nonviolent action; in the knowledge of technique, planning, and strategy; or in the forms of strategic consciousness specific to individual cases. Defining nonviolent action as an independent variable would also focus the researcher on measures of outcomes, such as factors leading to effectiveness or to changes in systems in which nonviolent action was used. The distinction between causal and purposive of course does not mean that researchers focus on only one dimension. They will most often find themselves studying both causes and strategies, particularly in case studies.

Formulating research
In choosing directions for research, three options face the field. Research could speak to main lines of argument in the existing literature, it could specialize further to be dictated by central sub-areas and specialized literatures, or it could be theory driven. The obvious difficulty of taking the first path is to determine precisely the "literature" in question, and thus its strengths and shortcomings. For example, authors often contrast "principled" and "pragmatic" nonviolence or nonviolent action, as mentioned earlier (Stiehm 1968). The distinction itself is not entirely clear, but implies that the *motive* for which nonviolent action is undertaken (ethical commitment or pragmatism) is a significant, perhaps causal, factor in its conduct and outcome. From this point of view, a text on nonviolent action can be read from an *a priori* viewpoint assuming that a central role for ethical motives is there even when it is not explicit. In the absence of an explanatory theory, this option is as good as any, despite the fact that a researcher may not believe that the principled-pragmatic dichotomy played a

role. This argues against putting some "literature" on nonviolent action in a central place until it has been more carefully and theoretically defined.

Secondly, other scholarship concerned with much the same questions addressed here has developed independently from any research on "nonviolent action." Researchers in these fields have perspectives, methods, and theories that have little to do with the presumed mainstream of nonviolent action. Most impressive among these are studies of labor strikes and lockouts. This international body of work has methods for measuring the incidence of strikes in various countries and for relating incidence to structural factors in the society and economy, bolstered by theories that relate the causes and duration of strikes to economic and other factors. This literature is significant for the study of nonviolent action in that it has explored the importance of labor organizations as struggle organizations, the strike as a sanction in an interactive context, and the strategies of antagonists (Batstone, Boraston, and Frenkel 1978; Knowles 1952; Barbash 1956; Mullins 1980).

International economic sanctions studies similarly have been conducted with little concern for the issues that characterize research on nonviolent action, but with burdens of their own. The challenge for researchers here is that they are expected to come to some conclusions about how and why (or if) these sanctions work (Hufbauer and Schott 1985; Licklider 1988; Khan 1989). The development of clear ideas and findings on nonviolent struggle may have something to add to the debate about international sanctions, especially as they resemble other nonviolent sanctions.

Only recently have the perspectives of nonviolent action studies in general been applied to a specific area (cf. Lofland 1985). One example of this is a study of consumer boycotts by Smith (1990), which draws on Sharp (1973) in developing its analysis and argument. This reveals that the theory of nonviolent action can make an independent contribution, rather than being dependent upon the findings of others. This in turn suggests that research choices can productively be driven by theory. That is, nonviolent action theory specifies that certain relationships among the variables in conflicts should be significant in certain ways regardless of what specific methods of nonviolent action the activists use and regardless of their precise motives in using them. Factors such as mass and dispersion of participants, the adversary's

capacity for repression, control of resources by actors, loci of power, and the like ought in principle to be definable, measurable, and to correlate in identifiable ways. Of course, theory in its current state quite likely would not provide a very precise guide to formulating questions or to predicting findings. The great likelihood is that the theory will undergo substantial modification, but this points up even more tellingly the necessary relation between theory building and the research process.

New research questions
The burden of the relationship between theory and research in studies of nonviolent action must shift from theory that only responds to the findings of researchers to theory that suggests research questions. Research questions will need to meet several requirements if they are to contribute to the development and testing of theory.

First, an adequate research question in the field ought to focus on variables that are significant in the literature on nonviolent action, rather than some other theory. It goes without saying that conflict studies in general, work by political scientists on the correlates of disruptive political activity, or by sociologists on collective action and resource mobilization must be understood by those who contribute to studies of nonviolent action. Making a contribution to debates in those fields, however, often implies working with a different set of factors than those nonviolent action studies focus on. While no radical separation is necessary, it should be clear that these disparate literatures find differing issues to be important.

