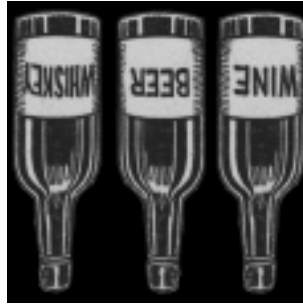


ANN-MARIE E. SZYMANSKI



## PATHWAYS TO PROHIBITION

Radicals, Moderates, and

Social Movement Outcomes



## Pathways to Prohibition



# **Pathways to Prohibition**

Radicals, Moderates, and Social Movement Outcomes

Ann-Marie E. Szymanski

Duke University Press   Durham and London 2003

© 2003 Duke University Press

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞

Typeset in Quadraat by Tseng Information Systems, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data appear  
on the last printed page of this book.

To Loren, with all my love



## Contents

List of Figures ix

List of Tables xi

Acknowledgments xiii

- 1 Political Strategy and Social Movement Outcomes 1
- 2 Churches, Lodges, and Dry Organizing 23
- 3 Modular Collective Action in a Federalist System 65
- 4 Legislative Supremacy and the Definition of Movement Goals 89
- 5 Political Alignments, Party Systems, and Prohibition 122
- 6 The Dynamics of Local Gradualism in the States 153
- 7 Turning Moderates into Radicals 182
- 8 Local Gradualism and American Social Movements 198

Notes 219

Selected Bibliography 301

Index 317





## List of Figures

- 1** Use of All Forms of Referendum by the Prohibition Movement to Achieve Statewide Prohibition, 1880–1920 13
- 2** Development of the National Temperance Movement, 1815–1905 28
- 3** Number of Adherents, National Temperance Organizations, 1860–1920 40
- 4** Total Number of Temperance-Related Petitions, by Session of the Tennessee Legislature, 1837–1857 80
- 5** Use of Different Forms of Direct Legislation by the Prohibition Movement during the 1880s and the Progressive Era 151
- 6** Prohibition Movement's Success in Using Different Forms of Referendum during the 1880s and the Progressive Era 152
- 7** Pattern of Membership Growth, Ohio WCTU, 1875–1920 163
- 8** Patterns of Membership Growth in the Illinois WCTU and Pennsylvania WCTU, 1880–1920 165
- 9** Pattern of Membership Growth, Michigan WCTU, as Compared to Frequency of County Option Elections, 1875–1920 175
- 10** Pattern of Membership Growth, Michigan WCTU, as Compared to Pattern of County Option Victories, 1875–1920 176



## List of Tables

- 1** Estimated Voter Turnout in Referenda Sponsored by the Prohibition Movement to Achieve State Prohibition during the 1880s and the Progressive Era 15
- 2** Tactics of the Anti-Liquor Movement 66
- 3** Goals of the Anti-Liquor Movement 92
- 4** General Liquor Laws Enacted in the South during the Postbellum Period 114
- 5** Major State Liquor Laws Enacted in the North during the Postbellum Period 116
- 6** Partisan Control of Government in States and Territories Adopting Prohibition Laws, 1851–1855 128
- 7** Contours of State Party System in the South: Gubernatorial Vote, 1848–1856 130
- 8** Partisan and Nonpartisan Support for Prohibition, 1869–1896 135
- 9** Partisan Control of State Government in the States Holding Prohibition Referenda, 1880–1890 138
- 10** Electoral Competitiveness and Prohibition Party Strength in States Holding Dry Referenda, 1880–1890 139

- 11** Electoral Competitiveness in States Holding Dry Referenda during the 1880s and the Progressive Era 141
- 12** Percentage of Party Electorates Supporting Prohibition Referenda during the 1880s and the Progressive Era 142
- 13** Partisan Control of State Governments during the Prohibition Movement's Greatest Legislative Victories, 1900–1920 144
- 14** Factionalism and Enactment of the Prohibition Movement's Most Significant Legislation, 1900–1912 147
- 15** Use of the Initiative and Referendum by the Prohibition Movement to Achieve Statewide Prohibition, 1898–1919 150
- 16** Patterns of WCTU Membership Growth in Pennsylvania and Illinois 166
- 17** Barriers to Dry Mobilization during the Progressive Era in Pennsylvania and Illinois 167
- 18** Barriers to Dry Mobilization during the Progressive Era in Michigan and the United States 170
- 19** Patterns of Membership Growth in the Michigan WCTU during the 1880s and the Progressive Era 178

## Acknowledgments

I am indebted to a number of people who assisted in the completion of this book. As a graduate student in Cornell University's Department of Government, it was my good fortune to work under the direction of Elizabeth Sanders, Sidney Tarrow, and Martin Shefter, each of whom played a significant role in this undertaking. It was Marty Shefter's seminar on political change in the United States that first introduced me to the temperance movement and, more generally, to the study of American political development. Meanwhile, Sid Tarrow's seminar on comparative social movements inspired me to apply a different theoretical approach to my work, and I also benefited greatly from his sage advice about research methods, the process of writing, and the academic profession. Finally, Elizabeth became the chair of my dissertation committee at a crucial stage in my career as a doctoral student. She challenged me to meet her high standards, and her patience, criticism, and support were invaluable to me particularly toward the end of this process.

Other scholars who made useful suggestions include: Richard Bense, Peter Katzenstein, Mary Katzenstein, E. W. Kelley, Jeremy Rabkin, Elisabeth Clemens, Don Maletz, and Loren Gatch. I am grateful to them for taking the time to offer me advice, and to all the Cornell graduate students who participated in the informal dissertation colloquium established by Peter Katzenstein. I learned much from my fellow students, including that my initial research design was too unwieldy.

I also acknowledge my gratitude to my colleagues at the University of Oklahoma and especially to Ron Peters, who permitted me to escape some departmental duties that might have interfered with the completion of this book. Another colleague, Jim Douglas, graciously lent me his scanner at a key moment in the book's completion.

Part of this work was supported by two Arts and Sciences Junior Faculty Re-

search grants and by the Jonathan R. Meigs Fellowship, which defrayed the costs of traveling to various archives. Moreover, I benefited from a year-long Mellon Fellowship, which gave me the freedom to write as a graduate student.

