

Chapter Three

CONTEXTUAL CONDITIONS

WE ARGUED IN THE previous chapter that it is difficult to imagine the development of social movements in the absence of some number of individuals feeling deeply aggrieved about some condition that is regarded as contrary to the interests, rights, moral principles, or well-being of themselves or others. We also noted that mobilizing grievances are unlikely to congeal out of whole cloth apart from the process of grievance interpretation. Yet the existence of mobilizing grievances does not guarantee the emergence of a social movement or affiliated protest activity. In the language of causal analysis, mobilizing grievances constitute a necessary rather than sufficient condition for movement emergence. Also necessary is the opportunity to redress those grievances through various means of strategic action that involve their articulation to relevant audiences and the capacity to pressure the appropriate authorities to remedy those grievances. Such opportunity, however, is not a simple, one-dimensional phenomenon. Rather, it is multidimensional in the sense that the opportunity to press one's concerns and claims collectively is based on the existence and confluence of a number of overlapping conditions: the opportunity or freedom to express one's grievances publicly and to relevant authorities, whether through the media or by assembling and protesting in various public places; access to sufficient resources to organize and mount a

campaign to address those grievances; and relatively safe, spatial enclaves in which the aggrieved can associate in absence of the curious and perhaps watchful eye of their targets or government officials. Considered together, these three sets of factors may be thought of as the necessary contextual conditions for the emergence of social movement activity. The massive Tiananmen Square student-led protest in Beijing, China, in the late spring of 1989 lasted several weeks but ended abruptly and bloodily when the communist government ordered its military to squash the protest. This widely chronicled repressive action effectively slammed shut the window of opportunity for students and their supporters to publicly express their grievances, thus foreclosing one necessary, requisite condition for social movement mobilization and action.

Not surprisingly, social movement scholars have theorized and researched these facilitating or enabling contextual conditions. In *Theory of Collective Behavior*, Neil Smelser hinted some time ago at the importance of such conditions with the concept of "structural conduciveness,"¹ but he did not go as far as subsequent scholars who have conceptually unpacked and elaborated such conditions into three overlapping perspectives on the emergence and functioning of social movements. One perspective focuses broadly on political opportunity and the various factors that affect the opening and closing of the window of opportunity; another directs attention to the importance of various resources, such as money and relevant supplies; and a third accents ecological and spatial factors, such as the proximity of prospective protestors to each other. All of these conditions were at work in the case of the Tiananmen Square protest, as they are in one form or another in the life span of all social movements

that manage to get off the ground and press their claims. In this chapter, we discuss and illustrate these three sets of facilitating contextual conditions.

POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY

Whether individuals will act collectively to address their grievances depends in part on whether they have the political opportunity to do so. From a folk standpoint, political opportunity entails the elbowroom or freedom for individuals and collectivities to express their grievances and pursue their interests above ground rather than belowground: that is, publicly through the various communication channels (for example, electronic media, press, Internet) and/or through assemblage in various public and quasi-public places, including not only parks, streets, sidewalks, universities, and colleges, but also the halls and meeting chambers of the relevant authorities. This conception of political opportunity has long been expressed by activist scholars. Writing in *The Class Struggle* in 1910, for example, Karl Kautsky noted that “a free press and the right to communication are absolutely essential.” They “are to the proletariat [working class] the prerequisites of life; they are the light and air of the labor movement.”² Contemporary social movement scholars also acknowledge the importance of such freedoms but see them as contingent on the degree of openness or accessibility of the political system, and thus focus on its “receptivity or vulnerability” to organized challenge.³

The point is that social movements have great difficulty reaching out and mobilizing various kinds of support in the absence of a political context that allows for the free and open expression of collective grievances and claims, even when they

run counter to the interests of the system of authority being challenged. Recognizing the importance of political opportunity for the emergence and operation of social movements is not terribly helpful alone, however, for a number of interconnected reasons. The first is that political systems—be they local, state or regional, national, or international—can vary considerably in terms of how receptive (open) or unreceptive (closed) they are to challenge. The second is that this variability is not announced, as in the rendering of an edict, but is signaled by aspects of the system’s ongoing functioning. The third is that these signals, just as with any signals in social life, are sometimes missed, ignored, or read or interpreted in ways that may unexpectedly facilitate or curtail mobilized dissent and challenge.

In light of these observations, we turn to an examination of three sets of issues: the extent of variability in the openness of political systems to challenge; the dimensions of political systems and the sociopolitical conditions or events that are likely to signal something about its receptivity or openness to challenge; and the sometimes neglected fact that signaling dimensions and events are vulnerable to differential interpretation and associated action or inaction.

Variation in System Accessibility

System accessibility is the shorthand expression for the extent to which a political system and its institutions are open or closed to participation and influence. The degree of access can vary with a host of factors, including decision-making structures, the party or political orientation of officeholders, and the relative status of different groups or categories of claimants. In the case of decision-making structures, governments in which power is

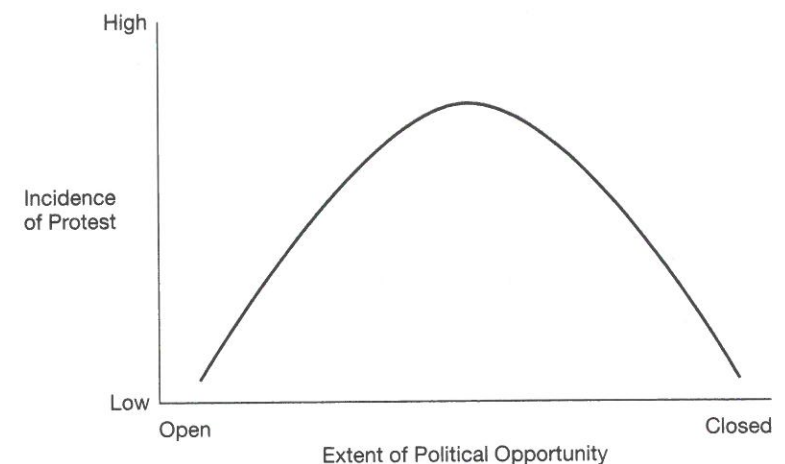
concentrated rather than diffused among various branches and actors and in which administrative functions are centrally coordinated are likely to be less accessible than are governments wherein power is more diffused and administration is not so heavily coordinated. But even the existence of relatively open and democratic governmental structures does not ensure that all constituents will have equal access. As the political scientist Michael Lipsky asked rhetorically in 1970 in reference to the American political system, "is it not sensible to assume that the system will be more or less open to specific groups at different times and at different places?"⁴ Given the historical experiences of women, blacks, Latinos, and gays and lesbians, as well as other underrepresented minorities, in relation to the American political system, Lipsky must have known full well the answer to his rhetorical question. But it was a question that had not been widely researched at the time he broached it. Years of subsequent research on this question has shown that the answer is unequivocally affirmative for the U.S. political system as well as for the political systems of other countries.

The first major empirical examination of Lipsky's question was conducted a few years following Lipsky's query by Peter Eisinger, who investigated the extent to which variation in protest and riot behavior in forty-three American cities in the 1960s was affected by differences across the cities in what he termed "the structure of political opportunity." He defined it as "the degree to which groups are likely to be able to gain access to power and to manipulate the political system," and he found that the "incidence of protest" was indeed "related to the nature of the city's political opportunity structure," but not necessarily in the way one might initially assume.⁵ Protest occurred more

readily in cities in which the political opportunity structure was neither fully open nor closed but exhibited "a mix of open and closed characteristics,"⁶ thus suggesting a curvilinear relationship between opportunities and levels of protest. This curvilinear relationship, which is shown in Figure 3.1, has since become the foundational proposition for political opportunity theorizing and research.

