

COLLECTIVE IDENTITY AND COLLECTIVE EFFICACY

Dr. Terry Dunne¹

National University of Ireland – Maynooth

This paper is based on a study of 135 so-called threatening letters or threatening notices gathered by the state authorities in the eastern province of Leinster on the island of Ireland in the year 1832. Such notices were an anonymous or pseudonymous way of issuing demands usually backed up with threats of violence and which are found in a range of conflicts, i.e. they can be found in personal disputes, inter- or intra-family conflicts or in electoral intimidation, as well as in class conflict. The notices studied here were exclusively concerned with either employment conditions or land occupancy – a deliberate choice to aid in the uncovering of subaltern worldviews. These notices are frequently associated with a series of peasant-based movements generically known as whiteboys or rockites; whiteboys after one of the earliest of their kind – in the 1760s, rockites after what was probably the largest and most influential such mobilisation.

41 of the 135 notices bear the imprimatur ‘Rock’ usually ‘Captain Rock’. There are other less frequently occurring pseudonyms such as ‘Captain Carder’, ‘Lady Clare’ and ‘Terry Alt’. These are pan-regional pseudonyms. There is over 100 kilometres between Clare, the original home of the Terry Alt pseudonym, and Kildare, where it was to be used two years later. The Captain Rock heartland of north Cork and west Limerick is more than 200 kilometres away from the parts of north Leinster where ten or twelve years after the eponymous Rockite movement the Captain Rock pseudonym still had currency. The practice does not seem to have spread through contiguous areas. Furthermore other recurrent motifs within the notices include direct references to other parts of the country – occurring 11 times, and references to travel, that is the say the author(s) of the notices purport to be travelling from another part of the country, something which occurs 15 times. More localised monikers such as ‘Whitefeet’ and ‘Gentlemen Regulators’ also occur within the Leinster 1832 notices collection.

This paper more fully explores the theory behind the concept of collective identity which I have deployed to understand the use of recurrent pseudonyms within the notices. Although collective identity was first used to explain what were called in

¹ terrymdunne@gmail.com.

the 1980s new social movements I will argue that the same concept can be used to understand earlier movements of class and in fact it, and similar concepts, have been successfully applied to them. I will then argue that identity is made, not given, but that it is not conjured from thin air. That is to say, we cannot understand movements simply by reference to social structure, but, on the other hand, an idealism which sees identity as constructed in a discursive space outside the material practice of everyday life is not a viable approach.

However the main theoretical argument here concerns how collective identity functions, what purpose it performs, what needs it answers, and what role it plays within movements. It will be argued that identity is central, in that it provides people with the sense that they are a part of something altogether grander than just themselves or their immediate co-workers or neighbours and that this sense is a crucial contribution to feelings and understandings of collective efficacy. Collective efficacy refers to the belief in the ability of one's self and cohort to achieve intended aims. This proposition linking collective identity to collective efficacy is related to another proposition which is that social subordination produces a reduced sense of collective efficacy. Thus an essential part of the collective action of the early-nineteenth-century rural poor was the creation of a sense of collective identity which bolstered their sense of collective efficacy.

Collective Identity

Collective identity has been subject to a sort of semantic inflation, where its meaning is stretched to encompass almost all cultural or ideological aspects of a movement. It is a nebulous, mercurial and contested idea. One of the most succinct definitions of collective identity in the literature relating it to social movements is that proffered by Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper:

an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly...²

² Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, 'Collective identity and social movements' in *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27 (2001), pp 283-305; p. 285.