Finally, I must express my appreciation to my family for their support and loyalty throughout the duration of this project. My parents, Richard and Edna Szymanski, have provided everything from free babysitting to travel money during these years, and my sisters-in-law, Alice Fox, Cathy Gatch, Dorothy Gatch, and June Zaragoza, opened their homes to me during some of my research trips. Suffice it to say that I could not have completed this book without their help.

Meanwhile, I thank Rosemary Gatch for her patience. She has been a remarkably good-natured child, and has adjusted well to having a perpetually stressed-out mother. Oliver and John Gatch arrived as I was completing this project, and have proved much of the conventional wisdom about twins to be wrong. Finally, my husband, Loren Gatch, sustained me through the darkest days of this book, when it seemed as though nothing was coming together. He read every chapter, helped me with my teaching, and assumed all of the household responsibilities when necessary. I will be eternally grateful for his love and understanding.

## Pathways to Prohibition





## 1 Political Strategy and Social Movement Outcomes

### Radicals and Moderates

For radical social movement activists, moderation is usually not a virtue. For example, the radical environmentalist David Brower has said that his moderate colleagues “don’t seem to learn . . . that whenever they compromise they lose.” Moreover, moderates are suspect because their pragmatism seems incapable of challenging the broader political, economic, and social relations that constitute the status quo. The radical pacifist Daniel Berrigan once accused moderate antiwar activists of being “obsessed by the necessity of delivering results.” Instead of worrying about “efficiency,” Berrigan argued, the movement had to realize that “the spiritual dismantling of the American empire is going to consume at least our lifetime, and perhaps the lifetime of the next generation.” Finally, many radicals question whether modest reform efforts are worthwhile if the public has yet to adopt the “correct” beliefs. In 1840, for instance, a radical abolitionist issued this warning to his moderate counterparts: “All attempts to abolish slavery by legislation before the people of the country are converted to anti-slavery principles must of necessity be unsuccessful.”<sup>1</sup> But is moderation really so lethal to a social movement?

Like other social movements, America’s anti-liquor crusade divided along ideological lines after 1875. On one side stood the radicals, who favored state and national prohibition, particularly if these policies were incorporated into state and national constitutions. On the other side were the moderates, who believed that the movement should initially focus on restricting local liquor retailing, and only later seek prohibition on a broader scale. Both sides believed that theirs was the best approach to the liquor question, and both sought to mobilize citizens who shared their visions.

For the radicals, only the state and national governments had the power to crush

the liquor traffic. "Penalties sufficient to destroy the traffic will never be made," wrote one orthodox dry, until these governments brand it "an outlaw and enemy." Furthermore, radicals preferred constitutional prohibition to mere laws, as it created "an established standard of right principles exerting its instructive influence upon public sentiment—a beacon of essential truth illuminating and guiding public thought." Conversely, they frowned on agitation for prohibition in one's neighborhood, town, or county, for "it was wrong for the state to surrender its sovereignty, evade its duty and divest itself of responsibility on a matter vitally affecting the welfare of the state by shifting the decision to localities, a procedure making it practically certain that some localities would vote to perpetuate plague centers."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the radicals often dismissed local prohibition as no better than Stephen Douglas's "squatter sovereignty."<sup>3</sup>

Though acknowledging that many did not share their views, the orthodox dries were nevertheless confident that they could command public support for prohibition. All it took was for courageous men and women to unapologetically rally round this policy and to persuade the public of its value. As F. A. Noble put it,

When there is a vigorous public sentiment on any question of morals, it is because somebody has taken an advanced position, and educated and drawn the people up to it. If all who think and even say [prohibition] would be a good thing . . . would only say it without any 'ifs,' and 'ands,' and 'buts,' . . . public sentiment on this liquor business would swell and press on like an incoming tide, and in a little while there would be laws looking to the suppression of this evil which would have in them the force of the right hand of God.<sup>4</sup>

During the 1880s the radicals had good reason to believe that prohibition measures would soon be embodied in state constitutions. By swamping the state legislatures with petitions, and by carefully navigating the quagmires of the amendment process and the party system, the dries forced referenda in eighteen states on whether to include prohibition in their constitutions.<sup>5</sup> In one state, North Carolina, the prohibitionists failed to frame prohibition as a constitutional issue but nonetheless compelled the legislature to hold a referendum on a state prohibition law.

Unfortunately, these referenda only revealed the lack of grassroots support for statewide prohibition. Between 1882 and 1890 voters in twelve states rejected prohibition outright; in four other states, constitutional prohibition won but fleeting victories.<sup>6</sup> As of 1900, Kansas, Maine, and North Dakota alone retained constitutional prohibition, and only New Hampshire and Vermont maintained statutory prohibition.<sup>7</sup> At the national level, prohibitionists were hardly more successful. During the winter of 1889–90, Senator Henry W. Blair (R-N.H.) and Representative John A. Pickler (R-S.D.) introduced resolutions in their respective houses that called for sub-

mitting a prohibition amendment to the states for ratification. Although reported favorably by Blair's committee (the Committee on Education and Labor), the resolution was otherwise ignored by party leaders in both houses.<sup>8</sup> By 1890 the crusade for state and national prohibition was at a virtual standstill.