How well does the curvilinear relationship hold up across various incidents of movement protest and political contexts? The answer, as with most phenomena that social scientists investigate, is conditional. It is certainly true that countries that are governed by dictatorial, authoritarian regimes are heavily skewed toward the closed end of the continuum, often characterized by relatively little, if any, protest, either emergent or

Figure 3.1
THE POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY CURVE



movement-sponsored. That is not to say that collective behavior is absent in these countries; rather, the collective behavior tends to be state-sponsored and celebratory rather than contested or protest-oriented.⁷ North Korea, governed for some time by the dictatorial personality cult of Kim Jong-il, provides a glaring example of a country in which protest is virtually absent but celebratory collective behavior is quite common. Not only is protest outlawed, but the means of generating and communicating collective grievances are unavailable to regular citizens: cell phones are illegal, the Internet is inaccessible to all but the elite; newspapers feature only state propaganda, and radios and TVs receive only government channels. Other countries in recent times that similarly have negated the prospect of protest by limiting the means for the generation and dissemination of mobilizing grievances and responding repressively to hints of protest mobilization include China, Cuba, Myanmar, and the former East Germany and Soviet Union. Although these countries vary somewhat in the structures of their governments and repressive impulses, they are or were unquestionably authoritarian and nondemocratic.

In contrast to such regimes are those that are more democratic, generally less repressive, and, therefore, generally skewed toward the open end of the continuum. Examples include, among others, Australia, Canada, the various countries that make up the European Union, and the United States. But these and other democratic countries are neither uniformly nor consistently open to protest. Rather, consistent with Lipsky's point mentioned above, the historical record for each country or set of countries reveals temporal, group-based, and locational

variability in their respective openness to movement contestation and challenge. And even across countries that appear quite similar in political structure, there can be noteworthy variation in receptivity to social movements. For example, in a comparative study of the fate of various so-called new social movements in four West European countries (France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland), Hanspeter Kriesi and his colleagues found that the extent and form of movement mobilization varied according to differences in the political structures of the countries.⁸

Such variability in political opportunity structures is also evident in countries governed by more authoritarian regimes. Moreover, this variability in openness can change very quickly, as in the spring 1989 Beijing student movement and the sudden flowering of protest in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s.

Both of these now historically memorialized instances of social movement protest⁹ are consistent with the political opportunity curve and the observation that partially opened access to some system of authority encourages, or at least allows for, protest, all else being equal. That systems of authority in which access is partial rather than completely open or closed are more generative of collective challenge makes sense. After all, if access is completely closed and external challenge is forbidden, not only is it logistically difficult to organize a collective challenge, but such action is almost certain to invite repression. If, in contrast, access to the system is completely open, such that various classes and status groups are incorporated into the system and have an opportunity to pursue their interests, then challenge in

the form of social movement activity is unnecessary. Of course, the existence of such an open system is more of a figment of our utopian imagination than historical reality.

Signaling Dimensions of Political Systems

Variability in system accessibility, and thus the prospect of social movement challenge, can be affected by a host of factors that appear to cluster into three broad categories: (1) the relative stability of the pattern of political alignments within a system; (2) the presence or absence of influential allies; and (3) the repressive capacity or impulse of the state or relevant political entity.¹⁰

SHIFTING POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS. Changes in the pattern of alignments within a political system can signal prospective changes in system accessibility. When existing alignments are stable, as when there is party unity and leadership continuity, there is less opportunity for marginal or antagonistic groups to mount a challenge to the system. However, shifting alignments may increase the vulnerability of the system to challenges from groups outside the system. Such shifts may be signaled by leadership voids and elite cleavages occasioned by the death of a ruler or president or by a palace scandal; by changes in party support and solidarity; by general electoral volatility; and by regime crises that can result from the confluence of these factors, the mismanagement of economic or international affairs and events, and the manufacturing of contrived events,¹¹ any or all of which can lead to what has been called a legitimization crisis.¹²

To illustrate more concretely the relationship between this assortment of events and shifting alignments, consider how electoral volatility and shifts in party strength in the United States have been associated with corresponding social movement activity. In an analysis of poor people's movements in the United States through the 1970s, Piven and Cloward note that changes in parties' electoral strength in both the 1930s and the 1960s encouraged organized labor, black Americans, and other marginalized groups to press for changes in party strategies for bringing unrepresented social groups into the political arena.¹³ The erosion of the "solid South" of segregationist white voters from the Democratic party in the 1950s and 1960s also prompted Democrats to seek black political support, thus opening up the political process to black America. As Doug McAdam observed with respect to the growing importance of the black vote in his study of the development of the black civil rights movement in the middle third of the twentieth century, "the black vote increasingly became a more volatile political commodity than it had heretofore been, prompting both parties to intensify their efforts to appeal to black voters."¹⁴ Research has also shown that a divided government—divided party control over the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the presidency—in the United States has been positively correlated with African American protest.¹⁵

Declining political party strength and party instability in the United States have also been found to make both parties more vulnerable to manipulation and control by more extremist views and movements, as demonstrated by the control of party platforms at national conventions by more extremist groups.¹⁶

Illustrative of this finding is the control of the Democrat platform at the 1968 convention by the Mississippi Freedom Party and the more recent influence of the far “religious right,” with its focus on banning abortion and same-sex marriage, on the party platforms of the Republican conventions in early 2000 and 2004. Thus, shifting alignments may not only invite access but also give rise to manipulation and control of the older guard by new players.

INFLUENTIAL ALLIES. The presence or absence of allies who have standing and connection within the power structure can also affect system accessibility. The importance of such allies in relation to movement campaigns and successful outcomes has been theorized by Edwin Amenta and his colleagues in terms of the “political mediation” thesis. The thesis, which holds that movement mobilization typically requires mediation by supportive actors in political institutions or in other institutional contexts,¹⁷ has considerable support in the research literature. For example, William Gamson’s research on fifty-three challenging groups in the United States between 1800 and 1945 found that those that secured the support of political allies tended to be more successful.¹⁸ Sarah Soule and her collaborators, moreover, found that the pro-Equal Rights Amendment movement in the fifty U.S. states had more success when there were allies in the state governments.¹⁹ Likewise, Jenkins and Perrow’s analysis of the American farm workers’ movement in the United States found that the greater success of the movement in the 1960s, compared with the 1940s, was due in part to the receipt of support from three influential allies: urban liberals who boycotted lettuce and grapes in support of the UFW; organized labor;

and a new generation of sympathetic administrators in the U.S. Department of Agriculture.²⁰ Similarly, McAdam found, in his previously mentioned study of black mobilization in the middle part of the last century, that supportive allies do not necessarily have to be formally embedded in the political power structure but can be positioned to exert pressure on important actors within the structure. Thus, he noted that:

a variety of external political pressures continued, in the early 1960s, to render the political establishment vulnerable to pressure from black insurgents. Among these pressures were increased public awareness of, and support for, civil rights. . . .²¹