This, however, has been criticised as defining identity as a property of a particular individual, rather than being a matter of relations between different social actors.³ In that sense, their definition can be contrasted with that of David Snow, who writes of collective identity that its

essence resides in a shared sense of “one-ness” or “we-ness” anchored in real or imagined shared attributes and experiences among those who comprise the collectivity and in relation or contrast to one or more actual or imagined sets of “others”.⁴

Gamson further elaborates the concept of collective identity into ‘three embedded layers’ which are organisational, movement and solidary.⁵ Movement identity refers to the *we* of a movement, the act of collective identification with others based on a shared participation in a particular movement, series of protests, or similar activities in different locales. Solidary identity refers to a broader *we*, ‘constructed around people’s social location’, these being identities of class, gender and ethnicity. By organisational identity, Gamson means the identity of individual activists based around their particular role as ‘movement carriers’. The paucity of the documentary record does not allow for much of an investigation into this form of identity. What I am concerned with here is what Gamson classifies with the concepts of movement identity and of solidary identity. The agenda for the study of social movements through the prism of collective identity can be summed up by quoting Alberto Melucci:

The empirical unity of a social movement should be considered as a result rather than a starting point, a fact to be explained rather than evidence.⁶

In terms of social movement studies, collective identity was originally advanced as a concept in the context of the new social movements problematic of the 1980s. New

³ Cristina Flesher Fominaya, ‘Collective identity in social movements: Central concepts and debates’ in *Sociology Compass*, 4/6 (2010), pp 393-404.

⁴ David Snow, ‘Collective identity and expressive forms’, *Center for the Study of Democracy Working Papers*, 10-01-2001, online at escholarship.org/uc/item/2zn1t7bj, accessed 5 Sept. 2014.

⁵ William A. Gamson, ‘Commitment and agency in social movements’ in *Sociological Forum*, 6:1 (1991), pp 27–50; p. 40.

⁶ Alberto Melucci, ‘The Process of Collective Identity’ in Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans (eds), *Social Movements and Culture* (Minneapolis, 1995), pp 41–63; p. 43.

social movements apparently featured ‘an expressive rather than instrumental motivation’⁷ where

emerging social conflicts in advanced societies have not expressed themselves through political action, but rather raised cultural challenges to the dominant language, to the codes that organize information and shape social practices. The crucial dimensions of daily life (time, space, interpersonal relations, individual and group identity) have been involved in these conflicts . . .⁸

Crucially, to many the new social movements seemed not to be class movements, and there was not an automatic admission to the collectivity by virtue of one’s position in a social structure. Rather, that collectivity had to be created. From this follows the focus on cultural or expressive forms of movement activity. While the newness of new social movements proved questionable and they were, in fact, as prone to bureaucratisation and political instrumentality as any hoary outpost of social democracy, nonetheless, this helped give us a new way of looking at movements. Though there were in fact important antecedents which were also aware of the necessity to create identity. It might be considered that ‘old social movements’ of nation and class were uncomplicatedly based on identities which were socially structurally given. In fact not only is this not the case, but a considerable amount of scholarship, much of it pre-dating the formulation of collective identity within social movement studies, has analysed identity construction with regard to class movements.⁹

Class and identities

Class is used in multiple different senses and can be used to describe many different phenomena. Class can be understood as referring to categories of inequality with people divided up by income, life chances, education, etc. In other words, it can be understood as stratification in the sense employed within neo-Weberian and Functionalist sociology. This is also the most popular understanding of class today and has the imprimatur of official government statistics and much journalism. This, however, is not the meaning of class most relevant to what is being examined in this thesis. Two uses of class are particularly relevant here. Firstly, class as it refers to

⁷ Paul Byrne, *Social Movements in Britain* (London, 1997), p. 36.

⁸ Melucci, ‘The Process of Collective Identity’, p. 41.

⁹ Jeff Pratt, *Class, nation and identity: The anthropology of political movements* (London, 2003);

relations of exploitation and conflict, revolving around appropriation of surplus product over and above what the direct producers get. This appropriation happening either nakedly through feudal rent, or through the capitalist wage and the difference in the value of labour power and the value of what labour produces. Secondly, we have class in a Thompsonian sense – class as an identity and movement based on those relations of exploitation and conflict but not reducible to them.