While the Prohibition party, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the Independent Order of Good Templars (IOGT), and other radicals united to support state and national prohibition during the 1880s, moderate anti-liquor activists became convinced that these groups had lost touch with the gritty reality of local liquor control. As L. Edwin Dudley recalled, "In one temperance society to which I belonged I asked the question one evening of the presiding officer: 'Will you tell me, sir, what is the law of Massachusetts relating to the liquor-traffic?' and I was answered: 'I don't know and I don't care; it is not prohibition and that is all I want to know about it.'"<sup>9</sup>

To Dudley, the radicals' indifference to the practical aspects of liquor control was disturbing. In pursuing nothing less than state prohibition, orthodox temperance groups offered no assistance to those who suffered daily from the saloon's illegal activities. Such prohibition may have been a noble goal, but Dudley worried about the "poor, ragged little fellows" who were enticed into Boston's saloons to drink, gamble, and mingle "with crowds of dissolute and drunken men and women, and all this in violation of the law of the state."<sup>10</sup> Recalling the North's mobilization for the Civil War, he concluded that the campaign against liquor would never enlist a majority of Americans without a more pragmatic battle plan:

I remembered that at the beginning of the War of the Rebellion volunteers were called upon to enlist for the suppression of the Rebellion and the maintenance of the government of the United States. I remembered, also, . . . that if the call had been at the beginning for volunteers to go to the South to fight for the abolition of slavery, not one in ten of those who went would have been at all likely to enlist, and yet I remembered that the educating influence of the conflict carried these men . . . on, step by step, until . . . they were all abolitionists. It seemed to me that in temperance work there should be a place for the moderate as well as for the extreme man.<sup>11</sup>

In 1882 Dudley established the Massachusetts Law and Order League, a group devoted to enforcing extant liquor laws at the local level. Although short-lived, the Law and Order League would bequeath its law enforcement methods and, more significantly, its focus on securing modest, local goals to the Anti-Saloon League (ASL).

Like Dudley, the ASL's leaders believed that "reforms are not revolutions; they are evolutions." In their view, "every law on the statute books which tends to suppress or repress the liquor traffic is a weapon in the hands of the forces of reform,

which, if used will hasten the day of permanent victory.”<sup>12</sup> In short, the ASL had grasped an essential property of collective action: its potential to radicalize the moderate adherent of a social movement, even when the goals of such action seem limited. Instead of expecting its recruits to adopt the “correct” beliefs about prohibition before participating in the movement, the Anti-Saloon League first sought to engage Americans in local prohibition skirmishes which barely dented the profits of the liquor industry, but which socialized them into the militancy of the broader movement.

The capacity of movement participation to radicalize adherents has often been noted by social scientists. For example, Doug McAdam found that Freedom Summer activists eventually shifted to the left ideologically, while others who had applied to take part in the project but ultimately did not maintained moderate political views.<sup>13</sup> Unlike the Freedom Summer participants, however, the reformers who traveled the path from “damp” to “bone dry” were generally not involved in high-risk behavior which threatened their lives.<sup>14</sup> Rather, dry radicalism was forged when individuals confronted the intransigence of the liquor interests, which refused to accept even the most modest restraints on the saloon. Hence, the Anti-Saloon League deliberately instigated local prohibition conflicts, and advocated state laws which authorized local prohibition referenda—commonly known as “local option” laws. Such laws brought nascent dries face to face with the obstinate saloon, and unleashed the democratic potential of the decentralized American state. As one League leader described it:

[Local option] is a law that enables a community opposed to saloons to keep them out, even though other places in the state may allow them to exist. . . . Its essential element is the rule of popular government. There can be no principle of legislation more American, or more democratic. To refuse the right of the people to determine such a question for themselves by communities, and thus permit saloons to be forced upon neighborhoods . . . against the popular will . . . is to proclaim an autocracy of rum that is thoroughly at variance with our American usages.<sup>15</sup>

League strategy was not only locally based but also gradual in character. By attaining partial but positive victories in the legislative, electoral, and judicial arenas and then building on those victories, the ASL drew its adherents into an escalating conflict which eventually scaled the walls of American federalism. Engaged in an ever-widening battle that lasted twenty years (from about 1900 to 1920), a proponent of municipal prohibition could become an advocate of county prohibition, then an advocate of statewide prohibition, and finally an advocate of national constitutional prohibition. By 1919 the ASL and its allies had amassed an enormous dry

army which obtained statewide prohibition in thirty states and sustained it in three more (Maine, Kansas, and North Dakota).<sup>16</sup> In short, the league's crowning achievement—the Eighteenth Amendment—cannot be understood without appreciating the ASL's extraordinary capacity to involve moderates in temperance agitation and then keep them in a state of perpetual motion.

The prohibitionists of the 1880s gained limited success, while their Progressive Era counterparts achieved a remarkable—albeit temporary—accomplishment in American politics: the passage of an amendment to the U.S. constitution. How can such divergent outcomes be explained?

This book argues that choice of strategy—or how a social movement defines and pursues its goals—is important in determining whether the movement will succeed. Of course, the political system must be somewhat vulnerable to the challenge posed by a social movement for it to have a chance of winning concessions. Indeed, unstable political alignments would prove vital to both the prohibition movement's limited success in the 1880s and its ultimate triumph in the early twentieth century. Once movements have gained some access to the policymaking process, however, their fate cannot be explained solely in terms of their access. In other words, political opportunities were necessary for dry success in both the 1880s and the Progressive Era, but they do not sufficiently account for why outcomes differed across these two periods.

Instead, these divergent outcomes reflected the shift in the movement's strategy from promoting state constitutional amendments to advocating “local gradualism,” the strategy which produced greater success in the Progressive Era. Local gradualism is “local” in that it initially focuses on local issues before targeting the state and national levels of government. It is “gradualist” in that it emphasizes achieving moderate goals before pursuing more radical goals. In the prohibition crusade these two aspects of strategy produced both a potent grassroots component and the capacity to transcend the limited scope of local politics. Well-suited to the porous, federal structure of the American state, local gradualism has been effectively used by other social movements in the United States, including the civil rights movement and the Christian Right.

Finally, this research suggests that a social movement's choice of strategy reflects both changes in state structure and new ideas about the appropriate distribution of political power. While novel institutional arrangements may channel a movement's energies in unprecedented directions, such innovations are often the byproduct of evolving ideas about the distribution of political authority. In the case of the prohibition movement, it adopted local gradualism partly in response to recent modifications of the political system, namely the devolution of the state legislatures'

liquor licensing power to the localities, and the judiciary's growing acceptance of these licensing regimes. Moreover, these developments reflected a collective belief that the people, rather than the state legislatures, were best situated to resolve controversial issues affecting their localities—a view which gave many judges a coherent rationale for upholding local option laws and other types of local referenda. Meanwhile, whereas the moderates heartily embraced critiques of legislatures prevalent during the Gilded Age and adopted a strategy to exploit devolution, the radicals were more ambivalent about the emasculation of state legislatures and hence, its strategic implications. In short, social movements may only capitalize on new statutes, bureaucratic configurations, or judicial decisions if their leaders share the philosophy which animates them.