In each of these cases, as well as others, such as the pro-democracy movements in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe, the presence of influential allies accounts for neither the emergence nor the success of these movements. But having such allies can clearly enhance the prospect of movement development and success by functioning as a conveyor of political pressure, as a hedge or buffer against repression, and as a source of legitimation. What is less clear is whether differences in the character of the relationship between allies and a social movement make any difference in whether movement protest increases or decreases. For example, some research suggests that African American congressional representation reduced protest by providing greater access and thereby channeling movement action into more institutionalized politics.²²

REPRESSIVE CAPACITY OF AUTHORITIES. A third factor generally thought to signal the degree of accessibility of authorities to challengers is their repressive capacity or inclination to resort

to repression, and particularly changes in that capacity or inclination. McAdam's research on the rise of the civil rights movement provides a clear illustration of this relationship, as it shows how the movement surfaced following a decline in the South's tendency to invoke repressive measures to keep black Americans in their place. Using the annual number of lynchings as an indicator of repression, he found a significant decline in lynching during the years preceding the movement. Additionally, he argues that an increase in federal protections of black civil rights and a growth in the support of white liberals for black churches and colleges dampened the repressive inclination of Southern social control agents and thus facilitated the rise of the civil rights movement.²³

Since governmental authorities, and particularly the national state, tend to monopolize the instruments of repression (legal system, weapons, prisons), scholarly attention has generally focused on the relationship between, on the one hand, the repressive behaviors and appetites of national states and, on the other hand, social movement activity. It is important to keep in mind, however, that not all states or regimes are equally ready or likely to exercise their repressive potential. In general, democratic states are less likely to resort to repression on a consistent basis than are authoritarian states. Whatever the regime type, however, the actual or threatened use of repression can be quite variable over time. In the case of the Chinese student movement in Beijing in the spring of 1989, for example, there was initially a relaxation of the state's iron-fisted social control procedures, with the result that "heterodox views were less subject to sanctions such as denouncement and imprisonment" and "college students . . . felt free to participate in authorized political activities on campus."²⁴ But this restraint proved to be short-lived,

as the state slammed shut the window of opportunity by unleashing its troops in Tiananmen Square in early June 1989, about a month and a half after the commemorative gatherings for Hu Yaobang, the former secretary of the Communist General Party whose tolerance of student demonstrations two years earlier had forced him to resign that post, and the initial student demands for governmental rehabilitation of Hu's reputation. In between the initial public outpouring of student sympathy for Hu on April 16 and the military repression of June 3, the student movement evolved in a pro-democracy direction and the government's social control efforts vacillated between hardline measures and a more tolerant approach. As noted in Dingxin Zhao's analysis of the dynamics of the relationship between the government and the student movement:

The government initially tolerated the 1989 Movement, while trying to confine it to mourning activities for Hu Yaobang. After Hu Yaobang's state funeral, the government's policy shifted to a more hardline approach, as was indicated by the April 26 *People's Daily* editorial that labeled the movement anti-revolutionary turmoil. When students successfully organized April 27 demonstrations that defied the editorial, the government came back with a soft strategy and tried to contain the movement through a policy of limited concessions. On May 19, however, after a week of the hunger strike, the government declared martial law and brought a mass of troops to Beijing, first trying to scare the protestors away. When that didn't work military repression followed.²⁵

Given the highly authoritarian bent of the Chinese regime at that time, what is surprising was not the eventual repressive reflex of the state but the fact that it allowed the students to protest

at all. Perhaps more surprising is the occasional violent repressive hiccup that surfaces in more democratic countries like the United States. Three memorable examples that occurred during our lifetimes were the skirmishes between student protestors and the police, and the eventual police rioting, in Chicago at the time of the 1968 Democratic Convention, resulting in hundreds of injuries and nearly seven hundred arrests;²⁶ the shooting of students, resulting in four dead and nine wounded, by Ohio National Guardsmen on the Kent State University campus on May 4, 1970; and again ten days later, on May 14, the police firing on protesting students at Jackson State College in Jackson, Mississippi, leaving two dead and twelve wounded.²⁷ But these repressive reflexes did not suddenly close the door to student protest across the United States as did the Tiananmen Square massacre. In fact, within days of the Kent State killing, students on campuses across the country were marching to close down their universities to the chant of "Strike! Strike! Shut it down!" As noted in the 1971 *Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest*, "[d]uring the four days that followed the Kent killings, there were a hundred or more strikes a day" and, "[b]y the end of May . . . nearly one third of 2,500 colleges and universities in America had experienced some kind of protest activity."²⁸

At the nearby University of Akron, for example, around noon a day or two after the Kent State shootings, 150 students were listening to speakers in an outdoor "free speech area" that had been established immediately after the shootings. Following the last speech, there was a pregnant pause, as students seemed to be waiting for another speaker or directions as to what to do next. Out of the blue came a clarion call from the back of the

gathering: "Strike! Strike! Shut it down!" Within seconds, that keynote was repeated among other crowd members, and then the entire gathering was chanting the slogan in unison. Within a minute or two, the gathering was marching to the campus's main administration building to "shut it down."²⁹ So not only do repressive actions by the social control agents sometimes fail to stifle movement protest, such actions, in some places and times, appear even to stimulate it.

The observation that repression that appears to close the doors of opportunity may sometimes stimulate protest rather than dampen it seems to be counterintuitive, but there is considerable evidence of this, especially in countries other than industrialized democracies: for example, in Argentina, Burma, Chile, El Salvador, Iran, the Philippines, and South Africa.³⁰ Because of such findings, including his own research on revolutionary movements in Central America, Jeff Goodwin stated emphatically:

Far from being a response to political openings, the revolutionary mobilization that occurred in Central America during the 1970s and 1980s was generally a response to political exclusion and violent repression—the *contraction* of political opportunities and the *closing down* of "political space."³¹

So how are such contradictions to the core political opportunity thesis explained?³² The answer, as suggested earlier, is that the presence of certain conditions, or their confluence, accounts for the exceptions. One such set of conditions was revealed in Paul Almeida's study of two waves of protest that occurred between 1962 and 1981 in El Salvador. He found that the key to the puzzle resided, at least for El Salvador, in "a sequential

model of political opportunity and threat” wherein the organization building that occurred during periods of liberalization and political opportunity provided a durable organizational infrastructure that nurtured protest even in the face of subsequent repression.³³ As he explains:

The wave of demonstrations and strikes that rocked El Salvador between 1967 and 1972 . . . came to an end when the state held successive fraudulent presidential and parliamentary elections in 1972. Even with this closing in opportunities, the organizational infrastructure founded in the late 1960s endured in both the countryside and cities through the 1970s.³⁴

In turn, this organization building and sedimentation provided the base for continuous, and even more radicalized, challenge during the ten-year period prior to El Salvador’s civil war in the 1980s.

The other part of the equation that fostered radical mobilization in the face of escalating repression was the broadening and intensification of the grievance base confronting Salvadorans. Almeida discusses these mounting grievances—state attributed economic woes, erosion of rights, and state repression itself—as “threats” without specifying the exact character of the threats. Consistent with our discussion of threats in the previous chapter, we understand the threats confronting Salvadorans to have been the kind that threaten the quotidian or everyday order by making things worse. In effect, Salvadorans were confronted with the threat of loss in terms of rights, freedoms, and economic functioning; as previously discussed, the threat of loss is a particularly potent prod to mobilization. The suggestion, then, is that when grievances associated with the actual or threatened

loss of what people already have and believe is rightfully theirs reaches a threshold in which the prospect of taking action to curtail the loss, and perhaps recapture something of what was lost, is less costly than doing nothing, then the probability of mobilization in the face of repression increases. This appears especially to be the case, Almeida explains, when an existing organizational infrastructure is already in place.