My case is that class (the relationship), which has class conflict intrinsic to it, exists independently of class, the identity, and class (the identity) does not have to call itself class i.e. doesn't have to use a language of class. Different individuals and groups of people can recognise themselves as in some sense on the same side in what are class conflicts and create an identity of class but not call that identity class. This continues to be a class identity even when it embraces people in a number of different class relationships - that is to say embracing both peasants and farm labourers as the iconography discussed here does or as the *campesino* identity does in twentieth century and contemporary Mexico.¹⁰ The letters 'C', 'L', 'A', 'S' and 'S' are entirely arbitrary as a mode of expression of class identity.

The emphasis on creation foregrounds an agentic process mediating between social structure and discourse with the proviso that these are distinctions made only for analytical purposes. That is to say, the forming of class (the relationship) involves class conflict and hence at least the possibility of class (the identity) from the get go. This agentic process means that class (the identity) exists in inter-relationship with class movements and the micro-politics of resistance. A further necessary distinction must be made, that between class identity and a language of class. Class identity meaning collective identities developed within class conflict, a language of class referring to a conjunctural sub-set of those class identities – ones which expressly use the term class. This is a necessary distinction to make in order to get to grips with the discourse determinism of the post-modern turn in social history.

It is a distinction which might be said to be presaged by E.P. Thompson's 1978 journal article *Eighteenth-century English society: Class struggle without class?*¹¹ Before turning to interrogate the conceptions of class advanced in Thompson's work I'll use Gareth Stedman Jones's case against Thompson as my baseline for the post-modern

¹⁰ Christopher R. Boyer, *Becoming campesinos: Politics, identity, and agrarian struggle in postrevolutionary Michoacán, 1920-1935* (Stanford, 2003).

¹¹ E.P. Thompson, 'Eighteenth-century English society: Class struggle without class?' in *Social History*, 3:2 (May, 1978), pp 133-65.

turn of the 1980s. However, to understand where Stedman Jones is coming from it is necessary to linger a while longer with Thompson. The preface to Thompson's 1963 *The making of the English working class* puts forward his identity/movement understanding of class, which has agency as central to the development of a class identity:

...class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born – or enter involuntarily. Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms : embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms. If the experience appears as determined, class-consciousness does not.¹²

This is the understanding of class which Stedman Jones is responding to in his seminal introduction to his 1983 *Languages of class: Studies in English working class history 1832-1982*. Stedman Jones argues that: 'Language disrupts any simple notion of the determination of consciousness by social being because it is itself part of social being.'¹³ But effectively he ejects language from social being. A better formulation is to consider a dialectical process whereby signs are shaped by social conflict and signs also shape social conflict rather than a one-sided determinism.

To Thompson, using class as referring to relations of production is to turn class into a static thing, Thompson was trying to bring agency back in against a theoretical backdrop where it was imagined that, to quote Sewell: 'factories produced a proletariat almost as mechanically as they produced cloth or nails'; and there was 'little curiosity about what workers actually felt, said, wrote and did'.¹⁴ Apart from the fact that the relations of production are in no sense static, too much of a focus on class as an identity can tend to watering it 'down to the point where it virtually disappears in many situations'.¹⁵ Class is evinced in the basic fact of appropriation of surplus from the direct producers - a relationship within which there are inherent antagonisms and this is

¹² Thompson, *The making of the English working class*, pp 9-10.

¹³ Stedman Jones, *Languages of class*, pp 21-2.

¹⁴ William H. Sewell Jr, 'How classes are made: Critical reflections on E.P. Thompson's theory of working-class formation' in Harvey J. Kaye and Keith McClelland (eds), *E.P. Thompson: Critical perspectives* (Philadelphia, 1990), pp 50 – 77; p. 53.

¹⁵ de Ste.Croix, *The class struggle in the ancient Greek world*, p. 57.

best described as class, irrespective of what identities are developed (or not developed) out of the immanent conflict.

To recap: we can have class as referring to relations of production, i.e. what Marx refers to as the ‘class-in-itself’; we can have class as referring to a collective identity, which can be further related to class-based movements; and that this identity/movement meaning of class can use a language of class (i.e. the actual term class) but need not.