### **Explaining Outcomes: Internal Dynamics versus External Environment**

According to social movement theorists, a social movement's outcome may reflect its internal dynamics and resources, its external political environment, or both. Analysts who have peered into the internal machinery of social movements link a movement's chances of success with its capacity to construct viable organizations, raise money, exploit the expertise of professional activists, recruit from existing groups, devise an effective repertoire of collective action for confronting political élites, pursue narrow goals, and articulate an ideology with widespread appeal. In contrast, social scientists who have concentrated on external factors claim that the success of social movements stems from opportunities created by political crises and unstable political alignments, and from the process by which state structures channel mobilization.

Before examining these two approaches, I should note that scholars have long disputed the definition of success and how to classify movement outcomes. Among other things, "success" may refer to a movement's attainment of tangible benefits that meet its goals, its formal acceptance by political élites, the legitimization of its goals, and the transformation of individual or group consciousness.<sup>17</sup> In this study, "success" will be defined instrumentally because that is how the drys themselves measured success. In other words, the prohibitionists succeeded when their participation in collective action produced tangible benefits that met their goals.<sup>18</sup> Of course, segments of the prohibition movement—such as the dry fraternal orders—also focused on consciousness raising and the transformation of social attitudes about drinking. However, as chapter 2 shows, the temperance fraternities declined in strength during the late 1800s, and by the Progressive Era played a lesser role in the movement than groups which sought to influence political institutions.<sup>19</sup>

## Success and the Internal Dynamics of Social Movements

In the early 1970s sociologists turned to organizations as the appropriate focus of social movement research, and articulated what came to be known as resource mobilization theory. Some proponents of this theoretical framework claim that successful social movement organizations tend to possess a formalized structure with a clear division of labor, which increases combat readiness by reducing internal conflicts.<sup>20</sup> Other resource mobilization theorists link a group's capacity to mobilize support with its command of financial resources,<sup>21</sup> access to a pool of movement professionals,<sup>22</sup> and ability to recruit from existing solidarity groups.<sup>23</sup> Such assets, they argue, help the challenging group overcome the costs of collective action and sustain its mobilization efforts.

While these insights contribute to our understanding of social movements, they seem more concerned with illustrating the dynamics of mobilization than with accounting for movement success as defined above. Indeed, adherents of these views have been accused of equating movement success with the ability of particular social movement organizations to mobilize people.<sup>24</sup> For the most part, I second this criticism,<sup>25</sup> and would add that while resource mobilization theory may describe what an established social movement organization looks like, it cannot explain why some organizations are successful in their campaigns for policy change and others are not.

For example, the Anti-Saloon League fits the classical resource mobilization model quite well. First, the ASL's upper echelons exhibited both hierarchical organization and professional staff. In addition, the organization drew upon the vast financial and organizational resources of the evangelical Protestant churches, which promoted the league's highly productive fundraising and recruitment efforts.<sup>26</sup> However, the Anti-Saloon League only perfected this form after years of struggle, and did not differ markedly from other temperance organizations in terms of structure and resource base.<sup>27</sup> Almost every dry group sought to create a bureaucratic organization; several groups were staffed by career activists and could afford to hire movement organizers; and many organizations attempted to harness the Protestant churches' resources.<sup>28</sup> With these resources, anti-liquor organizations often mobilized hundreds of thousands of followers, and yet only the ASL led an effective charge for prohibition.<sup>29</sup> In short, if the league was not unique in its organizational structure or resource base, then one must look beyond resource mobilization theory to explain why this organization was more successful than its competitors.

While resource mobilization theorists stress the role of organizational resources, other scholars have sought to gauge the impact of violence, disruptive protest, and other forms of collective action on the success of social movements. Ac-



cording to some analysts, movement leaders may decide their movement's fate when they select their protest forms. For example, Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward argue that poor people's movements advance solely through disruptive protest and that constructing permanent movement organizations is inherently counterproductive.<sup>30</sup> In a similar fashion, Lee Ann Banaszak has discovered that the aggressive use of organizational, lobbying, and confrontational tactics were associated with early success by both the Swiss and American woman suffrage movements.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, other social scientists believe that movement success cannot be ascribed to a single protest form, and instead underscore the efficacy of "multiform movements," which maintain diversified repertoires of collective action. As Sidney Tarrow notes, multiform movements often "combine the demands and the participation of broad coalitions of actors in coalitional campaigns of collective action."<sup>32</sup>

In a way, these discussions of "collective action form" capture part of what I mean by "strategy." Indeed, some analysts distinguish between "confrontational" social movement strategies (which are contentious forms of collective action), and "assimilative" ones (which are more conventional).<sup>33</sup> However, if "strategy" means "a method for obtaining a specific goal," then these authors only emphasize how particular methods are chosen, rather than how goals are defined. This theoretical lapse may be crucial, for the leadership of a social movement would presumably determine its intermediate and long-term goals when making decisions about how to achieve them.

In any event, the prohibition movement used any number of collective action forms throughout its long history. As participants in a multiform movement, the drys employed petition campaigns, parades, mass meetings, electoral pressure, court actions, and occasionally even violence to destroy the saloons and their contents. While some movements succeed by being unruly, the prohibition movement, with the exception of the Women's Crusade,<sup>34</sup> usually preferred conventional protest forms to more contentious ones.<sup>35</sup> In addition, as chapter 3 maintains, there is no compelling evidence that the Progressive Era drys improved upon the means of collective action used by their nineteenth-century predecessors. Hence, the form of collective action had no significant impact on the prohibition movement's disparate outcomes in these two periods.