Taken together, these observations provide two important reasons that mobilizations sometimes occur in the face of mounting repression. But they also reveal that it is not easy to predict when such mobilizations will occur. The difficulty arises because of variation in the tipping point between the costs of action and the costs of inaction and the presence or absence of a viable organizational infrastructure with associated leadership strengthened by what has been called “iron in the soul.”³⁵ There are other sources of iron in the soul as well, such as moral shock or outrage and even a deep sense of honor that may sometimes motivate collective action in the absence of structural opportunity. This was the case in 1943 when Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto resisted with smuggled weapons and explosives Nazis’ efforts to deport them to the Treblinka death camp.³⁶

Another factor that can affect the relationship between mobilization against authorities and repression is the character of the repression. Although repression is often discussed as if all repression is much the same, clearly that is not the case. Distinctions have been made recently among different types of repression, or forms of protest control, based on different agents of control, whether the control is direct or indirect, and whether it is publicly visible.³⁷ Military control and protest policing illustrate a state-based, direct, observable form of repression; in con-

trast, countermovements, such as the anti-cult movement of the 1970s and the pro-life movement, illustrate grassroots, private sector mobilization seeking to repress adversarial movements or to reverse their successes. For example, the ongoing push to overturn *Roe v. Wade* (the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision establishing that abortions are permissible for any reason a woman chooses, up until the “point at which the fetus becomes ‘viable,’ that is, potentially able to live outside the mother’s womb”) emerged in response to the pro-choice movement and focuses on halting the efforts of that movement.³⁸ In addition to appealing to authorities to act on their behalf, countermovements sometimes get authorities to look the other way and countenance indirectly their repressive activities or those of more radical spin-off groups that operate underground and engage in more extreme measures to terrorize and thus repress their targets. This is what the Ku Klux Klan did for years during the Jim Crow era via its lynching campaigns, and what Operation Rescue tried to do for the anti-abortion/pro-life movement.

As in the 1989 Beijing student movement, repression can also be relatively “soft” in contrast to the more conventionally understood “hard” repression illustrated by the unleashing of the military and police at the governmental level or by vigilante groups and terrorizing countermovements at the level of rank-and-file citizens. Besides a pulling back of the police or military, or softening of their repressive tactics, soft repression can also involve the strategic use of nonviolent action to mute or delegitimize oppositional groups and ideas.³⁹ This is done quite commonly through negative stereotyping or stigmatization, as when 1960 student activists were called “commie, pinko fags,” gay and lesbian activists are referred to as “fags”

and dykes,” and feminists are called “feminazis,” a derogatory term popularized by the popular conservative radio talk-show host Rush Limbaugh. Soft repression can also take the form of silencing, as when a movement is denied voice via exclusion from governmental hearings or media coverage. An example of how this can work in the media is provided by Myra Ferree and her colleagues in a study comparing abortion discourse in the United States and in Germany over the twenty-five-year period from 1970 through 1994. Not only were significant differences found in the extent to which nonstate speakers were given voice in the newspapers of the two countries, with the U.S. press being more accommodating than the German press, but the majority of the nonstate voices in Germany were institutionalized representatives of the churches (55 percent) rather than those of social movement speakers (6 percent). In the United States, in contrast, only 17 percent of the nonstate speakers were church-based, and 39 percent of all nonstate speakers were associated with social movements.⁴⁰ Hence, the following conclusions:

Compared to the U.S., the silence of social movements in Germany is deafening. . . . This is not because there are no feminist or right to life mobilizations in Germany, but because the media have a strong preference against giving voice to less institutionalized speakers. . . . [Thus] the mobilization potential for social movement mobilization is enhanced in the United States and repressed, softly, in Germany by the institutional form by which movements relate to civil society in media practices.⁴¹

A final factor affecting the relationship between repression, or protest social control, and mobilization is the fact that repressive behaviors or threats, whether soft or hard, are not always

read the same way, if read at all. But this is true for other signaling elements as well and thus warrants a separate discussion.

Reading Political Opportunity

We have noted how the presence or absence of political opportunity may be signaled by shifting political alignments, the coming and going of allies, and by the repressive behavior of authorities. For two fundamental reasons, however, there is no automatic relationship between these signals and mobilization. First, signals are signs that must be noticed, which means that they can be missed or ignored. Second, signals have to be read or interpreted, which means that they are subject to differential interpretation.

Just as signal lights or stop signs at traffic intersections are sometimes overlooked or missed, so signals of changes in a political structure or some authority system can be missed or glossed over. Sometimes the missed opportunity may be the result of internal tensions, debate, and even fragmentation, such that a movement is not sufficiently cohesive to take advantage of existing or emergent political opportunities. Some scholars have argued, for example, that “the women’s movement of the 1980s was less effective in achieving its political aims . . . partly because its supporting coalition fragmented, as radical and institutionally oriented wings polarized.”⁴² Similarly, research has suggested that the nuclear freeze movement stagnated, in part, because of internal debate over whether institutional access would absorb, or co-opt, the movement.⁴³

At other times, the missed opportunity may be attributable to a misreading of the situation. In such cases, the opportunity was not glossed over; rather, it was read or interpreted as not being very auspicious. We suspect, however, that it is far more

common for movement leaders and activists to exaggerate the extent of openness and, at times, to interpret as an opening what may appear to some observers as an absence of opportunity. This happens because movements are likely to assess opportunity “with a systematic optimistic bias, exaggerating opportunities and underestimating constraints.”⁴⁴ As noted in Gamson and Meyer’s discussion of the “framing of political opportunity,”

This bias is built into the functional needs of movements which need to sustain a collective action frame that includes the belief that conditions can be changed. Since movement action can sometimes create political opportunity, this lack of realism can produce a self-fulfilling prophecy.⁴⁵

Additionally, dissidents and protesters may sometimes define opportunities in terms of other factors, such as the perceived strength of their oppositional allies. Such perceptions appeared to be operative in the case of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. As Kurzman noted in his study of structural and perceived opportunity associated with the revolution:

the state was *not*, by several objective measures, particularly vulnerable in 1978 when widespread protest emerged. Instead, Iranians seem to have based their assessment of their opportunities for protest on the perceived strength of the opposition. In other words, Iranians believed the balance of forces shifted, not because of changing state structure, but because of a changing opposition movement [emphasis in original].⁴⁶

Equally important as interpretive bias in assessing the degree or character of opportunity is the extent of passion and outrage shared by activists and their adherents. As noted earlier with respect to Salvadoran mobilization, escalating repression did not

keep some citizens from protesting against the state because of the outrage they felt over their mounting grievances. Similarly, the increasing threat of hardline repression by the military in Beijing in the spring of 1989 failed to deter students from engaging in further protest. "Most expected a harsh crackdown, but for many 'the feeling of injustice was too strong for students to succumb to' the prospect of increased repression."⁴⁷ Such examples of movement activists and protestors forging ahead in the face of mounting repression are not hard to come by, thus underscoring the observation that presence or absence of political opportunity is not merely an objective matter but also in the eyes of the beholders.

So while the actual presence or absence of political opportunity matters, it is arguable that it matters less than its perception, which is affected by threat-based grievances, moral shock or outrage, the perceived strength of the movement, and the passion generated by those threats, shocks, perceptions and the movement's goals, and, thus, how the structure of opportunity is read and framed.