That is then:

- (1) Class as relations of production;
- (2) Class identity as a collective identity based on conflict within those relations but not using a language of class;
- (3) Class identity as a collective identity based on such conflict and which uses a language of class.

Thomson has an identity, movement and agency-based approach to class. Class struggle is a ‘manifest and universal historical process’, but class (in Thompson’s use of the term) isn’t:

People find themselves in a society structured in determined ways (crucially, but not exclusively, in productive relations), they experience exploitation (or the need to maintain power over whom they exploit), they identify points of antagonistic interest, they commence to struggle around these issues and in the process of struggling they discover themselves as classes.¹⁶

On the contrary we should see agency, struggle and culture within the relations of production, and should see these relations as dynamic not static, not just agency in the formation of class identity and class movements but also agency within the so-called static objective economic structure; albeit agency in turn constrained and shaped by structure. In fact, Thomson’s more empirical work outstrips his theoretical statements on class and is often times concerned with just this inter-relationship of structure and agency. For instance, his work is replete with examples of proletarianisation as a contested phenomenon shaped by different sets of human actors. With regard to the identity understanding of class, I would argue, as does Thompson, that this identity

¹⁶ Thompson, ‘Eighteenth-century English society: Class struggle without class?’, p. 149.

doesn't have to call itself class at all. This development of a common bond, a collective identity, a sense of *we*, does not necessarily have to go under the name class.

Thompson claims that: 'in the process of struggling they discover themselves as classes'; what if they don't discover themselves as classes in the sense of using a language of class? What if the process of struggling and discovering produces collective identities expressed in forms other than a language of class?

Thompson argues that class in the sense that develops in nineteenth century industrial capitalist societies 'has in fact no claim to universality' there can be other collective identities coming out of the conflict inherent in antagonistic relations of appropriation/production.

In terms of Thompson's focus on class as movement/identity and the discovery of 'themselves as classes' 'in the process of struggling' and moreover that class, in the sense of employed in nineteenth-century industrial capitalist societies 'has in fact no claim to universality' it follows that collectivities can discover themselves but not call that discovery class.

Hence the possibility of class-based movements, which is to say movements-based in conflicts within relations of production, forging identities while not using the language of class, or perhaps only partly using that language. This is observable in instances of working-class formation outside of nineteenth-century Europe – and hence outside of the particular contexts that shaped that formation and gave it a language of class, contexts such as the traditions of the artisanate and the revolutions in France (1787-1799 and 1830).

Hagen Koo's study of working-class formation in late-twentieth-century industrialisation in South Korea treats of the disparate elements from which was formed the collective identity at the heart of the workers' movement. It was by no means simply and automatically an identity as workers – for the reason that physical labour apart from independent farming carried strongly negative connotations.¹⁷ The elements that fed into identity construction included *han* which Koo describes as 'an extremely complex concept, difficult to translate into English, but in broad terms it can be defined as long

¹⁷ Hagen Koo, *Korean workers: The culture and politics of class formation* (Ithaca, 2001), pp 127-30; works dealing with the intricacies of class formation in the European context include: Ronald Aminzade, *Ballots and barricades: Class formation and republican politics in France, 1830 – 1871* (Princeton, 1993); Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg (eds), *Working-class formation: Nineteenth-century patterns in western Europe and the United States* (Princeton, 1986); Richard J. Evans, *Proletarians and politics: Socialism, protest and the working class in Germany before the First World War* (New York, 1990).

accumulated sorrow and regret over one's misfortune or a simmering resentment over injustice one has experienced'.¹⁸ Another strand was the populist *minjung* intellectual/cultural movement, which involved, amongst other things, a popular social history, demotic literature, and the revival of traditional dance.¹⁹

It is my contention that what we are seeing when we see a common set of aliases used in notices from opposite ends of the island, and when some notices make positive reference to events in other parts of the country or purport to be linked to movements elsewhere, can be considered a class identity. In other words a class identity is to be found within the Leinster 1832 notices collection but to no great extent is that identity expressed in a language of class. This is a class identity expressed in an iconographic commonality.