To reiterate, if "strategy" is defined as "a method for obtaining a specific goal," then social scientists have generally emphasized the "means" over the "ends" in discussing this concept. One exception to this imbalance is William Gamson, who asked whether challenging groups which pursue narrow goals are more likely to succeed than groups with broader aims.<sup>36</sup> In his study of fifty-three social movement organizations, Gamson measured the magnitude of movement goals on three fronts:

1. Did the group make single-issue or multiple-issue demands?
2. Did the group make radical demands or demands that did not attack the legitimacy of present distributions of wealth and power?
3. Did the group intend to influence *élites* or to replace *élites*?

He found that groups with single-issue demands were more successful than those having multiple-issue demands, and that groups which tried to displace an established member of the polity usually failed. Once Gamson controlled for the effect of *élite* displacement, his analysis of radicalism's impact revealed that the success rate of groups with radical demands and that of groups with moderate demands were virtually indistinguishable.<sup>37</sup>

At first glance, Gamson's conclusions suggest that the prohibition movement should have been equally likely to succeed in the 1880s and the Progressive Era. Both the campaigns for prohibition amendments and those for local option concentrated on one issue and did not attempt to displace political *élites*. Nonetheless, historians are correct in saying that the most prominent national dry organizations of the 1880s, namely the Prohibition party and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, both possessed broader and more radical agendas<sup>38</sup> than the Anti-Saloon League, which focused primarily on prohibition during the early twentieth century.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the former groups expended their scarce resources on various unrelated campaigns and slighted their efforts to pass state prohibition. In addition, Gamson might say that the Prohibition party was doomed to failure, given its goal of seizing the reins of government from the "corrupt" Republicans and Democrats.

One should not be too hasty, however, in accepting the conventional wisdom that the ASL succeeded because it adopted a single-issue position, in contrast to the earlier prohibitionists. For one thing, it must be noted that Gamson ultimately discovered no *independent* effect of multiple-issue demands on group outcomes, because virtually all the groups in his sample with multiple-issue demands also sought to replace political *élites*.<sup>40</sup> Second, most historical accounts of the nineteenth-century state referendum campaigns do not indicate that the dries linked their demand for statewide prohibition with other issues.<sup>41</sup> In fact, though local branches of the WCTU and Prohibition party participated in statewide campaigns, these campaigns were typically directed by local single-issue prohibition groups which were nonpartisan and unaffiliated with the national party and the national union.<sup>42</sup> Finally, single-issue dries attempted to organize two national groups in the mid-1880s (the nonpartisan National League for the Suppression of the Liquor Traffic, 1885, and the Anti-Saloon Republican Movement, 1886), but these efforts nonetheless failed to advance their cause.<sup>43</sup>

While rejecting the single-issue explanation for the prohibition movement's greater success after 1900, this book nevertheless emphasizes the significance of goal selection as an integral part of political strategy. To be sure, many social movement organizations (e.g., the WCTU and the General Federation of Women's Clubs) thrive as groups by embracing a wide range of causes.<sup>44</sup> However, as chapters 3, 4, and 8 suggest, social movements often flounder if their constituent groups fail to coalesce around shared goals when defining their political strategies. In the prohibition movement, which encompassed thousands of local groups and operated in a federal system, finding a unifying purpose was a prerequisite for the development of a national—rather than a parochial—political strategy. Furthermore, as the Anti-Saloon League demonstrated, there may be definite advantages to focusing on local issues rather than state and national ones.

Other scholars who focus on internal movement dynamics have examined how movement ideology influences social movement outcomes. In particular, Jane Mansbridge has outlined a particularly cogent model of how a group's expression of its ideology affects movement development. According to Mansbridge, movements organized on the basis of ideological incentives typically follow an "iron law of involution." As the very "dynamic that binds activists to the movement," movement ideology tends to be idealistic, radical, and exclusive, which in turn "works against the inclusive policy of accommodation and reform." In the end, the movement's own exclusivity isolates it from the rest of society, rendering it ineffectual.<sup>45</sup>

Over all, Mansbridge's model contributes more to an understanding of social movement failure than to an explanation for movement success. Since it was organized on the basis of nonmaterial incentives, the prohibition movement should have been subject to the iron law of involution, and there is some evidence to this effect. As this book shows, the leading prohibitionists of the 1880s were indeed more ideologically pure than their counterparts in the Progressive Era, and that purity helped ensure their defeat. Still, Mansbridge's framework cannot explain why the dries of the early twentieth century not only escaped the "iron law of involution" but also achieved extraordinary success. Her own discussion of ideology and the ERA movement indicates that a social movement may mount an effective mobilization effort which temporarily evades the iron law, but which nevertheless fails to accomplish its primary goal.<sup>46</sup>

Reversing Mansbridge's argument, Suzanne M. Marilley suggests that social movements are more likely to succeed when they construct inclusive ideological appeals that promote political alliances. In her account of America's woman suffrage movement, it was only when a new generation of pragmatic leaders forged a "feminism of personal development" after 1906 that the movement formed a winning coalition. This ideology downplayed the exclusive nativist and racist positions

of some suffragists, and instead built support for suffrage by promoting the vote as crucial to securing woman's full opportunities to pursue happiness. In the end, such feminism appealed to a variety of groups—from trade unionists to settlement workers—because each group believed that its own particular causes would be promoted by suffrage.<sup>47</sup>

This book reinforces Marilley's broader point about the advantages of inclusive movements. However, it specifically underscores the significance of moderation as a source of inclusivity. Indeed, as chapters 6 and 7 show, the moderate dries' willingness to lower the ideological barriers to movement participation meant that they could mobilize new adherents to the dry cause who might otherwise have remained uninvolved. In contrast, the radical prohibitionists energized a core group of supporters but failed to win over many potential dries. Still, moderation alone cannot explain why the Progressive Era dries were able to navigate their political environment so successfully. For that, one must look beyond the internal dynamics of social movements.

### **Success and the External Environment of Social Movements**

Advocates of the "political process" approach have criticized theorists who focus on internal movement dynamics for neglecting the political context of social movements. In general, these scholars contend that social movements can obtain "some measure of success when they are able to take advantage of the weakness of their opponents, in particular the state and political authorities."<sup>48</sup> If such weaknesses exist, the social movement is said to confront a favorable political opportunity structure, and the dimensions of its success will be shaped by the contours of that structure.