Conclusions Regarding Political Opportunity

We began our discussion of political opportunity structures with the widely held proposition that varying degrees of political opportunity can facilitate or constrain the prospect of movement emergence and associated protest. There is nothing in our discussion that contradicts this proposition, but we have suggested that the relationship between the structure of political opportunity and movement emergence and protest is highly conditional. One condition, of course, is the political opportunity curve itself (see Figure 3.1). Recall that it posits a cur-

vilinear relationship between movement protest and political opportunity, with most protest occurring in a context in which the window is neither fully open nor closed. Interestingly, it is partly for this reason that some studies testing political opportunity hypotheses against other theories sometimes find that political opportunity measures are not terribly significant.⁴⁸ Yet, we have seen that this curve is neither static nor generalizable across time, various groups, location, or place: both regimes that are traditionally open and those that are repressive can oscillate temporally between the two extremes; openness for one status group does not necessarily apply to other groups; and just as there can be variation across countries, so there is often variation across municipalities within the same country. We have also seen that whatever the extent of accessibility, structures of opportunity can be read differently or misread, and that how they are read can be influenced by the character of grievances, associated passions, and framing. We can thus conclude that signaling of some level of political opportunity, or the bypassing of a closing window, constitutes a necessary condition for the emergence and operation of social movements. But such signaling conditions are not sufficient to spark mobilization in the absence of the mobilizing grievances discussed in the previous chapter and the accumulation and deployment of various resources and the organizational space in which to operate. We thus turn to consideration of the facilitating condition of resource mobilization.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

The proposition that the emergence and persistence of social movement activity depend on the availability of resources that can be accumulated and channeled into movement mobilization

and activity constitutes the orienting premise of the resource mobilization perspective developed principally by John McCarthy and Mayer Zald in the mid-1970s.⁴⁹ As McCarthy and Zald hypothesized regarding the link between resource availability and movement emergence, “the absolute and relative amount of resources available to” social movements is contingent on “the amount of discretionary resources of mass and elite publics”; moreover, “the greater the absolute amount of [those] resources available to the SMS” [social movement sector] within a society, “the greater the likelihood that new SMIs [social movement industries] and SMOs [social movement organizations] will develop.”⁵⁰

This general hypothesis is noncontroversial today, as it has received wide-ranging support from a variety of empirical studies. For example, a study of the determinants of the founding of U.S. environmental movement organizations between 1895 and 1995 revealed that their founding was positively associated with national prosperity and negatively associated with high rates of business failures.⁵¹ Another study found that protest activity by U.S. feminist groups in the thirty years between 1955 and 1985 similarly increased during prosperous times.⁵² Likewise, an examination of the city-level contextual determinants of temporal variation in the frequency of homeless protest across seventeen U.S. cities in the 1980s and early 1990s revealed that the incidence of protest was greatest in those cities with larger monetary resource pools, as measured in terms of per capita income and transfer payments.⁵³ An assessment of this pattern internationally similarly found that citizen participation in transnational social movement organizations, such as Greenpeace, tends to be positively associated with national wealth.⁵⁴

These and other studies provide compelling support for the core resource mobilization thesis,⁵⁵ but they do not address a number of other important questions that are relevant to understanding the relationship between resources and the course and character of social movements. These include: (1) what are the various types of resources of importance to social movements? (2) from where or whence do these resources flow? and (3) does the source affect movement goals and activities?

Types of Resources

Broadly conceived, resources include almost anything that movements, and other organizations, need to mobilize and deploy for the purpose of advancing their interests. This includes, most generally, people and money, and some degree of legitimacy within one or more sets of relevant actors, such as the movement’s constituency or the larger public. We could stop here and conclude that movements that are reasonably successful in securing people, money, and legitimacy will be more successful in realizing their interest than movements that are resource poor. But this general conclusion is not very helpful because it also pertains to other collective enterprises, such as political campaigns and the missions of nonprofit organizations. Additionally, resources can vary considerably in terms of how fungible and accessible they are. Money, for example, is highly fungible or portable in the sense that it can be easily converted into other resources (for example, office space and equipment) and is readily transferred from one context to another. In contrast, legitimacy and related symbolic resources, which we discuss below, are typically less fungible and more context or group specific. Similarly, resources can vary in terms of whether access

to them is a matter of proprietary control, as with money and human labor, or more generalized, as with such cultural phenomena as tactical repertoires and models of organizing that can be accessed and adopted or imitated by other groups.⁵⁶ Rather than merely note the obvious importance of money, people, and some degree of legitimacy for movement mobilization, we offer a more refined typology of the various kinds of resources that can be of varying importance to different social movements or at different points in a movement's career. The typology, presented in Table 3.1, identifies five general kinds of resources and lists sub-types for each, concrete examples of each sub-type, and whether the sub-type is skewed more or less fungible and more or less proprietary.⁵⁷

While it is arguable that all five general resource types are of some importance to all movements, there can be considerable variation in the relative importance of the different sub-types to different movements. To illustrate, let us contrast two quite different movements. Consider first, movements of the homeless that percolated in many American cities in the 1980s and 1990s. A study assessing the viability of fifteen homeless movement organizations across eight American cities (Boston, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Minneapolis, Oakland, Philadelphia, and Tucson) found that the viable SMOs were those that secured nine or more resources out of a repertoire of fifteen sub-types.⁵⁸ But SMO viability was not merely a matter of the volume of resources secured, since some resources (such as moral support, leadership, and having a place to meet) were found to be more important than others. In the case of moral support, for example, all of the viable organizations realized both verbal and solidary support. Illustrative of solidary support are the comments of the

Table 3.1
TYPOLOGY OF RESOURCES

General Resources	Sub-Types	Examples	Properties	
			Fungible	Proprietary
Material	Money	Cash donations	Yes	Yes
	Supplies	Paper, telephones	No	Yes
	Physical Space	Meeting and office spaces	No	Yes
	Transportation	Cars, vans, pickups	Partially	Yes
	Employment	Jobs for activists	Partially	Yes
Human	Generalized Labor	Envelope stuffers, marchers, picketers	Partially	No
	Specialized Labor	Computer experts, legal council	Partially	Yes
	Leadership	Organizational and inspirational	Partially	Yes
Social-Organizational	Infrastructures	Sidewalks, streets, postal service	Yes	No
	Social networks	Extra-movement ties to individuals and organizations	Partially	Yes
	Formal organizations		Partially	Yes
Moral	Legitimacy	Positive public opinion	Partially	No
	Solidary support	Joining in the cause	Partially	No
	Celebrity	Celebrities like Bono may do both	Partially	No
Cultural	Repertoires and recipes	Organizational, tactical, and technical schema or models	No	No
	Literature, media, film, Internet, etc.	Use of these sources to frame SMO interests	No	Yes

leader of the Oakland Union of the Homeless, who noted when discussing a Christmas Day protest:

We had a bunch of ministers from all over the Bay area come and their basic statement was, "I'm not here to say our church can solve homelessness; I'm here to say our church can stand in solidarity with the homeless." And so they all stood there and pledged that night that even though their churches needed them on Christmas, they would commit civil disobedience with us.⁵⁹

Such support was especially important for the homeless because of their pariahlike status and the associated ways in which they are stigmatized. But just as important for homeless SMO viability was having secured space in which to meet and having associated office supplies, which makes sense in light of the severe generalized material resource deficits of the homeless.