It is worth noting that generally identity formation is conceived in the literature on historic working-class movements as a facet of generalisation, that is to say part of a process of moving from particular struggles to a more unified movement uniting different 'militant particularisms'.²⁰ This is not what is occurring in early-nineteenth-century Ireland since whiteboyism, was, for the most part, extremely localised – in no way did the usual activity of whiteboy bands necessitate any degree of solidarity beyond their immediate locality. Yet, they still display a form of collective identity. Thus it is necessary to analyse what this might be so, what need did this expression of collective identity address. This is the main topic of the remaining half of this paper.

Social subordination and collective efficacy

This section will put forward the hypothesis that the experience of subordination negatively impacts on people's appraisal of their, and their cohorts', capacities, and that part of the process of mobilisation involves the nurturing, both practically and symbolically, of a sense of collective agency.

In his 2006 journal article *Fear, hatred and the hidden injuries of class in early modern England*, Andy Wood makes the case in regard to plebeian mentalities in early-modern England that:

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 136.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* pp 142-6.

²⁰ Laurence Cox and Alf Gunvald Nilsen, *We make our own history: Marxism and social movements in the twilight of neo-liberalism* (London, 2014), pp 77-9.

The psychic consequences of labouring people buying into paternalist discourses – however knowingly, cynically or partially – may have been to have chronically impaired their individual and collective identities.²¹

Wood's argument draws on Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb's *Hidden Injuries of Class*.²² Perhaps the Sennett and Cobb thesis is specific than that and really only applicable to the United States during the 1960s and to societies sharing certain commonalities with that society. Nonetheless Wood is on to something.

The effect of life at the wrong end of a class system upon perceptions of collective efficacy is not an easy issue to approach, most especially when considering circumstances in historic pre-capitalist societies. Nor has the question received a great deal of scholarly attention. But some studies do illuminate the issue in passing.²³ Some insight is offered by Sulamith Heins Potter's and Jack M. Potter's anthropology of Zengbu, a village in Guangdong province in south China, during the later stages of the revolution and the first three decades or so of the People's Republic. A highly tense situation existed in the village when it was on the cusp of land reform in 1951. At least two participants in local anti-landlord actions suffered consequent mental breakdowns from which they never recovered. The impact on their psyches occasioned, it seems, by fear of one day suffering retribution from figures who were once possessed of both great local power and great capacity for cruelty. These were extreme examples of a more pervasive anxiety. We learn that at 'first the poor peasants were loath to speak out directly against the landlords, and it was only with difficulty that the cadres were able to convince them that they would not endanger themselves by speaking out, and that they would actually receive expropriated land from the wealthy.'²⁴ Given the villagers previous life experiences this was not necessarily an unreasonable apprehension. The import of that fearful sentiment to the consideration of the impact of social subordination on feelings of efficacy is underlined by the fact that land reform in

²¹ Andy Wood, 'Fear, Hatred and the Hidden Injuries of Class in Early Modern England' in *Journal of Social History*, xxxix (2006), pp 803-26; p. 817; see also Andy Wood, "'Poore men woll speke one daye" plebeian languages of deference and defiance in England, c.1520-1640' in T. Harris (ed.), *The politics of the excluded in England, 1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp 67-98.

²² Richard Sennet and Jonathan Cobb, *The hidden injuries of class* (Cambridge, 1972).

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 42.

Zengbu was happening several years after the Red victory in the civil war and, consequently, with the support, and later participation, of the central Chinese state.²⁵

The postulate that the experience of class, in an objective or structural sense, would have an impact on an appraisal of self or group capacities seems reasonable. To what extent this was a factor in the period and place this paper is concerned with will likely remain unknown. It is possible though to advance some well-grounded speculations.

Part of the process of popular mobilisation is the instilling of what can be called a sense of agency, a feeling of efficacy, confidence or empowerment, which is partly an outcome, partly a precondition, which can grow and which can wither and which is linked to collective identity. Collective identity, in its turn, is in part a development out of social conflict and in part it feeds social conflict, and one way in which it can be through helping to create a sense of agency.