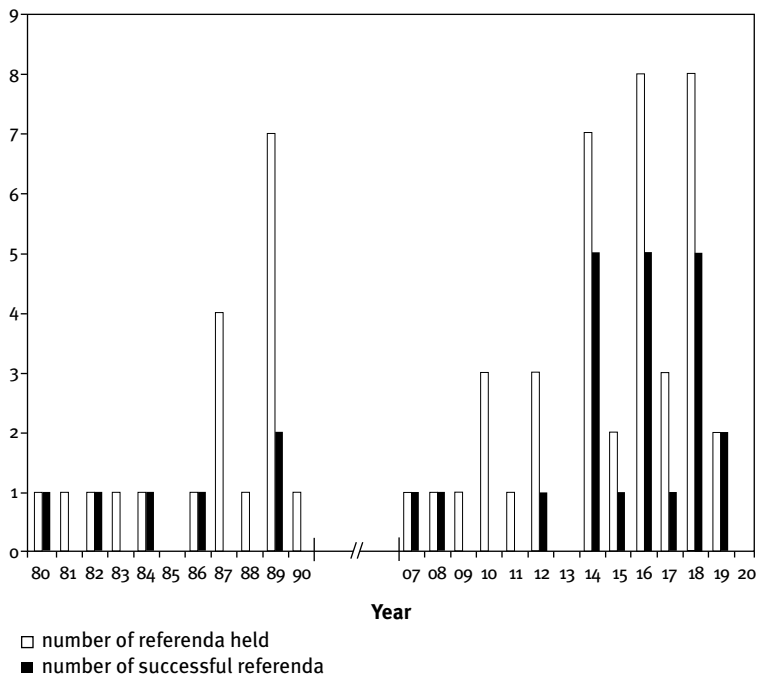
Political opportunities may reflect an enduring, dynamic process of social and political change, or they may be embedded in state institutions. For example, some analysts claim that movements profit from broad political crises, such as depressions, wars, and other periods when established interests are more likely to accommodate the claims of challenging groups.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, other social scientists argue that the instability of political alignments has contributed significantly to the success of many social movements. According to this view, a political party (faction or actor) operating in a closely contested electoral arena may be more willing to respond to the demands of a social movement if it will gain votes by doing so.<sup>50</sup> Alternatively, some proponents of this theoretical framework maintain that the institutional arrangements which characterize state structure determine a movement's ability to affect both public policy and its implementation. For instance, a social movement may face enormous obstacles in influencing the policy of a highly centralized state,

but still might not realize its goals in a less centralized state which lacks the capacities for implementation.<sup>51</sup>

Two versions of the political process approach have been used to explain the prohibition movement's success during the Progressive Era. First, historians have often suggested that America's entry into World War I in April 1917 significantly increased the support for prohibition among political élites, thus contributing to the claim that political crises shape movement outcomes.<sup>52</sup> To bolster this argument, they note that the wartime government strictly regulated liquor production for the purposes of food conservation and also disseminated anti-German propaganda, which undoubtedly weakened the political power of wet groups like the German-American Alliance. However, the timing of prohibition victories casts doubt on this argument. By 1917 twenty of the thirty states that would adopt state prohibition during the Progressive Era had already done so. In addition, though accelerated by the wartime atmosphere, the Eighteenth Amendment's ratification "was completed suddenly by the actions of twenty-one state legislatures during the month of January 1919, more than six weeks after the war's end."<sup>53</sup>

A second political process explanation has been proposed by J. Christopher Soper, who attributes prohibition's success in America to particular features of the American state. In his comparison of the British and American prohibition movements, he asserts that "the weakness of the American national state and the absence of a coherent alcohol policy opened up myriad opportunities for meaningful local activism," whereas "the relative strength of the British state meant that local regions had very little political autonomy which, in turn, discouraged local activism." State weakness would prove to be the key to the Americans' success, since dry access to the federal system "generated membership and interest in the ASL, which was situated to provide the expertise necessary to organize a successful campaign."<sup>54</sup> While Soper is correct to point to federalism as one cause of the American prohibitionists' success, his comparison cannot explain why federalism mattered more during the Progressive Era than it did during the 1880s. Indeed, he provides virtually no evidence to support the contention that American institutions abruptly became more conducive to local activism in the early twentieth century than in the late nineteenth.<sup>55</sup>

A third variant of the political process approach, which underscores the role of unstable political alignments, does help account for both the prohibition movement's limited success in the 1880s and its impressive triumph in the Progressive Era. However, political instability only creates an opportunity to succeed, not success itself. For this reason, my study of the prohibition movement will ultimately contend that the classic version of the political process model cannot explain why a movement sometimes succeeds in taking advantage of its opportunities, and why another movement might fail when presented with the same or similar opportunities.



**Figure 1** Use of All Forms of Referendum by the Prohibition Movement to Achieve Statewide Prohibition, 1880–1920. Source: Ernest H. Cherrington, *The Evolution of Prohibition in the United States of America* (Westerville, Ohio: American Issue Press, 1920).

As can be seen in figure 1,<sup>56</sup> unstable political alignments left political élites vulnerable to dry demands during the 1880s, and they thus furnished the prohibition movement with opportunities to advance their cause. In nineteen states, policy-makers granted the dries nineteen chances to use direct legislation<sup>57</sup> to further their cause at the state level; only six (or 31.6%) of these attempts succeeded.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, the Progressive Era dries also made use of statewide direct legislation to achieve their goals. Once these prohibitionists believed that local option had been fully exploited, they too sought to pass referenda at the state level. Between 1907 and 1919, the dries managed to use direct legislation in twenty-nine states, again owing to political instability.<sup>59</sup> Of the forty referenda that they proposed to establish statewide prohibition,<sup>60</sup> twenty-two (or 55%) would pass.