Second, an important research question states and tests a relationship among significant variables within the context of struggle. For example, the theory of nonviolent action suggests that the use of nonviolent means is a "choice" that is stimulated in part by opportunities in the structure of the conflict. In other words, nonviolent action is an affirmative choice of methods, tactics, or strategy deemed appropriate to the objective. In this sense, the theory predicts that, in the majority of cases, self-restraint or refraining from violence as a central motive will be a secondary factor in the "choice" of nonviolent action. Implicitly, propositions such as this one can be tested. If properly formulated, research should be able to identify the relationship between the selection of means and objectives, assuming that the data exist. This idea that choice relative to objectives is the principle of

selection in most cases may indeed be false and in need of modification or ultimately rejected.

Third, a research question formulated at one level of generalization should aid in the forming of questions at another, preferably more general, level. McCarthy (1983b), for example, compares certain dynamics of extended nonviolent challenges and offers propositions about how protracted challenges result in the development of institutions of struggle. Fourth and last, a set of challenging research questions can encourage researchers to tap data sources not previously made useful to this field in an explicit and informed fashion. As suggested previously, methodological and research competence has not been a primary feature of intellectual training in this field. Training nonviolent action researchers to do the job of research well also ought to lead toward broadening the range of data sources that they are prepared to handle, from public records in many languages, to social surveys, to more sophisticated approaches to data collection and analysis.

Abandoning unproductive research areas
Because asking new research questions is vital if nonviolent action studies are going to grow, it is necessary to rethink the relationship between today's work and its historical roots. In brief, we know today about nonviolent struggle largely because Thoreau, Tolstoy, Gandhi, and others made it an intellectual as well as a political issue. Yet clearly each worked in a setting where political commitment, ethics and values, and effective political practice (for Gandhi, anyway) were equally compelling problems.

Since we know that values, commitment, and effective practice are contingent and variable aspects of actual struggle, it is important to distinguish the falsifiable propositions in writings on ethics and practice from the ethical views themselves. For example, a recent anthology contains selections on nonviolence and nonviolent action under the title "Nonviolence in Theory and Practice" (Holmes 1990). The editor implies that the views of Thoreau, Tolstoy, Gandhi, and others are the "theory" of which episodes of nonviolent action are the "practice." In the first place, as discussed at the beginning of this essay, this position cannot be presumed but must be presented as a statement open to support or contradiction by evidence. Secondly, what *part* of these views is the theory? In Thoreau's famous essay on

resistance to civil government (1973 [1848]), for example, is the "theory" his view on political obligation or his ideas on the friction created by an uncooperative minority? Thoreau makes both ethical-philosophical and practical claims, but only the latter can be held up to the light of evidence.

Reconsidering the history of nonviolent action also suggests change in the method of choosing cases to study. A recurring idea in the literature on nonviolent action is that certain cases are important, either because of the actors involved, because they are well-known, or because they represent a famous victory. Consequently, many publications include exemplary case sketches, but ones that lack enough detail to be instructive. Case studies are often presented to prove that nonviolent action is "possible," especially in a repressive regime, or to show the courage or commitment of the protestors. It would be wrong to say that these reasons are foolish or that they have served no purpose in education about nonviolent action, but the repetition has itself become a problem. As Ceadel (1980) points out in studying the work of Richard Gregg, the cumulative impression can undercut the claim that nonviolent action is a significant, worldwide phenomenon by making it appear that only very few, rather than many, cases exist. Thus this method has served its purpose and needs to be replaced by more nuanced and sophisticated case reports. We advocate that descriptive case studies should be placed second in importance to theory development. In this, case studies will contribute centrally to testing hypotheses, compelling researchers to clarify their concepts, and giving evidence of the nature of previously unclear factors.

Research and Accumulation of Knowledge

We now turn to aspects of research that can contribute to a cumulative effect. The first is systematically emphasizing theory-driven research, while the second is the introduction of an explicitly comparative approach. Of course it is possible to do good work without referring to any theory, let alone the technique-approach theory discussed here. Likewise, many are genuinely more interested in phenomena of which nonviolent action is only a part, such as particular historical examples or current struggles, general process in conflict, the collapse of empires, democratization, civil society, ethnic and racial conflict, or

the like. The question is, how can communication among scholars and the weighing of contributions be accomplished without an effort to build an accessible body of theory? The basic categories of knowledge about nonviolent action are fairly well agreed upon, even though emphasis varies from person to person. Questions of why nonviolent action happens, how it operates, and what factors lead to which outcomes are basic to all approaches. Consequently, there does not need to be resistance to speaking a common theoretical language to explore these questions, nor to the view that generating and testing falsifiable propositions are at the heart of the research enterprise.[4] Institutionalization of theory-driven research means an agreement to join an interactive community of scholars willing to test one another's views and to achieve a common body of findings and ideas.