Such base material resources, however, are not so critical for many social movements. For movements that are more culturally deviant or idiosyncratic, such as the religious movements that were imported into the United States and Europe from various parts of Asia in the 1960s and 1970s, securing some measure of public legitimacy and respectability via celebrity ingratiation and endorsement seeking is especially important. Two examples include the saffron-robed, Hindu-based Hare Krishna movement exported from India and the Buddhist-based Nichiren Shoshu movement exported from Japan. In the case of Hare Krishna, recall the widespread and favorable publicity it received by Beatle George Harrison in his popular song "My Sweet Lord," with its refrain "Hare Krishna [My sweet lord], Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare [My Lord]." While

the Nichiren Shoshu movement never received the endorsement of an international celebrity with the status of George Harrison, its leaders persistently sought the endorsement of celebrities which the rank-and-file members could invoke as they went about the business of recruitment, presumably to lend an air of importance and respectability to the mantra—*Nam Myoho Renge Kyo* (Devotion to the Mystical Law of Cause and Effect through Sound)—they were trying to promote.⁶⁰

The importance of legitimacy to the ongoing operation of movements is also illustrated by the efforts of countermovements and targeted authorities to discredit their adversaries or challengers. This can be done through various forms of reputational stigmatization, including the imputation of negative identities to members or the group as a whole, generalizing from a few "bad apple" members to the entire membership, focusing attention on questionable members or organizational ties, and drawing attention to and highlighting questionable ideological beliefs.⁶¹ In the late 1960s and 1970s when there was a flowering in the United States of off-beat, nontraditional religious movements, for example, it was commonplace for more mainstream and institutionalized religious groups and their adherents to attempt to discredit these movements by referring to them as cults and accusing them of brainwashing.⁶² It is partly to ward off such discrediting charges and labels that movements such as Nichiren Shoshu, and Scientology more recently, have sought the endorsement of celebrities and have engaged in various impression management activities so as to generate as much idiosyncrasy credit as possible.⁶³

In general, the research strongly supports the proposition that the availability and procurement of resources matters

greatly for the emergence and the operation of social movements just as they do for all goal-seeking enterprises. But the research also tells us that not all resources matter in the same way for all movements, with some movements being more interested in securing moral resources, such as a measure of legitimacy, and other movements having a greater need for material resources and specialized labor.

Resource Derivation

Given the centrality of resources to movement emergence and viability, an important question concerns their derivation. From where or whence do resources flow?

Regarding derivation, there are basically three possible sources for general resources: they can be secured from external sources, such as “conscience constituents” (individuals, groups or organizations who support movement activity without benefiting directly from attainment of its objectives); they can be derived indigenously from a movement’s constituency; or they can be derived from both. Although there has been debate about the generality and relative importance of externally provided versus indigenously derived resources, we contend that both sources are important but that their importance may vary by the resource base of a movement’s constituency, by certain objectives and tactical actions, and by different points in the life span of a movement. The previously mentioned research on fifteen homeless social movement organizations (SMOs) across eight U.S. cities illustrates the importance of a movement’s resource base when considering the derivation of its resources. Not only did all but one of the SMOs secure most of their resources (75 percent) from external sources, the range of resource types provided by

external supporters was also one of the key factors distinguishing between viable and nonviable homeless SMOs: viable SMOs procured an average of 9.7 external resources, while nonviable SMOs mobilized an average of 4.5 external resources.⁶⁴

That homeless SMOs would be so dependent on external resources is not so surprising given the general impoverishment and resource deficits of the homeless. But relatively few social movement constituencies are as deprived as the homeless across the range of resource types. As a consequence, they are much more likely to generate a greater proportion of their resources indigenously: that is, from their constituent base. A case in point is the civil rights movement. Aldon Morris’s study of the black Southern student sit-in movement of 1960 demonstrated, for example, the importance of internal organization to the emergence and diffusion of the movement across sixty-nine cities. Specifically, the organizational infrastructure and much of the leadership for the movement was in place prior to its emergence. As Morris concludes, “pre-existing activist groups, formal organizations, colleges, and overlapping personal networks provided the framework through which the sit-ins emerged and spread.”⁶⁵ McAdam’s research on the development of black insurgency between 1930 and 1970 not only affirms the existence of a broad-based organizational infrastructure out of which the civil rights movement grew in the 1950s and 1960s but also traces its development in the 1930s and 1940s.⁶⁶ The point, then, is that the black civil rights movement was bred and fed, in large part, by the indigenous black community and institutional infrastructure (black churches, black colleges, and NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] chapters) in which it was embedded. However, such findings do not mean

that the black civil rights movement received no support from external conscience constituents, as it was the recipient of externally based moral support, material resources, and some specialized labor.⁶⁷ This suggests a pattern of mixed support, albeit skewed in the direction of indigenous support in contrast to the homeless movement, which was skewed heavily toward external support. So both movements were recipients of external support but were in varying degrees dependent on their preexisting resource base and the moral support their causes generated.

Effects of Externally Derived Resources

Although externally derived resources typically facilitate the operation of movement organizations, they may also come with a cost: a loss of autonomy and moderating influence with respect to movement objectives and tactics. This possibility has prompted concern among movement activists and advocates about the specter of external co-optation or control. Scholars similarly have been concerned with this possibility, asking: Does resource dependency transform SMO goals and tactics? In other words, does the piper call the tune? There is no consensual answer to this question; rather, there are three overlapping arguments. One holds that external resource dependency moderates goals and tactics, thus dampening the prospect of militant or radical tactical action.⁶⁸ A second argument holds that external support does not necessarily mute radical dissent but channels it into more professional and publicly acceptable forms.⁶⁹ The third argument contends that whether the appropriation of external resources alters an SMO's goals or course of action depends on the degree of correspondence between the perspectives and aims of the resource providers and the movement.⁷⁰ When there is close correspondence, as when radical sponsoring orga-

nizations support movements inclined toward radical action, it is alignment or correspondence with respect to ideology and tactics (rather than resource dependency per se) that accounts for the parallel behavior.

Interestingly, all three arguments find some support. In the case of the fifteen homeless SMOs mentioned earlier, the correspondence argument seemed to hold, as there was no significant relationship between a resource benefactor relationship and the use of radical tactics (for example, blockades, sit-ins, and housing takeovers): three of the five SMOs that had a resource benefactor engaged in radical action, as did five of the ten SMOs that did not have a benefactor.⁷¹ In these cases, a resource benefactor thus appeared to enhance the viability of the SMOs but did not necessarily moderate tactical actions. In contrast, some research on external support of professional organizations in the civil rights movement found that such support had a tempering effect on tactical action or means but not on goals or ends.⁷² Such research findings suggest that while the procurement of external resources can modify the course and character of movement action, there is no automatic, determinative effect of receiving or appropriating those resources. Rather, it appears to be a conditional relationship, depending on where the resource provider is located on a continuum of organizations or actors ranging from elites to non-elites, on timing of the support in a movement's life span, and on the degree of correspondence between the perspectives and goals of the supportive agency and the movement.