In general, the prohibitionists of the early twentieth century encountered a more favorable political environment than their predecessors did; specifically, a greater number of state governments were responsive to citizen demands for direct legislation during the Progressive Era than during the 1880s. However, it is also obvious that the dries of the later period managed to use direct legislation more effec-

tively. Thus, the classic version of the political process model must be supplemented by further explanation. One relatively unexplored variation of this model would look beyond the vulnerability of the movement's elite opponents and would consider the weakness of its antagonists as potential voters in the electoral system. Since the dries in both periods used direct legislation as a major vehicle<sup>61</sup> for achieving their goals, they frequently left the fate of their movement in the hands of the electorate rather than at the mercy of elites.

### **The Electoral System as an External Environment**

Lloyd Sponholtz suggests one possible explanation for the success of the dries after 1900, namely that "a smaller turnout" may have enhanced "tremendously the possibility for minority rule" in referendum elections. He notes that direct legislation in the hands of well-organized groups allows them to assume a disproportionate decision-making power should their opponents fail to vote.<sup>62</sup> Thus, the dry victories of the early twentieth century conceivably reflected the demobilization of the American electorate that commenced after the election of 1896.

Social scientists have long underscored that a smaller proportion of the potential electorate participated in national elections after 1896, which marked the end of a period distinguished by high rates of voter turnout.<sup>63</sup> Scholars have offered two sets of explanations for the demobilization of the electorate in the twentieth century: one stresses the consequences of decreasing party competition, while the other stresses the establishment of legal and institutional barriers to voting.<sup>64</sup> Regardless of their explanation, however, most analysts agree that those segments of society lacking in wealth, education, and power became less likely to vote than social groups which possessed these attributes.<sup>65</sup> This shrunken, more middle-class electorate would presumably react more favorably to dry referenda than the highly mobilized electorate of the 1880s, which averaged a presidential election turnout of 78.7% nationwide.<sup>66</sup> After all, prohibition appealed the least to some social groups who ostensibly decreased their electoral participation after 1896, namely southern blacks, Germans, and Catholic immigrants.<sup>67</sup> With supporters of the saloon less prominent in the electorate, advocates of dry referenda may have encountered a more receptive voting public during the Progressive Era.

While plausible, this argument is offset by demographic changes in the U.S. population between the 1880s and the Progressive Era that hampered the prohibition cause. By the time the dries began sponsoring referenda in 1907, the number of immigrants arriving in the United States had surpassed one million for two consecutive years. In contrast, the annual number of immigrants who disembarked in the period 1880–90 averaged 518,534, or about half as many.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the nation's

**Table 1** Estimated Voter Turnout in Referenda Sponsored by the Prohibition Movement to Achieve State Prohibition during the 1880s and the Progressive Era

State	Year of Referendum, 1880–1890	Voter Turnout for Referendum, 1880–1890	Average Turnout, Presidential Elections, 1880–1888	Year of Referendum, 1900–1920	Voter Turnout for Referendum, 1880–1890	Average Turnout, Presidential Elections, 1900–1920
Washington <sup>a</sup>	1889	41.8	—	<b>1914</b>	54.3	57.1
Oregon	1883	44.5	65.2	<b>1914</b>	50.5	51.9
Michigan	1887	63.4	77.5	<b>1916</b>	71.9	73.6
Nebraska	1890	68.2	70.5	<b>1916</b>	77.6	74.2
Ohio	1883	68.6	93.2	1914	75.1	79.3
				1915	68.9	
				1917	67.3	
				<b>1918</b>	56.7	
West Virginia	1888	70.1	87.9	<b>1912</b>	73.6	84.1
North Carolina	1881	72.8	84.8	<b>1908</b>	37.7	51.5
Iowa	<b>1882</b>	73.7	90.5	1917	62.2	77.0
South Dakota <sup>a</sup>	<b>1889</b>	75.5	—	<b>1916</b>	56.1	67.9
Texas	1887	77.7	75.8	1911	48.9	35.4
				<b>1919</b>	26.5	

<sup>a</sup> Washington and South Dakota became states in 1889 and therefore did not vote in presidential elections until 1892. Turnout estimates for their 1889 referenda are based on estimates of their electorates in 1890.

All turnout figures in percent. Boldface signifies successful referendum.

Table based on turnout estimates by Walter Dean Burnham. For an explanation of his methodology, and his list of presidential turnout rates, see U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*, 2 vols. (Washington: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975), 1067–69, 1071–72.

Catholics formed 14.3% of the population in 1906, as compared to 9.9% in 1890.<sup>69</sup> A smaller percentage of immigrants and Catholics may have voted in the Progressive Era than in the 1880s, but this reduced participation would have occurred in populations that had increased their presence in America. Thus, the demobilization of the electorate in the early twentieth century may not have dramatically altered the composition of the American electorate to favor the dries.

Indeed, if one compares the turnout rates of the dry referenda of the 1880s with those of the Progressive Era, it becomes apparent that voter turnout has little to do with dry success in the latter period, particularly outside the South. Significantly, one cannot, according to table 1, simply infer that referenda turnout rates followed national trends toward electoral demobilization. Despite declines in presidential turnout rates between the two periods under study, this table clearly indicates that turnout rates in prohibition referenda were not very high during the 1880s, nor did they automatically become lower after 1896.

Moreover, these data fail to reveal a correlation between low voter turnout and



the success of referenda. In Washington, Oregon, Michigan, Nebraska, and West Virginia, the successful referenda of the latter period actually exhibit higher turnout rates than their failed counterparts of the 1880s. In one state, South Dakota, the prohibition movement sponsored two successful referenda, one in 1889 (turnout rate: 75.5%) and the other in 1916 (56.1%). Meanwhile, in Iowa the dries proposed a successful referendum in 1882 (73.7%), and one that failed in 1917 (62.2%). Finally, three states (Ohio, North Carolina, and Texas) held successful referenda in the Progressive Era which were distinguished by lower turnout than their failed precursors of the 1880s.