Institutionalizing a comparative approach has a slightly different focus. As discussed above, case studies have contributed much to the growth of this field, despite their limitations. Case selection often seems to have been prompted by finding that the methods of nonviolent action have been used with some intensity and effect in a historical example, which indeed fits the first criterion of the technique approach. The research process, however, has resulted in the accumulation of facts (rather than their interpretation) and on the unique features of any particular case. Relatively few case studies have been undertaken with a sense of how the processes they reveal compare with other cases or test propositions derived from the theory.

A methodology of carefully structured comparative case studies can contribute significantly to development of a more adequately specified theory. The first task for researchers is to become more self-conscious about the theoretical assumptions they make in data collection and analysis. As we have argued, sufficient research exists on nonviolent action and related phenomena to generate testable hypotheses rooted either in traditional approaches to the field or in newer integrative efforts. Case selection, therefore, must be made carefully and from the viewpoint of maximizing theory-construction and testing.

Recalling the potential areas for research discussed above, an inquiry might identify several comparable cases of nonviolent action (comparable in terms of the stated goals of the actionists, the scope of participation, or some other variable) to examine structural conditions preceding those actions. Asking how different social, political, or

economic conditions related to similar outcomes might illuminate the dynamics of the emergence of nonviolent action. Similarly, a cross-cultural study of belief systems among nonviolent actionists could reveal key elements of individual motivations to participate. Any number of other investigations could be constructed, examining central problems related to an emergent theory of nonviolent action.

This kind of comparative approach could be used, for example, to study resistance to Nazism in Europe during World War II or the recent transitions from state socialism and Soviet domination in Eastern Europe. Nonviolent action, as the term is used here, was a key feature of resistance in both settings. In the Second World War, protests, strikes, and noncooperation reached from the Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway eastward as far as Bulgaria, and even within Germany itself (see Kershaw 1983; Semelin 1993; Stoltzfus 1993). Yet, evidently, the forms and level of repression, the objectives and outcomes, and the implications of these variations differ greatly from case to case. Some significant factors are quite evident, such as the unrelieved brutality with which Poles were treated, the sentence of death that hung over all Jews, and the limited but lethal violence that faced Norwegians. But how do these fit together with the causes, extent, conduct, and outcomes of the nonviolent resistance?

Similarly, important questions can be addressed to the challenges and transitions of the 1970s and 1980s in eastern Europe. Here the comparative enterprise is shaped by the range of similarities and differences in each nation's confrontation with local state socialism and with the USSR of the Brezhnev and post-Brezhnev eras. What role did the accumulation of experience in nonviolent struggle play in these cases? To what extent did the building of organizations that could survive repression contribute to the expansion and outcome of the nonviolent challenge? What accounts for the decision of the regimes in Europe to avoid the "Chinese solution" of mass repression, as had been employed earlier in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland? Is it enough simply to say that the threat of Soviet intervention shaped the outcomes of the earlier years, while the later absence of credible threat determined the fall of client states? If some of these questions could be answered comparatively, they would point toward theoretical relationships testable in cases where there are less manageable similarities and differences. Both of the settings just discussed compel researchers to ask the same question: to what extent is the

outcome of nonviolent struggle determined by the presence of a large, potentially aggressive, nondemocratic state and its range of tolerance in the field of play?

If broader questions about how nonviolent action operates are to be answered adequately, they must be answered under as varied a set of circumstances as possible. This is implicitly comparative. Moreover, comparative research must itself be related to the theoretical basis of the field. It must inform theory and be informed by theory. In short, as discussed in the previous section, research on cases needs to be framed in terms that make it useful to other students of nonviolent action. This will happen only if case studies are informed by a comparative and theoretical consensus on what issues are important.

Collecting data that speak to the *how* aspect of nonviolent action will contribute toward comparability and allow the researcher who undertakes a case study to contribute to building a field. A variety of models for analyzing and classifying the elements of a conflict may be helpful in this research (e.g., Tilly 1978; Kriesberg 1982). Here, we suggest the following scheme as organizing rules to guide the collection of *descriptive* data in a focused case study. First, a case study should include the *structural and contextual factors* which form the background of action (these may be treated as causal factors in other literatures). Population, social and economic stratification, racial and ethnic mix and the history of conflict or accommodation among groups, the economy and its performance (including relative performance for various sectors), location in the international system, regime type, and the like are clearly such factors. Certain not-so-evident factors are also of interest as structural and contextual factors, such as those conditions that are conducive to or limit the creation of solidarity and a common sensibility among the populations disposed to conflict. Some of these factors are specific to a given case, such as the often-noted role of the African-American church in the civil rights movement (Morris 1984). Other factors are more general, such as the discovery by social movements researchers that associational bonds are related to participation in collective action (McAdam 1988; Useem 1980).