The inspiring of feelings of collective efficacy as a part of popular mobilisation has received some scholarly attention. The issue occasionally features in works which could be loosely placed under broad rubric of social movement studies and sometimes in studies of collective action from within the social psychology sub-discipline.

Social movement studies and collective efficacy

The cultivation of a sense of collective efficacy and of heightened morale has not been a core concern of what can be broadly called social movement studies. It has received some attention though, Francis Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, for example, argued that the 'emergence of a protest movement' involves 'a new sense of efficacy; people who ordinarily consider themselves helpless come to believe that they have some capacity to alter their lot.'²⁶ There are three particularly relevant studies, firstly those of Eric L. Hirsch on community groups and South Africa solidarity protests in the U.S. in the late 1970s and early 1980s; secondly, Rick Fantasia's partly auto-ethnographical *Cultures of solidarity*, which treats of shop-floor conflicts and the late twentieth-century American working class;²⁷ and thirdly, Daniela Issa's writing on the

²⁵ See also: John Gaventa, *Power and powerlessness: Quiescence and rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Chicago, 1982); Howard Newby, *The deferential worker: A study of farm workers in East Anglia* (London, 1979).

²⁶ Francis Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor people's movements: Why they succeed, how they fail* (New York, 1979), pp 3–4.

²⁷ Rick Fantasia, *Cultures of solidarity: Consciousness, action, and contemporary American workers* (Berkeley, 1988).

role of *mística* in the contemporary Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem-Terra (Landless Rural Workers' Movement – MST) in Brazil.

Eric L. Hirsch, in his work on the South Austin Coalition Community Council, an organisation dealing with urban social problems in Chicago's west side circa 1979, found that crucial in generating commitment was 'the creation of feelings of collective political efficacy' through emphasising the benefits produced by the group's victories.²⁸ This, he argues, is particularly true of individuals transitioning from local block-level participation to a higher community-wide participation.

Fantasia gives us a very intimate micro-level account of the dynamics involved in a wildcat walkout from the steel foundry he worked in circa 1975. In his particular section this involved an element of symbolic display on the part of those workers most committed to the action. The display consisted of 'statements of defiance and prominent spatial positioning in relation to the foreman' which served 'to create an appearance of solidarity that quickly became an actual manifestation of it'.²⁹ Thus 'a group of workers divided by their level of commitment and participation became more unified' as 'circumstances appeared to favor a successful action'.³⁰ What the individuals most committed to the walkout were doing was representing themselves as powerful and as united with their rank-and-file colleagues while representing the authority of the foreman as diminished and isolated. There was an element of performance as the leading group and their barracking of the foreman was watched by the less committed majority. That this was in part theatre does not in any way reduce the seriousness of what was at stake – all participants could have lost their employment. The theatrical display had to inspire confidence that the wildcat would work, the local representative of management authority had to be symbolically undermined.

According to Issa, *mística* has a double meaning referring to both the 'representation through words, art, symbolism, and music of the struggles and reality' of Brazil's landless rural poor organised in the M.S.T. and 'the feeling of empowerment, love, and solidarity that serves as a mobilizing force'.³¹ There isn't a direct English

²⁸ Eric L. Hirsch, 'The creation of political solidarity in social movement organizations' in *The Sociological Quarterly*, 27:3 (1986), pp 373–87; p. 384.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 99.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 108.

³¹ Daniela Issa, 'Praxis of empowerment: *Mística* and mobilization in Brazil's landless rural workers' movement', in *Latin American Perspectives*, vol 153 no 34: 2 (2007), pp 124–38; p. 125; see also John L. Hammond, '*Mística*, meaning and popular education in the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement' in *Interface: a journal for and about social movements*, 6:1 (2014), pp 372–91.

translation of *mística*, which means both feelings of solidarity and empowerment as well as their expression and creation in art, ritual and symbolism. Issa's analysis of the M.S.T.'s activity highlights symbolic practice, identity, and the construction of a sense of popular agency. These are the elements bound up in the scrawled words Captain Rock.