Given the comprehensive nature of the South's disfranchisement efforts, one should not be surprised that North Carolina and Texas held referenda in the Progressive Era with lower rates of voter participation by adult males than their referenda in the 1880s. However, the direct impact of black disfranchisement on the success of the southern branch of the Prohibition movement during the early twentieth century is difficult to measure. First, only three southern states held referenda in the 1880s.<sup>70</sup> While five Southern states<sup>71</sup> used referenda to enact prohibition after 1900, five others relied on legislative acts to establish statewide prohibition during the Progressive Era.<sup>72</sup> In addition, the dries of the latter period still managed to lose four referenda that they sponsored in the South despite the diminished voting power of southern blacks.<sup>73</sup> In fact, the success rate of southern dry referenda during the Progressive Era (55.6%) does not differ markedly from that of the nation as a whole (55%).

If anything, the disfranchisement of blacks principally enhanced the opportunity for dry success by eliminating one of the leading rationales for Democratic unity in the South. Along with the defeat of populism and the emergence of "lily-white" Republicanism, black disfranchisement made it safe for southern state Democratic parties to tolerate competition for party nominations. Using the newly installed primary system, political entrepreneurs like Edward Carmack (Tenn.), Hoke Smith (Ga.), and B. B. Comer (Ala.) challenged party stalwarts, sought statewide office, and were ultimately responsible for helping the prohibition movement to succeed at the state level. In other words, prohibition allowed these politicians to distinguish themselves from their more traditional Democratic rivals, and these entrepreneurs in turn assisted the dries by placing prohibition on the statewide agenda. As chapter 5 argues, a similar intraparty factional warfare characterized other state party systems during the Progressive Era, and thus contributed to the dries' opportunities to succeed in those states as well.

If the turnout data suggest that the demobilization of the American electorate after 1896 does not explain the success of the Progressive Era dries, then other factors must have been involved. As indicated above, this book maintains that the

prohibition movement's gains were the product of both its internal dynamics and its external environment. Within these two broader categories are three crucial factors that shaped dry success: political strategy, movement ideology, and unstable political alignments. Because of unstable political alignments, the prohibitionists had the opportunity to hold referenda during both the 1880s and the Progressive Era. However, their disparate success in using direct legislation during these two periods reflected their ideology and their political strategies. Wedded to their strategic preference for state constitutional amendments, the radical dries of the 1880s failed to secure broad-based support for their prohibition referenda and subsequently succumbed to the "iron law of involution." In contrast, their twentieth-century counterparts evaded this law by initially focusing on modest, local anti-liquor policies, a strategy which mobilized thousands of new supporters for prohibition and helped win most referenda. In short, it was the movement's shift from a radical strategy of promoting constitutional prohibition to a moderate strategy of local gradualism that allowed it to make the most of favorable political developments.

### **The Origins of Strategy**

Assuming that the Anti-Saloon League's local gradualism spurred a more effective movement than the radicals could muster, then one must grapple with another question: Why did local gradualism catch fire as a strategy in the Progressive Era and not during the 1880s? Scholars who have studied the origins of strategies adhere to the political process school, and concentrate on the effects of state structure, elite responses to movement activity, and the movement's likelihood of success. Unfortunately, these theorists usually focus on movement "forms" or "repertoires" of collective action, as discussed above. For example, Herbert Kitschelt concludes that when "political systems are open and weak," they invite assimilative strategies by movements, and when they are closed and have considerable implementation capacities, movements "are likely to adopt confrontational, disruptive strategies outside established policy channels."<sup>74</sup>

A more helpful political process explanation for the origins of strategy comes from Doug McAdam's recent work. He argues that social movement forms reflect specific changes in the structure of state institutions. Thus, a movement offered a new chance to participate in a given political institution will assume a strategy tailored to take advantage of that opportunity. For example, he cites the case of Ross Perot's independent candidacy in the American presidential election of 1992 as a response to "newly liberalized procedures and guidelines structuring the mobilization and operation of third party campaigns."<sup>75</sup>

While concurring with McAdam's overall approach, I maintain that scholars

have failed to identify the most significant innovations in state structure when accounting for the origins of the Anti-Saloon League's strategy. Among other things, they have pointed to the widespread adoption of the primary system, the initiative and referendum, and local option after 1880 as developments which aided the ASL.<sup>76</sup> However, the league was frequently the proponent of these reforms, as well as their beneficiary, and only a portion of its success can be directly linked to these innovations. For example, of the thirty states to adopt state prohibition during the Progressive Era, only nine "went dry" because of the initiative and referendum. In the remaining twenty-one states, the anti-liquor forces succeeded with more traditional methods. In eight states, they prevailed on state legislatures to enact statutory prohibition; in ten, they successfully exploited direct legislation procedures predating 1898;<sup>77</sup> and in three others, they effectively combined these two approaches.<sup>78</sup> Likewise, local option as a dry resource was hardly a novelty during the late nineteenth century. Indeed, as early as the 1830s some state legislatures had experimented with diverse forms of local option laws.<sup>79</sup>

Rather, my study will underscore the importance of other alterations in the political landscape, namely the devolution of the state legislatures' liquor licensing power to localities, and the judiciary's growing acceptance of these licensing regimes. It should be noted that these two developments, which had their greatest impact on the anti-liquor movement after 1890, advanced other causes as well. For example, they also aided proponents of stock laws, who sought to ban cattle, pigs, sheep, and other animals from grazing on local roads and uninhabited lands. Like proponents of temperance, they secured general laws which allowed communities to vote either for or against closing the open range, and typically saw those laws upheld in court as legitimate delegations of state authority.<sup>80</sup> While the parallels between the anti-liquor movement and other reform endeavors are often striking and warrant future study,<sup>81</sup> they are not surprising. After all, devolution and its legal acceptance stemmed from a fundamental shift in elite attitudes about the democratic potential of state legislatures, and in particular from the demise of legislative supremacy as a governing principle. Indeed, the anti-liquor movement's ability to use local referenda should be viewed as an integral part of this broader development, to which the movement contributed and from which it profited.

That the ASL's strategy emerged from both changes in state structure and collective beliefs about the appropriate distribution of power would not be surprising to some students of social movement strategy. In contrast to analysts who focus solely on political opportunities to explain the origins of strategy, other scholars maintain that collective beliefs and values may also shape the strategic choices of movements. Lee Ann Banaszak, for one, contends that the distinctive strategies pursued by the American and Swiss woman suffrage movements reflected shared beliefs about the