Second, a case study should stress the conduct of nonviolent action itself and the factors that *motivate, inform,* and *maintain* it. The technique approach to nonviolent action is concerned with the question of *how* action is taken as much as *why* it is taken. Collecting

descriptive data on the *how* question begins with the sources of a group's knowledge of nonviolent action. This includes what they call it (which may well not be "nonviolent action"), what they believe it to consist of, and why. It also includes what can roughly be called the strategic consciousness, consisting of the action group's awareness of the conflict and what it is about, their sense of the adversary and its likely response, their orientation toward third parties, possible openings for the employment of nonviolent means, selection and employment of particular methods, and the sense (if there is one) of the process by which their own use of nonviolent action may bring about some or all of their objectives. Formal and informal organization, leadership, internal social control, efforts to keep discipline if relevant, and similar variables are also of significance.

The third set of variables are *factors describing the course of interaction* during conflict. Seen from the *how* point of view, the course of nonviolent collective action is a sequence of reciprocal efforts on the part of each party to modify the behavior of the other party while limiting the effects of the others' actions. A central task of descriptive case research on nonviolent action is to detail, insofar as possible, the actions taken by each side against the other and their effects on the opposing party. (See McAdam 1983 and Ackerman and Kruegler 1994.)

The sequence of tactical interactions is, of course, bounded and modified by factors that neither antagonist can readily control. These factors include structural aspects of the relationship between the parties, but also involve crises that occur within a campaign of action as a result of economic or political collapse, natural disasters such as earthquakes or floods, or collective action that goes seriously awry. For example, massacres are often crisis points in campaigns, as they were in Boston, Massachusetts in 1770, Amritsar, India in 1919, and Sharpeville, South Africa, in 1960. (See Datta 1969 and Fein 1977 on the Amritsar's Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre, and on the concept of crises in conflicts, McCarthy 1983a.) Crises are points at which challenging groups must respond and respond to some effect, or face dissolution and loss.

The fourth set of factors needed to establish a comparative basis for work on nonviolent action are *outcome measures*. These break down into two types: description of the actual outcomes of struggle and assessment of the reasons why these outcomes occurred. Both of these

are notoriously difficult tasks and are fraught with much greater problems of analysis than any of the points already discussed. In the matter of actual outcomes, it has been traditional to assess the results either as "success" or as "failure." From the viewpoint of comparative research, this is vague and does not exhaust the possibilities. As a practical matter, action groups regularly fail to achieve precisely what they set out to achieve (if indeed they know exactly what that is), but is this evidence of "failure?" Likewise, in many cases, the relative effects of a given campaign cannot be fully assessed until some years have passed.

Some researchers suggest that actors have the single privileged viewpoint from which to answer this question, but even this requires a nuanced method of reconstructing what the actors' positions are. Groups may evaluate outcomes on different scales, involving the accomplishment of concrete goals and changes or the experience of participating in rewarding, emotionally significant activities and relationships. These somewhat divergent senses of the term "successful" may both be among the actors' objectives. Even in a losing cause there may be "compensatory values" (Hiller 1928:212) that make the struggle successful as an experience. Sometimes this distinction is phrased as a contrast between instrumental and consummatory behavior; between action taken for a goal and that taken for the emotional experiences it brings. This distinction itself may fail to recognize the importance of social relationships formed during action as a source of objective change, as research on the life course of activists (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988) suggests.

It is for these reasons that we advocate an approach that describes and assesses outcomes rather than attributing success or failure as such. Gamson (1990) measured outcomes only at the end of a "challenge," as he called it. The wisdom of this course for researchers on nonviolent action is shown by the variety of judgments on the "failure" of Solidarity published between the declaration of martial law and the movement's reemergence. Just as an adequate description of the course of action would attempt to develop measures of, for example, the cost of a given action/counteraction for the group it was aimed at, objective measures of outcomes are also necessary. One example might be measures of inclusion in the polity (Tilly 1978, Gamson 1990) such as receiving voting rights, holding office, constitutional and legal modifications, or perhaps changes in economic

position as defined by labor contracts, wage scales, or other economic rights. Grosser measures of relative success or failure as judged by the achievement of stated goals may be necessary in quantitative analysis where higher levels of aggregation are needed, which should be possible to derive from a well-grounded and sensitive description. (See also Pagnucco, Smith, and Crist 1992:30-33.)