Conclusions Regarding Resource Mobilization

In this section, we have emphasized the importance of resource availability and acquisition to the emergence and persistence

of social movement activity. We also noted that there are at least five general types of resources: material, human, social-organizational, moral, and cultural. Although each of these resource types may be of some importance to all movements, we observed that there can be considerable variation in the relative importance of the different sub-types to different movements. Additionally, we explored the question of resource derivation, observing that resources may be derived internally from a movement's base or core constituency, from external supporters, or from a combination of support. While there has been debate about which is the most important wellspring of resources, the research indicates that most movements are the beneficiaries of both internally and externally derived resources, even though they may rely more heavily on one source than on another. Finally, we took up the question of the effects of the receipt of externally derived resources, concluding that the effects can be varied and are thus conditional rather than determinative.

Two relevant questions that we did not explore concern the role of social movement organizations in securing and deploying resources, and whether different types of movement organizations operate differently in terms of resource acquisition and deployment. Since the answers to these questions depend on the ongoing dynamics of a movement's operation, we address them in Chapter 5, which focuses on dynamics.

ECOLOGICAL FACTORS AND FREE SPACES

In addition to some degree of political opportunity and the accumulation of some variety of resources, the prospect and character of movement emergence and mobilization are affected by ecological factors and the existence of free spaces. Ecological factors refer to the spatial arrangement of movement-relevant pop-

ulations and physical places, often called free spaces, conducive to facilitating or sustaining collective challenges to authority.

Ecological Factors

Evidence that ecological factors are important to movement mobilization abounds in the literature on different movements and related protest events. To illustrate the significance of the spatial arrangement of relevant populations and physical structures, let us return to the 1989 Beijing student movement and Tiananmen Square. According to Dingxin Zhao's in-depth analysis of the movement, the ecology of Beijing's various universities significantly affected student mobilization. Among the most important ecological factors were the proximate location of most of Beijing's sixty-seven universities in relation to each other, with most being less than thirty minutes apart via bicycle; the separation of most of the universities from the outside world by large brick or concrete walls; the dense campus living conditions, with half a dozen or more students typically living in the same dormitory room for at least four years; the almost "total institution" character of campus life, with each university having "its own restaurants, student dining halls, cinema, hospital, post office, barbershops, grocery stores, sports facilities, recreational areas and other such facilities,"⁷³ and the campus spatial layouts, which channeled and concentrated student routines and activities. Together, these ecological and spatial characteristics constituted an ecology that affected student mobilization in five overlapping ways:

- (1) It facilitated the spread of dissident ideas in the period before the movement and the transformation of news about particular events during the movement.
- (2) It nurtured many

student-based networks. . . . (3) It shaped students' spatial activities on the campus[es], creating a few places that most students had to pass or stay in daily. These places became centers of student mobilization. (4) The concentration of many universities in one district encouraged mutual imitation and inter-university competition for activism among students from different universities. (5) The ecology also facilitated the formation of many ecology-dependent strategies of collective action.⁷⁴

Such observations about the ecological facilitators of the Beijing student mobilization in the spring of 1989 are not peculiar to that movement or ecological context. In fact, the ecological character of university campuses across much of the world has been noted by other scholars as a facilitator of student movements. Two campus ecological factors are especially prominent worldwide: the spatial, or, territorial segregation of youth creating what has been called "youth ghettos,"⁷⁵ and spatial arrangements that channel the daily comings and goings of students and often aggregate them in particular places at particular times, such as student unions or centers, campus quads that students crisscross between classes, and the administratively designated and ecologically marked "free speech" areas that were created on university campuses in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s to centralize and control student rallies and protest. At the University of California, Irvine, for example, an area on the main campus walkway, including the steps leading up to the walkway next to the Administration Building, has been established as the rally/protest area. It is here that proponents of various political issues and causes, including various student as-

sociations, such as the Muslim Student Association and the Jewish Student Association, aggregate and sometimes confront each other via collective gestures and vocalizations. But they are not free to appropriate this space on a whim or at any time. Rather, it must be reserved and scheduled—and only within a limited span of time, usually between noon and 1:00 P.M.

Such regulatory measures are all part and parcel of the administrative control of protest and collective challenge.⁷⁶ Interestingly, these measures can, like the ecology of campuses in Beijing and elsewhere, facilitate the flow of communication and exchange of ideas, the interconnection of networks, and the development of a sense of collective enthusiasm and efficacy. The larger point is that it is difficult for social control agents—whether they are associated with the university, the encompassing community, or the state—to fully stamp out ecologically based contacts and interactions. As Zhao noted in his analysis of the Beijing student movement, "an authoritarian regime may crush intermediate associations, but it cannot destroy ecology-centered human interactions." Instead, he submits, the repressive efforts of the state often unintentionally "strengthen ecology-based human interactions."⁷⁷

The effects of such an unwitting social control error may not be publicly visible,⁷⁸ especially when public assemblage and protest is stamped out or banned, but that does not mean that those harboring adversarial sentiments mute those sentiments. Rather, they may disappear into various free spaces.

Free Spaces

Free spaces are small-scale community or movement settings beyond the surveillance and control of institutionalized author-

ities that are voluntarily frequented by dissidents and system complainants. In such settings, various forms of cultural challenge, such as adversarial narratives and frames, that precede or accompany mobilization are generated or nurtured.⁷⁹ Examples of free spaces include, on one hand, quasi-public places, such as coffeehouses, neighborhood bars, student lounges, classrooms, religious facilities (for example, churches and mosques), and, on the other hand, more private places, such as one's home, apartment, dormitory room, and office or place of work. Two factors make spaces relatively free in the sense of being safe or protected: they are typically beyond the direct gaze and earshot of authorities, and they either are controlled by movement sponsors or friends or are appropriated and colonized by the dissidents themselves.

The importance of free spaces to the development and nurturing of adversarial sentiments and mobilization is clearly illustrated by the role of black churches and colleges during the course of the civil rights movement. Morris's previously mentioned analysis of the black student sit-in movement that spread across sixty-nine cities in February and March of 1960, mostly in the South, found that preexisting structures—namely, black colleges and churches—functioned to facilitate the emergence and diffusion of the movement.⁸⁰ How so? By providing the organizational infrastructure, associational connections, and free spaces in which to organize, strategize, and aggregate. As Morris concluded regarding these factors:

Because this internal organization was already firmly in place prior to the 1960s, activist groups across the South were in a position to quickly initiate sit-ins. This rapidity with which sit-ins were organized gave the appearance that they

were spontaneous. This appearance was accentuated because most demonstrators were students rather than veteran Civil Rights activists.

Yet the data show that the student organizers . . . were closely tied to the internal organization of the emerging Civil Rights movement. Prior student/activist ties had been formed through church affiliations and youth wings of Civil Rights organizations. In short, students and seasoned activists were able to rapidly coordinate the sit-ins because both were anchored to the same organization.⁸¹

Although churches and colleges are not immune from state monitoring and intrusion, the state in nonauthoritarian regimes appears reluctant to inject its control agents and forces into those settings, except on rare occasions, such as the previously mentioned Kent State and Jackson State cases. It is partly for this reason that the churches and colleges, in particular, have functioned as relatively free spaces for mobilization.