Social psychology, collective efficacy and empowerment

Studies of collective action from within the social psychology field foreground the necessity for collective action participants to believe in their ability to make a difference. The concept is usually termed perceived self- or group-efficacy, or collective efficacy.³² Another variation on theme is the concept of empowerment.³³ To Bandura, people's 'shared beliefs in their collective power to produce desired results' constitute a key element of collective agency.³⁴ This sense of efficacy influences people in terms of 'how much effort they put into their group endeavour, their staying power when collective efforts fail to produce quick results or meet forcible opposition'.³⁵ The concept of empowerment adds an affective dimension to the cognitive-based approach central to the concept of efficacy. Moreover, empowerment theorising sees collective action itself as contributing to a sense of empowerment. Empowerment is not only a precondition to collective action but can be an outcome. In the field of social movement studies, the work of Colin Barker on the strike wave in Poland in 1980 links the affective and the cognitive together within a conceptualisation of empowerment as a process which is partly pre-condition and partly outcome.³⁶

³² Lauren E. Duncan, 'The psychology of collective action' in Kay Deaux and Mark Snyder (eds), *Oxford handbook of personality and social psychology* (New York, 2012), pp 781–803; Albert Bandura, 'Exercise of human agency through collective efficacy' in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9:3 (2000), pp 75–8; Viktor Gecas, 'The social psychology of self-efficacy' in *Annual Review of Sociology*, 15 (1989), pp 291–316; p. 310.

³³ John Drury and Steve Reicher, 'Explaining enduring empowerment: A comparative study of collective action and psychological outcomes' in *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 35 (2005), pp 35–58; Atalanti Evripidou and John Drury, 'This is the time of tension: collective action and subjective power in the Greek anti-austerity movement' in *Contention: The Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Protest*, 1, (2013), pp 31–51.

³⁴ Bandura, 'Exercise of human agency through collective efficacy', p. 75.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 76

³⁶ Colin Barker, 'Crises and turning points in revolutionary development: emotion, organization and strategy in Solidarnosc, 1980–81' in *Interface: a journal for and about social movements*, 2:1, (May 2010), pp 79 – 117.

Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to blend together debates on class from within social history, discussions on collective identity from social movement studies, and the concept of collective efficacy advanced from within social psychology. The form of identity is not a socially structurally given, but what is such a given is the existence of class conflict and hence the potential for class identities. Class identities are not necessarily formed around a concept of class in the sense of the terminology of nineteenth century industrial capitalism. We can then identify several pertinent meanings given to the term 'class'; class as a relationship of exploitation and conflict, class as an identity using a language of class, and class as an identity developed out of class conflict but not using that particular language. Even quite localised and particular class conflicts evince a need for a form of identity. Before that is the obvious need arising from the development of particular struggles to a point of generalising, which is that generalisation requires a process of symbolic unification, i.e. uniting people from different occupational groups or from different localities. The earlier need for identity revolves around class in the more objective or structural sense of class relationships which have, as a corollary, negative impacts on the sense of collective efficacy. That is to say, life at the wrong end of those relationships will, in myriad ways, lead to an impaired sense of collective efficacy, in terms both cognitively and affectively. Moreover, disparities in the allocation of resources allows agentic strategies which undermine collective efficacy in subordinates, e.g. displays of power and status, ritual humiliation, violence, paternalism and simply the greater capacity to inflict defeat in any contestation. Collective identity is a sort of myth which inspires a greater sense of collective efficacy. People have to choose how they respond to conditions imposed on them. In doing so they do not choose freely – there will always be a host of structural constraints they have to adapt to. What I have tried to show in this paper is that collective identity is a part of choosing, in that it can be a resource to facilitate collective action and in turn is created through collective action. Identity expresses possibility. Possibility contained in part through stories of what has been done elsewhere by “people like us”.³⁷ The cultural resources drawn on to craft collective identity may not be the more familiar ones of a language of class, or of country, or of creed.

³⁷ Eric Selbin, *Revolution, rebellion, resistance the power of story* (London & New York, 2010).