Theory Development and Field Building

In writing of the "field" of nonviolent action, we refer to something that exists in its potential, but not in reality. Nowhere is this more noticeable than in the absence of a sustained effort to create a community of researchers who take inspiration from the technique approach. Studies of progress in research and theory development point to the importance of invisible colleges, groups of researchers who work apart from each other, but who share an understanding of the problems that need to be solved and the working assumptions that help solve them. The absence of this important condition for the advancement of knowledge must be sobering to students of nonviolent action. Good research and good theory *can* be done and are done in this field of study, but they do not accumulate, do not challenge misconceptions, and do not grow as they can and should. Thus, while one task of this essay is to encourage the building of theory and research, another is to call for the creation of an effective and self-sustaining research field that attracts and supports good workers. Neither of these will be accomplished without a clear exposition of the logic and necessity of intellectual work in this area.

What are the next steps in developing a theory that can guide research in the field of nonviolent action? Developing an explicit theoretical model of the technique approach first requires an uncompromising and thorough criticism of the ideas that now exist. Rule (1988:230-38) suggests how factors need to "connect" in an explanatory theory. A "model of theory and explanation" in social research, he argues, must first "identify connections linking empirically falsifiable properties of social data." These "empirical connections" form the "bases for explanation." The task of a theoretical model of nonviolent action is: (1) to propose connections between ideas about nonviolent action and things that researchers can observe and (2) to do

this in such a way that the ideas tell us in advance how to recognize the observables when we see them. Theory is not a secondary or residual category of thought that can be easily dispensed with because it is theory that tells the researcher what to look for.

A theoretical critique of the technique approach to nonviolent action would begin with a careful reading of the works containing the essential features of this model. Its aim would be to reveal the assumptions, beliefs, propositions, hypotheses, and proposed generalizations contained in these views. This review and criticism would carefully specify the assumptions shared by all or most researchers in the field and distinguish them from assumptions held by certain researchers but not others. The (undoubtedly many) logical failings and gaps in the model would need to be drawn out. This would allow researchers to examine the core assumptions to see if they are relatively parsimonious. It would also help to avoid redundancy and inconsistency, unnecessary assumptions, research questions masquerading as assumptions, and assumptions about other phenomena improperly included in the nonviolent action inventory.

Accomplishing this task would make it possible to move toward stating a theoretical model that would explicate the central assumptions necessary for the explanation of nonviolent action and state the central concepts unique to this field in a logically adequate and precise way.

Our final, and perhaps most pressing, recommendation in this essay is for a serious effort to inventory the propositions stated in the theory of nonviolent action, subject them to criticism, and restate the theory in a fully specified form that can support coming decades of research on this important aspect of group conflict.

CONCLUSION

Twenty years have passed since Gene Sharp published *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. This work inspired the beginnings of a complete reevaluation of what nonviolent action is all about. From the assumption that it was the application of philosophical nonviolence in the political realm, researchers have moved far towards considering it a steady and significant feature of much human action that involved protest, sanctions, and pressure. But the "field" of work implied by

these observations remains more potential than actual.

We believe that researchers on nonviolent action can and will make it clear that their perspective must be addressed when research on human conflicts is done. There is an enormous amount to be done and twenty more years should not pass until it is accomplished.

The task of criticizing the theory as it now stands and creating a renewed, fully specified, and research-oriented explanatory theory of nonviolent action is a pressing need and it is one that can be accomplished. We call on researchers that wish to contribute to this effort to join together and carry this out. They must speak with one another face to face, argue their differences, and identify points of consensus. They must be prepared for the likelihood that cherished beliefs may not bear scrutiny, but they must also have hope that their shared work can establish nonviolent action as a field of knowledge of essential importance for understanding human societies in conflict.

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NOTES

1. Case mentions in the introduction that he had begun *Non-Violent Coercion* before the First World War as a dissertation on "the social psychology of passive resistance," meaning that he was not aware of Gandhi until after the war.

2. Conser et al. (1986), for example, was inspired by Sharp's observation (1973:4) that "to an extent that has on the whole been ignored," the early stages of the American independence movement used "nonviolent resistance" and also by the many examples he uses from this movement to illustrate nonviolent methods. The research question suggested by this was whether the examples revealed a significant *pattern* of nonviolent struggle.

3. See Zielonka 1989: 116, note 53, for comments about what researchers ought to understand about nonviolent action as revealed by his work on the case of Polish Solidarity.

4. Disagreement will continue, of course, where thinkers place a committed view of nonviolence at the heart of the enterprise.