Not surprisingly, the church and its sister institution in other religious traditions, such as the mosque for Islam, has functioned as a relatively free space for movement mobilization in various times and contexts. In the case of the Iranian Revolution of the late 1970s, for example, anti-Shah sentiments and frames, as well as plans for mobilization, were generated and nurtured, in part, within the protective shield of the mosque.⁸² More recently, some mosques and madrasas (or madrassahs), which are Islamic schools, have served as free spaces or havens for learning, discussing, and spreading militant, Islamic fundamentalism.⁸³ The madrasas, in particular, have been the focus of attention in "the war on terrorism," especially those in Pakistan and Afghanistan that have been charged with functioning to

help breed Islamic militancy. In Pakistan, for example, there are an estimated twelve thousand madrasas, with about one million Pakistani students attending these schools.⁸⁴ Although not all of them are seed beds for militancy, government leaders and local officials claim that many madrasas function as such. The mayor of a town in the northern Peshawar region of Pakistan, which is close to the tribal areas where the Taliban and Al Qaeda have reputedly flourished, claimed that “there are many madrasas run by mullahs that train jihadis and get funds from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait.” He emphasized that “these jihadis know only jihad” but “should be brought into the mainstream.”⁸⁵ Similarly, President Karzai of Afghanistan asserted that the source of “the Taliban insurgency lies in training camps and madrasas . . . in Pakistan, and that the insurgents take sanctuary there.”⁸⁶

Not all movement-related free spaces are as organizationally formalized or institutionalized as schools, colleges, and places of worship. Perhaps even more common are places like coffeehouses and bars or pubs that are appropriated at particular times by or for dissident groups and their gatherings. A researcher for an ongoing study of radical activists in the United States notes, for instance, that many of his contacts and observations have occurred in a coffee shop where they meet regularly.⁸⁷ Even in more autocratic, repressive political systems, coffeehouses often function, as illustrated below, as important spaces for the voicing, sharing, and framing of grievances that may congeal into mobilizing grievances that precede and nurture eventual cultural or system challenge.

Free spaces are likely to be more limited and constrained in authoritarian, totalitarian regimes because of their extensive surveillance and frequent effort to infect interpersonal and organi-

zational networks with spies and informants. Yet, the aggrieved and discontented often secure free spaces and devise means of communication that evade the control tentacles of the regime. A case in point is provided by the subculture of public accommodation and private resistance that developed in Estonia during Soviet rule. Conceptually, accommodative subcultures are characterized by privately held values and opinions that are incongruent with those of the regime or state but not manifested behaviorally in public. In other words, there is a contradictory relationship between what some citizens believe and express in the private realm and how they behave in the public sphere.⁸⁸ It is this contradictory relationship—typically reflected in adversarial talk, narratives, songs, and poetry—that sustains the subculture and provides the stuff out of which oppositional movements often grow. In Estonia, such incongruent, oppositional sentiments were expressed and nurtured in coffeehouses; in small groups, such as “local theater troupes, choral societies, local history associations, beekeeping and horticulture societies in rural areas, and small intellectual groups like the English Academic Association and Book Lovers’ Club”; in university student organizations; and even carefully in the classrooms of some schoolteachers—all of which constituted free spaces in the sense that they operated in places and in a fashion that evaded the gaze and tentacles of the regime. How this compartmentalization of the private and public worked is nicely illustrated by the following comment of a dissident student:

I wrote a historical materialist analysis of the father of Estonian nationalism, Ferdinand von Kruetzer. It was terrible. We actually wrote this stuff! We had to in order to get our degrees.

But when we gathered at the coffee house we could say there what it really was. It was pure garbage!⁸⁹

In Estonia, this accommodative subculture, which flourished out of view the state, ultimately functioned as the seedbed for the subculture of opposition that flowered in the late 1980s in the wake of Soviet President Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and perestroika that loosened the Soviet regime's social control efforts and helped set the stage for the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Estonia is only one case, of course, but Estonians' efforts to carve out and maintain free spaces within which to nurture a culture of resistance is commonplace across authority-challenging movements. It would thus appear that the existence of free spaces, however they are identified, appropriated, and secured, is a necessary condition for movement emergence.

Conclusions Regarding Ecological Factors and Free Spaces

In this section, we have highlighted the relevance of ecological factors, including free spaces, to the prospect and character of movement emergence and mobilization. We have illustrated the importance of these factors by referencing the 1989 Beijing student movement, the 1960 black student sit-in movement, student protest gatherings and movements on U.S. college campuses, radical Islamic fundamentalist movements, and the anti-Soviet, Estonian Independence movement. These movements vary in a number of ways, including time and place, but they were all facilitated or constrained by ecological factors. The importance of such factors resides in large part "in the fact that, other factors being equal, the potential for mobilizing a population will be different if the same population is spatially arranged

in a different way."⁹⁰ One final example will suffice to illustrate the point. In a study of the distribution of peasant radicalism in Chile in the 1960s, it was found, among other things, that spatial proximity to highly organized and politically radical mining municipalities located in the countryside functioned as the main determinant of variation in the degree of peasant radicalism. In other words, those peasants most ecologically proximate to the mining municipalities became the most radical because of increased exposure to the miners' leadership and ideology.⁹¹

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have argued that the emergence and functioning of social movements are contingent on the confluence of a number of core contextual conditions. These conditions include the actual or perceived political opportunity or freedom to express one's grievances and press one's claims publicly and to relevant authorities; access to sufficient resources to organize, mount, and sustain a campaign and the organizational capacity to deploy those resources in an effective manner; and favorable ecological or spatial arrangements of movement-relevant populations and relatively safe, spatial enclaves (often called free spaces), in which the aggrieved can associate beyond the eyes and ears of their targets or government officials and social control agents.

Each of these three sets of conditions can be thought of as the necessary contextual conditions for the emergence of social movement activity; together, it is arguable, they constitute the sufficient contextual conditions for movement emergence. Another way of thinking about them is as enabling conditions in that their presence enhances the prospect of movement emer-

gence and mobilization, while their absence or foreclosure diminishes that prospect.

But, as noted at the outset of this chapter, even the temporal confluence of these contextual conditions does not ensure movement mobilization in the absence of mobilizing grievances. As concluded in a study by Jenkins et al. that examined the relationship between political opportunity and African American protest from 1948 to 1997: "it is not a question of opportunities alone being important, or grievances or organization alone, but all three contributing to protest."⁹² We have argued, moreover, that ecological and spatial factors also matter.

Even the presence of these factors—political opportunity, resource aggregation, favorable ecological conditions, and mobilizing grievances—does not affect alone the course and character of a movement once it is up and running. Equally important are how movements operate strategically and tactically, their internal organizational functioning, and their relations with other movements and organizations within their organizational fields. These and related topics cluster under the conceptual umbrella of movement dynamics, which we examine in Chapter 5. We first consider, however, the issue of participation.

Chapter Four

PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

IN CHAPTER 1 WE described four primary types of challenges to systems of authority, noting that the focus of this book, as with most research on social movements, is on direct challenges by collective actors. Direct challenges by collective actors encompass movement-organized rallies and demonstrations, lawsuits, marches, and sit-ins as well as activities designed to undermine and seize a state's authority, as in the case of revolutions. Of course, individuals often challenge a system of authority without ever joining a social movement, as when an employee files a grievance against his or her employer for discrimination. While there have been numerous social movements concerned with issues of discrimination in the workplace,¹ an individual filing a claim against his or her employer for discriminatory practices does not necessarily make him or her part of that movement.

The distinction between individual and collective challenges gives rise to one of the most frequently asked questions in the study of social movements: why do individuals sometimes participate in *collective* challenges rather than act alone to challenge a system of authority or not act at all? More pointedly, why do some victims of discrimination decide to challenge their employers directly by themselves, while others join a social movement to address such grievances? More generally, at a national level, why do some citizens participate in social movement ac-